

The Politics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy:  
A Case Study on Iraqi Turkmen

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## ABSTRACT

### The Politics of Loss and the Poetics of Melancholy: A Case Study on Iraqi Turkmen

Guldem Baykal Buyuksarac

In this dissertation, I examine the question of politicized ethnicity in a transnational context where nationalism is put into service as a redemptive ideology to heal personal and collective wounds of historical traumas and marginalization. I try to understand how ethno-nationalism is organized as a process of identification and as a discursive regime dictating certain moral imperatives generative of a collective political subjectivity. The locus of my ethnographic research is largely a middle class Sunni community of Turkmen expatriates in Turkey, who have maintained a resilient politicized attachment to their hometown, Kirkuk, the oil-rich ancient city of northern Iraq.

I conceptualize ethno-nationalism as a melancholic process, marked by the subject's refusal to abandon its (lost) object of desire, which is, in this case, home (the city of Kirkuk) as well as ethnic identity (Turkness). I understand the melancholic tendencies of the ethnicized subject in terms of one's resistance against normalizing discourses (in the case of Iraq, Arabization and Kurdification). With a retrospective approach, I study the survival strategies that the Turkmen community has developed against the assimilation policies of Iraqi state. I explore the constitutive role of state and inter-communal violence in the formation of Turkmen ethnicity.

I also study the diasporic perspective on contemporary Turkmen politics in Iraq. I argue that the diasporic elite seeks to incorporate ethnic sentiments and (be)longings into a kind of civic nationalism and to justify the Turkmen claims of ethnic particularity based on universal principles of human rights. I maintain that this identity discourse, which foregrounds the civic bonds of the Turkmen to Iraq, has developed mainly in response to a Kurdish ethnocracy emerged in the post-2003 period.

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## INTRODUCTION

Much has been said about the new historical forces under the rubric of ‘global flows’ that challenge the political dominance and cultural supremacy of territorial states.<sup>1</sup> Many have identified ‘globalization’ as a process of economic and political dismantling of national borders,<sup>2</sup> and some have even predicted the end of state nationalism as a principle of political mobilization and of the nation-state itself as a sovereign territorial unit. However, what threatens territorial states across the world is not always supra-national attachments, but also emergent forms of minority and diasporic nationalisms. As social scientists, we should consider these ‘new’ nationalisms as “integral to, and the result of, the production of transnationalism,” rather than as anomalies or “atavistic symptoms of a ‘transition’.”<sup>3</sup>

This dissertation concerns ethnicity-based popular politics in the Middle East with a focus on Iraqi Turkmen, a Turkic-speaking<sup>4</sup> group that was exposed to marginalization and forced displacement by the colonial and post-colonial Iraqi governments over the last century. The locus of my ethnographic research is largely a middle class Sunni

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Appadurai 1996, 2001; Blanc, Basch, and Schiller 1995; Kearney 2000; Rouse 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Featherstone 1990, Robertson 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Shami 1998:618.

<sup>4</sup> The Turkmen language is a Turkic dialect resembling that spoken in Azerbaijan.

community of Turkmen expatriates in Turkey, who have maintained a resilient politicized attachment to their hometown, Kirkuk, the oil-rich ancient city of northern Iraq.<sup>5</sup> I examine the question of politicized ethnicity in a transnational context where nationalism is put into service as a redemptive ideology to heal personal and collective wounds of historical traumas.

I take Iraqi Turkmen to be an example of what Rogers Brubaker (1996) called “double-minority”—that is, a self-defined ethnic group dwelling in one nation-state and yet represented as an extension of a “dominant” ethnos of a neighboring country with strong ties to both nation-states; in this case, Iraq and Turkey. The claims this community makes on each of the two states are different. Of Iraq they claim citizenship and with Turkey they claim cultural affinity; an affinity based on a common imperial past, a common language, and a common mytho-history of ethnic origins. In this work, I am concerned with this particular form of minority experience, which I try to examine in its own historical complexity.

I argue that the collective identity forged by this group is a function of a historical process, which has been shaped by multiple national and international factors. I attempt to conceptualize the formation of their ethnic identity as a ‘processual event’ that takes place at the intersection of multiple discursive regimes in space and time. The discursive regimes I am referring to are (1) the international legal discourse that defines who constitute a majority and who a minority, or who is entitled to self-determination and

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<sup>5</sup> The displaced Turkmen constitute a diaspora scattered all over the world, ranging from Iran to Canada. However, I do not intend to frame the subjective experiences of the Iraqi Turkmen in terms of ‘diasporic subjectivity’ since the present study does not encompass those resettled in other localities. For recent research on diasporic subjectivity with a comparative perspective, see, inter alia, Brodwin 2003.

who is not (Chapter Two), (2) the discourse underwritten by imperial mentality and neocolonialism that define the territorial relationships through international political and economic arrangements, a process which has continued to facilitate the presence of Western capital seeking to exploit the local resources of a region (Chapter One), (3) the discourse of identity politics of the colonial and post-colonial governments in Iraq, marked by Sunni-Arab nationalism (Chapters Two and Four), (4) the discourse of Turkish nationalism and the state discourse in Turkey on the ‘Outside Turks’ and particularly on Iraqi Turkmen (Chapter Three), and (5) the contemporary discourse of Kurdish separatism and expansionism that paved the way for the emergence of Kurdish ethnocracy in northern Iraq after the US-led military intervention of 2003 (Chapter Five). My argument is that the Turkmen ethnic identity emerges as a minority discourse at the conjunction of these five major ideological forces.

At the end of a quite lengthy ethnographic research, I was left with a curious sense of melancholy evident in the way my informants were attached to their ethnic identity. Having conducted all those interviews, attended communal events, listened to *hojrats*, and read poems, I found myself puzzled at this unsettling feeling. How could I understand it without being absorbed in it? That remains the most challenging question, and the major concern of this project, with which I still grapple. This sense of melancholy was so overpowering that it has shaped the way I conceptualize ethno-nationalism as a socio-cultural phenomenon. That is how I came to consider it in terms of a melancholic process, marked by the subject’s refusal to abandon its (lost) object of desire, which is, in this case, home (the city of Kirkuk) as well as ethnic identity (Turkness). I argue that loss

(actual, threatened, or ‘fantasized’) is immanent in the self-construction of the Turkmen identity, and this loss thus serves as a dominant focus of inquiry and analysis throughout my dissertation. As a historical experience, loss appears many times in various guises – the detachment of Kirkuk from the Turkish territories in 1926, the suspension of citizenship rights, ethnic marginalization, expropriation in modern Iraq, the leaving of a home, and the loss of a loved one.

*Melancholia*, as Freud understands it, is a sign of psychopathology, indicating a state in which the one who has suffered the loss is unable to mourn it and letting it go. In my own understanding of this state, by contrast, it emerges as an affect that facilitates self-making and the affirmation of agency. Thus, I focus on the self-constitutive aspect of melancholy, its creative and imaginative capacities as well as its political and moral potentials (Chapter Three).

In terms of displacement, while the loss of homeland is usually considered as a major threat to the sense of being and belonging, that very same loss could ironically become the very condition of possibility for a particular ‘feeling of community’. The Iraqi Turkmen, I contend, persists as a transnational community with a shared ethos and moral solidarity, only insofar as they cannot overcome the loss (actual or threatened), and thereby retain the ‘Ideal of Kirkuk’. For the Turkmen, this represents a desire to restore Kirkuk of the Turkish (Ottoman) times, when the district was a “stronghold of Turkish officialdom”<sup>6</sup> and the Turkmen, as the largest group in town, was actively involved in provincial government.

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<sup>6</sup> For British accounts of Kirkuk at the turn of the twentieth century, see Edmonds 1957, Hay 1921, Longrigg [1925] 2002, Soane 1926, Wilson 1931.



Serving as Foucault's normalizing discourse,<sup>7</sup> the Ideal of Kirkuk constitutes the communal conscience of the Turkmen nationalists, by establishing unwritten rules and implicit codes through which to regulate intra-communal relations, which are thereby animated through a sense of collective being and be-longing. In short, this ideal *seeks to* organize the marginalized group in terms of a moral community committed to national Cause, or to establish a nationalist subject by way of "providing the very conditions of its moral agency and the trajectory of its *desire*."<sup>8</sup>

Let me elaborate on the term 'community', a tricky concept to deal with, especially in a case where nationalism is largely contingent on transnational connections. I tend to disengage community from place, and deploy it in the sense of 'intersubjective space'<sup>9</sup> rather than 'emplaced sociality'. But, there is more to it. When my informants referred to 'national cause' (*millî dava*), they would actually attach variable meanings to it and not necessarily suggest a single kind of identity politics. As this implies, when I use the term 'community', I do not refer to an internally homogenous group with a common will. On the contrary, there is a range of understandings of what the Turkmen politics should be, and differences often lead to serious disputes among the Turkmen.

Then, what makes Iraqi Turkmen a 'community', or in what sense do they constitute a 'community'? For a possible answer, I will refer to the critical theorization of

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<sup>7</sup> See Butler 1997; Foucault 1987, 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Butler 1997:2, emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Anderson 1983, Appadurai 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1997.

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities*,<sup>10</sup> which treats 'community' as a symbolically constituted form of identification and thereby calls for a shift of focus from the 'imagining' process toward the production of 'imaginaries' in the Lacanian sense.<sup>11</sup> The latter process involves the social construction of horizons of meaning, or orders of truth, through which a community constitute an image of its own unity in contradistinction to an outside.<sup>12</sup>

In an edited volume on the politics of difference, Aletta J. Norval (1996) criticizes Anthony Smith (1986, 1991), who suggests that every nation is premised on an ethnic legacy that constitutes its pre-modern essence,<sup>13</sup> by addressing the objectivist fallacy in this argument that obscures the symbolic character of 'nation' as it reifies and primordializes 'ethnicity'. Norval also warns us against vulgar subjectivism that would reduce 'imagining' into the question of how actors interpret their belonging to a community. In order to escape the objective/subjective dualism, one needs a profound analysis of social construction of communities, be they national, racial, or ethnic. Such approach entails re-conceptualizing "imagined community" in terms of "political imaginary," a term that is based on the notions of "political frontier" or "antagonism" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) and can be enriched with recourse to the idea of constitutive outside (Derrida). In this way, one would be able to address a significant issue that has

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<sup>10</sup> See Bowman 1994, 2003; Norval 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Žižek 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Norval *ibid.*:63.

<sup>13</sup> For an opposing view that suggests nation and nationalism are modern phenomena, see Anderson 1983, Bauman 1989, and Hobsbawm 1990.

not been adequately theorized in discussions on ethnic nationalism: How do the communities forge their identity in relation to other communities?<sup>14</sup> As Norval (1996:64) writes,

It is not sufficient simply to point to “boundaries beyond other nations” lie. For what is at stake here is precisely the problem of identity, the constitution of the self which takes place only by reference to an other, from which the self can be distinguished, which thus acts as the condition of possibility for the construction of any community. Too often the latter is ignored by a focus which stresses the centrality of positive characteristics of a particular community. [...] Any analysis which attempts to address the problem of identity at this level must enter into essentialist forms of argumentation, and will fail to offer an account of why these elements, and no others, act as constitutive characteristics.

Heavily inspired by this critical perspective, I intend to study the Turkmen ethnic identity in terms of a political imaginary constituted through externalizing two main Iraqi communities symbolically constructed as the ultimate others, which are the Arabs and Kurds. As Norval notes, the ‘political’ here should not be confused with ‘politics’ – the latter refers to events that take place in their own facticity while the former indicates the horizon of meanings which structures our experiences and determines our modes of identification.

## **Historical background**

At the turn of the last century, the population of the Kirkuk district was composed of various ethnic and religious groups, including Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, Armenians, and Jews. Of these groups, the Turkmen and the Kurds formed numerical majorities in the town and the rural areas, respectively. Historians such

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<sup>14</sup> Norval *ibid.*64.

as Hanna Batatu argue that there seemed to be a correlation between ethnic identities and class positions in the city of Kirkuk. In general, the Turkmen belonged to the land-owning and bureaucratic elite, and the mercantile classes. With the breakdown of the political supremacy of the Ottoman Turks in the aftermath of the First World War, however, Turkmen's social dominance gradually weakened. As for the Kurds, in Kirkuk they formed the poorer segment of the town's population, whereas in rural areas, there were Kurdish aghas and landless peasants working in fields owned by either Kurdish, or Turkmen and Arab landlords.

There are multiple historical forces underlying the emergence of a nationalist tradition among the Turkmen in Iraq. Before all, there is a watershed moment, which included the foundation of a mandate state upon the ruins of the Ottoman Empire (1921) and the annexation of the ex-Ottoman province of Mosul to Iraq (1926) as a result of an extended international arbitration process. This was a turning point for the Turkmen, when this privileged community under the Ottomans was abruptly subjected to forced incorporation into a new nation-state.

When the mandate for Iraq was awarded to Great Britain in 1920, the political status of the Mosul province, including the districts of Sulaimaniya, Mosul, and Kirkuk, were left open for negotiations between the Turkish and British governments at the Lausanne Conference. The Turkish nationalist government was willing to relinquish territorial sovereignty over the lands where Arabs were predominant, but insisted on restoring the Mosul province to Turkey based on the argument that a Turkish majority inhabited the region. In the Turkish thesis, the Mosul region was described as an integral

part of Anatolia, with strong commercial and cultural ties to the latter. It was also argued that the Turkish dialect spoken by the inhabitants of Mosul was the same as the one used in Anatolia, thereby making language into a significant sign of Turkish presence in northern Iraq. In so arguing, they created an ill-defined social category into which Turks and Kurds were lumped together based on a strikingly speculative grand narrative of entangled racial roots (“Turanian” roots as they were called), and religion was employed as the primary marker of the alleged identity between the local Turks and Kurds.

During the negotiations at Lausanne, the ethnic origin and linguistic identity of Mosul Turks eventually became a contested issue. To counter the Turkish thesis, the British introduced one of their own making. This exercise throws into clearest relief what I would like to call a genealogy of naming. According to the British argument, the local Turks who called themselves “Turkmen,” were not Ottoman Turks at all. For the dialect they spoke resembled Azerbaijani rather than the Istanbul dialect, and they were the descendants of the Oghuz Turks who came from Central Asia to Iraq long before the sultan Osman founded the Ottoman Empire. To be sure, the local Turkic-speaking community shifted back and forth between calling themselves Turks and Turkmen. The name, “Turkmen,” was used by them whenever it was necessary to emphasize domicile or to distinguish themselves from their immediate neighbors, namely the Kurds and the Arabs. The British mandate government and subsequent post-colonial governments would, however, would use the name “Turkmen” as an index of an essential and distinctive feature of these “Iraqi” Turks that distinguishes them from Anatolian Turks in

general. However, they held in reserve the other connotations of the name to mark all Iraqi Turkmen as the residue of the Ottoman Empire and as potential Turkish spies. Interestingly enough, the British argument that traced the ethnic origins of the Turkmen to the Central Asia was in line with the Turkish thesis, except that, according to the latter, the Oghuz tribe was the common ancestor of Anatolian and Iraqi Turks. The same historical argument that the Turkish government made in tracing the lineage of the Mosul Turks back to Central Asia and in pointing to their nativity in Iraq is also employed today by the Turkmen nationalists as they seek to justify their claims of difference from other local communities and claims of cultural affinity to the Turkish Turks.

At the Lausanne Conference, the two disputing states, unable to reach a resolution, agreed to submit the subject to the arbitration of the League of Nations Council. The Council in turn sent a commission of inquiry to the region. Based on the commission's report that claimed to reflect the popular will, the Council finally decided to award the Mosul province to Iraq ruled under the British mandate, and Turkey agreed on the terms of the resulting treaty in return for a ten percent share of Iraqi royalties, which she would receive over the following twenty-five years.

The British mandate administrators arrived in Iraq with the Western prejudices of the nineteenth century about Islamic civilization, of which the Ottoman Empire was a part. They tended to describe the Empire in terms of 'Oriental Despotism' – a system prone to collapse, as it was "unchanging and unable to escape the constraints of its

inherent superstition, violence, and corruption.”<sup>15</sup> The Iraqi society was perceived as fundamentally divided into urban and rural domains. The cities were imagined as the centers of the depraved *effendis*,<sup>16</sup> whereas the illiterate rural population, it was thought, represented the authentic Iraqi identity, untouched by the imperial degeneracy and unspoiled by modernity, with all its ploys and tactics of power.

An important reason for the aversion to the effendis is that they played a part in local insurgencies, by collaborating with the anti-imperialist Shii clergy and Sadah (descendents of the Prophet) in mobilizing the Iraqi masses against the British occupation. At the turn of the twentieth century, there was a large-scale political mobilization in the Mosul province at the grassroots level with a major actor being the *Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti*, or the Society for Defense of Rights. According to the Turkish official history, this network was established with the purpose of protecting “the rights of the Muslim Turkish population in areas where there was a perceived danger of occupation” by European forces.<sup>17</sup> Kemalist (Turkish nationalist) groups from various

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<sup>15</sup> Dodge 2003:43.

<sup>16</sup> The term *efendi* derives from a Greek origin, probably through a Byzantine colloquial vocative form *afendi*, meaning Lord, or Master. The word found its way to the Arab-populated areas in the nineteenth century; and came to designate “secular, literate townsmen, usually dressed in European style, as against the lower classes on the one hand, and the men of religion on the other.” (Lewis 2009) While it was predominantly used to indicate the bureaucratic elite in the imperial center, and associated with modern Western life style, the title turned into a generic term to include Westernized landed town-dwelling notables and merchants who had established trade connections with Europe. By the twentieth century, the word was being used in Iraq for Westernized land-owners, well-exposed to modern education and urban life style, who could be a member of an old wealthy family, or a bureaucrat-mallak, or a nouveau riche merchant-mallak. As Michael Eppel remarks, “the rapid expansion of modern education and Western dress codes in the 1920’s and 1930’s makes it difficult to define who was included in the concept of *effendi*.” (Eppel 1998:230) The term was increasingly associated with ‘new middle class’ in the entire Middle East and North Africa. See Ayubi 1980, Halpern 1963; cited in Eppel *ibid*. For Sunni-Arab Effendiyya and their role in the nationalist Arab movement in colonial and post-colonial Iraq, see Davis 2005, Eppel *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Canefe 2002:144.

parts of the empire participated in this network, including the Turkmen efendis and notables from Kirkuk and its surroundings.<sup>18</sup> The emergent Turkmen historiography similarly refers to a ‘Turkish Society’ (*Türk Cemiyeti*) with members from Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Mosul, among which one could also find anti-imperialist Kurds and Arabs.<sup>19</sup> As narrated, the Turkish Society had a leading part in boycotting the coronation of Amir Faisal in 1921.

The son of Sharif Hussein, Faisal, having failed in Syria, is appointed by the British Colonial Ministry. The High Commissioner Percy Cox arranges a referendum in order to legitimate the decision. The peoples of Kirkuk, Mosul, Arbil, and Sulaimaniyah veto the appointment. The Kerkukis destroy the election boxes to say that it is unthinkable to have Faisal as a king over the Turkish lands. Mehmed Sadik, a young Turkish poet, reads a poem before the crowd that opens with: ‘*İntihab etmem seni Faysal Irak’ın mülküne.*’ [I do not elect you, Faisal, for the sovereignty of Iraq.]<sup>20</sup>

Once they established the civil government, the British administrators had to reconcile with the local powers, tribal shaikhs and landed notables in particular, in order to maintain social order and achieve popular consent. As it turned out, it was the Sunni-Arabs, who predominated in the parliament and held the key positions in the government at the expense of other social groups who were marked in ethno-linguistic and sectarian terms.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the antagonism of the Turkmen against the Iraqi state has a history that goes back to the period of the British mandate. Reading the history of this antagonism, which

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<sup>18</sup> For the British documents about the Kemalist propaganda activities in Iraq during the early twenties, see CO 730 and FO 371.

<sup>19</sup> Nakip 2007, Saatci 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Nakip *ibid.*:51.

<sup>21</sup> See Batatu 1978.



turns out to be the reading of a people's history of Iraq as history from below, is the most challenging task of this project. With a limited and indirect access to Arabic texts, I resorted to a range of sources from scholarly literature on Iraqi history in British and Turkish archives (official records and personal memoirs), the oral accounts of the Turkmen, and a small number of works published by a few 'local historians'. The latter consisted of Turkmen academics and intellectuals who have undertaken the writing of the history of the Iraqi Turkmen as a political project. Under the light of these sources, my project of re-reading Iraqi history seeks to capture those particular moments that were mostly ignored, or silenced, by hegemonic historiography.

If we refer exclusively to the process of minoritization and marginalization in post-imperial Iraq, we would have only a partial account of the historical conditions of Turkmen nationalism. The overwhelmingly antagonistic experience this marginalized people had under a succession of oppressive Iraqi governments has to be considered in tandem with the history of inter-communal violence in Iraq. Thus, the related argument in this dissertation is that the experience of antagonism is the decisive element in all processes of identity formation.<sup>22</sup> The authoritarian government is not the only 'antagonist' in this particular history. As discussed in Chapter Five, the identity politics of the Turkmen is largely contingent on their precarious relations with the 'ethnic' Other, the Kurds, rather than the Arabs.

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<sup>22</sup> Laclau and Mouffe 1985.

## **Ethnographic context**

Closely related as it is to social reproduction and change, the issue of identity formation is better understood when viewed from a historical perspective. I therefore designed my project so as to encompass the last eighty-odd years, a period beginning with the foundation of a mandate state in the ex-Ottoman territories of Iraq. I have sought to integrate a historical perspective into my project by paying close attention to secondary resources on the political and economic history of the area and by conducting archival research at multiple sites, including the National Archives in London.

The archival research has complemented more than two years of fieldwork, which was conducted at multiple sites in Turkey, mainly in Istanbul and Ankara, the two big cities where the Turkmen population is concentrated. I carried out most of the research in 2006 and 2007. However, I maintain my ties with my informants by attending various events coordinated by migrant organizations as well as through occasional phone calls and e-mails. I have culled my data from diverse sources: participant observation, semi-structured and open-ended interviews, life stories (published and unpublished), historical accounts (1950 – present), folk poetry, community publications (books, periodicals, and newspapers), organizational websites, internet fora/ blogs, electronic correspondences, and local television (Turkmeneli TV). Most cheerful moments of my fieldwork were those lazy afternoons I spent with Turkmen women and their children at home gatherings. I favored sitting on the couch and just listening, most of the time without interrupting them with any questions, sipping my dark sweet Arabic tea after a hearty meal, which, with no exception, included a tray of stuffed green bell peppers à la Kirkuk. I felt quite

lucky to have friends eager to talk, more than anything else, about the place they left behind. The women, in particular, were generous in sharing with me their memories of the Saddam regime, their childhood memories, or their memories of displacement. Thus, I collected a good many of life stories – stories of friendship and hostility, loyalty and betrayal.

### ***The migrants***

In the absence of official data, the size of the Iraqi Turkmen population in Turkey has become a controversial issue, especially since December 2005, when the first parliamentary election was held in Iraq following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime with the U.S-led military intervention in March 2003.<sup>23</sup> The BBC recorded that only 4,178 Iraqis had registered to vote from Turkey and the Iraqi Turkmen Front (*Irak Türkmen Cephesi*, hereafter the ITF) had gained 3,500 of these votes.<sup>24</sup> The mainstream Turkish media interpreted the number of the registered voters as extremely small given that the recent guesstimate of the Iraqi Turkmen population in Turkey was around 40,000.<sup>25</sup> In spite of the low level of registration among the Turkmen immigrants, the Turkmen parties unexpectedly received 21,000 of the 23,000 votes from Turkey. This raised serious objections, especially from the Iraqi Kurds, who claimed that the voting

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<sup>23</sup> The following information is partly based on a research project recently conducted by Didem Danis on the migratory patterns and integration models of the Iraqis, with a focus on the migrants who were resettled in Istanbul. See Danis et al. 2006:42-43.

<sup>24</sup> BBC, 28 January 2005. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4215393.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4215393.stm); cited in Ibid. Based on the BBC report, more than 280,000 Iraqi expatriates registered for out-of-country voting in fourteen countries, ranging from Iran to the United States. The total number of votes won by the Turkmen Front is 87,993 (0.7%).

<sup>25</sup> Danis *ibid.*:43.

was fraudulent. The Turkish radical nationalists affiliated with the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*; hereafter NAP) and the Idealist Hearths (*ülkü ocakları*) were accused of ‘sneaking into’ the election buildings. The Turkish representatives responded to the accusations by explaining that the unexpectedly high number of votes was because of the participation of illegal immigrants in the elections. In the Turkish press, some interpreted the election results in Turkey as a response to the recent social engineering efforts of the Kurds in Kirkuk.<sup>26</sup> The community leaders, in turn, explained the low level of registration as a protest against a Kurdish-biased US-led election, and for some, the guesstimate of 40,000 that was circulated in the press was “just an invention.” The head of the Iraqi Turks Society For Culture and Solidarity (ITSCS) at the time, Mr. Kemal Beyatli, estimated the Turkmen population as 7,000 to 10,000 in Turkey and as 5,000 to 7,000 in Istanbul. These figures, however, surprisingly contrast with the guesstimates provided in a report published in 2005 by the Global Strategy Institute at Ankara (renamed in 2009 as the Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies):

When it is assumed total Turkmen in Iraq is about 3 million that means, in the light of this survey, about 10% of them live abroad and about 40% of this should be in Turkey.

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<sup>26</sup> With the fall of the Baath regime in 2003, the reversal of forced displacement policies (the Arabization and Anfal campaigns) led to the return of thousands of Kurdish and Turkmen families to the Kirkuk Governorate, especially to Kirkuk City. According to a monitoring report issued by IOM (2005), “throughout the months of August to November 2004 the return of movement of Kurds notably increased. This [was] reportedly due to the beginning of the school year in September, elections in January 2005 and for many the reported National Census [which was postponed].”

So that makes about 120,000 Turkmen immigrants in Turkey and around 300,000 all around the world.<sup>27</sup>

The unavailability of official data indicates that a large number of the Iraqis in Turkey are irregular migrants, as recent studies have shown.<sup>28</sup> This means that they either arrive without valid documents, or they migrate legally but overstay their visas. This, however, is not the only pattern available to the Iraqi immigrants in Turkey.<sup>29</sup> Some of the Turkmen immigrants stay for a while with resident/ work/ study permits and eventually acquire Turkish citizenship. This explains the particular situation of the Turkmen who came to Turkey, mainly for education, from the fifties through the late eighties. It is usually claimed that this group constitutes thirty to forty percent of the Turkmen population in Turkey, while the larger part of the immigrants arrived around the Gulf War of 1991.<sup>30</sup>

The diplomatic relations between Turkey and Iraq during the first half of the twentieth century was marked by certain arrangements that would facilitate the back-and-forth movement of Iraqis between the two countries. From the perspective of the Turkish state, the reason behind these arrangements was the urge to protect and improve the

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<sup>27</sup> Sirkeci 2005:86-87. This report is based on a research conducted by Ibrahim Sirkeci about the migratory patterns of the Turkmen community in Iraq. Further information about the Global Strategy Institute at Ankara will be provided in the following pages.

<sup>28</sup> Icduygu 2003, 2005, Mannaert 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Danis *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> This account finds corroboration in Sirkeci *ibid.* It is hard to be certain about the population of the naturalized Turkmen in Turkey, since there are no publicly available official data on the naturalization cases. See Danis *ibid.*:26.

cultural rights of the Turkish minority in Iraq.<sup>31</sup> Initially, the 1926 Treaty of the Turkish-Iraqi border was signed soon after the annexation of the ex-Ottoman province of Mosul to Iraq, where the Turkmen-speaking population was concentrated. With this treaty, the two countries agreed on the clauses of the Iraqi Nationality Law of 1924 that granted the Turkmen the right to opt for Turkish citizenship.<sup>32</sup>

This arrangement reflected in part the immigration and settlement policy of the Turkish state that was shaped during the early decades of the republic, and this policy itself was the product of a massive social engineering project aimed at nationalizing, i.e. homogenizing, the population. The 1934 Law of Settlement,<sup>33</sup> which constituted the legal basis of the project, is still an authoritative document in governing immigration to Turkey.<sup>34</sup> With this law, its drafters “hoped that ‘the Turkish state would no longer have to suspect the Turkishness of any Turk (Turkish citizen)’”. The actual form that the ideal citizen have to take was evident in an article that put individuals of Turkish ethnicity and

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<sup>31</sup> Simsir 2004.

<sup>32</sup> For the Iraqi Nationality Law of 1924, see Chapter Three.

<sup>33</sup> The law divided Anatolia into three zones representing three groups: those of Turkish culture who spoke Turkish, those who did not speak Turkish but were considered to be of Turkish culture, (e.g. immigrants from Caucasus and the Balkans), and those who neither spoke Turkish nor belonged to the Turkish culture (primarily eastern and southeastern Anatolia largely populated by Kurds, Arabs, and non-Muslim minorities). The first region was open to domestic and international immigration since it was already dominated by a ‘Turkish’ population, whereas the Turkish culture of the second region was to be improved by resettlement policies. On the other hand, the third region, where the most violent Kurdish uprisings took place since the establishment of Turkish republic, was closed to any form of civilian settlement for security reasons. While the settlement of non-Turkish immigrants would be regularly monitored by the state, those of Turkish ethnicity were allowed to settle where they wished, except the region closed to settlement. See Kirisci 2000.

<sup>34</sup> The Settlement Law was revised in 2006, but the article related to the entry of immigrants of ‘Turkish origin’ still remains in effect. See Danis and Parla 2008, Kirisci *ibid*.

language in a privileged status.”<sup>35</sup> By virtue of this article, the immigrants ‘of Turkish race or culture who speak no languages other than Turkish were directly eligible for citizenship without any further inspection’.<sup>36</sup>

The 1926 Treaty was followed by two other international arrangements; one was the Residence Contract of 1932 that enabled the Iraqi and Turkish citizens to live, to work and to own properties in the other country, and the other is the Educational and Cultural Cooperation Protocol of 1946 through which Iraqi students gained access to university education in Turkey. Apparently, by virtue of these two legal acts, many Iraqis, particularly the Turkmen, were able to enjoy the right to settle, work, and study in Turkey without losing their Iraqi nationality.

The Iraqi Turkmen came to Turkey in three phases. The first group moved to Turkey soon after the foundation of the Iraqi state by obtaining Turkish nationality. This was the time when the Iraqi Turkmen found themselves in a dilemma between staying at home in Iraq and living in a Turkish territory, a process that led to the separation of many families.

The second group is the ‘educational migrants’<sup>37</sup> who benefited from the diplomatic arrangements (mentioned above) that facilitated the residence of the Iraqis in

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<sup>35</sup> Kirisci *ibid.*:5.

<sup>36</sup> See Cagaptay 2002. During the founding years of the Turkish Republic, as some argue, the religious background (Sunni-Hanefi Muslim identity) might have prevailed over ethnicity in determining whom to include in, or to exclude from, the national ‘body’. Yet, when viewed from a wider historical perspective, the Muslim background and ethnicity emerge as the two major symbolic elements that complement each other at least in defining who is ‘non-Turkish’ (e.g. Muslim Kurds and Turkish speaking Armenians). On this argument, see Danis and Parla *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Danis *ibid.*

Turkey. Mostly from upper- and upper-middle-class background, they came to Turkey from the fifties onwards to obtain professional degrees in areas such as medicine, law, and engineering. A significant part of these migrants, all now Turkish citizens who actually do not consider themselves ‘migrants’,<sup>38</sup> stayed for various reasons in Turkey. Many started families in one of the big cities, having got married to a Turkish Turk. Some returned to their country after graduating, but subsequently came back for various reasons, but mostly political ones. On the other hand, some others have become “circular migrants” moving back-and-forth mainly for business activities.<sup>39</sup> What they all had in common was the strong social ties they retained to their place of origin – ties that were reinforced through familial relations, proprietorship in Iraq, and business networks.

The third group of immigrants fled Iraq from the late eighties to 2003. The major reason for their leaving home was the violent ethnic cleansing campaign of the Baath regime, the notorious ‘Arabization Program’, through which ethnic minorities were systematically displaced, stripped of their properties and exterminated.<sup>40</sup> Until 2002, the campaign continued unabated, with thousands of people being forced to leave the country. Human Rights Watch reported that the Iraqi government displaced approximately 120,000 persons (mainly Kurds but also Turkmen, Assyro-Chaldeans, and

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> One of the most tragic moments for the Kurdish minority was the genocidal *Anfal* (‘Spoils’, 1986-1988), Saddam Hussein’s military campaign of exterminating the rural Kurds in northern Iraq. As Bruinessen notes, “at least fifty thousand and perhaps several times that number were killed” during Anfal. See Bruinessen 2005.



Shii Arabs) from Kirkuk and other cities in the northern region between 1991 and 2000.<sup>41</sup> Earlier studies have shown that political (state persecution, conscription, and the Gulf War) and economic (confiscation and poverty largely caused by the twelve-year embargo by the U.N) motivations for migration went hand in hand in the post-1991 era. One of the remarkable events of ethnic cleansing that led many Turkmen to flee Iraq was the incident of Altinkopru on 28 March 1991 (the ‘Altinkopru Massacre’). Several weeks after the event hundred-odd bodies were discovered in mass graves. These people, including families with children, were killed while they were trying to escape the towns of Altinkopru, Taza, and Kirkuk. Many of the survivors were arrested or internally displaced.<sup>42</sup>

In his recent research on the migratory patterns of the Iraqi Turkmen, Ibrahim Sirkeci argues that more than eighty percent of out-migration from the city of Kirkuk and the nearby towns took place after 1990. In another study it is claimed that, between the late eighties and early 1991 there were almost 8,000 Iraqi asylum seekers who were mainly Arabs, Chaldeans, and Turkmen. “Among these 8,000,” it is argued, “almost half found their way to the West and resettled there, while [the] other half stayed in Turkey with residence permits.”<sup>43</sup> Turkmen, in particular, found it easier to start a new life in Turkey with the support of their relatives who were already there. The Turkish media reported at the time that the government extended preferential treatment to Turkmen

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<sup>41</sup> HRW 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Hirmizi 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Icduygu 2000.

refugees from Kirkuk and Mosul by locating them in a special camp in South Eastern Anatolia, while settling Kurdish refugees at the Turkish-Iraqi border.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Turkmen who arrived with ‘the first wave’ of 1991 were able to enjoy a bit of ‘official hospitality’ as Turkey generously issued visas and residence permits, and even supported some of them in finding employment.

But, in a few years, the conditions in Turkey sharply deteriorated for all non-European (“non-Convention”) refugees, including the Turkmen.<sup>45</sup> With the arrival of ‘half a million’ Iraqi Kurds in 1991, Turkey, with a sizeable Kurdish minority within its own territories, treated the issue in terms of ‘national security’ rather than human rights, which ushered in a more restrictive immigration policy. Given their public identity (the ‘ethnic Turk’ tag), the Iraqi Turkmen who arrived in the late nineties found themselves in a highly ambiguous situation. While they came to Turkey with “high expectations,” only some of them were able to obtain long-term residence permits, let alone Turkish citizenship. On the other hand, their Turkish identity did serve as a kind of symbolic capital, which facilitated not only their socio-economic integration in the place of resettlement but also their everyday negotiations with the Turkish state. During my fieldwork, I heard several anecdotes particularly about the migrants’ encounters with the Turkish police. Even though many of these migrants, particularly a population of young

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<sup>44</sup> S. Coskun, “Turkiye Gocmen Cenneti,” *Gunes*, 21 April 1991, cited in Kirisci *ibid.* On Kurdish migration, see Icduygu *ibid.*, Kirisci 1996.

<sup>45</sup> Under the 1952 Geneva Convention, Turkey was obliged to recognize and protect asylum-seekers and refugees only from Europe. In effect this implied that she would grant refuge only to people fleeing persecution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, while the rest were referred to as ‘non-Convention’ refugees. It was because of this geographical limitation those who fled Iraq were considered as ‘temporary guests’, or ‘illegal migrants’, rather than asylum seekers. As a consequence, Turkey acted as a transit, rather than a host, country for those coming from the Middle East. See Icduygu *ibid.*, Kirisci *ibid.*

men who lived on tiny salaries with neither health insurance nor residence permits, they are rarely deported because the police usually ‘turn a blind eye to their illegal status’. However, this offers only a partial view of what really has taken place since the mid-1990s.

In a recent study, Danis and Parla point to the irregular migrant status of the ‘newcomers’.<sup>46</sup> With the recent drastic change in Turkey’s immigration policy, as they argue, the newcomers have found themselves in a highly uncertain legal situation, and particularly those who arrived after 2003 are forced to live under precarious conditions (poor housing, temporary jobs etc.). A population of single males between the ages of 19-35 make up a significant part of this group. In Istanbul, they are usually employed in wholesale textile or import/export companies located in the old districts such as Osmanbey and Laleli, and most of them live in the old quarters nearby, around Osmanbey (e.g. Kurtulus, Ferikoy), in rental apartments they share with other Iraqi singles.<sup>47</sup> The rest of the newcomers are low-income and middle-class families resettled in various districts of Istanbul and Ankara. Some of the low-income families, among whom I did my fieldwork, live in Aksaray, another old district in Istanbul where the Iraqi Turks Society for Culture and Solidarity, or *Irak Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği*, (hereafter, the ITSCS) is located.

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<sup>46</sup> Danis and Parla *ibid*.

<sup>47</sup> As Danis (2006:53) notes, “ethnic business targeting Arab customers provided an important employment niche for the Iraqi Turkmen who migrated in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Unlike the ones who came for educational reasons in the 1960’s, Turkmen who arrived in the later decades, took advantage of the flourishing informal sector, in particular of the commercial centers in Laleli and Osmanbey.”

### *The migrant organizations*

I came to know most of my informants through migrant organizations in Turkey, particularly the ITSCS and the Kirkuk Foundation (*Kerkük Vakfı*).<sup>48</sup> The ITSCS was established in 1959 by a group of Turkmen professionals among the ‘educational migrants’ as a kind of diasporic political organization underscoring the ‘National Cause’ rather than a migrant association that serves to facilitate the social integration of the migrants in the host country.<sup>49</sup> For the founders of the Society, the urgent task was to create a public opinion about the recent events in Iraq, of the Kirkuk incident, in particular (July 14, 1959, see Chapter Five). The Society was founded in the Cold War period, when anti-communism enjoyed a great deal of popularity among Turkish conservative-nationalists. While the Turkish state kept its distance from the ethnic kin beyond its border, avoiding irredentist claims, the Turkmen were in close relations with both secularist and conservative nationalist groups, particularly the Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocakları*). As discussed in Chapter Three, the latter had become the nursery for Turkmen nationalism as early as the fifties. In 1997, the active members of the ITSCS established the Kirkuk Foundation for specializing in publishing. Two years later, the Foundation

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<sup>48</sup> There are mainly two other Turkmen organizations in Istanbul. One of them is Irak Turkmenleri Kardeşlik ve Kultur Derneği (Iraqi Turkmen Society for Brotherhood and Culture), recently founded (2002) by a group of Turkmen businessman in Osmanbey, a society that became an ideal site for the socialization of the young men employed in the companies located in the same district. The other is Turkmeneli İnsan Hakları Derneği (Turkmeneli Society for Human Rights) in Fatih headed by Nefi Demirci, a prominent Turkmen nationalist who came to Istanbul in 1953 to obtain a university degree in medicine. Apart from these organization, there is Turkmeneli İsbirligi ve Kultur Vakfı (Turkmeneli Foundation for Collaboration and Culture), an NGO established in 1996 and headquartered in Ankara, Erbil and Kirkuk.

<sup>49</sup> Danis and Parla *ibid*.

started to issue *Kardaşlık (Brotherhood)*, a quarterly periodical that includes articles on Turkmen politics, cultural life, literature and folklore.

### **A focus on middle class**

This dissertation is a study of middle class people and of what I call ‘cognitive displacement’, by which I refer to a sense of loss, marked by melancholy and nostalgia. A considerable part of the Turkmen expatriates I interviewed in Turkey were the grand or grand-grand children of landed gentry, political elite or civil servants of fairly high rank who served the Ottoman Government in Iraq before the Great War. Many of the interviews imparted a story about the loss of power that was traced back to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of an Arab state in Iraq in its aftermath. I also looked at contemporary memoirs, poetry, and political writings of several Turkmen intellectuals and leading figures, such as Hasim Nahid Erbil and Ersad Hurmuzlu, as primary resources or ethnographic texts, each representing in its own way the public discourse of Turkmen nationalism.

From the Turkmen’s perspective, the nationalization of Iraq entailed forced displacement in social positioning. The issue at stake is power and privilege, in the first place, since this is a case of demotion where an imperial element that was once favored by the state administration becomes a national minority with almost no access to decision-making processes. However, I try to avoid reducing the sense of loss felt by the marginalized Turkmen into an elite syndrome of disempowerment. On the contrary, I argue that this state of feeling is particularly endemic in the long-standing Turkmen middle class.

The young generation is no exception, since parents inculcate a sense of ‘Turkish pride’ and nostalgia for the ‘Turkish’ (the late Ottoman) days. It is apparently *affects rather than ideas* that are transmitted to following generations. The reason why I use here the word ‘affect’, but not ‘emotion’, is that the former is a wider concept to designate emotions and desires, acting upon the action of the subject. Whether you call it affect, emotion, or the structures of feeling, I am referring here to a discursive field and discursive practices. In this research, I try to understand how an arbitrary event or experience acquires social significance through the very discursive, or semiotic, processes. I explore, for example, how the territorial rearrangement and nationalization of Iraq is represented in Turkmen narratives as a painful event (Chapter Three). What turns melancholic grief, otherwise an individual experience, into a collective phenomenon is this semiotic, or communicational, process taking place in a shared discursive field that can be described as ‘ethno-national culture’.

### **Dissertation plan**

The Turkmen ethnicity has been shaped within a particular historical complexity marked by five major discursive forces I have itemized earlier in this introduction. The first two chapters of my thesis will expand on the first two items on the list. In Chapter One, I begin with the question of land in the contexts of the late Ottoman and colonial Iraq, by examining the ways in which the shifting economic and political significance of land informed the relationships between various historical actors in the region. A crucial event that took place in this period is the emergence of mineral oil, otherwise an ancient asset, as a new economic value in the regional market, which entailed the irreversible

penetration of foreign capital into the country. In the latter part of the first chapter, I discuss how the oil-rich areas of Iraq, the Mosul province in particular, turned into highly contested lands of global significance. I, furthermore, argue that the neocolonial mentality of the Great Powers driven by economic concerns –specifically, their plans for oil exploitation in the Middle East– played an important part in the political and territorial rearrangement of Iraq as a nation-state under the British mandate.

In Chapter Two, I turn to this latter process, paying particular attention to the Mosul debate of the early twenties. In 1926, the ex-Ottoman province of Mosul was annexed to Iraq ruled under the British mandate as a result of a prolonged international arbitration process. I explore the political significance of this event within a historical context when the international world order was being reshaped under the hegemony of rising American liberalism. In the first section, I explain how the ‘Mosul question’ was claimed to have been resolved in line with the universal principle of ‘self-determination’. Next, I offer a critical discussion on the liberal understanding that came to define the hegemonic meaning of ‘self-determination’. As I conclude the chapter, I briefly examine the major implications of the international legal discourse on self-determination and the protection of minorities for the marginalized communities of modern Iraq.

One of the main tasks of this project is to understand how the Turkmen relate themselves to history. The underlying argument here is that historical consciousness is constitutive of how people perceive and perform their selfhood. Thus, I inquire into a particular mode of historical consciousness, which would explain how the Turkmen articulate their knowledge of the past, including immemorial and recent histories. As a

matter of fact, I am not only concerned with their epistemic ways of (re)producing past, but also curious about the *affective* ways in which the Turkmen vent their history.<sup>50</sup> In Chapter Three, I narrow my focus to the founding years of modern Iraq in order to demonstrate how the Turkmen represent their experience of this particular period.

In Chapter Four, I address how the process of minoritization took place in the cultural domain, language in particular, and discuss the survival strategies that the Turkmen community has developed against the assimilation policies of Iraqi state. Furthermore, I refer to a peculiar aspect of language, which is its high capacity to sustain a sense of historical and cultural continuity that could challenge the civic premises of a territorial state. I argue that the case of the Turkmen dialect spoken in Iraq is exemplary of linguistic marginalization in two senses. First, with the foundation of the Iraqi state, Arabic replaced the Ottoman Turkish as the official language and the Turkmen dialect was relegated to a minority language with highly limited access to formal education, print media and broadcasting. On the other hand, as a spoken Turkic dialect, it was already in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the ‘Istanbul Turkish’, which assumed a new politico-cultural eminence with the rise of Turkish nationalism. Therefore, the local efforts of the Turkmen to revitalize Turkish in Iraq were not only significant in terms of the identity politics of a minority group, they also indicated an attempt to recover the lost contact with other Turkic-speaking peoples beyond the Iraqi borders.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Hermann 2005.



In Chapter Five, I discuss how the Turkmen have recognized a collective self and developed a sense of communal solidarity against a Kurdish other. This entails a historical reading of an antagonism that becomes more obvious at certain moments in time. I focus here on a particular occurrence, the Kirkuk events of July 1959, which can be considered as a milestone for Turkmen nationalism that has largely determined the course of the contemporary identity politics of the community. I also argue that the contemporary Turkmen nationalism seeks to incorporate ethnic sentiments and (be)longings into a kind of civic nationalism and to justify the Turkmen claims of ethnic particularity based on universal principles of human rights. I maintain that this identity discourse which foregrounds the civic bonds of the Turkmen to Iraq has developed mainly in response to a Kurdish ethnocracy emerged in the post-2003 period.

## **CHAPTER I : LAND, OIL, AND COLONIAL MODERNITY IN NORTHERN IRAQ**

As the Iraqi lands were handed down from one imperial power to another at the turn of the twentieth century, a significant change occurred in the economic value of naphtha, the most precious resource these lands offered to the world market. Naphtha had been exploited in Mesopotamia since ancient times, but only through primitive methods, and the deposits had not been satisfactorily explored until the late nineteenth century. The Ottoman mining law, the western experts reported, was “ill-drafted and largely inapplicable, its execution uncertain.”<sup>51</sup> No serious petroleum enterprise existed, except for humble local activity in the seepage villages.

As S. H. Longrigg (1968) notes, the need for oil products in Iraq became remarkable in the late 1800's with the rising living standards of the upper class. At the same time, Western states, increasingly interested in the possibility of exploiting Middle Eastern oil commercially, began dispatching their experts to the region for scientific assessment. The latter in turn reported that the greatest possibilities for Ottoman oil laid in the Arab provinces of Mosul and Baghdad<sup>52</sup> and urged the biggest oil companies to establish strong relations with the Ottoman bureaucracy in order to obtain concessions in

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<sup>51</sup> Longrigg 1968.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.:13-14.

Iraq. The following decades were, thus, marked by fierce international struggles over the oil-bearing lands of the country in both economic and political terms.

This chapter focuses on the introduction of mineral oil as a new economic value into the politics of land ownership and the penetration of foreign capital into the regional market with high stakes in the nascent oil business. As I address these developments, I try to explain how the oil-rich areas of Iraq, and Mosul in particular, as the biggest oil-producing region of the country, turned into a highly contested land of global significance. In this context I also mention two cases of property conflict, on the one hand, the Ottoman family claims to the Sultan Abdulhamid's oil assets in Baghdad and Mosul provinces, and on the other hand, the claims of a Turkmen family, the *Neftcis* ('naphtha merchant' in Turkish), to ownership and mining rights in a large area in Kirkuk. Of these two, the latter deserves further consideration for a follow-up study where one could examine closely the colonial history of displacement in Iraqi context.

In the following section, I provide a historical background to the main discussion outlined above. I examine the ways in which the shifting economic and political significance of land informed the relationships between various historical actors in the region. This historical process involved, among other things, the introduction of the Western concept of private property into a pre-capitalist agrarian system. This implied that, first, a new conception of economic activity would emerge, indexed to surplus production rather than to subsistence economy, and second, a serious impending change in the projection and representation of political power.

## The question of land in late Ottoman times

In the mid-nineteenth century, an administrative transformation began in Mosul and the rest of Iraq with the establishment of a *vilayet* (province) system. In 1879, Mosul became a separate *vilayet*, including the *sanjaqs* (*mutasarrafiya*) of Mosul, Kirkuk, and Sulaimaniyyah.<sup>53</sup> These changes took place during the Reform Period (*Tanzimat*), when the Ottoman state was frantically attempting to bring about political centralization and ‘modernization’ in almost all institutions of state and society. The Tanzimat reforms involved systematic changes in administrative and fiscal practices such as, the abolishment of tax- farming (in theory at least), the imposition of direct taxation, and the restoration of central authority in provinces that were otherwise dominated by local elites (*ayan*) and tribal shaikhs. In the economic realm particularly, the process of reorganization led to a new kind of state interventionism that promoted the integration of the empire into the expanding world market, much to the dismay of the agrarian society.

As Feroz Ahmad (1993:28) writes:

Under the modified system there was a sharp increase in commercial activity, especially in the countryside where the peasantry was forced to produce more and more for the market in order to pay taxes and to buy imported necessities. In this period, the economic significance of rural moneylenders, who were mainly non-Muslims, also increased and peasants became more dependent on them, sometimes giving up their land in lieu of debt. This, of course, increased national awareness and exacerbated religious and ethnic tensions with grave consequences in the future. Thus it seems fair to conclude that the Tanzimat state’s decision to acquiesce to free trade brought with it momentous results.

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<sup>53</sup> According to the new administrative system, the empire was now divided into *vilayets* (or *wilayas*), *vilayets* into *mutasarriffiyas* (*sanjaq*, or *liwa*), *mutasarriffiyas* into *qazas*, *qazas* into *nahiyas*. See Figure 1.1.



material-producing region for the European core markets in exchange for manufactured goods.<sup>55</sup> With the Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention of August 1838, the reformers put an end to state protectionism by allowing foreign traders to engage directly in regional market. European companies were swiftly penetrating into the Iraqi provinces while most of the transactions were organized by non-Muslim merchants (particularly Jews) who served as the intermediaries between foreign traders and local agricultural producers.<sup>56</sup> External trade increased at an accelerating rate especially after the advent of steam navigation on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. The growing import of foreign manufactured goods led to a decline in petty commodity production, and the bulk of raw materials were now transported to more profitable markets in Europe.

With the Land Code of 1858, the Ottoman state replaced a tax-farming (*iltizam*) system with direct taxation by salaried officials (*muhassıl*), a law intended for the regularization of fiscal revenues from agricultural production. The Code nullified the previous forms of ownership based on revenue grants, including the pious endowment lands (*waqf*), lands held as a freehold (*temlik*), the revenues from which lands were distributed to military commanders (*timar*), bureaucrats (*ze'amet*), and palace members (*has*), or to tax farmers (*muqataa*).<sup>57</sup> It recognized, instead, the following categories:

1. *Mulk land*: land held in absolute freehold ownership. Landownership comprises two rights: the *raqaba*, or right of absolute ownership, and the *tasarruf*, or right to the usufruct of land. In *mulk* tenure both rights belong to the individual. Waqf lands generally belonged to the *mulk* category.

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<sup>55</sup> For the world-system theory, see Wallerstein 1974. For the application of the theory to the Ottoman Empire, see Wallerstein 1979; Wallerstein, Decdeli, and Kasaba 1987; Islamoglu and Keyder 1987.

<sup>56</sup> Haj 1997.

<sup>57</sup> Islamoglu 2000: 29.

2. *Miri land*: land of which *raqaba* or absolute ownership belongs to the state, but usufruct or *tasarruf* to the individual. It is a form of heritable leasehold ownership in which the state leases land to the individual.
3. *Matruka land*: land reserved for some public purpose, as for example, village threshing floors [usually associated with the Western conception of public property]
4. *Mawat land*: dead or unreclaimed land.<sup>58</sup>

As a legal concept, the *miri* (*emiriye*, or princely) category originated in the Hanafi notion of property that emerged in the late medieval period, according to which “all land was under the guardianship of the sultan who was the representative of God on earth.”<sup>59</sup> It was based upon this principle that taxation of land was justified in *shari’a* terms, and that the sultan, on his part, was obliged to ensure the safety and subsistence of his peasant *reaya* (subjects). Landed property was categorized according to taxes imposed, some being religiously sanctioned and some strictly non-Islamic. Khoury argues that “the different series of provincial state laws (*kanunnameler*) and the administrative guidelines attached to them (*dustur-u amel*), issued in the sixteenth century when the Ottoman conquered Iraq, reflect [an] uneasy symbiosis between *kanun* and the Hanafi interpretation of *shari’a*.”<sup>60</sup> The ambiguity of the relationship between *kanun* and *shari’a* was most conspicuous on issues of land, its administration, and ownership. Furthermore, the state did not enjoy monopoly over the production of knowledge of Islamic law. In all provinces, locally recruited jurists played a crucial role

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<sup>58</sup> Warriner 1957: 66.

<sup>59</sup> Khoury 2001: 309.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*: 309.

in both the interpretation and the implementation of kanun and shari'a, in a wide range of matters, including disputes governing inheritance and land revenues. In this manner, the local ulama acted as the major agent of Ottoman control in the absence of a strong political provincial class, by reserving the right to offer dissenting interpretations on issues of administrative law derived from shari'a.<sup>61</sup>

A common land tenure practice in Ottoman times was the distribution of the *miri* lands among the subject population by way of granting the tenant the right to collect taxes (*tasarruf*) based on a tenure contract, while the absolute or nominal ownership of the land (*raqaba*) remained with the sultan. The latter, as the supreme distributor of all rights and privileges related to land, mainly the rights of cultivation and the rights to collect taxes, was engaged in a series of contracts with one or more of the following parties: the prebendal cavalry, peasant-cultivators, tax-farmers, and administrative officials. As the studies on Basra and Mosul have shown, the Ottoman state often had to make concessions to revenue holders and landowning groups in its provinces by amending the administrative laws for the purpose of local adjustment. In most cases, this entailed the redrawing of the boundaries separating kanun and shari'a, "both by the state and by local groups who chose to challenge the state's definition of what was allowing in shari'a terms."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.: 311-312.



The main purpose with the Land Code of 1858 was to introduce a general system of individual ownership through compulsory registration of title to all *miri* land, as the prerequisite of a tax reform. Yet, by doing so,

The Ottomans did not abandon the concept of the sultan's guardianship over land [...] Nor did they completely forsake the vocabulary used in their earlier piecemeal attempts at navigating between *shari'a* and *kanun* in their negotiations with their landowning subjects. However, they did rationalize, systematize, and regularize all land transactions in ways that abandoned the language of bargaining implicit in the earlier debates on issues of land and its taxes. [...] the Ottomans had embarked on an ambiguous and highly successful effort to homogenize the local practices of the courts by making them adhere to a particularly Ottoman interpretation to Hanafi law. Perhaps it was this clear subordination of *shari'a* to a single state-sponsored interpretation that led to polarization between *shari'a* and *kanun*.<sup>63</sup>

The discursive shift in the concept of property with the Land Code is usually read in terms of an endeavor to establish state control over the totality of wealth produced by individual owners in the countryside.<sup>64</sup> According to this, the legal constitution of property as individual ownership was central to the process, and this entailed the differentiation between the categories of income and taxation, of property and taxation. This implies that a new conception of economic activity was evolving, which was indexed to surplus production rather than to subsistence production. Agrarian surplus constituted an economic value that was not limited to revenue claims any more, but was expected to deliver an income to the landowner. In this context, individual ownership was becoming an increasingly contested domain to the extent that the object of property, the land, was commodified, and turned into an economic asset that was measurable, controllable, and alienable. Registration of title deeds was initially applicable only to *miri*

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.: 324.

<sup>64</sup> See Islamoglu *ibid.*

lands. The *tapu* title replaced the former titles to land revenues and the rights of usufruct; thereby the ownership claim was established as an absolute claim over the land except that it was subjected to the taxation by the state.

Viewed from this perspective, the land reform makes a significant historical case to display the signs of a serious change in the projection and representation of political power during late Ottoman times.<sup>65</sup> This was particularly evident in the transformation of the very meaning of ‘*miri*’. As Islamoglu writes, “it was no longer associated with the distributionist logic of state power, whereby the *miri* status enabled the ruler, as the custodian of the treasury, to assign revenues from state lands to different groups to obtain their political allegiance and to ensure subsistence production, thus preventing social strife.”<sup>66</sup> The new understanding of *miri* reserved the right to land revenues for the state to the exclusion of the former tax-farming groups, and subjected individual ownership to the control mechanism of modern state.

Historians maintain that the former revenue claimants tended to strongly resist the extension of state control over agricultural income. It is argued that there emerged in many places of the empire serious social conflicts between those who obtained *tapu* titles and the cultivators who, as a result, lost their inheritable usufruct rights. In such cases, the state resorted to legal adjustments by issuing special regulations in order to meet the particular demands of the interest groups involved in the dispute. This shows that the law and administrative practices became sites of struggle and negotiation, with various

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<sup>65</sup> For a discussion on the change in the projection and representation of state power in the late Ottoman Empire, see Khoury and Kennedy 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Islamoglu *ibid.*: 28.

contesting parties, including the former tax-farming officials, notables, shaihs, aghas, peasantry, and tribesmen.<sup>67</sup>

### **The case of Iraq**

There are not many archival studies on the late Ottoman land tenure system as implemented in Iraqi provinces. The scholarly historical discourse, in examining the dynamics of the interplay between the land tenure practices and social change in the early modern period, has tended to focus on central and southern Iraq with large tribal populations.<sup>68</sup> What we know about the Mosul case is, therefore, limited and has been largely shaped by British official accounts as well as studies that offer general perspectives (with little or no empirical data) on the changing land tenure system during the late imperial period.<sup>69</sup>

At this point, I would like to draw the reader's attention to a significant work by Albertine Jwaideh on land tenure and social change in Lower Iraq during late Ottoman times.<sup>70</sup> The study deals with a region that is significantly different from northern Iraq with respect to various aspects of agricultural production, landholding, and the social and economic consequences of the Ottoman land reform. It is, however, highly relevant to our discussion, as it affords a perspective for considering the question of how the Iraqis' relation to land changed with modern legal discursive practices. Jwaideh describes the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> See Jwaideh 1984, Sluglett and Sluglett 1983.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Batatu *ibid.*, Dowson 1932, Karpat 1968, Warriner *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Jwaideh *ibid.*

land tenure conditions in Lower Iraq, the middle Euphrates and Muntafiq regions in particular, in terms of a “chaotic state” which comprised two conflicting systems of proprietorship that existed on the same and extensively tribal lands (*dira* in Arabic), one being a system of rights established by the Ottoman law and the other exercised in accordance with the customary tribal regulations. These latter rights, Jwaideh notes, “were illegal, notwithstanding the fact that they were generally based on *de facto* possession and usually enjoyed greater antiquity of origin.”<sup>71</sup> The distinction between these two ‘morals’ of landholding bears great significance to the extent that they were based upon “quite different notions of real property;” and in referring to this distinction, Jwaideh points to possible indigenous ways of attachment to a piece of land in the example of Lower Iraq.

The tribal term *dira* (land), in keeping with its beduin origins, conveyed more of the sense of the domain over which the tribe exercised sovereign rights rather than that of exclusive ownership. However, among the settled tribes along the middle Euphrates a vocabulary involved which conveyed a more profound sense of property. A strong sense of entrenched attachment to particular tribal lands was sometimes expressed by the words *al-sakaniyya* (dwelling) and *al-nuzul* (habitat), but the term most commonly used was tribal *lazmah* (holding or that which is held or grasped).<sup>72</sup>

For the state, on the other hand, landed property signifies the fundamental means of collecting revenue from an agrarian society. In that sense, the Ottoman and British governments did not differ greatly in their perceptions on landed property, except that Britain might have considered herself much more efficient in establishing an ideologically coherent and functionally systematic basis for revenue collection.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.: 334.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.: 334.

The British colonizers, Jwaideh argues, “clouded” the meaning of the lazmah institution by certain legal connotations largely based on the survey of land tenure by the economist Sir Ernest Dowson (1932). They tended to perceive the persistence of lazmah practices in the country as an unintended consequence of the Ottomans’ failure in systematic control of miri lands. A long-established tradition was, thus, trivialized and misrepresented as an example of primitive practices in rural Iraq, or as a systemic anomaly. Dowson was defining the term lazmah as “the customary prescriptive claim of the tribe to land” by reducing it to the right of occupation and cultivation (usufruct, or *haqq akl-sukna wa al-zira’a*) as opposed to raqaba vested in the state. According to this understanding, lazmah was comparable to the rights conferred by ‘*tapu*’ (a form of inheritable tenancy on state land) that had been introduced by the Ottoman land code.

Jwaideh finds Dowson’s definition quite misleading to the extent that it undermined the antiquity of tribal land law in Iraq and ignored the recent shape it had taken since the Ottoman Land Code was enacted. As an indigenous form of real property, tribal lazmah, he suggests, “was essentially corporate in nature, was claimed in perpetuity, and included all the lands on which a tribe or tribal group reserved exclusive right of possession, whether for pasture or cultivation.”<sup>73</sup> A significant difference between tribal lazmah and tapu was that the former was a much more entrenched right, in the sense that it continued to be claimed even if the land was left unattended (due to migration), whereas the latter could be asserted only as long as the land was being cultivated. The British lazmah that would be introduced later in 1932 with the Lazmah

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.: 335.

Code, similarly involved a conditional alienation of miri land to individuals, the land reverting to the state if not used for at least four years.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the title to tribal *lazmah* was acquired through either collective toil or conquest. In the first case, the *fallah* (agricultural labourer, be he a member of a tribe or not), who, for example, contributed freely of his labour for digging a canal, would be entitled to a share of the land (*saham*) thus brought into production. In that sense, the recruitment of tribesmen, rather than some outsider *fallahin*, was a significant principle for the integrity of the holding. The distribution of the land among the tribe (among tribal families or individual tribesmen) was undertaken by the *shaikh* (tribal chief), ideally in accordance with the principle of equity, and there was a representative committee that oversaw its distribution.

Prescriptive rights under the provision of the Land Code, on the other hand, were valid *only* for individuals; and there was no room in the law for collective ownership, such as the tribal *lazmah*. Perhaps, that is why the land code is usually considered to have deepened the crisis of tribal institutions in Iraq as the empire itself decayed. Ghassan R. Atiyah, for example, argues that land reform contributed to the disintegration of tribal society “not by turning the tribesman into an independent and private owner of his land, but rather by alienating the tribesman from his land altogether and rendering him a mere tenant or agricultural worker, cultivating the land of a shaikh who had become a landlord – often an absentee landlord living in one of the big towns.”<sup>75</sup> Jwaideh is uncertain about that, because, as he sees it, the Ottoman state’s refusal to codify the indigenous system of

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<sup>74</sup> Batatu *ibid*.

<sup>75</sup> Atiyah 1973: 29.

land tenure with the purpose of breaking the tribal society was countervailed by the strong resistance of tribes. “The sense of proprietary right to particular plots of land,” he suggests, “constituted the firmest of bonds uniting the individual cultivators to their tribes and perhaps more than anything else underlay the continuity of tribal modes through the enormous changes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”<sup>76</sup>

This is not to deny that the Ottoman land reform played a significant part in the transformation of social and economic relations across the country. Jwaideh’s case study of Muntafiq (1869-1914) explains the change in tribal relations in Lower Iraq with the rise of small sectional tribal chiefs, i.e. *sarkals* (derived from the Persian word *sar kar*, ‘the head of work’) as powerful agents of an emerging agrarian economy. Sarkals, with a background of a shaikhly house or a humble family, assumed an economic rather than a tribal role in rural society. They had found their social niche through their capacity in the management of labour and resources rather than seniority or kinship, though their position would end up in a semi-hereditary status. In the late 1800’s, the *tapu* title to Muntafiq lands belonged to the shaikhly al-Sadun family, which used to govern an emirate in the region before Tanzimat. The governor Mithat Pasha (1869-1872) assigned a member of the family, Nasir Pasha, as the Mutasarrif (governor of sanjaq) to reorganize the emirate into a *liwa* (or *sanjaq*), and small sectional shaihks became the most significant element of this process. Both the al-Sadun family and the government relied on the agency of these *sarkals*, one in extracting a tithe of their claim as holders of *tapu* title, and the other in obtaining its revenues and imposing its authority in the *liwa*. A

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<sup>76</sup> Jwaideh *ibid.*: 343.

major consequence of this was the loss of reverence among the Muntafiq tribesmen for the al-Sadun who were increasingly viewed as merely the absentee landlords of the lands they tilled. Concurrently, along the middle Euphrates, the lands were consolidated in the hands of the few shaikhs and thus alienated from tribesmen, who now turned into landless sharecroppers and prospective rural-urban migrant workers. This eventually caused estrangement and double-friction, between the shaikh and tribesmen, on the one hand, and between the state and tribesmen, on the other. However, as Jwaideh argues, “in neither case had it led as yet to the detribalization of society, but tribal society was becoming fragmented.”<sup>77</sup> Detribalization was rather a belated effect of a long-term process of land registration that spanned the late Ottoman and the British mandate periods, especially conspicuous among the members of shaikhly families.

The British made some attempts to preserve customary laws in their colonies (e.g. South Africa),<sup>78</sup> and in the case of Iraq, the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation Act of 1919 (TCCDR) particularly represents their intention to give tribal customs the force of law.<sup>79</sup> With this act, the tribal chiefs of the north and shaikhs of the south were now firmly entrenched in power with the judicial authority in villages that the British conferred on them, and this was not necessarily happening with the acclamation of tribesmen. On the contrary, the ensuing tribal conflicts would significantly damage the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.: 349.

<sup>78</sup> See Mamdani 1996.

<sup>79</sup> The British government established a two-tiered judiciary system in Iraq, which institutionalized the tribal law in the countryside while subjecting urban dwellers to Iraqi civic law originally based on Ottoman codes. See Dodge 2003, Haj ibid., Sluglett 1976.



customary affairs in the countryside. It is important to note in this context that the process and rate of change in rural Iraqi society was further enhanced by developments throughout the monarchic period. By change, I am referring to the proliferation in the number of sarkals across the country, the alienation of peasants from their lands, and the increase in economic and political power of Arab shaihs and Kurdish aghas, which, as a whole, ensued in growing hostility of the rural populace and the new urban poor to the monarchy.

In the case of northern Iraq, agrarian economy took quite a different shape, with an increasing rate of integration of an entrepreneurial class of merchant- and bureaucrat-*mallak* (*mulk*-holder)<sup>80</sup> into the production process. Khoury suggests that commercial agriculture was not yet predominant in Mosul's hinterland in the eighteenth century, and "coexisted with semi-feudal relations. It was mainly practiced in villages where urban notables could control the peasantry either through coercive methods or through relations of increased dependence."<sup>81</sup> She also argues that agricultural enterprise was still largely confined to production for regional trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century; and land usage did not yet take the *çiftlik* form (large-scale estate catering exclusively to international markets).<sup>82</sup> Later on, with the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, enserfment was

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<sup>80</sup> Unlike the *tapu* and *lazmah* tenures of more recent origin, *mulk* is an old form of land tenure usually confined to towns and their immediate vicinity. See Batatu *ibid.* 53-57.

<sup>81</sup> Khoury 1991: 155.

<sup>82</sup> Prior to its integration into the Ottoman Empire, Mosul had strong commercial and cultural ties with two larger regions: "The first was the Turkic and Persian world of southeastern Anatolia, northern Iran, and central Asia. The Mosuli ties to this world antedated the brief Safavid occupation of the city and can be traced to the post-Timurid when the Turkic tribe of Ak Koyunlu controlled much of southern Anatolia and Mosul. Throughout the fifteen century, towns like Hisn al-Keyf, Mardin, and Cizre, were major suppliers of cotton Venice.[...] Trading ties with the east and south were reinforced and expanded by the unification

gradually normalized as taxes turned into rent payment to private persons. In an administrative report (1919), the British stated: “When government land was originally made tapu, in most cases, cultivators registered their own lands in their names. During the last thirty years, however, the aghas by fraud and bribery annexed most of these lands for themselves while the cultivator carries on as a serf.”<sup>83</sup>

According to the report submitted by Sir E. Dowson to the British administration, the rural lands, which were mostly owned by local notables, had been occupied and tilled by local villagers based on immemorial usufruct rights. The latter, however, faced hardship when these lands were pledged and forfeited to town-dwelling merchants for debt.

There were large amounts of state lands in and adjoining Kirkuk, occupied by some local families based on the principle of immemorial possession. As the British reported, “these too [were] in the habit of using a power of alienation in respect of these lands but their position [was] rather different from that of the tribal occupants described in [other divisions] that under Turkish law each of them apparently could successfully claim tapu title deeds on demand.”<sup>84</sup> A major consequence of this was the consolidation of enormous plots of land in the hands of the few urban notable and administrative

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of Persia under the Safavids and the inclusion of Baghdad and Basra in these domains. Further west, Mosuli merchants found in Aleppo and Mamluk Syria a market in which they could purchase Syrian goods and sell their own. The Ottoman conquest of Mosul reinforced some of these links to Anatolia, Syria, and Baghdad, but made those to Safavid Iran subject to the vicissitudes of Ottoman-Safavid relations.” See Khoury 1997: 33-34.

<sup>83</sup> CO 696/2, Administrative Report on the Arbil District for the year 1919.

<sup>84</sup> CO 696/2, Administrative Report on the Kirkuk District for the year 1919.

families in Mosul.<sup>85</sup> According to Hanna Batatu, a significant part of these local notables were “the Turks who had long been resident in Iraq.” Based on such cases, he argues that the ethnic factor, rather than the religious one, played a crucial part in the formation of an “aristocracy of officials.” Particularly in the Kirkuk district, the landed bureaucratic and merchant class was largely composed of the local Turks (or Turkmen). To name some of the prominent families,

[T]he Bazirgans [‘bazirgan’: textile merchant], descendants of Bazirgan Pasha, wali of Baghdad from 1690 to 1693, and the mumayyiz, descendants of Hasan were also Awchis [‘awchi’: hunter], who for many decades were virtually the hereditary mutasarrifs of Kirkuk; the Chadirchis [‘chadirchi’: tentmaker] who gave Ottoman Baghdad two of its mayors; and the Churbachis [‘churbachi’: soupseller] who, as their name indicates, were originally connected with the provisioning of the Ottoman troops. The forebears of these three families had all arrived in Iraq in the army of Sultan Murad IV in 1638, and had been recompensed with grants of land for their services in the campaign. Other Turkish administrative families of consequence were Daftaris, who descended from a daftardar or treasurer of Ali Riza Pasha al-Laz (1831-1842); the Urfalis [‘Urfali’: native of Urfa, a Turkish city in the South Eastern Anatolia], whose ancestors was an agha or chief of Janissaries [the local Ottoman professional army] in the days of Daud Pasha (1817-1831); and the Naphtajis, who for long held the post of mutasallim or deputy governor at Kirkuk and exercised exclusive control over the naphta springs of this district, charging three shillings to four shillings six pence for every skinful carried off, and realizing in the twenties about 3,000 pounds sterling annually.<sup>86</sup>

The parochial historiography depicts some of these notables as leading figures in local insurgencies during the British occupation, particularly the Neftcis (or Naphtajis) and the Avcis, who supposedly participated in the Kemalist Movement at Mosul (the *Ozdemir Movement*, 1922-1925).<sup>87</sup> Given their social positioning, it is also quite possible that these notables served as key figures in the region to mediate between the colonial

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<sup>85</sup> See Edmonds 1957: 275-276.

<sup>86</sup> Batatu *ibid.*: 212-213.

<sup>87</sup> For further details on the Mosul Ozdemir Movement, see Turkmen 2003.

administrators and the local inhabitants. Consider, for example, the following remarks by Wallace Lyon, who was recruited as an Assistant Political Officer (APO) in 1918:

There were four main families of notables in Kirkuk – the Naftchizadas, Qirdars, Avchis, Ya’qubizadas. The first, headed by Husain Beg, were an old Turkish family which had the local oil concession. The Qirdars, headed by Haji Jemil, a much revered and astute old gentleman, were wealthy merchants, cousins of the Mayor of Istanbul. Haji Hassan Effendi Avchi, head of his family, an ex-mudir and a keen farmer, had spent a large fortune making an irrigation canal on his land in the Hawija plain bordering the Lesser Zab river. His sons were great sportsmen and fully upheld the family name Avchi, which in Turkish means hunter. The Ya’qubizadas were municipal officials with considerable property in the city. They had retreated from Kirkuk with the British and so cast in their lot on our side and Mejid Effendi was mayor of the city. All four families were *solid reliable Turkish stock*, and after the war their leadership and support was a most *stabilizing factor* in local government.<sup>88</sup>

In the British mandate period (1914-1932), mercantile capital was directly engaged in agricultural production, having secured its claims to lands and also invested in machinery. The Land Settlement of 1932 was the first in a series of property settlements that encouraged commercial agriculture with well-defined rights granted to “various interests involved, from tribal chiefs and tribespeople, to pump owners and cultivators.”<sup>89</sup> As Samira Haj argues, by the early 1950’s, mechanized cultivation “was undertaken by two groups: the moderate landholding peasant, under pressure to produce for the market, and the large wealthy town mallak interested in making profit. Thus, it was in the districts like Mosul and Baghdad where moderate-size proprietorship (family ownership)

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<sup>88</sup> Fieldhouse 2002: 172, italics added.

<sup>89</sup> Haj *ibid.*: 49.

prevailed, and/or private capital was able to penetrate and control production in the capacity of *lazmah* and *tapu*, that machinery became widespread.”<sup>90</sup>

### **Old resource, new value: The emergence of oil industry in Iraq**

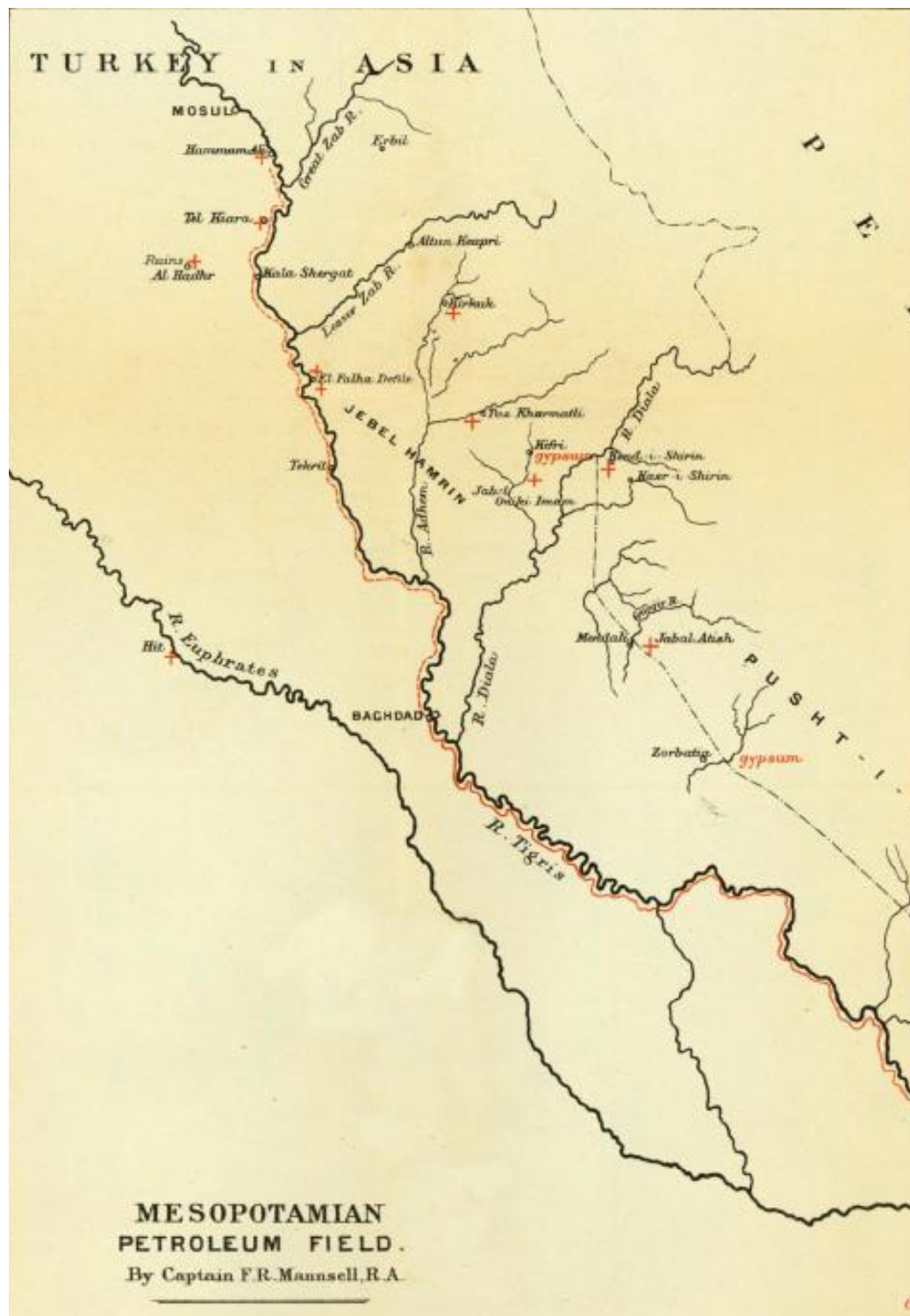
As already discussed above, agriculture constituted the economic base of the classical Ottoman taxation system since arable land was for centuries the major resource of wealth and fiscal revenue. This was the case for both core and peripheral provinces. Although certain areas, Mesopotamia in particular, were known to contain commercially valuable reserves of bitumen and oil, these reserves had been exploited only in primitive terms. As Longrigg (1968:10) notes, “the conception of an oil-pool on the now familiar scale did not or could not exist; its use by human beings was inconceivable; and the trifling surface deposits were accepted as no more than mysteries of nature.” Not earlier than the late nineteenth century were these oil fields explored by any foreign experts. Thus, the exploitation of the available oil and bitumen deposits in the region remained for generations limited to local uses.

Toward the end of the 1800’s, Europeans, increasingly interested in the possibility of exploiting Mesopotamian oil commercially, began to make expeditions to the region in order to assess its oil potential.<sup>91</sup> Soon after various expert reports were circulated in Istanbul, Sultan Abdulhamid (1876-1909) took action under the guidance of Agop Pasha, Director of the Privy Purse. The sultan issued three Imperial decrees (in 1888, 1898, and

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.: 51.

<sup>91</sup> Kent 1976.



**Figure 1.2** Mesopotamian Petroleum Field, by Captain F. R. Maunsell, *The Geographical Journal*, 1897

1902) for the conversion of the oil-bearing state lands (*miri*) in Baghdad and Mosul to the crown-domain (*saniyyah*). In this way, the exclusive rights for the exploration and exploitation of petroleum were transferred from the Treasury to the Sultan's Privy Purse, more often referred to as the Civil List.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, the governor Midhat Pasha had taken initiative to develop the Mendali seepages and had built a refinery at Ba'quba. The government was now trying to increase the yield by deeper diggings in the seepage lands of Tuz Khurmatu and Qaiyara that were recently acquired by the Privy Purse. Europeans, on the other hand, thought that the Ottoman administration was "weak, capricious, and corrupt, unsuited in every way to the initiation of major industrial enterprises; the mining-law was ill-drafted and largely inapplicable, its execution uncertain."<sup>93</sup>

As Sultan Abdulhamid might have expected, only after the lands were registered under the royal possession, could the Ottomans' flirtation with the German entrepreneurs be less perilous. The Anatolian Railway Company (ARC), acting for the Deutsche Bank, had already been holding the right of exploiting the mines at a distance of 20 kilometers along both sides of the railroad, which ended at Konia. The company was now working towards the installment of a line running from Konia to Basra via Baghdad, and finally to a port on the Persian Gulf. In 1904, having discarded its rivals (the British, Dutch, and Russians), the Germans signed the Baghdad Railway Convention with the Civil List authorities, which granted them a preferential right over oil along the new line. This

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<sup>92</sup> See Longrigg 1968, Terzi 2003.

<sup>93</sup> Longrigg *ibid.*: 13.

meant that the company would be able to undertake for a year preliminary investigations in the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets. In mid-1905, the ARC belatedly requested the extension of the time limit for further exploration.<sup>94</sup> The Civil List Ministry, on the other hand, maintained that the company had not complied with the 1904 Convention and already exceeded by thirteen months the limit for submitting the reports of their exploratory work. The Turkish Government finally declared that the agreement had been broken and regarded itself free to offer concessions on similar terms to any other foreign company.

In the meantime, a British rival, William Knox D'Arcy, having recently obtained Persian oil concession for sixty years,<sup>95</sup> was seeking another for Mesopotamia. In July 1908, while Mr. D'Arcy was hammering away at possible oil agreements with the Ottoman government, the revolutionary Young Turks overthrew Abdulhamid and re-imposed the 1876 constitution. All negotiations with the sultan were, thus, suspended, and more importantly, control of the oil-bearing lands was transferred from the Civil List to the Ministry of Finance, to which all claims had to be resubmitted.

In the following year, the ARC made a last ditch attempt to clinch the pending railway agreement by officially reminding the Ottoman Finance Minister of their oil rights granted by the 1904 Convention. In response, the Minister asserted that there was no way to resurrect the company's lost rights. As much as they issued a formal protest, the Germans were not able to persist any longer in pressing their claim.

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<sup>94</sup> For further details about the process, see Kent *ibid*.

<sup>95</sup> See Atarodi 2003.



On the British side, other competitors emerged, such as Royal-Dutch Shell Transport and Trading Company and R. L. Harmsworth, MP, seeking diplomatic support for negotiations with the Ottomans, but the Foreign Office did not respond positively to any of them by indicating that it had been supporting the D'Arcy group as a predominantly British enterprise. On the other side, the Ottomans were discussing the terms of a possible railway project with two American companies, the Chester group and the Anglo-American J.G. White, which competed for a line running eastwards from Sivas, via Harput, Arghana, Diyarbakir, Mosul, and Kirkuk, to Sulaimaniyah. As in the case of the German's Railway Project, the concessionary would be given the mining rights within a twenty-kilometer strip on each side of the line. The Chester group emerged as a strong contender due to the apparently better relations it had with Sultan Abdulhamid. The negotiations came to a halt, however, with the 1908 Revolution, and the Turkish parliament voted in June 1911 to postpone consideration of the project until the next session.

Increasingly anxious about the rising American interests in Middle Eastern oil, the British and German competitors sought to reconcile their interests by the establishment of the National Bank of Turkey, which later merged into African and Eastern Concessions Ltd. (1911). The Armenian industrialist, Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, who had acted as financial and economic adviser to the Ottoman government at various times, became the Executive Director of the National Bank and, as a strong stakeholder, played a significant role in the creation of the oil consortium, Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC).

The TPC, called Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) since 1929, sought for a number of licenses and concessions, but the major objective was the exploitation of the reserves in Baghdad and Mosul. At the time, the Qaiyara seepages were operated on a humble scale by the British military authorities while those of Kirkuk and Tuz Khurmatu by the Neftci family and the Government, respectively.<sup>96</sup> The sultan Abdulhamid had already lost his ownership rights over the *saniyyah* lands, but his heirs would not easily concede their claims over the oil assets.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the German and Ottoman shares in the company were lost to Allied interests; and by the 1920, once the U.S interests were accommodated, the consortium comprised the following shareholders: the D'Arcy group, known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (which in 1935 became the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, or AIOC, and in 1954 BP), Royal Dutch/Shell, the Compagnie Française des Pétroles, or CFP, which in 1991 became Total), and the Near East Development Corporation (a consortium of five large US oil companies, among them Standard Oil). Before the frontier question was resolved, the TPC signed an agreement with the Iraqi Government in 1925, which granted the company a seventy-five year concession on oil. In accordance with the concession, each partner received 23.7 percent of the shares, and Mr. Gulbenkian the remaining 5 percent.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, the Turkish Republic, as a losing third party in the final deal, was to be indemnified for her loss of Mosul with a ten-percent share of Iraqi oil royalties that she would receive over the following twenty-five

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.: 68.

<sup>97</sup> For Mr. Gulbenkian's bibliography, see Hewins 1957.

years triggered by the enforcement of the Frontier Treaty of 1926. The IPC started to make payments to the Turkish government in 1932 and stopped to pay in 1952. Turkey protested this based on the argument that her share had been paid only since 1931, the year in which the oil production started at Kirkuk, and the payment period should not come to an end until 1955.<sup>98</sup> The Turkish official history explains Turkey's later tendency for a conciliatory policy on the conflict with her commitment to the non-aggression treaty signed in 1937 (Sadabad Pact).

***Vahdeddin's pawned coffin: the lost assets of the Imperial Family***

One of the stakeholders in the oil struggle was the imperial Ottoman family that was exiled to Europe following the regime change in Turkey. I briefly discuss here the legal battle of the imperial heirs, a quite interesting case in itself, in order to give the reader a sense of the legal language of the conflict over the oil-bearing lands of Iraq, and how the land issues were debated between the British Government and the private persons seeking the restitution of their lands in the ex-Ottoman territories. What follows is largely based on an 'insider' story, narrated by Mahmud Sami, a naturalized British subject of Ottoman descent.<sup>99</sup>

The legal battle among the imperial heirs was precipitated by the last imperial decree Abdulhamid was forced to issue in 1908 prior to his dethronement. This was an *Irade* transferring the Civil List and his private properties, including the oil-bearing lands in Iraq, to the Ministry of Finance, that is, to the State. The CUP government would have

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<sup>98</sup> Cosar and Demirci 2004.

<sup>99</sup> See Sami 2006.

the decision confirmed with another decree issued in 1909 by the succeeding sultan, Mehmed V Resad. The purpose of this, I assume, was to prepare a legal ground for a lease contract with the TPC that sought oil concessions. In his book, Mahmud Sami explains why the imperial family objected to the legal validity of these two decrees:

*[T]he new Constitution reintroduced by the Young Turks for commendable reasons, that is the restoration of a democratic form of constitutional monarchy, required that henceforth all Imperial Decrees of the reigning monarch had to be submitted to Parliament for consideration, and could only assume the force of law if approved by both Houses of Parliament. Neither [of the two Irades] were considered by Parliament and acted upon. Consequently they did not assume the legitimacy of Acts of Parliament as required by the Constitution, and were therefore null and void under Turkish Law as confirmed many decades later.*

A third decree was issued in 1920, by virtue of which State properties, including those transferred from the Privy Purse, would be restored to the Civil List. This was a significant development in the conflict because the subsequent international debate on the ownership and exploitation rights to the oil-bearing lands would revolve around the concept of the Civil List. The next move of the Ottoman heirs, in consultation with a group of European legal experts, was to put forth an argument that the lands in question were registered in the name of Abdulhamid and not in the name of the Civil List. The sultan's daughter, Princess Zekiye, took the case to the High Commission with a claim based on some legal documents that the properties were his father's personal belongings, and therefore, should be passed down to his children, as their rightful inheritance, in equal parts. The princess's appeal paved the way for a series of correspondences between the imperial family and the British Foreign Office until 1926, when the latter responded to the claimants with a final statement. The following is the article of the Lausanne Treaty that is relevant to the heirs' claims to their private properties in Iraq:

*Article 74. The property, rights and interests which have been subjected to measures of transfer or to any exceptional measures by the authorities of the High Contracting Parties and which still exists, or can be identified, in territory under Ottoman Sovereignty on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1914, and detached from Turkey by the present Treaty, and which belong to nationals of the High Contracting Parties, including former Ottoman nationals, acquiring ipso facto the nationality of an Allied Power or of a new State in accordance with the provisions of the present Treaty, shall be immediately restored to the owners by the Governments concerned.*

*[...]With this object all exceptional war measures or measures of transfer by the High Contracting Parties with respect to enemy property, rights and interests, shall be immediately discontinued or stayed when liquidation has not been completed and the claims of the owners shall be satisfied by the immediate restitution of their property as soon as this property has been identified.*

*All disputes relating to the identity of goods claimed or their restitution shall be submitted to a Mixed Arbitral Tribunal established by Section 6 of the present Part.<sup>100</sup>*

In his response to the ex-sultan, Mehmed VI Vahdeddin, the Foreign Secretary stated that the British Government was “unable to accept the suggestion that the question should be submitted either to the Mixed Arbitral Tribunals instituted by Article 22 of the Treaty of Lausanne, to the Permanent Court of International Justice, or to the Council of the League of Nations. [T]he only Courts which are competent to pronounce on [his] Majesty’s claims to former Civil List properties are those of the countries within which those properties [were] situated.”<sup>101</sup> The following is the Article 60 of the Treaty of Lausanne, which constituted a legal basis for the counter-argument of the British Government against the imperial family’s claims of inheritance:

*States in favour of which territory was or is detached from the Ottoman Empire after the Balkan Wars shall acquire without payment all property and of the Ottoman Empire situated therein.*

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<sup>100</sup> Lausanne Conference Proceedings 1923: 721-722.

<sup>101</sup> Foreign Office Permanent Under Secretary’s letter to the last Ottoman sultan, Mehmed VI Vahdeddin, quoted by Sami *ibid.*: 47.

*It is understood that the property and possessions of which the transfer from the Civil List to the State was laid down by the Irades of the 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1324 (8<sup>th</sup> September 1908) and the 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1325 (2<sup>nd</sup> May 1909), also those which, on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 1918, were administered by the Civil List for the benefit of a public service, are included among the property and possessions referred to in the preceding paragraph, the aforesaid States being subrogating to the Ottoman Empire in regard to the property and possessions in question. The Wakfs created on such property shall be maintained.<sup>102</sup>*

The content of the Foreign Secretary's statement became the subject of lengthy discussions between the two parties, but "nothing came out" of the heirs' further attempts, and the same year, the last Ottoman Sultan, Vahdeddin, died in exile, "in penury:"

*The creditors resorted to legal action to seize his property, which being non-existent meant his coffin. As a result it took nearly a month to sort out the ghastly situation with the help of friends. Finally the necessary formalities were completed involving the Italian and French officials, France being the Mandatory Power for the Lebanon and Syria, and the ex-Sultan's coffin was released and conveyed by sea to Lebanon and by rail from there to Syria. He was buried in the cemetery of the Sultan Selim Mosque in Damascus, where some other members of the Imperial Family who died in exile have also been buried.*

*Such was the sad end of the last Ottoman who had considered himself a friend of Great Britain. Had he taken note of the lessons of history, he would have realized that for Governments the world over the term 'friendship' always translates as 'expediency'.<sup>103</sup>*

Over the following decades, the main subject of contention was whether the case could be taken or not to international arbitration. And by now, the Turkish Government was also involved in the debate. It seems that the suggestion was first brought up by the US in the 1920's, which was at the time trying to challenge the validity of the concession secured by the TPC. In a secret memorandum submitted in 1922 to the Cabinet by the

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<sup>102</sup> Lausanne Conference Proceedings: 715.

<sup>103</sup> Sami *ibid.*: 48.

Secretaries of State for Colonies, Winston Churchill admitted that the oil rights of the TPC rested “upon a diplomatic rather than a legal basis.”<sup>104</sup> Perhaps, that is why the British never considered arbitration as a way of resolution. The Turkish Government, insisted, throughout the 1930’s, on submitting the issue to the Tribunal based on the argument that the *Irades* of 1908 and 1909 were not legally valid. But, the case was already deadlocked with two Iraqi laws enacted in 1926 and 1927. The first one, the Transfer of Turkish Government Property Law, which had already been in force since August of 1924, laid down that all properties of the Ottoman Empire located in Iraq became the property of the Iraqi Government, including those transferred from the Civil List to the State by the Sultan’s *Irades*, and that “no court shall entertain any inquiry into the validity of such *Irades*.”<sup>105</sup> The law that came to force in 1927 was a follow-up to the earlier one, and stated that it was “a specific criminal offence to raise any question of the Imperial Ottoman Family’s rights in any Court in Iraq.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, the lawsuit of the imperial family, it seems, came to a dead-end as early as the 1920’s with the establishment of these two laws, and was destined to become a mere footnote in the modern history of Iraq penned by the British colonizers.

### ***Babagurgur***

During the Lausanne Talks over the frontier question, the Turkish delegation was asked to appoint experts to illuminate the Mosul Commission on the social conditions of

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid: 173.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.: 172.

<sup>106</sup> From the opinion obtained in 1967 from the two British lawyers, Sir Lionel Heald and Mervyn Heald of London Law Firm of Gilmore and Tylee & Naylor; quoted in *ibid.*: 144.

the region.<sup>107</sup> The delegation, in turn, assigned Major Kamil Bey for Mosul, Nazim Bey for Kirkuk, and Fattah Effendi for Suleimaniyah. Nazim Bey, a member of the Neftci family, who was a deputy for Kirkuk in the Turkish Parliament. When he joined the Commission during the arbitration in order to defend the Turkish interests in Iraq, there were also other issues at stake, including the ownership and mining rights of the Neftci family to the oil field at Babagurgur.

While I was doing my field research among the Iraqi Turkmen immigrants in Turkey, I met a descendant of the Neftci family who lives in Ankara with an Iraqi passport. My informant's grandfather, Huseyin Bey, obtained Iraqi citizenship in the 1920's while his brother, Nazim Bey, opted for Turkish nationality at the time. As the story goes, the family was granted the right to work the naphtha mines of Babagürgür centuries ago. Their ancestor, the *mutasallim* (tax-farmer) Ismail Agha was appointed as the governor of the Kirkuk Sanjaq following the Persian incursion of Sultan Murad IV, and, in 1639/40 (Hegira 1049), he was granted the right to exploit the mines on the lands where he had been collecting tax revenues. The mining rights of the family were later confirmed by another decree issued in 1781/82 (Hegira 1196). The following is a translation of this second decree I obtained from the family archive:

*Sentence rendered and delivered to the religious Judge and to the Public Receiver of Kirkuk. Whereas by a petition presented by Neftcizade Ismail, Mehmed Ibrahim and Huseyin Aghas to our imperial court.*

*It has been stated that some persons have trespassed against the Naphtha Mines of Babagurgur situated within the Sandjack of Kirkuk which Naphtha Mines they –the petitioners– have been possessing and putting the profit by IMPERIAL CHARTER,*

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<sup>107</sup> On the frontier question see Chapter Two.



*since long time past, although no body else having any interest or right what so ever on the said Mine the same should be kept safe of any trespasses, and WHEREAS the matter being inquired of our IMPERIAL COUNCIL it was reported that the Naphtha Mines of Babagurgur situated within the SANDJAK of KIRKUK had been granted to NEFTDJI ZADELER [sons] and that the boundaries of said Mines are limited on the East by the line of EDHEM TCHAY STREAM, and on the South by the line starting from said stream and crossing the BIG ROAD and leading to BEHLUL TCHAGUL and on the West by the line starting from said BEHLUL TCHAGUL, crossing the KIZIL YAR MEADOW and leading to MERAA DERE and on to the NORTH by the line starting from MERAA DERE and leading to SAYIBE MOUNTAIN and that it is has been established after due attendance that no other person has any right whatsoever to interfere and meddle with property within said boundaries, this being sactioned by imperial Firman issued at the beginning of Moharrem of the year 1049 (Hegira).*

*NOW THEREFORE, you who are the religious Judge and Public Receiver thereof, be it known to you that the present is Our Imperial Majesty's Firman to the effect that upon reception of this Imperial Firman any and all interference with the property of said Mines within said boundaries by persons other than NEFTDJI ZADELER must be removed and avoided and that you are obliged to act in accordance therewith.*

*Middle Rabilevvel 1196*

There is another legal document that a part of the family, who became Turkish nationals, had based their land claims on. It was a governmental decision issued in 1911 that granted Neftcizade Nazim and Qadizade Ragib Beys the exploration rights for a period of ninety-nine years at three different oil seepages in the Cebel Hamrin and Al-Fatha regions, a decree to be approved later by the Turkish Republic in 1926. Nazim Bey appealed to the Arbitral Tribunal for the return of his mining rights and yet lost the case, as the latter, even though it acknowledged his ownership, did not grant him the rights to drill oil wells or to establish a refinery on the area. After Nazim Bey died, all of the legal documents were kept at the Iraqi Embassy in Turkey for a while and later transferred to his son Nizamettin Neftci, who was later expelled from Iraq with the military coup of

1958.<sup>108</sup> As for the ownership rights of the family members who opted for Iraqi nationality in the 1920's, the surviving heirs today complain that no rent payment has been made for years for a large oil area in and around Kirkuk.

In December 1925, while the Neftci family was reclaiming their mining rights at Babagurgur, the Mosul province had already been awarded to the Kingdom of Iraq by the League of Nations. As soon as the question of Turkish frontier was thereby resolved, the first geological inquiry team was dispatched to Kirkuk and the headquarter of the Field Management was established near Tuz Khurmatu to organize drilling and all other required services. After several wells had been spudded in the area, it turned out that the one at Babagurgur was, according to Longrigg (1968: 71), the most promising spot, “destined profoundly to alter both the economic fortunes of Iraq and the oil-history of the world.” The exploratory drilling was completed in 1934, and by the end of the thirties, Kirkuk was ready to serve the oil market with its twenty wells and an oil company (IPC) that employed “some 2,000 Iraqis [mostly Kurdish and Turkmen], 125 Europeans, and 30 Americans.”<sup>109</sup> The Company had agreed to complete the Kirkuk- Mediterranean pipeline, to make a substantial annual royalty to the Iraqi Treasury, and to consider a Mediterranean railway project.

The drilling for crude oil at Kirkuk was suspended for a while during the Second World War and resumed in 1943, ending up with forty-four wells at Babagurgur that

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<sup>108</sup> Based on the information provided by Huseyin Neftci, 2006.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.:72.



agreement of 1916, which was ‘secretly’ signed by Britain, France, and Russia.

With this agreement, the three states, the first two claiming the oil-rich Mosul region, came together in order to define their respective territories of control on the eve of the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. Britain was given direct control over southern Iraq, primarily the oil producing regions adjacent to Kuwait and Iran, and indirect influence over inland Iraq and Jordan. France was assigned direct control over an area covering southern Lebanon and southeastern Anatolia, with inland Syria and northern Iraq under its indirect influence. Palestine was reserved for international control. However, the terms of the covenant was doomed to failure –Russia had to relinquish its claims over Turkey after the Revolution of 1917; the U.S President Woodrow Wilson persuaded the international community to reject the idea of partition of the Arab lands; and Britain, preoccupied with the oil resources of Iraq, forced France to give up Mosul. From the British perspective, ensuring political influence over Palestine was essential to their plans about Iraq, as they needed access to the Mediterranean Sea to carry Mosul’s oil to the west.<sup>110</sup>

By the time of the Paris Peace Conference (1919), the Europeans had taken pains to unlearn the language of conquest and to master a new one in conformity with the rising values of political liberalism endorsed by Woodrow Wilson. When the League of Nations came up with the idea of Mandates “as a compromise solution that would appear less

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<sup>110</sup> Atarodi *ibid.*

‘colonial’,”<sup>111</sup> the British had already declared that they came to Baghdad (1917) “not as conquerors but as liberators,” promising that Arab aspirations would be realized.<sup>112</sup>

As the mandate system was being established in Iraq, political restructuring of the country was further complicated by international economic arrangements and negotiations such as the one that took place between Britain and the United States on the exploitation of the oil fields. While Wilson insisted on the application of the ‘open door’ policy to all the mandate territories, the British argued that instability in Iraq would prevent any access to the oil fields.<sup>113</sup> This over-cautious attitude of the colonial administrators suggests a specific British intent to monopolize Iraq’s oil industry. Nevertheless, American oil companies managed to acquire interests in various oil developments in Baghdad and Mosul in 1925.<sup>114</sup>

By then Britain had got France to renounce her claims over the Mosul vilayet, as the latter agreed to receive 25 percent of the Mosul oil in recompense and to construct two separate pipelines and railways necessary for oil transportation to the Mediterranean. The two countries thus signed an oil agreement at San Remo (24 April 1920), a process that resulted mainly because of British efforts to resist the free participation of other countries, particularly the United States, in Iraq’s oil industry. The American

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<sup>111</sup> Watenpugh 2002.

<sup>112</sup> Atarodi *ibid.*: 131.

<sup>113</sup> Anghie 2005:58.

<sup>114</sup> Wright 1930, cited in Anghie *ibid.*:59. On the American oil policy, see DeNovo 1963.

government, in its turn, severely criticized Britain for its claim to exclusive control of the oil resources in Mosul, by reminding her that “any alien territory acquired under the Versailles Treaty ‘must be held and governed in such a way as to assure equal treatment in law, and in fact to the commerce of all nations.’”<sup>115</sup> The San Remo Oil Agreement was condemned as “a grave infringement of the mandate principle... formulated for... removing in the future some of the principal causes of international differences.”<sup>116</sup> In response, the British reiterated that they had no intention to establish exclusive rights in Mesopotamian oil fields, and the agreement under question indicated a necessary adaptation of earlier arrangements to post-war conditions, which entailed the transfer of German interests in the TPC to France.

The British, however, had a soft spot, which was their desire to assure American support for their mandates in the Middle East.<sup>117</sup> For these and other reasons, such as the increased military threat posed by the Kemalist forces to the Mosul vilayet,<sup>118</sup> Britain was led to abandon her previous monopolistic oil policy and to allow for American participation in the TPC. Meanwhile, Rear Admiral Colby M. Chester of the U.S. Navy had sought to strengthen his relations with the Turkish government in the hope of obtaining concessions for the building of railways and the exploitation of mines in Iraq. As a result of Americans’ diplomatic support during the Lausanne Talks over the Mosul

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<sup>115</sup> Atarodi *ibid.*:95.

<sup>116</sup> Correspondence between the British Government and the U.S. Ambassador (28 July 1920), quoted in Atarodi *ibid.*:97.

<sup>117</sup> See Hogan 1977.

<sup>118</sup> See Mejcher 1976.

boundary dispute, Turkey granted Chester and his Ottoman-American Development Company a new concession. But practically, this meant nothing, since Turkey was about to relinquish her territorial claims over the Mosul province anyway.<sup>119</sup>

As an international rough and tumble competition continued over the mineral resources of Mosul, local claimants, the Kurdish leader Shaikh Mahmoud Barjanji in particular, were also pressing their rights over the region since their nationalist aspirations had been encouraged by the Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination.

When the political status of the Mosul vilayet was fiercely debated between Turkey and Britain at the Lausanne Conference, both countries pretended that they did not take into consideration the oil potential of the province as they put forward their arguments. It was later stated in the Blue Book that oil had had not the slightest effect on the British attitude toward the Mosul question. Scholarly perspective, however, comes up with totally different interpretations, indicating that the Boundary Commission was not as “neutral” an international body as it was supposed to be. Peter Sluggett, for example, notes that one of the commission members, Paul Teleki, might have sought to influence the process so as to enable Britain to obtain a new oil concession. It was probably not a coincidence that the concession was given to the TPC shortly after the Commission’s visit to Iraq.

The underlying argument here is that the economic concerns of the Great Powers, particularly their plans for oil exploitation in the Middle East, played a significant role in the international decision-making process that generated the mandate solution for Iraq

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<sup>119</sup> Atarodi *ibid.*

and defined the territorial boundaries of the emergent Iraqi state. In the following chapter, we shall look closer to this process with a particular attention to the Turkish-British conflict over the political status of the Mosul province that was belatedly resolved by means of international arbitration.



## **CHAPTER II : NATION, COMMUNITY, AND THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION: THE CASE OF IRAQ**

In this chapter I focus on a case of territorial rearrangement, namely, the annexation of the ex-Ottoman province of Mosul to Iraq in 1926. I seek to locate the political significance of this event within a historical context when the international world order was being reshaped under the hegemony of rising American liberalism. I begin with a discussion on the international debate on the political status of Mosul before its inclusion into Iraq, which resulted in a resolution that was claimed to rely on the universal principle of ‘self-determination’. I proceed with a critical treatment of the liberal understanding that came to define the hegemonic meaning of ‘self-determination’. This particular conception, an ideological product of the Wilsonian doctrine, was heavily implicated in the institution of a mandate system in the Middle East and Iraq in particular. Towards the end of the chapter, I briefly discuss the major implications of the international legal discourse on the question of self-determination for the Iraqi minorities.

### **The Mosul debate**

The lands that became Iraq in 1920 had remained for four centuries under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire, including the *vilayets* (province) of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul. Having long ago penetrated into the regional market thanks to economic concessions granted by the Ottoman reformers, the British had invaded all three

provinces by the year of 1919. As soon as military control was established in the whole region, an interim civil administration was set up along the lines of the colonial government in India.<sup>120</sup> Next, the League of Nations decided to unite the three provinces under the British mandate, while carving out Kuwait from the Basra province.

Preparations to install a constitutional monarchy in Iraq was completed with the election of the king at the Cairo Conference (1921), in which a large delegation from Iraq participated, comprising for the most part of British officials and two Iraqi ministers.<sup>121</sup> There were two non-native Arab candidates for the throne, Abdullah and Faisal, the two descendents of the Hashemite dynasty in Hijaz, the sons of Sharif Hussain. It soon turned out that the brothers would both share in the mandate projects of the British – Abdullah was rewarded with Transjordan and Faisal was crowned in Iraq.

Following a very brief experience with the kingdom of Syria, Amir Faisal had been expelled from Damascus as soon as the dream of an independent Arab state in Syria was destroyed by the French in July 1920.<sup>122</sup> Given his earlier political activities as a leading figure in the Arab Revolt after his father Sharif Husain, the British regarded Faisal as a potentially charismatic leader to rally the Arab people of Iraq behind a new state. As an outsider, he was not yet affiliated with any particular faction in the society. This was an advantage, especially when he was compared with a native candidate like Sayyid Talib al-Naqib of Basra whose notoriety in local politics dates back to the

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<sup>120</sup> On the British mandate government in Iraq (1914-1932), see Dodge 2003, Sluglett 1976.

<sup>121</sup> Tripp 2000.

<sup>122</sup> Fieldhouse 2002.

Ottoman times.<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, as an Arab, Faisal “did not have much support amongst the Kurds and as a Sunni he found little favour among the Shi‘a, although some respected him as a *sayyid*. For their part, the established Sunni *sayyid* families in Iraq tended to regard him as an interloper, although his identity was reassuringly familiar and suggested no radical departures from the old order.”<sup>124</sup>

As soon as the council of ministers unanimously decided to offer Faisal the kingship of Iraq, the consent of the locals was ‘guaranteed’ with a bogus referendum (1921), producing ‘96% majority in favor of Faisal’. However, it was not until the ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in 1924 that uncertainties about the scope of the British authority in the country were eliminated. With this treaty the resumption of direct rule, formally abandoned in 1920, was no longer legally possible. .<sup>125</sup>

Highly skilled and experienced in governmental techniques of camouflaging the fact that the colonial presence was that of an occupying power, the British administrators did not have much trouble establishing in Iraq a tradition of indirect rule based on an advisory system.<sup>126</sup> In this they benefited mostly from their forty-year experience in Egypt, which they governed to a greater extent by means of persuasion, “without

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<sup>123</sup> See Sluglett 1976. Sayyid Talib, who acted in local politics as the deputy of Basra during the government of Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), first cried out for Arab autonomy in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars when anti-European and anti-CUP sentiments among Iraqis escalated into an organized resistance. He later decided to give support for a British Mandate. For the shifting character of proto-Arab nationalism in the Iraqi context of the early 20th century, see Atiyyah 1973, Haddad 1991, Simon 1991, Tarabein 1991.

<sup>124</sup> Tripp *ibid.*: 48-49.

<sup>125</sup> For the contents and political significance of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty (1922-1924), see Ireland 1927, Sluglett *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> For a comparative analysis of the administrative habits of the British and French mandate systems, see Wright 1926b.

flaunting their presence in any gross fashion before the eyes of the [local] officials.”<sup>127</sup> In order to make the Iraqi government run the way they wanted, as the British reasoned, first, they had to compromise with local powers, particularly Sunni *ulama*, tribal shaikhs and local notables. The High Commissioner Percy Cox persuaded an elderly *naqib al-ashraf* (head of descent group), Sayyid Abdurrahman, from Baghdad to be the president of the council of ministers and serve under British supervision, whereupon a government was formed, headed by the naqib, which included twenty-one eminent figures from all three of the provinces. Ever vigilant of the rebellious Shi‘a, the British realized that they had to collaborate with the ‘corrupt’ *effendis* (the high-ranking ex-Ottoman officials, who were mostly Sunni) to maintain social order and achieve popular consent.<sup>128</sup> While Sunni-Arabs predominated in the parliament and held the most important administrative positions, the council of ministers included a few Shi‘a and Christians, with only one representative from the Jewish community.<sup>129</sup>

When the mandate for Iraq was awarded to Great Britain at the San Remo Conference in April 1920, the political status of the Mosul province, including the

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<sup>127</sup> Cromer 1916, cited in *ibid*: 748-749.

<sup>128</sup> Effendis (*effendiya*) were the Ottoman state officials, educated in the CUP schools and versed in modern politics. They collaborated with the Shii clergy and and *Sadah* (*Sayyids*) in mobilizing the masses against the British occupation. Following the 1920 revolt, the British authorities had to appoint many of the Sunni arab effendiya to administrative positions. For the British vision of Ottoman state elite, see Dodge 2003.

<sup>129</sup> Based on Hasan al-‘Alawi’s archival research, Eric Davis makes the following remarks regarding the sectarian bias of the mandate government: “Shi‘i presence in the Iraqi parliament was [thus] part of the typical colonial pattern of divide and conquer. Shi‘i mujtahids, on the other hand, were excluded from political participation by both the British and the Sunni elite. Within the state bureaucracy, arguably the most important agency was the Directorate of Education, which was entrusted with the nation’s educational system and the socialization of Iraqi youth. Under the Khaldun Sati‘ al-Husari’s sectarian leadership, the agency, a subunit of the Ministry of Education, vigorously promoted a Pan-Arabist understanding of Iraqi political community through an emphasis on an Arab-Islamic Golden Age.” See Davis 2005: 56-57.

districts (*sanjaq* in Turkish, or *liwa* in Arabic<sup>130</sup>) of Sulaimaniya, Mosul, and Kirkuk<sup>131</sup>, were left open for negotiations between the Turkish and British governments. The nationalist government in Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal (later surnamed as Atatürk), having renounced all treaties, contracts, and other obligations signed by the last Ottoman government after 16 March 1920, reserved for itself the sole right to make laws and agreements on behalf of the Turkish nation.<sup>132</sup> As for the issue of Mosul, they insisted on restoring the province to Turkey with an argument based upon the *National Pact* (*Misak-ı Milli*):

*Inasmuch as it is necessary that the destinies of the portions of the Turkish Empire which are populated exclusively by an Arab majority, and which on the conclusion of the armistice of the 30<sup>th</sup> October, 1918, were in the occupation of enemy forces, should be determined in accordance with the votes which shall be freely given by the inhabitants, the whole of those parts, whether within or outside the said armistice line, which are inhabited by an Ottoman Moslem majority, united in religion, in race and in aim, imbued with sentiments of mutual respect for each other and of sacrifice, and wholly respectful of each other's racial and social rights and surrounding conditions, form a whole which does not admit of division for any reason in truth or in ordinance.*<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> The Iraqi state kept the Arabic term 'liwa' until recently to indicate a province in the administrative system and a brigade in the army. The Turkish word 'sanjak' (banner) assumed a political significance in earliest years of the Ottoman state tradition as one of the signs of investiture of new sovereigns, notably of the first Ottoman sultan in Asia Minor. Ottoman historians usually refer to 'sanjaq' in relation to the *Timar System*, which can be roughly summarized as the administrative organization of the state (miri) lands in rural areas of the empire based on a distributive-accommodative logic.

<sup>131</sup> The earlier official name of this *sanjaq* was *Şehr-i Zor* (Mighty City). The name was changed into Kirkuk in 1893 to prevent confusion in correspondence with another place name, *Zor*.

<sup>132</sup> Shaw and Shaw 1977.

<sup>133</sup> See *Lausanne Conference*, pp. 370. The original transcription of the article is as follows: "Devlet-i Osmaniyyenin münhasıran Arap ekseriyetiyle meskûn olup 30 Teşrinievvel 1918 tarihli mütarekenin hîn-i akdinde muhasım orduların işgali altında kalan aksamının mukadderatı ahalisinin serbestçe beyan edecekleri âraya tevfikân tayin edilmek lâzım geleceğinden, mezkûr hatt-ı mütareke dahil ve haricinde dinen, örfen, emelen müttehî ve yekdiğerine karşı hürmet-i mütekabile ve fedakârlık hissiyatıyla meşhûn ve hukuk-u irkiye ve içtimaiyeleriyle şerait-i muhitilerine tamamiyle riyetkâr Osmanlı-İslâm

For its drafters, the National Pact was a document of concessions limited to the minimum conditions for peace.<sup>134</sup> Turkey admitted to relinquish territorial sovereignty over the lands where Arabs were predominant. In order to reclaim the Mosul *vilayet* as a whole, including the *sanjaq* of Kirkuk under the British occupation since before the Armistice of Mudros,<sup>135</sup> she had to demonstrate at the Lausanne Conference that a Turkish majority inhabited the province.

In the National Pact, a distinction was made between Muslim and Arab, which could be understood only in terms of linguistically defined ethnicity or race. If ethnicity became the new primary marker of social and cultural difference in the emerging national imaginary, then what happened to Kurdish identity as a distinct category from Turkish ethnicity? From the nationalist point of view, it was simply non-existent. In the Turkish memorandum submitted to the Lausanne Conference, the expression of ‘the Ottoman Muslim majority’ in the pact was rephrased as ‘the majority of Turks and Kurds’ so as to exclude Arabs on an ethnic/racial basis. The Turks and Kurds were lumped together in the same social category based on a strikingly speculative grand narrative of entangled racial (‘*Turanian*’) roots. Besides, religion was employed as the primary marker of the Turkish-Kurdish ‘brotherhood’.

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ekseriyetiyle meskûn bulunan aksamın heyet-i mecmuası hakikaten veya hükmen hiçbir sebeple tefrik kabul etmez bir küldür.”

<sup>134</sup> Budak 2003.

<sup>135</sup> The British troop managed to occupy the entire Mosul vilayet after the signature of the armistice of Mudros in contravention of its terms. See Anderson 1966.

*It has been said that the Kurdish people is Iranian in origin. This statement is contradicted by the 'Encyclopedia Britannica', which recognizes that the origin of the Kurdish people is Turanian, and thus confirms the argument of the Turkish delegation.*

*Those who know Anatolia are aware that as regards manners, usage and customs the Kurds do not differ in any respect from the Turks, and that these two peoples, while they speak different languages, form a single unit in respect of race, religion and manners.*  
<sup>136</sup>

While the issue was still on the table at Lausanne, republicans at home would take every occasion to generously display their faith in collective solidarity of Turks and Kurds in the region:

*Mosul is one of our provinces, inhabited for the most part by the bravest sons of the people of Turkey, the Turks and the Kurds, united in the same aim, in the same religion, with same sentiments, together in good days and bad days, and for whom the only way of salvation is to live with us. Those who visit the Kirkuk district would notice at a glance the unity of these people. And, those who are familiar with the geography of that place conceive of the Turks and Kurds living all together.*<sup>137</sup>

In the Turkish memorandum, under the heading of 'Geographical and Economic Arguments', Mosul was described as a 'naturally' integral part of Anatolia. Thanks to the newly constructed railway, it was claimed that the region had stronger commercial ties with Anatolia than with Iraq.<sup>138</sup> The Turkish delegates, yet, had to support these arguments in demographic terms and show that the region was populated by a majority of Turks and Kurds. Based on the last Ottoman census, they argued, "more than four-fifths of the population of the vilayet consist[ed] of Turks and Kurds, and less than one-fifth of

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<sup>136</sup> See *Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs (1922-1923): Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace*, pp. 342-343.

<sup>137</sup> This quote was excerpted from Rauf Bey's speech at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. See TBMMZC (Grand National Assembly Proceedings), XXVI, pp. 147.

<sup>138</sup> *Lausanne Conference Proceedings*: 348-349.

Arabs and non-Moslems.”<sup>139</sup> The Arabic speaking inhabitants of the town of Mosul, as they pointed out later in the text, “[were] really Turks who, having been in constant contact with the Arabs for a long time, [had] learnt both languages.”<sup>140</sup> The Turkish in use at Mosul, they added, was the same as that in use in Anatolia. It was also claimed that the Turks of Anatolia belonged to the group called the ‘Turcomans’: “There [was] therefore no serious foundation for the differentiation which it sought to establish between the Turks of Mosul and those of Asia Minor.”<sup>141</sup>

The ethnic origins of the Mosuli ‘Turks’ became the subject of a fierce debate between the Turkish and British delegates. In response to the Turkish thesis, the British argued:

*The ‘Turks’ are not Ottoman Turks; they call themselves Turkomans, and the Turanian language they speak resembles Azerbaijani rather than the Turkish of Constantinople. They are undoubtedly descendants of Turkomans who came to Iraq long before Osman founded the Ottoman Empire, probably from those Turkomans whom the Abbasid Caliphs hired to defend their territory.*

*[...] They ask that there should be united with the Turks of Asia Minor a population consisting as to one-twelfth of Turkomans, with whom they may be admitted to have some racial affinity; as to nearly seven-twelfths of Kurds, who have no more affinity with the Turk, except the possession of a common religion, than have the Chinese; as to three-twelfths of Arabs, who not only differ from the Turks in race and language, but are connected by strongest bonds of language, race and sympathy with the population of Baghdad and Basra; and as to more than one-twelfth of non-Moslem elements, which, however much they may differ from each other, have not a single bond – racial, linguistic, religious or cultural – with Turks.*<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.: 341.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.: 342.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.: 342.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.: 364, 365-366.



On the other hand, the Turkish delegation sought to strengthen their claims on the cultural identity of the Mosul province with a historical argument:

*The Mosul vilayet, and even the region extending down to the north of Baghdad, have been in the hands of Turks for over eleven centuries.*

*At the time of the Abbasid Caliphs, these countries were in the hands of Turkish Governors and soldiers, and of a Turkish population. These Turkish Governors enjoyed complete independence and sovereign rights; the first of them was Itah (A.H. 229); among them Kir-Boga and Ak-Sungur distinguished themselves by the monuments of art and public utility which they set up.*

*Imad-el-Din Zengui, the son of Ak-Sungur, one of the Governors mentioned above, founded in Mosul the Turkish State of the Ata-Beys.*

*There were also Turkish States, where members of the dynasty of the Ata Beys ruled, at Sanjar and at Jazirat-ibn-Eumer, the region which forms the western portion of Mosul.*

*Later, the dynasty of the Artiks founded Turkish States at Mosul, at Jazirat-ibn-Eumer, at Kharput and at Mardin. Tall-Keif, situated near Mosul, was one of the principal fortresses of the Artiks, and El-Ghazi-Khan, a Sovereign of this dynasty, destroyed at Tall-Afar a large force of Crusaders.*

*There are to be found in these regions numerous monuments of art and public utility which these Sovereigns caused to be constructed, some of which are in ruins; there are also to be found in museums, numerous coins which they caused to be minted.*

*After the dynasties the Seljuk Turks made themselves masters of Mosul, they considerably embellished and increased it, and made the town the centre of a high civilization. It was only after the Seljuk Turks that the Osmanli Turks ruled over these countries.*

*As will be seen, this region has continuously been owned and governed by Turks for eleven centuries.*

*The territory between Baghdad and the south of the present frontier of the Mosul vilayet is described in ancient historical works under the name of Tataristan, which proves that a Turkish tribe had settled there. Traces may still be found of this appellation in the valley which is described in the maps under the name of Wadi Tatar.<sup>143</sup>*

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.: 376-377.

Apart from the ethnic origins of the Turkic-speaking and Kurdish-speaking communities of the region, the other two highly controversial issues were the questions of demographic distribution and popular will. Ismet Pasha, leading the Turkish delegation, evaluated the latest Ottoman statistics (1919) as follows, (a) Arab element is insignificant in the Sanjaks of Sulaimaniya and Kirkuk; (b) in the central Sanjak of Mosul are only 28,000 Arabs as against 137,000 Turks and Kurds; (c) in the whole Vilayet of Mosul there are 410,790 Turks and Kurds as against 43,210 Arabs and 31,000 non-Moslems.<sup>144</sup> In response, the British Government made a clear distinction between the Turkish and Kurdish populations based on the assumption that the two communities constituted two separate local identities. Lord Curzon's recent estimations of the Iraqi government for the Mosul vilayet (1921) were: 186,000 Arabs; 455,000 Kurds; 66,000 Turks 62,000 Christians; and 17,000 Jews. "The whole of the country," he added, "north of Mosul on the right bank of the Tigris to the northern boundary of the vilayet is inhabited by Arabs. The whole country south of Mosul on the right bank of the river is inhabited by Arabs. Most of the country south of Mosul on the left bank of the river up to the Erbil-Kirkuk-Kifri road is inhabited by Arabs... The Turkish population is only one-twelfth of the entire population of the vilayet. They are mainly situated in the towns of Erbil, Altinkopru, Kirkuk, and Kifri."<sup>145</sup>

Throughout the Lausanne Conference, the Turkish delegates insisted on conducting a plebiscite in Mosul as they supposed that the inhabitants of the province

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.: 340-341.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.: 355-56.

demanded re-union with Turkey, for they believed that in that case they would “cease to be colonized people and become citizens of an independent State.”<sup>146</sup> In response, the British claimed that the local people had already been consulted as to whether they wished in the future to remain united with or to be separated. By referring to the recent plebiscite (1921), Lord Curzon stated that “the Arab areas with the Kurdish district adjacent to them, and the Turkoman towns, all gave their votes, and with the exception of Kirkuk all voted for inclusion in the Iraqi state and for the accession of Faisal to the throne of Iraq.”<sup>147</sup> Ismet Pasha replied: “The plebiscite held in this country, not on the question of the mandate but on that of Amir Faisal, took place after the forcible repression of the revolt and under the pressure of the forces of occupation; it therefore cannot serve to prove the attachment of the population to the present regime.”<sup>148</sup>

Unable to reach a resolution at the Lausanne Conference (1922-1923), the two disputing states agreed to submit the subject to the arbitration of the League of Nations Council. The latter dealt with the Mosul question in three stages.<sup>149</sup> First, a commission of three members ‘with no apparent interest in the dispute’ was authorized to ‘investigate the facts’ on the spot (M. Wirsén, Swede, chairman; Count Teleki, Hungarian; Col. Paulis, Belgian). Next, a Council committee was assigned to report on the issue, and a provisional frontier line (referred to as *the Brussels Line*) was fixed, running slightly from

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.: 351.

<sup>147</sup> *Blue Book*, “Turkey,” No. 1, 1923, pp. 367; cited in the *League of Nations Council Report on the Question of the Frontier Between Turkey and Iraq*, September 30th, 1924, pp. 15.

<sup>148</sup> *Lausanne Conference* ibid.: 347.

<sup>149</sup> Wright 1926a.

the south of the northern boundary of the Mosul vilayet defining the military status quo. In the final stage, the Council, while examining the Wirsén Commission's report, requested an advisory opinion of the Permanent Court of International Justice on its power and procedure under the Lausanne Treaty.<sup>150</sup> The Court decreed, in November 1925, that the Council was competent to give a final decision by unanimous vote, excluding the votes of the disputing states, and thereby a resolution was reached by December 1925, which was substantially based upon the Wirsén commission's report:<sup>151</sup>

*Looking at the question entirely from the point of view of the interests of the populations concerned, the Commission considers that it would be to some advantage that the disputed area should not be partitioned.*

*On the basis of this consideration the Commission, having assigned a relative value to each of the facts which it has established, is of opinion that important arguments, particularly of an economic and geographical nature, and the sentiments (with all the reservations stated) of the majority of the inhabitants of the territory taken as a whole, operate in favour of the union with Iraq of the whole territory south of the 'Brussels line', subject to the following conditions:*

*(1) The territory must remain under the effective mandate of the League for a period which may be put at twenty-five years;*

*(2) Regard must be paid to the desires expressed by the Kurds that officials of Kurdish race should be appointed for the administration of the country, the*

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<sup>150</sup> The legal question on which the Council needed the Court's advisory opinion involved the interpretation of the Article 3 of the Treaty of Lausanne related to the frontier between Turkey and Iraq: "(2) With Iraq: From the point on the Tigris which constitutes the terminal point of the frontier referred to in paragraph (1) of this Article: A line to be fixed in accordance with the decision to be given thereon by the Council of the League of Nations." For the contents of the treaty, see *Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs (1922-1923): Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace*, pp. 688. The council was asking the Court's opinion on the following questions: "What is the character of the decision to be taken by the Council in virtue of Article 3, paragraph 2, of the Treaty of Lausanne – is it an arbitral award, a recommendation or a simple mediation? Must the decision be unanimous or may it be taken by a majority? May the representatives of the interested Parties take the part in the vote?" For full the content of the Court's advisory opinion, see Permanent Court of International Justice, *Interpretation of Article 3, Paragraph 2, of the Treaty of Lausanne (Frontier Between Turkey and Iraq)*, Advisory Opinion, 1925 (ser. B) No. 12 (Nov. 21), available at <http://www.icj-cij.org/pcij/index.php?p1=9&p2=2&p3=1&co=B12>.

<sup>151</sup> Wright 1926a.

*dispensation of justice, and teaching in the schools, and that Kurdish should be the official language of all these services.*<sup>152</sup>

As soon as the Council awarded the disputed territory to Iraq, Great Britain began negotiations with Turkey that resulted in the signature of a treaty at Ankara on June 5, 1926, whereby the latter recognized the boundary with slight rectifications in return for 10 % of Iraqi oil royalties<sup>153</sup> and neutralization of the frontier.

As usually argued, the ‘Mosul Question’ was resolved in accordance with the Wilsonian principles of *nationality* and *self-determination*, the two prevailing principles of political settlement in Europe of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were now being translated into non-Western contexts by the hands of the League. These principles, if not the project of mandate system proposed at Versailles (1920), became increasingly popular among the ruling elite and intellectuals of nationalizing states.<sup>154</sup> Turkey, as a non-member of the League, not only recognized the propriety of the principle by demanding a plebiscite for Mosul but also agreed to have the Council handle the northern frontier question.

The Wirsén Commission appointed by the Council anticipated that the ethnic-linguistic identity would be the decisive factor in popular will and desire.<sup>155</sup> Yet, regarding the Mosul case, the issue of self-determination was much more complicated

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<sup>152</sup> League of Nations, *Question of the Frontier Between Turkey and Iraq*, September 30, 1924, pp. 88-89.

<sup>153</sup> In 1925, before the Mosul Question was resolved, the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC), signed a long term concession agreement with Iraqi Government. For further details, see Chapter II.

<sup>154</sup> A group of intellectuals in Istanbul, led by Halide Edip and Ahmed Emin Yalman, established the Society for the Wilson Principles (*Wilson Prensipleri Cemiyeti*, 1919) soon after the Armistice of Mudros. The Society asked the United States in a memorandum to act for peace by mediating between Turkey and the Entente countries. See Tevetoğlu 1988.

<sup>155</sup> Shields 2004.

than expected. A highly cosmopolitan population lived together in the region for centuries under Ottoman sovereignty, with various religious and linguistic communities including, Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen of Sunni and Shiite sects as well as Assyrians, Armenians, Jews, and Yezidis. There were many who spoke more than one language and had mixed lineages, not to mention the strong commercial ties as well as cultural exchange in the wider region (including Anatolia, Syria, and Iran), to be disrupted with the emerging national borders. According to the commission's report, two significant 'non-identity' criteria complicated the process, which would lead the Council to decide in favor of Iraq – one, the security problem and the other, the economic concerns of the locals. The commission, thus, reported:

*[...] the fact seems to be established that, taking the territory as a whole, the desires expressed by the population are more in favor of Iraq than of Turkey. It must, however, be realized that the attitude of most of the people was influenced by the desire for effective support under the mandate, and by economic considerations, rather than by any feeling of solidarity with the Arab kingdom; if these two factors had carried no weight with the persons consulted, it is probable that the majority would have preferred to return to Turkey rather than to be attached to Iraq.<sup>156</sup>*

During the Lausanne talks over the Northern Frontier, Europeans' attitude toward the idea of plebiscite served, in a way, as a litmus paper, revealing the hegemonic state-biased approach to the principle of self-determination. The British argument was remarkably straightforward, deriving its banality from colonial prejudices and stereotypes:

*Let us imagine a plebiscite in Kurdistan. What would happen? As Ismet Pasha has said, the population is moving. The majority of the Kurds and great part of the Arabs are*

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<sup>156</sup> League of Nations, pp. 88; after Shields *ibid.*: 57.

*quite illiterate. They will not know how to vote; they have never seen a ballot box in their lives, and if they did they would probably throw it at your head. Then again, who is going to find the troops to keep order? How are you to explain to the people what they are to vote about? The Kurds would doubtless vote for an independent Kurdistan; the Arabs for an Arab State; the Turks for Turkish nationality; and the Christians for anything which will keep them away from the Turks. How can you define frontiers under such conditions? The result would be inextricable confusion, and the Great Powers would hold themselves up to ridicule. Plebiscites are only good for a unified, not a mixed, population, and for a single, not a confused, issue.*<sup>157</sup>

As for the Wirsén commission's opinion on a possible plebiscite in Mosul, it implied, likewise, that locals were not qualified to vote for their future:

*Education is in a rudimentary stage, the social organization is medieval or feudal, and consequently most of the people, even if they have opinions of their own, follow those of their tribal chiefs or the landowners, on whom they are dependent. The latter would accordingly give the orders for the voting, which would also be influenced by personal quarrels, more or less fortuitous sentiments, tribal rivalries, etc. It is highly probable also that the fear of Government reprisals would serve to impair the value of the result.*<sup>158</sup>

Thus, at the very moment that the *principle* of self-determination was introduced in Iraq, the local people of the country were denied the *right* to make decisions to determine their own future.

### **On the riddle of self-determination**

The mandate system emerged at the end of the First World War as a modified version of direct colonial rule, half-heartedly committed to peoples' free will, without seriously challenging the legitimacy of colonialism.<sup>159</sup> In the 1920s, the Wilsonian

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<sup>157</sup> *Lausanne Conference*, pp. 400.

<sup>158</sup> *League of Nations*, pp. 19.

<sup>159</sup> See Falk 2002.

doctrine of international liberalism would advocate the mandate project for Iraq in the following terms:

Imperialism as practiced by European nations in Africa, Asia, and the New World has often developed backward areas rapidly, but has frequently exploited or destroyed the natives, closed the door to world commerce, and led to dangerous rivalries among the imperial nations themselves as the available amount of exploitable territory has declined. On the other hand, complete self-determination of backward areas, as manifested during the past century in tropical Latin America and certain countries of Africa and Asia, has often led to insecurity, injustice, and decline in economic production. Furthermore, direct international government in the few cases where it has been tried, as in Samoa, Spitzbergen, and the New Hebrides, has brought bad administration and international rivalry and has generally ended in division of the territory.

The system contemplated by the Covenant seeks to preserve the good and eliminate the bad of each of these methods. By the theory of trusteeship for purposes described in concrete documents, it seeks to preserve the technical advantage of imperialism with elimination of its abuses. By the theory of tutelage of adolescent peoples in defined stages of development, it seeks to gain the benefits of self-determination for the sufficiently mature without its risks for the unprepared. By the theory of mandates under the League of Nations, it provides international supervision to assure the good faith of the trustee and the tutor, without the technical disadvantage of direct international government. Operation of the theories of trusteeship and tutelage are best illustrated by Iraq. The documents defining the powers of the trustee are more elaborate than in the case of any other mandated community. This has happened without as yet any active supervision by the League. The further history of Iraq will test the soundness of the Covenant's theory of the proper relation between advanced and backward peoples.<sup>160</sup>

A much older concept with variable content, 'self-determination' can be traced back to the French Revolution that gave birth to the principle of 'national sovereignty'. Until the First World War, the concept, without having any foundation in international law, was only inconsistently applied in Europe. Then, it was Lenin among political leaders who first proclaimed self-determination as an indispensable condition for peace in

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<sup>160</sup> Wright 1926b: 768-769 (emphasis added).



the world, which should be applied to all non-European colonized peoples.<sup>161</sup>

The Wilsonian view, which would prevail over the Bolshevik approach in the inter-war period, offered rather a constricted version of the concept, delimiting the scope of its application to the peoples of Europe and promoting self-government *within* the colonial order, thus seeking to maintain the status quo. The U.S. Secretary of State, Robert Lansing played a major role in shaping the fundamental premises of the doctrine so as to “favor considerations of national safety, historic rights, and economic interests over the principle of self-determination.”<sup>162</sup>

Woodrow Wilson’s speech of *Fourteen Points* (1918) was a harbinger of a new political geography where assumedly distinct ethnic communities (‘nation’s) are demarcated by state borders. The fate of the peoples who had been ruled by the Ottoman Empire was in particular, dictated by the twelfth principle:

“[...] The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.”

After considerable debated over the content and limits of self-determination, legal authorities would soon edit out the rhetoric that promoted autonomy by using, instead, paternalistic language. This process culminated in the institution of the mandate system at the Treaty of Versailles (January 10, 1920). The shifting approach, thus, redefined the

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<sup>161</sup> Lenin proposed in 1914 a strategic alliance between the proleteriat struggle and the right of nations to political self-determination, arguing that the former could be appropriated in service of anti-imperialist bourgeoisie movements in oppressed nations. See Lenin 1951. For a discussion on Lenin’s project, see Cassese 1995.

<sup>162</sup> Knight 1985: 255.

political destiny of the inhabitants of Ottoman territories in terms of Article 22 of the League's covenant:

“[...] Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such a time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.”<sup>163</sup>

Regarding scholarly debates revolving around the Wilsonian international order, there emerged two distinct and yet intertwined problems: one about the way the principle of self-determination had been applied across the world, and the other pointing to the very ambiguity inherent in the concept itself. The first question entails a critique of international politics of the inter-war period marked by European colonial/ mandate projects. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the limited application of the principle was still a subject of contention, for the resolution of which the UN Charter (1945) proposed “friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.”<sup>164</sup> As Richard Falk has noted, the Charter deliberately refers to self-determination as a ‘principle’ rather than a ‘right’, because it is only in 1960 that the principle was officially endorsed as a right by the UN: “All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”<sup>165</sup> Yet, Falk argues, the distinction of self-determination as a ‘principle’ and as a ‘right’ is

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<sup>163</sup> See *The Treaties of Peace* (1919-1923), vol. I, pp. 19-20.

<sup>164</sup> Chapter 1, Article 1, Clause 2; quoted in Knight *ibid.*: 259.

<sup>165</sup> Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples, Resolution 1514 [XV], December 14, 1960, Clause 2; quoted in *Ibid.*: 259.

ultimately inconsequential in legal terms, considering the limits envisioned for its application:

[...] In Article 73 [Chapter XI of the UN Charter] the well-being of the inhabitants is affirmed as “paramount,” but implementation is essentially left in the hands of the administering state. In all instances this vested legal authority is in a European or North American state (except for the geographic, yet not political or ethnic, exceptions of South Africa). The central commitment is expressed in Article 73(b) as one of working “to develop self-government,” but not necessarily national independence. Article 76(b) does anticipate “advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstance of each territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned.”

[...] the normative content is ambiguous, due partly to the vague textual language. The tone is paternalistic with respect to administration yet subversive if considered in relation to historical trends and the expected aspirations of subordinated peoples. This trust concept introduced into UN operations is relevant to the rights and circumstances of dependent peoples, but it was not meant to have any relevance to the legal circumstances of indigenous peoples. Such peoples have never been offered, nor have their representatives claimed, a trust status as understood in the UN Charter.<sup>166</sup>

Similarly, in the UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples (1960), the principle of self-determination was exclusively associated with claims posited against colonial rule, with additional emphasis placed on ‘national unity’ and ‘territorial integrity’: “Any attempt at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”<sup>167</sup>

Falk’s argument leads us to a conceptual problem. When taken as a *right*, ‘self-determination’ lends itself to two conceptions, one tending to define it as a *human*, and the other as a *national* right. The first conception, in which a strong emphasis is made on

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<sup>166</sup> Falk 2002a: 42.

<sup>167</sup> Resolution 1514, Clause 6; quoted in Ibid: 44.

the universalistic idea of justice, holds the state accountable to a universal civic society with its supra-state laws. This implies that self-determination is a right to be equally enjoyed by everyone, and thus, the *consent of the governed* was part and parcel of the process of state formation. On the other hand, in the second conception, where *nationality* is treated as the dominant principle, any possibility of the emergence of collective aspirations and desires beyond or against those of the state – or, any possibility of regional particularism that would threaten the territorial integrity of the nation-state – is swept under the rug.

The idealist perspective shaping the first conception was usually grounded in Kant's seminal essay, *Perpetual Peace* (1795), which suggests that individual ethics may be implemented in international law to judge the actions of states.<sup>168</sup> This essay emerged as one of the earliest texts on *cosmopolitanism*<sup>169</sup> in a historical context of absolutist statism condemned to anarchy when the phenomenon of 'nation' was still in its rudimentary phase. Thus, Kant's project of perpetual peace was a pre-nationalist attempt to reform the state-centric Westphalian world order by proposing the *cosmopolitan right* as a "form of right based on existing attachments that bind us into a collectivity larger

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<sup>168</sup> See Lynch 2002.

<sup>169</sup> The word is a composite of two Greek words, *kosmo* for 'world' and *polites* for 'citizen'. The concept of cosmopolitanism emerged in the 18th century French philosophy with direct reference to Renaissance humanism which designated intellectual ethics of universal humanism as opposed to regional particularism. See Cheah 1998. Kant had earlier given lectures on perpetual peace and written on the subject in his piece, *Idea Toward a Universal History in a Cosmopolitan Respect* (1784). Allen W. Wood notes that Kant was not the first to theorize on the 'right of nations' (*ius gentium*), and that the notion had existed back in ancient times to be developed further by early modern theorists such as Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf. It was later Leibniz and William Penn who advanced, in the late 17th century, the project of international authority in Europe for a perpetual peace between Christian peoples. As Wood also argues, Kant's immediate models, however, were Charles-Irénéé Castel, Abbé de Saint-Pierre, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. See Wood 1998.

than the state.”<sup>170</sup> Accordingly, the cosmopolitan right “can be claimed against states because ‘individuals and states, co-existing in an external relationship of mutual influences, may be regarded as citizens of a universal state of mankind’ (PP, 98-99n).”<sup>171</sup> Therefore, states were to be treated as *legal subjects*, just as individuals are, in full respect for the basic human rights of every citizen and always ready to cooperate with other states in pursuit of perpetual peace. Having argued thus, Kant conceived perpetual peace as a *natural end* to be achieved through nothing but human reason and its critical abilities. The institutional vista proposed towards this end was a “federation of peoples,” through which “a number of nations forming one state would constitute a single nation.”<sup>172</sup> Hence, the project of cosmopolitan order initiated by Kant was envisioned as a state of international affairs where the Revolutionary principle of national sovereignty would be harmonized with that of enlightened universalism working toward the perfect unity of humankind.<sup>173</sup>

A critical aspect of the Kantian project inherited by the liberal notion of self-determination is a moral philosophy grounded in autonomy of human will.<sup>174</sup> In his earlier work, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant introduces the formula of autonomy (FA), “the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal

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<sup>170</sup> Cheah *ibid.*: 24.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*: 24.

<sup>172</sup> Kant [1795] 1991: 102.

<sup>173</sup> Fine 2003.

<sup>174</sup> For ‘autonomy’ and ‘free will’, consult an earlier piece by Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* [1785] 2007: § 4:431-435; 4: 446-448.

law.” Beneath this proposition lay the attempt to establish a moral foundation for human freedom. It seems that Rousseau had direct and immediate influence on Kant’s formulation, specifically his view of the civil state of moral liberty, to wit “[T]o be driven by appetite alone is slavery, and obedience to the law one has prescribed for oneself is liberty.”<sup>175</sup> Kant concludes, likewise, that rational beings achieve freedom only through observance of laws that they have set down for themselves. Here, a peculiar correlation is established between reason and freedom: “Viewed negatively, reason provides the freedom from instinct that enables human beings to develop and perfect their nature generally. Yet reason also has a positively liberating side, as the capacity to give laws and set ends that are independent of –and even in certain ways diametrically opposed to– the ends set for human beings by their instincts and natural propensities.”<sup>176</sup>

The crux of the matter, as seen in this light, is that human history is imagined to move on a linear axis with a significant turning point where reason (destined for ‘human dignity’) has matured far enough to beat out nature (marked by ‘self-conceit’ and ‘unsociable sociability’) and becomes self-legislative.<sup>177</sup> Kant calls this historical threshold, ‘enlightenment’, a project and a process to be realized through free public critique of pure and practical reason. When taken as a historical task, enlightenment is focused on perpetual peace, a “cosmopolitan project in which the human race must unite

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<sup>175</sup> See Rousseau [1762] 1987: 151.

<sup>176</sup> Wood *ibid.*: 69.

<sup>177</sup> It is crucial to note here that nature and reason cooperate as well as conflict in the course of human progress. In Kant’s own words, “the mechanical process of nature visibly exhibits the purposive plan of producing concord among men, even against their will and indeed by means of their very discord.” See Kant [1795] *ibid.*:108. For the full discussion, see *First Supplement: On the Guarantee of a Perpetual Peace*.

if it is to advance in its historical vocation, and hence preserve its nature as a species destined to turn natural discord into rational concord.”<sup>178</sup>

The moral principle of autonomy as proposed by Kant implies that freedom of the human will is contingent on the maturity of reason. From this it follows that a ‘people’, assumed to act like an individual in an international system of rights, is granted the right to self-determination only when it is considered to be ‘sufficiently mature’. This is how the Kantian moral-political project was translated into the *theory of mandates*, as clearly observed in the passage quoted earlier in this section: “By the theory of adolescent peoples in defined stages of development, [the system contemplated by the Covenant] seeks to gain the benefits of self-determination for the sufficiently mature without the risks for the unprepared.”

Considering how the Wilsonian doctrine was enunciated and applied in the past, it is obvious that the ‘self’ in self-determination came to “signify in *all* circumstances the existing *states* constituting the international society.”<sup>179</sup> This observation leads us to the second conception of self-determination, which pursues the modernist ethos of the state-centric Westphalian world order with additional emphasis on ‘nationality’. In contemporary political reality, the juridical and territorial nation-state is the only viable and universally valid political community to tie different individual identities (religious, racial, ethnic etc.) with the civic bond of nationality. The issue at stake here is that the Westphalian principle of ‘sovereign nonintervention’ inherited by the doctrine operates in

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<sup>178</sup> Wood *ibid.*:71.

<sup>179</sup> Falk 2002a:33.

this reality to the disadvantage of sub-state groups. For “sovereignty in the past hundred years has come to apply as a legal presumption only to territories formally constituted, accepted, and recognized as states by other states in the international system of states.”<sup>180</sup> Thus, any autonomy-seeking attempt of a secessionist minority group is unjustifiable within the existing framework that in principle favors ethnic diversity and religious pluralism.<sup>181</sup>

An early historical example, analogous to the Mosul case, is the Aaland Islands that had been part of Finland for over a century and whose inhabitants claimed in 1920 the right to secede from the country and to become part of Sweden while the Finns proclaimed independence from Russia. The League of Nations Council took up the question with the British initiative although the Finns claimed that Finland was an independent state and the Aalanders’ case was a domestic issue, therefore the international community was not a competent authority to intervene. Following a series of international legal procedure, the Council sent a commission of rapporteurs to the Baltic to make recommendations on the political status of Finland as well as on the Aalanders’ case. About the principle of self-determination, the commission made the following remarks:

*To concede to minorities, either of language or religion, or to any fraction of a population the right of withdrawing from the community to which they belong, because it is their wish or their good pleasure, would be to destroy order and stability within*

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<sup>180</sup> Knight 1985: 256-257.

<sup>181</sup> See Falk 2002b.



*States and to inaugurate anarchy in international life; it would be to uphold a theory incompatible with the very idea of the State as a territorial and political unit.*<sup>182</sup>

In the end, the Council acted in accordance with the commission's report and recognized Finland's sovereignty over the islands, recommending certain minority guarantees.

In retrospect, this perspective enables us to consider Wilson's principles in terms of an integrative/ inclusive state project that emerged in response to rising nationalist sentiments among minority communities in Europe –just as the Bolsheviks came up with a quite different solution for the issue of centrifugal forces in Russia.<sup>183</sup> Then, what are the major implications of this process for those people who were denied access to the right of self-determination?

With the reorganization of the political space after the First World War, huge masses were left as minorities with an uneasy feeling of 'being mismatched' in the new territorial states to which they were attached by formal citizenship. Looking at East Central Europe, Rogers Brubaker writes that millions of people suffered the same fate after the war:

The post-World War I settlements, though ostensibly based on the principle of national self-determination, in fact assigned tens of millions of people to nation-states other than 'their own' at the same time that they focused an unprecedented attention on the national or putatively national quality of both persons and territories. Most fatefully, millions of Germans were left as minorities in the region's new or reconstituted (and strongly nationalizing) states, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia. They belonged by citizenship to these new states but by ethnic nationality to an initially prostrate but obviously still powerful external national homeland. Similarly, more than three million Hungarians suddenly became national minorities in Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, linked by shared ethnicity to their openly irredentist 'homeland'; while substantial Bulgarian and Macedonian minorities, assigned to Yugoslavia, Greece, and

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<sup>182</sup> Cited in Crawford 1979: 86, cited in Knight *ibid*: 258.

<sup>183</sup> See Knight *ibid*.

Romania, were linked by shared (or in the case of Macedonians, putatively shared) ethnic nationality to equally irredentist Bulgaria. Some 6 or 7 million Ukrainians and Belarusians in the eastern borderlands of nationalizing Poland were linked to larger co-ethnic populations in the Soviet Union who possessed their own nominally sovereign (and in the 1920s, culturally quite autonomous) 'national states' in the Soviet federal scheme.<sup>184</sup>

Another immediate consequence of the nationalization of political geography was mass displacement, a highly noticeable phenomenon during the prolonged disintegration of the Ottoman Empire that spanned over a century. A large-scale Muslim migration from Russia had started as early as 1859, and until 1922, approximately 4 million Circassians and Crimean Tatars were resettled in the core Ottoman domains.<sup>185</sup> Similarly, an estimated 1,445,000 persons of Turkish and Muslim descent migrated to Anatolia as the imperial lands in the Balkans shrunk.<sup>186</sup>

Social historians tend to discuss the wholesale restructuring of world populations, directly or indirectly caused by the First World War, in terms of the 'unmixing of peoples'. Regarding the (ex-)Ottoman territories, the process of 'unmixing' initially followed ethno-religious rather than ethno-linguistic lines.<sup>187</sup> For instance, it was not only Turkish speaking Muslims who fled the Balkans to Anatolia but also Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks and Serbo-Croat speaking Bosnians. Later, when a massive Greco-Turkish population exchange was enforced by the Lausanne Treaty, the peoples in question were defined in religious rather than ethnic terms. Language gained significance over time "as

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<sup>184</sup> Brubaker 1996: 6-7.

<sup>185</sup> Karpat 1985.

<sup>186</sup> Eren 1993.

<sup>187</sup> Marrus 1985, cited in Brubaker *ibid.*: 153.

the Ottoman rump state increasingly assumed an ethnically Turkish identity and as the Orthodox Christian Balkan successor states came into increasing conflict with one another.”<sup>188</sup>

In *Nationalism Reframed*, where he describes these historical processes, Brubaker makes the following observation about the problem of national self-determination:

To underscore the centrality of war to mass migrations of ethnic unmixing in the Balkans between 1875 and 1924 is not to suggest that it was war as such that was responsible for these migrations. It was rather a particular kind of war. It was war at high noon of mass ethnic nationalism, undertaken by states bent on shaping their territories in accordance with maximalist – and often fantastically exaggerated – claims of ethnic demography and committed to molding their heterogeneous populations into relatively homogeneous national wholes. Not all wars entail the massive uprooting of civilian populations. Wars fought in the name of national self-determination, however, where the national ‘self’ in question is conceived in ethnic rather than civic terms, but where the population is intricately intermixed, *are* likely to engender ethnic unmixing through migration, murder, or some combination of both. Migrations of ethnic unmixing were thus engendered not by war as such, but by war in conjunction with the formation of new nation-states and the ethnic ‘nationalization’ of existing states in a region of intermixed population and at a time of supercharged mass ethnic nationalism.<sup>189</sup>

This is not a new argument. It is still operative, however, if we are to problematize the liberal fallacies on self-determination, going as far as to cast doubt on Kant’s idealist perspective of ‘perpetual peace’. And this doubt owes a great deal to the Hegelian critique of Kant’s theory of cosmopolitan right.<sup>190</sup>

The contention between Kant and Hegel is not caused by the latter’s being against the cosmopolitan tradition. As Robert Fine argues, Hegel is usually viewed as regressive

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<sup>188</sup> Brubaker *ibid.*: 153.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*: 154-155.

<sup>190</sup> For a discussion on the Hegelian suspicion of Kant’s ‘perpetual peace’, see Fine *ibid.*

and nationalistic when compared to Kant's universalism;<sup>191</sup> but, in fact, he was first to recognize cosmopolitanism as a definite social form of right. His suspicion of Kant's theory of perpetual peace is, rather, meant to question the ideal system of right to be established through a federation of peoples and to operate through the 'Sublime Codes' (my expression) that this federation has set down for itself. While Kant is complaining about the depravity and lawlessness of the Westphalian international order, Hegel laments for the peculiar kind of violence inflicted by the emerging model of international relations. At the root of this model, he claims, there is a particular way of understanding freedom; and the modern form of violence is nothing but the offspring of this 'freedom' that seeks to annihilate every objective determination.<sup>192</sup> The modern understanding, thus, posits a "negative freedom", "with *absolute possibility* of *abstracting* from every determination in which I find myself or which I have posited in myself, the flight from every content as a limitation." Hegel also writes, "it is precisely through the annihilation of particularity and of objective determination that the self-consciousness of this negative freedom arises. Thus, whatever such freedom believes [*meint*] that it wills can itself [*für sich*] be no more than an abstract representation [*Verstellung*], and its actualization can only be the fury of destruction."<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> See, for instance, Adorno 1973.

<sup>192</sup> See Hegel [1821] 1991: §5 (pp. 38). About *freedom of the will*, see also § 4, 6, and 7.

<sup>193</sup> Fine points out that this violence emerges from "a subjectivism which abstracts certain moral principles from utilitarian considerations and raises them to supreme status." Fine *ibid.*: 620.

It is very unlikely that perpetual peace would ever appear on the horizon under the given circumstances of a “league of sovereigns,”<sup>194</sup> which Kant had once envisioned as an opposite image of the Westphalian model, the latter reminding of Hobbes’ ‘state of nature’. That is so because the egoistic and nasty nature of human beings, the animating force behind sovereign states’ propensity to war, could only be tamed but not annihilated when states coalesce to form a federation<sup>195</sup>. As Hegel writes, such a political body in its individuality would eventually generate its own enemies and oppositions, and the member states would clash with each other where there is a conflict between their particular interests.<sup>196</sup>

### **The minority question in Iraq**

Self-determination has been for a long time a core principle and fundamental right in international law. As a ‘principle’, it was incorporated into the 1941 Atlantic Charter and the Dumbarton Oaks proposals that evolved into the United Nations Charter.<sup>197</sup> A few decades later, it was recognized as a ‘right’ of “all peoples” in the first article common to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1976). This led to the establishment of self-determination as an integral part of the universally applied human rights law. It is now stated that compliance with the right to self-determination is a fundamental condition for

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<sup>194</sup> See Hegel *ibid.*: §324.

<sup>195</sup> Fine *ibid.*: 621.

<sup>196</sup> Hegel *ibid.*: §324.

<sup>197</sup> Walt and Seroo (ed.) 1998.

the enjoyment of other rights and fundamental freedoms, be they civil, political, economic, social, or cultural.<sup>198</sup> On the other hand, there is still no agreement in international legal discourse to determine the full list of such rights and to identify the titleholders to self-determination. In addressing the question, legal experts have sought to make conceptual distinctions between social groups, such as nation/ people, indigenous people, and minority. It is, however, accepted that these categories are “not necessarily mutually exclusive, and some groups may evolve from one category to another as circumstances change.”<sup>199</sup> The blurred boundaries between ‘indigenous people’ and ‘minority’ is particularly revealing in this respect. The most widely accepted definition of ‘indigenous people’ was proposed by Jose Martinez Cobo, the Special Rapporteur of the U.N. Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and on Protection of Minorities (hereafter the SPDPM):

Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.<sup>200</sup>

As for the concept of minority, the SPDPM has defined a set of criteria, including numerical inferiority, non-dominant position in political terms as well as ethnic,

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.: 10.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.: 12.

<sup>200</sup> Jose Martinez Cobo, *Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations*, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/Add.4, para 379, quoted in *ibid.*: 12.

linguistic, cultural or religious characteristics distinct from other communities in a country. It is generally understood that while ‘peoples’ (read as nation) have the right to self-determination under the international law, minorities do not possess such a right. On the other hand, there are also “some communities appear to fit none of the categories precisely and yet contain elements of one or more of the categories. Kosovo, for example, is considered by some to be an Albanian national minority region within Serbia, but it is not so defined by the Kosovars themselves. The Albanians of Kosovo is also distinct political entity in its own right with a credible claim to self-determination.”<sup>201</sup>

The minority protection system has a longer history that goes back to the Lausanne Peace Treaty. Developed under the auspices of the League of Nations, the system was selectively applied to three groups of states in and within the periphery of Europe: the defeated states (Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey), states whose borders were re-drawn (such as Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia), and states whose admission to the League was dependent upon their treatment of minorities (such as Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Iraq). Each of the states was held responsible before the emerging international law for granting minorities positive rights and providing the institutional facilities to enable the exercise of these rights. The first constitution of Iraq (1925), thus, explicitly defined the affirmative duties of the state for protecting the minority rights:

The various communities shall have the right of establishing and maintaining schools for the instruction of their members in their own tongues, provided that such instruction

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.: 12.

is carried out in conformity with such general programmes as may be prescribed by the law. (Article 16)

After lengthy deliberations and negotiations, the League of Nations announced on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1932 the membership of Iraq as the first independent ex-mandate state. The declaration made at Baghdad on the occasion of the termination of the mandatory regime included articles that sought to assure the international community that the Iraqi government would be committed to the principles of minority protection. A particular emphasis was placed on the linguistic rights of the minority groups:

#### Article 5

Iraqi nationals who belong to racial, religious or linguistic minorities will enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Iraqi nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to maintain, manage and control at their own expense, or to establish in the future, charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their religion freely therein.

#### Article 9

1. Iraq undertakes that in the liwas of Mosul, Arbil, Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya, the official language, side by side with Arabic, shall be Kurdish in the qadhas in which the population is predominantly of Kurdish race.

In the qadhas of Kifri and Kirkuk, however, in the liwa of Kirkuk, where a considerable part of the population is of Turcoman race, the official language, side by side with Arabic, shall be either Kurdish or Turkish.

2. Iraq undertakes that in the said qadhas the officials shall, subject to justifiable exceptions, have a competent knowledge of Kurdish or Turkish as the case may be.

3. Although in these qadhas the criterion for the choice of officials will be, as in the rest of Iraq, efficiency and knowledge of the language, rather than race, Iraq undertakes that the officials shall, as hitherto, be selected, so far as possible, from among Iraqis from one or other of these qadhas.



The Iraqi case stands out as a typical example of the suspension of law in authoritarian regimes. Soon after the declaration of independence, with the Local Languages Act (1932), ethno-linguistic minorities (Kurds and Turkmen) were allowed to use their mother tongue at public offices, including schools and courts, in places (northern Iraq) where they constitute the majority of population. Yet, as of 1937, the Act was de facto invalid. The government prohibited education in Turkish at schools in districts outside Kirkuk, while allowing Turkish only as a foreign language class at schools within Kirkuk.<sup>202</sup>

The Revolution of 1958 that replaced the monarchic regime with a Republican government had potential significance for the development of minority rights in Iraq. In accordance with the emergent rhetoric of ‘the will of the nation’, the new interim constitution stated that

The Iraqi entity is established on the basis of cooperation among all citizens by respecting their rights and sustaining their freedom. The Arabs and the Kurds are considered partners in the country and this constitution recognizes their ethnic rights in a Unified Iraq. (Article 3)<sup>203</sup>

The expression of ‘partner’ should be read against the political context of the time marked by a growing coalition of the Kurdish insurgent groups and the Communists (ICP), the immediate victors of the revolution, whose political influence in national politics would soon be seriously challenged by the rising power of the Pan-Arab socialist Ba‘th Party. It seems that the republican government did not undertake any further

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<sup>202</sup> Hurmuzlu 2006. On the educational policy of the monarchic government in Iraq, see Simon 2004: 69-105.

<sup>203</sup> Al-Hirmizi *ibid*: 31.

measures toward the protection of all minorities in Iraq, and rather, sought to evade the minority question with an ad hoc law that addressed only the Kurds.

A group of the Ba‘thist and Arab nationalist officers carried out a military coup in 1963 to replace Qasim. The new government came up with another constitution (1964) that reiterated almost the same statement related to the Kurds without any reference to other non-dominant social groups in Iraq.

The Iraqis are legally equals in rights and duties and not subject to any discrimination because of race, origin, religion or any other cause. Moreover, this constitution recognizes the ethnic rights of the Kurds within a unified brotherly Iraq nationality. (Article 19)<sup>204</sup>

Next, the 1968 and 1970 constitutions were drafted during the Ba’th government, with similar articles that recognized the ‘legitimate rights’ of the minorities without explaining what is meant by ‘legitimate right’ and which groups (other than Kurds) would be included in the minority status. It was only a brief period of time (circa 1970-1974) that the Turkmen community was allowed to have education in the Turkmen language (with Arabic script) at primary schools, and thereby new schools were opened under Turkish names in and around the Kirkuk city, all to be closed down in 1974.<sup>205</sup>

The failure in implementing these laws is usually explained merely by the antidemocratic nature of the Iraqi governments. Here, I look at the issue from another angle, and argue that the persistent denial of minority rights by successive Iraqi

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.: 32.

<sup>205</sup> This argument is based on oral and written accounts by the Iraqi Turkmen.

governments is closely related to the way the problem of ‘cultural rights’ has been formulated in international juridical context.

The international law on human rights was founded as a response to the atrocities of Nazi Germany,<sup>206</sup> and this specific historical context led the legal language to adopt an exclusively individualist approach toward the protection of minorities. As a result, the state and the individual emerged as “the two poles around which the legal personalities [were] organized.”<sup>207</sup> The common understanding was that “if the individual human rights were properly guaranteed, special provisions for minority rights were unnecessary,” and that the principle of non-discrimination would indirectly protect minorities.<sup>208</sup> The international legal discourse, thus, came up with the following clusters of human rights:

1. Rights of individuals, peoples, groups, and minorities to existence and protection from physical suppression. At the individual level this is expressed as the right to life, of which an individual may be deprived through due process of law. At the collective level this is recognized through the Convention of Genocide which makes the physical suppression of a group punishable.
2. Rights of individuals not to be discriminated against on grounds of membership of a minority group.
3. Rights of persons belonging to racial and ethnic groups not to be the objects of hate or hostile propaganda.
4. Prohibitions against actions meant to destroy or endanger the existing character, traditions and culture of such groups.

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<sup>206</sup> Goldman 1994, Addis 1992, cited in Kurban 2003.

<sup>207</sup> Das 1996: 85.

<sup>208</sup> Goldman *ibid*: 52, cited in Kurban *ibid.*: 153-154.

5. Rights of persons belonging to ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities to preserve their culture and language, and rights of persons belonging to religious minorities to practice and profess their religion.<sup>209</sup>

The most widely debated issue about this language is that it has posited the individual as the only subject of all these rights. The only exception seems to be the expressions related to the crime of genocide, where an emphasis is placed upon the preservation of social groups which could not be classed as the beneficiaries of the right to self-determination. But, even in that context, there is no legally binding agreement on the crime of *cultural* genocide.<sup>210</sup>

A particular legal reference for the preservation of minority groups and their particular cultures is the Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>211</sup>:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their groups to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

Article 27 does not fall outside the pattern with its exclusive focus on individual rights. As Veena Das has remarked, “the crucial phrase in this article is ‘*in community with other members of their groups*’”. It would seem from this phrase that a collective dimension of rights is being recognized only in the form of associational rights, so the

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<sup>209</sup> Sacerdoti 1983, cited in Das *ibid*: 86.

<sup>210</sup> Das *ibid*.

<sup>211</sup> The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was opened for signature on 19 December 1966, and ratified by Iraq on 25 January 1971. See [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-4&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&lang=en).

individuals can, in community with other individuals with similar characteristics, enjoy these rights.”<sup>212</sup>

The individualist bias of the international legal system is not the only reason for its inadequacy to protect minority groups in member states. The juridical discourse is evidently ineffective, as many scholars have argued, largely because it fails to impose an affirmative duty on the states to facilitate mechanisms towards ensuring the preservation of minority cultures.<sup>213</sup> It has rather sought to guarantee a negative right to be free from discrimination, without obliging the states to establish and preserve the institutions necessary for the survival of the sub-national cultures. The U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) is widely accepted as an important attempt in improving the juridical context towards a language that imposes affirmative obligations on states to ensure the private as well as public use of minority languages. However, such obligations have been criticized for excluding the duty to provide the facilities for education in and of minority language. Moreover, the declaration has not been transformed into a legally binding covenant with a corresponding treaty body.<sup>214</sup>

It can be argued that a considerable progress has been made in the international legal system in addressing the question of the protection of minorities, yet there remain many unresolved issues, including the definition of ‘minority’. The most widely accepted

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<sup>212</sup> Das *ibid.*: 87.

<sup>213</sup> See Kurban *ibid.*, Das *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Kurban *ibid.*

formulation was proposed by Francesco Capotorti (1979), the Special

Rapporteur of the SPDPM:

A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.<sup>215</sup>

As evident in this definition, for a non-dominant social group to be classed as the beneficiaries of rights, it must meet not only objective (size of population, biological survival, cultural particularity etc.) but also subjective criteria. In particular, the group must demonstrate a *collective will to preserve* stable ethnic, religious, or linguistic traditions markedly different from those of the rest of the population.<sup>216</sup> The major problem with this understanding is that it places a great emphasis on minority consciousness, without taking into consideration the dominant culture's attitude toward minorities, which is highly critical in shaping this consciousness. As Dilek Kurban puts it, "where the state pursues a policy of recognition and inclusion, minorities have no

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<sup>215</sup> Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities Submitted by Mr. Francesco Capotorti, the Special Rapporteur of the U.N. Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, ¶ 568, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/384/REV.1 (1979), cited in Kurban *ibid.*: 158-159.

<sup>216</sup> In debating the definition of minority, international legal experts came up with a conceptual distinction between *national* minorities and *cultural* minorities. The former refers to "groups within a state who are long established in a particular territory that they regard as their homeland and whose members are bound together by a common consciousness and culture." The latter refers to "immigrants and their descendents – people who have uprooted themselves from their homelands to resettle in a new territory in a new polity." As Dilek Kurban explains, "the individual mode of dislocation detaches [the cultural] minorities from the [communities] with whom they share historical roots –and therefore strips them from meeting the critical objective criteria – and their desire to integrate into the dominant culture of their new homelands disqualifies them from fulfilling the subjective criteria. Hence, cultural minorities do not meet the requirements for legal recognition as minorities and the subsequent entitlements to rights that follow." Kurban also notes, "the argument that immigrant groups do not meet the objective and subjective criteria does not by itself negate the possibility of exceptional cases where immigrants may in fact turn into national minorities." Kurban *ibid.*: 160.

reason to avoid interacting with the majority for fear of the extinction of their own culture. If, however, the state opts for non-recognition, forced assimilation, or oppression, this leads individuals to minimize their interaction with the dominant culture and seek refuge in their communities.”<sup>217</sup>

### **Concluding remarks**

Towards the end of this chapter, I have dealt with the international legal discourse on minority rights as one of the discursive forces at work in the formation of politicized Turkmen identity. ‘Modern Iraq’ is a product of the Wilsonian international order, which, as a nascent nation-state, was regarded too immature to be fully independent at the moment of its foundation. The right to self-determination and self-government would be granted only if a state were considered sufficiently mature – just like a rational, sovereign, adult being who can be held responsible for his actions. That’s how the Kantian moral-political project was translated into the theory of mandates.

A minority protection system was developed around the same time that a mandate government was established in Iraq. Under this system, the Iraqi state was held responsible before the emerging international law for protecting the cultural rights of its minorities. That is how the relevant articles of the first Iraqi constitution and those of the 1932 Declaration of Independence were determined. During the inter-war period, the international legal discourse on minority rights placed an emphasis on language as the most visible marker of cultural identity or difference. On the other hand, the

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.: 159-160.

individualistic approach of the human rights discourse, largely shaped after the Second World War, puts the collective rights of minorities in jeopardy.

As I discussed Iraq's failure in implementing the laws designed to protect collective rights of the non-dominant social groups in the country, I argued that the persistent denial of minority rights by the successive Iraqi governments is closely related to the way the problem of 'cultural rights' has been formulated in the international juridical context. In arguing so, I problematized the hegemonic notion of human rights that is centered on the concept of the sovereign individual, a concept rooted in the contractarian theory that goes back at least as far as Hobbes, which exclusively defines the individual and the state as the two contracting or opposing legal personalities. One could argue that significant progress has been made in the international legal system concerning collective rights, especially if we consider the language of the Convention of Genocide or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified by Iraq in 1971). But, still, as much as the latter places emphasis on the preservation of social groups that are not granted the right to self-determination, as Das (1996) has noted, it does not fall outside the pattern with its exclusive focus on individual rights.

This discussion on the Iraqi governments' violation of communal rights leads us to our real subject matter, the experience of Iraqi modernity at a minority location,<sup>218</sup> which I will discuss at some length in the rest of the thesis. With a particular focus on the Turkmen, I will look at multiple dimensions of 'minority existence' in the Iraqi context,

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<sup>218</sup> I have borrowed this expression from Aamir Mufti (2007).



such as the violation of communal rights (e.g. education in native language), refusal of particular identity, and forced displacement.

### **CHAPTER III : BECOMING MINOR IN IRAQ: NATIONALIZATION, MARGINALIZATION, AND ETHNIC MELANCHOLY**

Iraq is usually characterized as a ‘weak’ state. Sami Zubaida (1991:208) describes this weakness in terms of the limited institutional penetration of the political power into the social domain, which implies that the state is much less efficient than other countries in the region, particularly Egypt, in producing “a homogenous and governable population.” There are two major consequences of this; one is the unavailability of a hegemonic civic Identity (*Iraqiness*), and the other is the proliferation of sub-national competing identities produced or reproduced in an antagonistic relation with state ideology.<sup>219</sup> The contemporary Turkmen ethnicity is one such particular identity that emerged at the margins of a dominant Arab culture as a minority discourse. As a matter of fact, it is a function not only of the weakness of the Iraqi state but of a whole historical process of nationalization and marginalization. Speaking of the Turkmen in particular, I am referring to a process that entailed displacement in social positioning, which can be explained as an experience of downward mobility of an imperial element that was once favored by the state administration to a national minority with only limited access to decision-making processes.

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<sup>219</sup> The constitutive role of antagonism in the process of identity formation will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Viewed in this way, Turkmen ethnicity signifies a particular mode of selfhood that is conditioned by the minority existence of the people involved in this process. What I call ‘minority existence’ is a *matter of subject-position rather than a question of essence*,<sup>220</sup> “that can only be defined, in the final analysis, in ‘political’ terms, that is, in terms of the effects of economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, social marginalization, and ideological domination on the cultural formation of minority subjects and discourses.”<sup>221</sup>

The Ottoman state was a world empire extending over a vast and highly diversified cultural geography. Therefore, social dynamics producing localities were remarkable in Iraq at the turn of the twentieth century, when the monarchy was installed by a foreign power and a non-Iraqi Arab noble was crowned. As Zubaida (2000: 364) writes,

For the majority of people throughout the Ottoman lands the ‘*millet* model’ of social organization and of social solidarities persisted, arguably to the present day, but superimposed on ideas of nationality. Ottomanism and subsequently Arab or regional nationalisms were modern ideologies of nationality and state formation for the intelligentsia, but for the common people they were often understood in communalistic terms: Muslims against Christians and Jews (including Europeans, then Israel); Arab *versus* Kurd or Turk in terms of personalized neighborhoods and communities. In Iraq this was further accentuated by the Sunni-Shi‘i divide, and the proximity of Iran and Turkey as the protagonists of the two sects. A kind of communalistic model of international relations emerged in the region (and still in operation), which classified local religious and ethnic groups alongside their foreign co-religionists and ethnic kin.

Thus, the Iraq example also instantiates how the notions of locality and community “refer both to a demarcated physical space and to clusters of interaction” that

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<sup>220</sup> Cf. Kaplan 1987.

<sup>221</sup> JanMohammed and Lloyd 1987:11.

cannot be contained within the boundaries of a territorial state.<sup>222</sup> This implies that the persistence of ethnic attachments among Iraqi Turkmen, which lead them to imagine themselves a *community*, should be studied as a process that takes place within an overarching transnational socio-political field, where Turkish nationalism emerges as a crucial ideological force in the production of their ethnic subjectivity.

Based upon these historical arguments, this chapter intends to address one of the main questions of the dissertation: How is ethnic selfhood produced through the experience of marginalization in a nation-state? It focuses on a moment in the national history of Iraq, an event that turned out to be a traumatic experience for the people involved. More specifically, it goes back to the annexation of the Mosul province to Iraq in order to rethink about this moment from the perspective of the ‘Mosul Turks’ (Turkmen), who were subjected to forced incorporation into an Arab state.

### **The Iraqi state and the problem of consent**

The Iraqi state suffered for decades the lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the masses of population. These masses included various identity and interest groups besides the Turkmen, a considerable part of which were those who had been unfavorably affected by the advance of the West’s might and capital in the region. The anti-British revolt of 1920 (*al-thawra*) was the first in a series of popular protests of the twentieth century against the effects of Iraq’s integration into the capitalist world market and the disruption

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<sup>222</sup> Gupta and Ferguson 1992:7. For a general discussion on the material and symbolic forces of locality against those of the national state, see Appadurai 2003.

of the local economy that this entailed.<sup>223</sup> The revolt was instigated and led by a coalition of social strata that represented otherwise different, at times irreconcilable, interests and desires: “*chalabis* bound up with the old modes of transport; ‘aristocrat’-officials connected with the former Ottoman administration; the [Shi‘i] *mujtahids* or [Sunni] *ulama*, the chief exponents of the hereditary social conceptions; landed tribal shaikhs or tribal *sadah*, who resented the unaccustomed rigor in English revenue collection or had been badly affected by the English management of the Euphrates waters.”<sup>224</sup> Sunnis fought shoulder to shoulder with Shi‘is, Arabs with Turks, townsmen from Baghdad with tribesmen from Euphrates.

The modern state of Iraq was “to a considerable extent an artificial creation implanted by the British, who relied on tribal shaikhs and a monarchy imported from the Arabian peninsula to secure their domination of the country.”<sup>225</sup> The first quarter of the twentieth century was marked by the increase in economic and political power of Arab shaihkhs and Kurdish aghas and the transformation of poorer tribesmen into landless sharecroppers, which eventually resulted in growing hostility of the rural populace and the new urban poor to the monarchy. Thirty-four out of a total of ninety-nine seats in the 1924 Constitutional Assembly were occupied by the indirectly elected shaikhs and aghas, excluding the tribal chiefs who were simultaneously *sadah* or leaders of mystic orders. Batatu compares this figure with that in the Ottoman period, when tribal chiefs had not

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<sup>223</sup> Batatu *ibid.*, cited in Beinín 1986:553.

<sup>224</sup> Batatu *ibid.*:1114.

<sup>225</sup> Beinín *ibid.*:553.

been powerful enough to sit in the *Majlis-i Mebusan* (National Assembly). In the Chamber of Deputies elected in 1914, only one out of thirty-four deputies representing Iraqi provinces descended from a shaikhly family, but he was a ‘townsman by birth and ideas’. The representative capacity of tribal shaikhs significantly increased until 1958, when they finally got 35.9 percent of parliament seats.<sup>226</sup>

If we stick to class-based analyses, it is not surprising to observe the rise of the communist party (ICP) in Iraq during the forties and fifties, as the latter was quite effective in mobilizing the masses frustrated by increasingly deepened income inequality. However, the ICP was able to receive substantial support from all classes, including urban intelligentsia, civil servants, workers, and slum dwellers. To many, this indicated that the party emerged as a venue for organizing different oppositional forces and mobilizing different identities. Ethnic and religious bias of the Iraqi state played a key part in the increasing popularity of the ICP particularly with the Shi‘is<sup>227</sup> and the Kurds.

Needless to say, there was a limit to the communist influence in Iraq; for example, the Turkmen of Kirkuk, usually characterized as a middle- and upper-middle class urban group, never got along well with the Communists. Yet, their class identity is not the only reason why most of the Turkmen did not subscribe to communism in the past. The Turkmen was reluctant to affiliate with any of the Iraqi or Arab parties, and I argue, this was closely related to a profoundly felt crisis of national belonging. I remember an

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<sup>226</sup> Batatu *ibid.*:95, 103.

<sup>227</sup> As Yitzhak Nakash (2003:25) notes, “following the massive conversion of the bulk of Iraq’s nominally Sunni Arab tribes to Shi‘ism mainly during the nineteenth century [the] share of the Shi‘is grew to its 1919 and 1932 estimates of 53 and 56 percent of the population, respectively.”

informant criticizing their forefathers: “We would consider Kirkuk part of Turkey, not of Iraq. We would see ourselves superior to every other Arab and Kurd. It was so because the Arabs and Kurds in our region were all rural [‘backward’, ‘uncultured’] while we were urban [‘civilized’, ‘educated’] civil servants since the Ottoman times.” So, the Arabs established political parties, including those addressing the wider population, but the Turkmen, did not enroll. “[They] only directed [their] gaze at Istanbul and Ankara.”

I suggest that the Turkmen’s unwillingness to participate in Arab politics was rooted in their anxiety of being assimilated into the dominant Arab culture. The community politics of the Turkmen, I maintain, followed a similar pattern during the post-monarchic period. They were not able to find their niche in any of the political parties; they instead got organized around local *Turkist* leaders.<sup>228</sup> The following section will provide a brief discussion on the historical development of Turkism in the late Ottoman Empire and the hegemonic discourse on “Outside Turks” that became prevalent in various nationalist circles in Turkey during the early Republican period.

The main argument here is that there is a problem of popular consent, a problem of recognition of the emerging Arab state, and the Turkmen makes a good case in this respect. From the perspective of the first generation of Turkmen, Iraq was nothing more than a ‘fake’ state, founded by the ‘*gavur*’ (infidel and merciless, referring to the British) and his Arab collaborators who were ‘too inept to run a state on their own’. One of my informants referred to the Turkmen’s disaffection with the Arab state in Iraq as follows:

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<sup>228</sup> On the historical development of Turkism, see the following section.

“To our grandparents, Iraq was a non-existent state... One day I took my grandfather to Baghdad. At one of the checkpoints on our way, we were asked to show our ID’s. My grandfather started to yell at the Arab officer: ‘Who is this state with shitty ass! I’ve got Abdulhamid’s *tezkere* [identification document]!’”

It is quite possible to think about the aversion of this generation to the Arab government in the context of certain set of habits of thinking that generated a stereotype of disloyal and cunning Arab who shot the Turks in the back. Let me remind that Amir Faisal who was enthroned by the British rulers as the first King of the monarchic state in Iraq was a descendent of the Hashemite dynasty of Hijaz, and the son of Sharif Hussein, who was a leading figure in the Arab Revolt during the First World War. The dissonance of the local Turks and Turkmen with the new monarchic government installed at the hands of the British is quite obvious, especially when we consider that they mobilized against the British colonizers in the Mosul province during and after the war. Besides the historical and personal narratives, I was also able to track the precarious relations between the local Turkmen and the mandate government in the British official records. In the following section, I will refer to the reports of the Special Service Offices in Kirkuk and Suleimaniyah about the local insurgent figures, to which the British referred as ‘bad hats’. These documents, dating from 1925, included the lists of ‘pro-Turks,’ with names of some ex-Ottoman officials, merchants, and Muslim clerics, including a few well-known figures whose descendants I happened to meet and interview during my fieldwork in Istanbul and Ankara.



### **Turkish nationalism, Turkism, and the question of ‘Outside Turks’**

Turkish nationalism, as historians say, is a latecomer, which was largely shaped by the German model at a time when the First World War put an end to all empires and nationalism was about to achieve worldwide hegemony.<sup>229</sup> Until nationalism became a viable political option for the Ottoman ruling class, Islamism and Ottomanism had remained as the two predominant ideological forces in the empire. The Arabic word for ‘nation’, *millah* (*millet* in Turkish) was used in a totally different context referring to ‘religious community’, particularly non-Muslims, whose cultural rights and self-autonomy were granted through what is known as the *millet system*.

The Ottoman ruling class remained, at least until the Balkan wars (1912-13), loyal to the cosmopolitan ideals of Ottomanism, which they conceived as the only way to carry the empire intact into modernization. This long-lasting commitment to Ottomanism was not simply a sign of naïve optimism about the viability of the empire. The political elite was of various confessions and ethnic origin, and “there was no opportunity for a sentiment of Turkishness to arise naturally as a supremacist ideology of the imperial centre”.<sup>230</sup> Even if the identification of an ethnically distinct Turkish identity dates back to earlier periods<sup>231</sup>, it was not until the First World War that the ruling cadres of the Young Turks proclaimed nationalism as an ideological project.<sup>232</sup> In a similar argument,

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<sup>229</sup> See Keyder 2005.

<sup>230</sup> Keyder 2005:4.

<sup>231</sup> Kushner 1977.

<sup>232</sup> Keyder *ibid*.

Taner Akcam refers to the memoirs of Halil Mentese, the President of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies for much of the Young Turks Period: “ [As Mr. Mentese claimed,] because the Turks were obliged to unite various communities within the country, they did not dare to announce in parliament that they were Turks. Upon loosing a great segment of its non-Muslim minority population in the Balkan Wars, the Committee of Union and Progress, which until then had been unable to make Turkism a necessary component of its rule, now pulled out all the stops. ”<sup>233</sup>

The belatedness of Turkish nationalism has a lot to do with a strong Islamist strand of Ottomanism among the state elite and an intelligentsia that was highly critical of the modernization or Westernization efforts of the nineteenth century. In looking at the the classical Ottoman period, one notices that religion was the primary marker of identity, which shaped to a large extent a sense of social solidarity among the subjects (*reaya*) of the Sultan and guaranteed their consent to the hegemonic order of the Ottoman dynasty. The sultan derived the legitimacy of his absolute power from an understanding of divine justice, and this would naturally exalt him over the *reaya* as the ‘preserver of eternal order’ and the representative of God’s will on earth.<sup>234</sup> Given that the empire occupied a vast geography, local affiliations were also conspicuous based on language, kinship, or tribal networks; yet, in the case of Muslim subjects, local identities did not necessarily clash with a sense of belonging to a ‘sacral community’ (*umma*). “It was more important

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<sup>233</sup> Akcam 2004:65.

<sup>234</sup> This conception of state power, that prevailed until the early modern period, was the underlying cause of the persistence of a complex agrarian-military system, which was quite distinct from that of the modernizing West in terms of the relations of production and of property it entailed. See Aricanli and Thomas 1994; Cin 1978; Keyder and Tabak 1991; Inalcik 1973; Salzman 1993.

to most Arabic-speakers that they were Muslims and subjects of the sultan than they spoke Arabic at home.”<sup>235</sup>

Historically speaking, the standardization of language and the printing revolution worked to dislodge religion as the primary marker of identity as the subjects of polyglot empires started to imagine that they took part in a new politico-social realm.<sup>236</sup> Yet, there are so many cases across the world where religion was frequently manipulated by the ruling elite and ‘organic intellectuals’ alike for mass mobilization in anti-colonial projects, in the course of national identity making, or simply for the reproduction of social hegemony. Turkey and Iraq are exemplary in this respect. Prior to the foundation of these two nation-states, when the Ottoman Empire was in the throes of modernization with the *Tanzimat* (Reordering) Program (1839-1876), and yet each passing day it got more and more dependent on Europe in financial terms, Islamism revived among an enlarging group of bureaucrats and intellectuals, known as the Young Ottomans, calling for a return to ‘the fundamental values and tradition of the civilization’ to shield the popular culture and morality from Western influence.

Nevertheless, the same conditions that stimulated Pan-Islamism also led to the flourishing of Turkish nationalism:

The very idea of nation, as it had been developed in the nineteenth-century Europe and advocated by so many nationalists of the Ottoman minorities, cannot have been ignored entirely by the Ottoman intellectuals. Though Ottomanism promoted the idea of the motherland, with all subjects, regardless of religion and race, equal before the law and loyal to the same Ottoman dynasty, the refusal of the minority nationalists to accept that

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<sup>235</sup> Cole and Kandiyoti 2002: 191.

<sup>236</sup> Anderson 1991.

equality, the success of national unity movements in Germany and Italy, and nationalist aspirations of non-Turkish Muslim groups in the empire led to an awareness of the Turkish identity and almost forced the germination of Turkish nationalism.<sup>237</sup>

In the meantime, there was a growing number of European Orientalists and Turcologists who systematically studied the Turkic cultures of Central Asia, thereby came up with a eulogistic scholarly discourse on the merits of Turkish language and traditions. Their findings about the pre-Islamic Turkish past would serve as a scientific basis for the forthcoming fantastic theories of racial superiority of Turks and of their role in the foundation of world's ancient civilizations and languages. Ottoman awareness of the non-Ottoman Turks, while owing a great deal to this literature, was stimulated further by the flow of Muslim refugees into the empire and the stories of violence from Russia in the aftermath of the Crimean War.

The first Ottoman Parliament survived only until February 1878, and the next period of thirty years would be marked by an autocratic regime under the rule of the sultan Abdulhamid. While the sultan sought to keep at bay any opposing movement in the capital, his *Istibdad* (tyranny) regime was raising in its own schools a rebellious generation of bureaucrats, military officers, and intellectuals, who mostly came from the lower classes and were adamant to change the system by force if necessary. The young lieutenant Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was a leading figure among this group who organized a secret political organization, *Vatan Cemiyeti* (the Fatherland Society), in Damascus in 1905, later to be renamed as *Vatan ve Hurriyet Cemiyeti* (the Society of Fatherland and Liberty). The *Vatan* group quickly achieved popularity among fellow

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<sup>237</sup> Shaw 1977:260.

officers in Mustafa Kemal's hometown, Salonica.<sup>238</sup> From 1906 onwards, the movement proceeded with its secret activities in Macedonia under the name of *Osmanlı Hurriyet Cemiyeti* (the Ottoman Liberty Society). By 1907, the Macedonian group joined a fraction of *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, the Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter, CUP, or the Unionists), in order to collaborate with the Young Turks in Paris on a radical project of strengthening the Ottoman state.<sup>239</sup> Regarding the socio-cultural basis of the Unionists, Nergis Canefe (2002:143) writes,

A critical aspect of the pre-1918 development of nationalism in the empire that may explain the Turkist emphasis in the political views of an increasing number of Unionists is that there were virtually no Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Bulgarians, etc., among these revolutionary cadres. They were Turkish-speaking with a Muslim background, although this classification was flexible enough to include Russian émigrés, a few Arabs as well as Albanians and others from the Balkans. In other words, the socio-cultural basis for the development of a multicultural, pluralist revival project was missing.

The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 was more like a culmination of a stormy negotiation process than a typical bloody revolution. In the end, Abdulhamid was forced to recall the Parliament and submit most of its powers to it, and there began a new era under the rule of the CUP.

It was in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars ended with the massive loss of life and land that an aggressive ethnic nationalism set the tone for the state policies and practices. The repeated Albanian revolts (1910-1912) had already convinced the Young Turks that

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<sup>238</sup> The city had a great social potential for revolutionary activities. For one thing, there was a substantial Jewish population as well as a large group of Jewish converts to Islam (*dönme*) who supported the movement in the hope for the alleviation of the existing conditions that hindered their full acceptance into the Muslim community. A second group of sympathizers was the merchants living in the city who felt very keenly the economic and financial difficulties of the time. See *ibid.*:264-265.

<sup>239</sup> See Canefe 2002:143.

it would be impossible to conciliate the national interests and to attain a unified empire.<sup>240</sup> While Islamism was still an option for the conservatives, most of the secularist CUP members were inclined toward Turkish nationalism. The Turkist movement, which had been represented in terms of a cultural nationalism, was now evolving into a political project in the hands of the Young Turks (or, the CUP).

The Young Turks regime offers a good case to demonstrate the nasty nature, the monstrosity, of ‘patriotic’ movements with several occasions of sheer violence, such as the deportation and killing of Armenians in 1915<sup>241</sup>, the displacement of Kurdish peoples in the Southeast Anatolia<sup>242</sup> and confiscation of minority properties<sup>243</sup>. What lies behind much of the CUP policies was the urge for capital accumulation in the hands of a ‘genuinely Turkish’ bourgeoisie through the dispossession of non-Muslim minorities.<sup>244</sup> “As the non-Muslim population was eliminated, their properties and position became part of the dowry of the new state, which could now distribute them to the population.”<sup>245</sup> The CUP government then decided to reward this ‘dowry’ to the Muslim refugees from the Balkans resettled on the Aegean coast, to local notables, or to the Kurdish tribes as an incentive for sedentary life.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Shaw *ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> Akcam 2004.

<sup>242</sup> Oktem 2004.

<sup>243</sup> Keyder 2003.

<sup>244</sup> Keyder 1987, Dundar 2001.

<sup>245</sup> Keyder 2003: 45, cited in Oktem *ibid.*: 567.

<sup>246</sup> Oktem *ibid.*

The official Turkish historiography usually treats the Turkist movements of the late Ottoman period (including the CUP-based nationalism) and the Kemalist state nationalism as two separate phenomena in spite of their similarities in certain aspects. However, the recent scholarship on the late-Ottoman revival-movements has revealed that there was a significant CUP involvement in the events leading to the Turkish Independence War. As Canefe points out, the Unionists paved the way for the establishment of Turkish nation-state through activities in at least three major domains: “military organization of an independence movement [*Milli Müdafaa Cemiyeti*, or the National Defense Committee], provision of a network for underground resurgence activities [*fedais*, or the CUP sacrificers, and the Unionist spying organization, *Teskilati Mahsusa*], and large-scale political mobilization at the provincial, grassroots level for a Turkish nationalist cause.”<sup>247</sup>

The most noticeable were the *Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri*, or the Defense of Rights Organizations, that enjoyed a great deal of support from the Turkic-speaking people of Thrace, Asia-Minor and Caucasus. According to the Turkish official history, this network was established in order to protect “the rights of the Muslim Turkish population in areas where there was a perceived danger of occupation” by European forces.<sup>248</sup> Kemalist groups (Turkish nationalists) from various parts of the empire

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<sup>247</sup> Canefe *ibid.*:144.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*:144.

participated in this network, including the Turkmen (or Turkish) *efendis*<sup>249</sup> and notables from Kirkuk and its surroundings.<sup>250</sup>

The emergent Turkmen historiography similarly refers to a ‘Turkish Society’ (*Türk Cemiyeti*) with members from Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Mosul, and claims that there were also anti-imperialist Kurds and Arabs in this society.<sup>251</sup> As narrated, the Turkish Society had a leading part in boycotting the coronation of Amir Faisal in 1921.

The son of Sharif Hussain, Faisal, having failed in Syria, is appointed by the British Colonial Ministry. The High Commissioner Percy Cox arranges a referendum in order to legitimate the decision. The peoples of Kirkuk, Mosul, Arbil, and Sulaimaniyah veto the appointment. The Kerkukis destroy the election boxes to say that it is unthinkable to have Faisal as a king over the Turkish lands. Mehmed Sadik, a young Turkish poet, reads a poem before the crowd that opens with: ‘*İntihab etmem seni Faysal Irak’ın mülküne.*’ [I do not elect you, Faisal, for the kingdom of Iraq.]<sup>252</sup>

In 1925, a report was sent from the Special Service Office in Kirkuk to the Air Headquarters at Baghdad in order to inform the mandate administration on the ‘bad hats’ of the Kirkuk liwa. A long list of ‘pro-Turks’ was attached to the report, including ex-

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<sup>249</sup> For a full definition of ‘efendi’, see Introduction, footnote 8. The difference between the Turkish and the (Iraqi) Turkmen efendis is that the former refers to those who recently settled in Iraq, usually after having been appointed from Istanbul as a bureaucrat or military officer while the latter is known as the part of the ‘native’ Turkmen-speaking population that inhabited Mosul for generations.

<sup>250</sup> For the British documents about the Kemalist propaganda activities in Iraq during the early twenties, see CO 730 and FO 371. The Turkish historians also argue that Mustafa Kemal appointed in 1921 a commander (Lieutenant Colonel Şefik Özdemir) to the Mosul region, together with a small group of voluntary corps from East Anatolia, for a secret mission to organize the emerging local resistance. See Turkmen 2003.

<sup>251</sup> See Al-Telaferi 1969, Zabit 1960; cited in Nakip 2007, Saatci 2003.

<sup>252</sup> Nakip *ibid.*:51.



Ottoman officials and officers with middle-class or wealthy family

background, muftis, and merchants.<sup>253</sup> Here is the report on Izzet Pasha:

Aged about 50. Brother-in-law of NAZIM Beg. Hates King FAISAL and his Diwankhaneh [house] is a meeting place for all pro-Turks and disgruntled elements though he usually avoids committing himself publicly. [He] was a rallying point for pro-Turks during the visit of the League's commissioners in 1925. Some time previously had a mutual arrangement with SAMI Beg (q.v.), JEMAL Effendi (q.v.), KHAIRULLAH Effendi<sup>254</sup> (q.v.), and Haji HASSAN of TEL ALI whereby they were to combine efforts and institute an organized system of propaganda for the Turks. In April 1925 was reported to be hand in glove with Mullah RIZA (q.v.) in a scheme for advancing the Turkish case vis-à-vis the League's commission. [He] has much expense and little happiness in his present domestic circle and is developing symptoms of miserliness.

Izzet Pasha was given a ministerial post in the first Iraqi cabinet under the chairman of the notables of Baghdad, Abel Rahman Al-Gailani. A Turkmen leader, Ersad Hurmuzlu (2003:51), makes the following remark about Izzet Pasha's early resignation: "[Izzet Pasha stepped down] as a result of his objections to the government's policies of ethnic discrimination and the constant confrontations between the Turkmen and the government. His resignation initiated the political divorce between the Turkmen and the government. Since that time, no Turkmen has ever been offered a ministerial position in the Iraqi government."

Alongside the political organizations, there also emerged several cultural clubs serving Turkism in late Ottoman period. Among them, the most influential was the *Türk Ocağı*, or the Turkish Hearth, which was founded in Istanbul on the eve of the Balkan

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<sup>253</sup> A similar report was sent from the Secret Service Office in Suleimaniyah to the Headquarters about the tribal chiefs in the liwa who supported the pro-Turkish movement. AIR 23/396. See also Al-Hirmizi 2005: 59-78.

<sup>254</sup> Khayrullah Efendi was the father of the Turkmen leader Ata Khayrullah who was killed during Kirkuk event of 1959. See Al-Hirmizi.

War of 1912 and has survived until today except for a seventeen-year interruption between 1932 and 1949. Soon after it was established, the club started to publicize its basic principles through its official periodical, *Türk Yurdu*, or *Turkish Homeland*.

As much as it was identified as a civil institution standing outside politics, the Turkish Hearth had close relations with the CUP during the late Ottoman period, and played a significant part in the shaping of the official identity politics of the Turkish republican state. Its founders had pledged that they would work for “the maturity and perfection of Turkish race and language” (*Türk dilinin ve ırkının kemali*) and remain unwaveringly devoted to “the unity in language, in opinion, and in duty” (*dilde, fikirde, işte birlik*). The periodical of *Turkish Homeland*, which was widely circulated in the Near East including some places in the Russian Empire until it was prohibited, played the major role in promoting the pan-Turkist ideals among Turkish-reading communities scattered in the region. A significant task of the periodical was to ‘purify the Turkish language from Persian and Arabic elements’. By 1918, the Turkish Hearth had turned into a ‘contact office’ for visiting committees from various parts of the ‘Turkish World’,<sup>255</sup> and *Turkish Homeland* provided the Turkish nationalists with an alternative narrative space in constructing a Turkist Subject in the image of an elder brother to protect and provision his ethnic siblings living beyond the political borders. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the trope of family would acquire particular

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<sup>255</sup> See Ustel *ibid*.

currency in Turkish ethno-nationalism only to disguise a patronizing attitude towards the newly established Turkic Republics in Caucasia.<sup>256</sup>

After Rumelia (*Rumeli*, the land of Romans) was tragically lost in the Balkan war,<sup>257</sup> the Turkish nationalists would turn to the impending loss of the Mosul region. The Turkist ideologue, Ziya Gokalp (1876-1924) drew the borders of the National Pact<sup>258</sup> in his famous poem, “Çoban ve Bülbül” (The Shepherd and the Nightingale), by including Kirkuk, which he considered purely Turkish, into the national territory of the new Turkey.

*Çoban dedi: Edirnedən ta Van'a  
Erzurum'a kadar benim mülklerim  
Bülbül dedi: İzmir Maraş Adana  
İskenderun Kerkük en saf Türkler'im  
Sarıl çoban sarıl mülkü bırakma  
Yad elinde bülbül Türk'ü bırakma*

*The shepherd said: the lands from Edirne to Van,  
to Erzurum are all mine.  
The nightingale said: Izmir, Maras, Adana  
Iskenderun, and Kirkuk, my purest Turks...  
Embrace, shepherd, embrace; don't leave the land.  
Don't leave the Turk in a foreign land.*

In 1915, *Turkish Homeland* published a series of essays under the title of ‘Iraqi Turks’. The author of the essays, Hasim Nahid Erbil (Erbil, 1880 – Ankara, 1962), was

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<sup>256</sup> Bora 1995.

<sup>257</sup> As Bora and Sen (2009) write, the Turkish nationalists would later try to legitimize the traumatic loss of the Balkans in terms of driving out the unwanted, or the purification of national identity:

“The early republican ideology was premised on a ‘militant’ oblivion that sought to erase the memory of Rumelia along with the Ottoman past. ‘New Turkey’ and ancient Turkness were tightly bound while the Ottoman period in between became a merely footnote. [...] Falih Rifki Atay [an exponent of this ideology] epitomizes this militant oblivion. In his travel notes on the Balkans [1930], [Atay] recalls Macedonia as ‘a terrible word and the bitter memory of the Ottoman Sultanate!’ Having said that ‘Monastir [Bitola]... Uskup [Skopje], Florina, which we once accepted as Turkish as Eyup’ are not Turkish anymore, he just finishes his words: ‘Let us forget Rumelia!’” (my translation)

<sup>258</sup> See Chapter Two.

an Iraqi born Turkish citizen.<sup>259</sup> The Kirkuk Foundation in Istanbul

posthumously compiled Erbil's work, composed of political essays published in various Turkish newspapers and journals between 1915-1958.<sup>260</sup> In the first essay of the series in *Turkish Homeland*, Erbil spoke to the conscience of the Turkish elite as he pointed to the presence of another Turkish self in distant lands of Iraq:

*From the travelogue of a reserve officer*

*[...] All of a sudden, I heard a distant sound. It was something I could distinguish from other sounds around, something new!*

*I paid attention: Distinct as it was from the breathing sounds of the nearby people and the horses, it emerged from the depths of a bright night, far beyond the shapes and shadows surrounding me. [...] It turned out to be a group of horseman that emerged in the boundless void of the night. [...]*

*The horsemen approached [...] They asked us in Arabic for water and tobacco. [...] One of our companions, who just woke up, grumbled, "What the heck do they want!" Then came the most sublime dramatic moment of my life: One of them rode his horse towards us; "Agha, we are also Turks!" he shouted in Turkish.*

*This cry of the man dressed like an Arab beat upon my soul as a dazzling ray of light gushing out the darkness of the night [and] I fainted in exuberant joy. Now these black shadows, like suns that no longer blaze down, covered the horizon [...] and then they were gone... [...]*

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<sup>259</sup> Son of a civil servant (*müstahdem*, or doorman in a government office), Erbil first studied law at Istanbul, and later economy and sociology at Sorbonne University. In the mean time, he worked at the Department of Landed Property in Mosul (*Emlak-ı Hümayun*) and at the Tax Office (*Maliye Teşkilatı*) in Istanbul until he left for Paris in 1923. While he studied at Sorbonne he served the Republican government as the Director of Legal Matters in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, worked as a Paris correspondent for *İkdam* ('Perseverance', a Turkish newspaper), and taught Turkish to the American diplomats at an institute for Near Eastern languages until he was appointed as the Assistant to the Consul General at Geneva. He returned to Iraq in 1934, where he (supposedly) taught French at Baghdad University until he was summoned in 1939 to Ankara for a position at the Ministry of National Education as a French interpreter. See Kerkuk 2004.

<sup>260</sup> Kerkuk *ibid*. The editor of the book, İzzettin Kerkuk wrote on the front page, "This is dedicated to the beloved soul of Hasim Nahid Erbil, who spent his life for the exaltation of the Turkish society and took great pains to defend on his own the rightful cause of the Iraqi Turks, and was buried in the Homeless Cemetery when he died in Ankara." (my translation)

*It was an intense joy that filled my heart only to fade away, the kind of joy a yearning soul feels when he comes across a most dearly loved one in a foreign place. At that moment I imagined "Iraq" together with "Turk[ness]" as I realized that "separation" (hicran) and "motherland" (vatan) are irreconcilable.*

The author concluded the story with a moral lesson to the Turkish elite:

*How miserable we are!.. For us, a visit to the city walls at Edirnekapi of Istanbul is comparable to a marvelous journey to the Great Wall of China. The Prince Islands are as remote as Cezire-i Serendip is. Alemdağ is less familiar to us than the South America. We have secluded ourselves up here in Istanbul, as if it is the whole world, so that we are not aware of the existence of our ethnic kins ['ırkdaş'].*

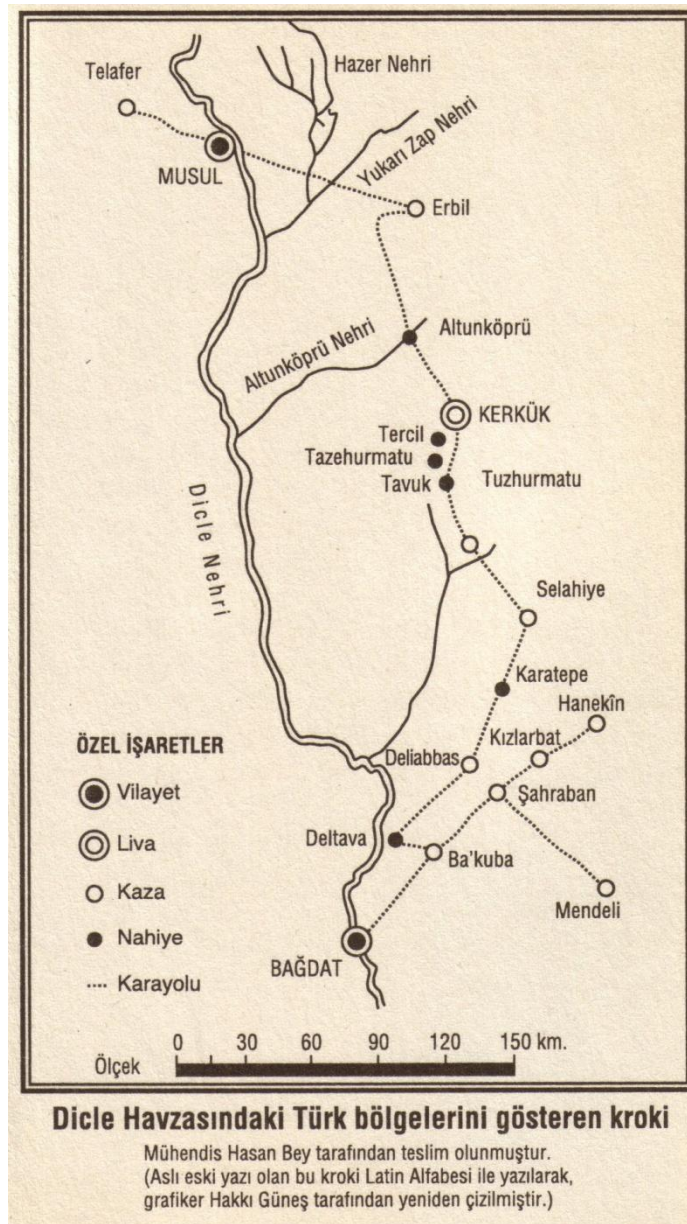
Erbil, next, referred in the essay to a post road that extends from Istanbul to Baghdad: "Draw a line," he wrote, "a line running from the left bank of the Tigris River between Mosul and Baghdad; the inhabitants [*ahali*] along this post road are all Turks!"<sup>261</sup> Then, we find a manually sketched map, printed in the next issue of *Turkish Homeland*, which shows the places where the Turkish population is concentrated in Iraq (see Figure 3.1). It is possible to think that this map was kind of a prototype for another map to be designed in the early seventies (Figure 3.2).

Erbil pursued further the subject of 'Iraqi Turks' in other Turkish journals and daily papers during the First World War and in its aftermath when Iraq, including the Mosul province, was under the British occupation. In an article where he supported the Turkish thesis presented at the Lausanne Conference on the Mosul Question, he wrote:

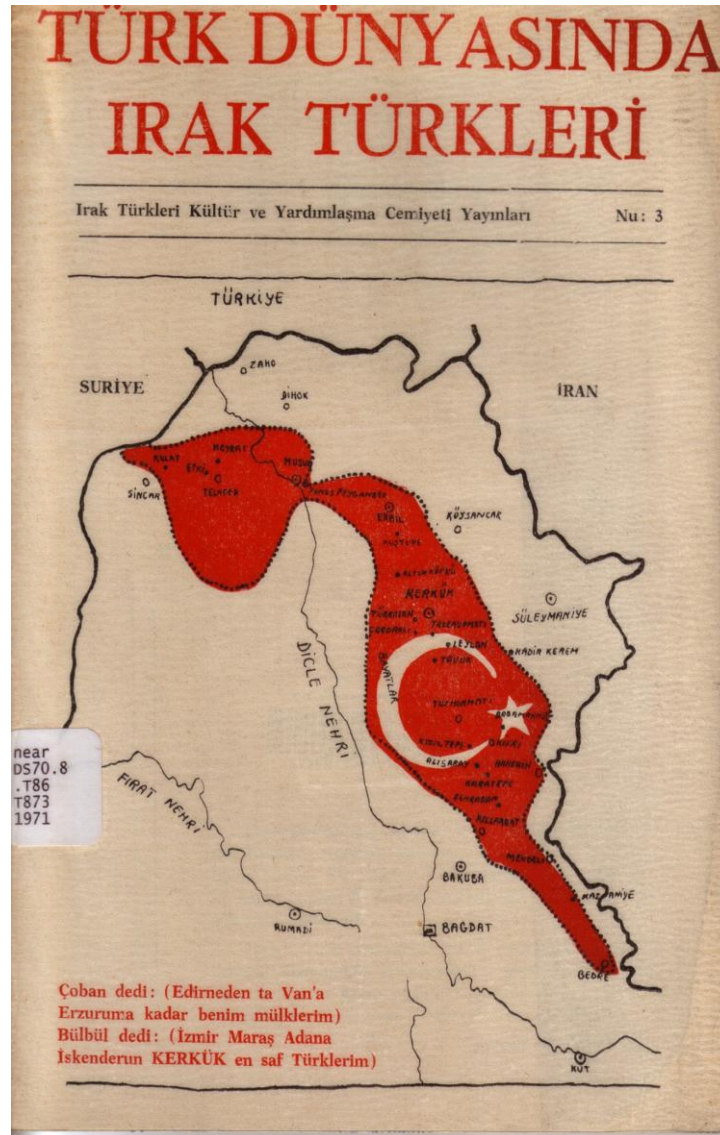
*There are many evidences that establish the Turkish existence in Iraq, and the only problem lies in their selection. [...] One of [these evidences] is "the History" that shows how the Turks from the Central Asia had settled and rooted in Iraq. The other is*

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<sup>261</sup> Erbil 1915.



**Figure 3.1** Turkish regions along the Tigris River. Source: Erbil 1915.



**Figure 3.2** Iraqi Turks in the Turkish World (Book title).

*the concrete and alive Turkish Being that is observable and tangible particularly with its language and literature, its customs and habits, its work of art and civilization.*<sup>262</sup>

“The History” to which Erbil referred in his essay traces the ethnic origins of the Iraqi Turks to the ancient Oghuz tribe in Central Asia, the very same ancestors of the Turkic tribes that advanced westward and settled in Anatolia around AD 1071 to found the Seljuki and later Ottoman states. The claim of primordiality in the region rests on the very same story of Turkic migrations to Iraq that is assumed to have begun as early as the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. It is maintained that the earliest Turkmen arrivals in Iraq were the warriors who accompanied a Muslim commander under the rule of the Umayyad Caliph Muawiyah on his way back to Basra from an incursion of Khorasan in the seventh century. As argued, this initial forced settlement of Turkmen in the southern Iraq paved the way for further migrations from Turkic lands in Asia while the largest number of Oghuz Turks arrived with Sultan Tugrul’s army during the early Seljuk era in the eleventh century in order to be settled this time mainly in the north. The Ottoman period is regarded as the last and the most significant stage of Turkmen settlement in northern Iraq thanks to the victory of the Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent over the Persian Safawids (AD 1535) and the reinforcement of the Ottoman Sovereignty in Iraq with the Sultan Murad V’s conquest of Baghdad (AD 1638). The historical resources describe this region, which was allocated to the incoming Turkmen who served in the Ottoman army, as a buffer zone along the Iranian border between the Kurds of the east and the Arabs of the west. Furthermore, as the typical narrative goes, there is a long

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<sup>262</sup> Erbil 1918.



interval of centuries (12th -16th centuries) during which a series of Oghuz Turkmen tribes (referred to as emirates, or *atabeylik*) ruled over the land in the absence of an empire.

At the end of a lengthy arbitration process, the League of Nations awarded Mosul to Iraq in 1926, and Turkey agreed on the terms of the resulting treaty in return of ten percent share of Iraqi oil royalties, which she would receive over the following twenty-five years. The loss of Mosul led to serious debates among the frustrated Turkish nationalists. In a meeting of the National Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Rüştü Aras, tried to justify their participation in the agreement as follows: “We are at the end of a nine-year war. Not recognizing the decision on Mosul would have led us to a new war. The fascist Italy was ready to walk against us. [...] Therefore, we patiently [*bağrımıza taş basarak*] agreed to relinquish Mosul.”<sup>263</sup>

Over the following decades, the Turkish state avoided irredentist claims, instead, engaged in a series of diplomatic arrangements with Iraq. The first arrangement was the Ankara Treaty of 1926, which was signed following the resolution of the League of Nations. With this treaty, Turkey agreed on the clauses of the Iraqi Nationality Law of 1924 that granted the Turkmen (usually cited as *Iraqi Turks* at the time) the right to opt for Turkish citizenship. In the introduction, I briefly discussed the significance of this arrangement in terms of the identity politics of the Turkish state; so, I will not repeat my earlier remarks here. The Ankara Treaty was followed by two other international arrangements; one was the Residence Contract of 1932 and the other was the Educational

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<sup>263</sup> Simsir 2004:68.

and Cultural Cooperation Protocol of 1946. By virtue of these two legal acts, many Turkmen, who usually had kinship ties to Turkish Turks, were granted the right to settle, work, and study in Turkey without losing their Iraqi nationality.

During the Cold War period, while the Turkish state was keeping its distance from the ethnic kin beyond its borders, anti-communist conservative nationalist circles, whose political views were largely represented by the National Action Party (NAP) from the late sixties onwards, insisted to pose the question of ‘Outside Turks’. Yet, a significant shift in their rhetoric took place after the Second World War, following the emergence of new concepts of human rights and freedoms.<sup>264</sup> In the past, the exponents of Turkism established their identity politics based upon a theory of territorial expansion known as *Pan-Turanism*, and usually rephrased as *Pan-Turkism*. The ultimate ideal was uniting all Turkic groups in one imaginary country, the *Turan*.<sup>265</sup> In 1960, the United Nations officially endorsed the principle of self-determination and independence as a *right* to be granted to the former Western colonies in Asia and Africa. Highly inspired by the recent developments in the international law on human rights, the Turkists advocated the liberation of Turkic groups from Soviet rule. The ideal (*ülkü*) of a *Turan*, or of *Greater Turkey*, where all Turkic groups would be unified, was abandoned. The shift in the Turkist rhetoric is evident in the following passage.

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<sup>264</sup> Karpat 1985.

<sup>265</sup> As Kemal Karpat (1985) notes, a majority of Turkic groups outside Turkey (totaling some 50-60 million people) lived in the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union and in the northwestern provinces of China.

*[T]he outside Turks constitute for the Turks of Turkey a humanitarian problem: Is not the principle of self-determination a humanitarian principle of our age? Those who do not accept this principle are the inhumane regimes and states. In this era of freedom, how can one forget millions of Turks living on their lands as slaves of others? Are the descendants of the Turks who lived for 1800 years as the most advanced and superior nation on earth inferior to the Negroes of Africa so as to leave the [outside Turks] under the yoke of tyranny? The civilized world is obliged to think about these unfortunate enslaved people. [...] The liberation of outside Turks is not a question of armed intervention, as foreign propaganda tries to insinuate... It is a national problem and, therefore, must rest upon ideas, national consciousness, and nationalism...*<sup>266</sup>

During the sixties and seventies, the Turkish nationalists did not only discuss the fate of Turkic groups living in the Soviet Union or in the Republic of Cyprus, but also broached the issue of Turks under Chinese and Iraqi rule. In 1971, the ITSCS (Iraqi Turks Society for Culture and Solidarity) at Istanbul published a book, titled *The Iraqi Turks in the Turkish World*, which included a series of political articles written by Turkish and Turkmen intellectuals. The illustration on the cover of the book reveals the irredentist overtones of the nationalist discourse on the question of Iraqi Turkmen (See Figure 3.2): a map of the lands supposedly dominated by the Turkmen population in Iraq, drawn upon the Turkish flag and captioned with Ziya Gokalp's "Shepherd and Nightingale." In the early nineties, the Turkmen nationalists reproduced this map (with no allusions to Turkey!) in response to the expansionist Kurdish project, and began referring to the region they laid cultural and historical claims over as *Turkmeneli* (the land of Turkmen) – a vast swath of territory running from Turkish and Syrian borders and diagonally down the country to the Iraqi border. The Turkmen nationalists argue that this new map (Figure 3.3.), indexing now a little wider territory, covers the areas in Iraq where the Turkmen community has for centuries constitutes the numerical majority. In

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<sup>266</sup> Sancar 1961; cited in Karpas ibid.: 431-432.



Figure 3.3 The map of Turkmeneli.

arguing so, they often refer to an old map of Western source, known as the map of ‘Turcomania’, which was published by William Guthrie in 1785.

### **Narcissistic love and melancholic grief**

*Büyük Gazi kurtar bizi yağların bezinden  
Kerkük Türktür gel ayırma anasını kızından  
Burada bir gözü yaşlı bağı taşı öksüz var  
Gece gündüz ayrı düşen yurdu için kan ağlar*

*Ghazi, indomitable, another's flag flies above us, save us  
Kirkuk remains Turkish; as mother cannot be separated from daughter  
a sad and sorrowing orphan is here,  
crying day and night for her country.*

Nazım Refik Koçak, “The Trouble of My Country” (*Yurdumun Derdi*), 1933

There is an ongoing debate among scholars seeking to understand the entailments and possibilities of social and collective bereavement, which revolves around the two fundamental concepts, ‘mourning’ and ‘melancholy’. The debate can be traced back to Freud’s first essay on the subject, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), where the two patterns of bereavement are compared and contrasted. “Mourning,” as Freud writes, “is commonly the reaction to the loss of a beloved person or an abstraction taking the place of the person, such as fatherland, freedom, an ideal and so on.”<sup>267</sup> More specifically, it is described as a “healthy” psychic process based on the successful acceptance of loss, through which the ego is gradually detached from the lost object and thus enabled to invest in new objects and form new attachments. Once the mourning process is completed, “ego is left free and uninhibited again.” On the other hand, melancholia is

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<sup>267</sup> Freud [1917] 2006: 310.

defined in terms of a pathologic pattern of mourning, in which the subject persists in his or her narcissistic identification with the lost object, a process that eventually poses a serious challenge to the ego's will to survive.

In *Stranded Objects*, Eric Sartner (1990) makes a significant contribution to the debate, by shifting the focus of inquiry from the dark abyss of the unconscious (in particular, the issue of self-beratement in melancholy) to the question of self-other relation under the light of postmodern theories of marginality and difference. According to Sartner, the crux of the matter can be rephrased in the following terms:

[M]ourning occurs when an object that one had loved for its intrinsic qualities separate and distinct from oneself is lost. The pleasures that derive from this form of love depend on a capacity to tolerate the potentially painful awareness that "I" and "you" have edges, and that inscribed within the space of this interval are the possibilities of misunderstanding, disappointment, and betrayal.

[...] In the case of melancholy, the pattern by which loss worked through is different because the loved object fulfilled a rather different function in the psychological life of the bereaved. A melancholic response to loss, the symptomology of which is a severe, often suicidal depression, ensues when the object was loved not as a separate and distinct from oneself, but rather *as a mirror of one's own sense of self and power*. The predisposition to love in this manner obtains when the self lacks sufficient strength and cohesion to tolerate, much less comprehend, the reality of separateness (this is the situation of both the primary narcissist, the infant, and the secondary narcissist, the adult melancholic). The paradox of this narcissism is that the narcissist loves an object only insofar and as long as he or she can repress the otherness of the object [...] (1990:2-3, emphasis added)

The predicament of the melancholy ensues from this narcissistic love that posits the subject in a simulation of unity with the lost object, where the self is violently eclipsed by the other, or in Freud's own words, where "the shadow of the object has fallen upon the

ego.” Thus, the primitive (melancholic) moment of mourning is marked by the subject’s failure to constitute boundaries between him/herself and the other.<sup>268</sup>

Freud, as Sartner points out, conceptualized the melancholic attachment to the lost object as a manifestation of infantile narcissism<sup>269</sup>, which is caused by the bereaved subject’s “residual resistance” to the troubling reality of separation. Accordingly, the grieving in melancholy is considered “more primitive,” because at stake is the establishment of the boundaries between the self and the other. In Sartner’s words (1990:3), “[m]elancholy [...] is the rehearsal of the shattering or fragmentation of one’s primitive narcissism, an event that predates the capacity to feel any real mourning for a lost object, since for the narcissist other objects do not yet really exist.”

I argue that the Turkmen found themselves in a similar situation with the foundation of ‘modern Iraq’ and particularly after they were separated from the Turkish territories with the drawing of national borders. A critical moment was the enactment of a Nationality Law in 1924 that granted all minorities the right to opt for their

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<sup>268</sup> At this moment, as Freud argues, the ego unconsciously incorporates the object of love into its inner world (‘introjection’), and in doing so it also inherits the ambivalent character of its love-attachment it wishes to preserve. As the libido is gradually withdrawn from the object, “a series of individual battles for the object begins, in which love and hatred struggle with one another, one to free the libido from the object, the other to maintain the existing libido position against the onslaught.” The battles of ambivalence remain withdrawn from consciousness until they take the form of a psychic conflict between one part of the ego and the critical agency (the issue of self-beratement). See Freud 2006:323-324.

<sup>269</sup> The concept of ‘narcissism’ was introduced by Freud (1914) in his paper “On Narcissism: An Introduction”. In “The Ego and the Id” (1923), he develops the concept further: “In the very beginning all the libido is accumulated in the id [‘primary narcissism’] while the ego is still in a process of formation or far from robust. Part of this libido is sent out by the id into erotic object-cathexes whereupon the ego, now growing stronger, attempts to obtain possession of this object-libido and to force itself upon the id as a love-object. The narcissism of the ego is thus seen to be secondary, acquired by the withdrawal of the libido from objects.” See Freud 1960:45. For a critical discussion on Freudian concepts of ‘narcissism’ and ‘identification,’ see , for example, Ragland-Sullivan 1986:30-42.

nationalities.<sup>270</sup> In this way, the Iraqi Turkmen were ‘forced’ to make a choice between Iraq and Turkey, a painful event in itself that ended up with the partition of many families. Many of them postponed resolving their dilemma, and held their breath until the League of Nations made the final decision on the political status of the Mosul province in 1926.

I suggest to read the literary texts I provide here as the residual signs of the Turkmen’s melancholic grief over the traumatic moment of detachment from Turkish territories. The foundation of the Iraqi state is represented in these narratives with negative and emotionally charged expressions such as ‘separation’, ‘rift’, ‘agony’ and so forth. The folk poetry most effectively conveys the affects that this historical moment generated in the community. Consider the following quatrain from the thirties:

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<sup>270</sup> “**Article 3:** This who used to hold the Ottoman nationality as of the sixth of August 1924 and living regularly in Iraq as from the twenty-third of August 1921 will lose the Ottoman nationality and shall be considered as having acquired the nationality of Iraq.

**Article 4:** Persons at competent age, who have acquired the Iraqi nationality by virtue of Article 3, shall be entitled within a period of two years from the sixth of August 1924 to opt for Turkish nationality. In the meantime, they will continue to be Iraqi nationals. At the end of the period, they will be treated under the provisions of Article 6.

**Article 5:** Any person at competent age, who has acquired the Iraqi nationality by virtue of Article 3 and yet does not belong to the majority of the Iraqi population, is entitled to opt for the nationality of the State in which the majority of population is of the same race as the person, with the consent of that State.

**Article 6:** Persons who have exercised the right to opt in accordance with the provisions of Articles 4 and 5 will lose their Iraqi nationality by the end of the succeeding twelve months. They may carry with them their movable property of every description with no duties imposed upon. They will be entitled to retain their immovable property in Iraq.”

The original version of the Iraqi Nationality Law No. 42 for 1924 in Arabic is available at <http://iraqilegislations.org/LoadLawBook.aspx>.



*Dertli idim ezelden, yârim gitti elimden.  
 Ayrılık büktü belim, kurtulamam elemden.  
 Attığım her adımda, bir uçurum açıldı.  
 Daha hayatta iken, yarım benden ayrıldı.  
 (Hidir Lutfi)*

The literal translation runs as follows: “I was eternally ailing; my beloved was wrenched away. / The separation crippled me down. I cannot escape anguish. / A rift opened with each step I took. / Half of me left me while I was still alive.” I have chosen this quatrain not only because it is a piece that is widely circulated among the Turkmen, but also it contains in a very simple form the most vivid notions of bereavement such as separation, wrench, rift, and mutilation. If we are to look at the representational contribution of each grammatical category within the quatrain, the most revealing is the verbal category. Only one of the eight verbs occurs in the present tense. Specifically, the verb ‘cripple down’ is the most forceful of the past tense verbs, which serves to extend to the reader a shocking moment of extreme deformation. The temporal structure of the verbal category opens two possibilities. One suggests that the past prevails over the present moment of being; the other implies that there is a possibility of escape, albeit erased at the moment of suggestion. This present ‘can escape (not)’ reveals the suspended status of the subject within an apparatus that simultaneously suggests and refutes escape. The speaking subject is, thus, suspended at the very moment of loss and entrapped in endless anguish rather than being potentialized.

In the poem, ‘beloved’ (with the possessive inflection, ‘my’) becomes a figure of departure as it is followed by ‘separation’ in the second line. Next, with the word ‘spine’ (with the possessive inflection, ‘my’), the body of the speaker is brought to the

foreground as a striking image to be reinforced with ‘step’ in the third and with ‘half of me’ in the fourth line. The word ‘step’ implies a sequence of movement, forward or backward, yet offering a sense of distance in any case. Separation is a recurring theme that sets the tone of the poem, and echoed in the noun ‘rift’ that provides an image of shattering. The noun ‘half’ (with the possessive inflection, ‘my’) reinforces this image in the fourth line where the bereaved is portrayed as a mutilated, or rather amputated, body. The parallelism between ‘yâr-i-m’/ *my beloved* and ‘yarı-m’/ *half of me* (*my half*) helps to reinforce the image of amputation.<sup>271</sup>

This sense of loss is endemic in the long-standing Turkmen middle class. A considerable part of my interlocutors were the grand or grand-grand children of the first generation of Turkmen citizens of Iraq. Many of the interviews imparted a (hi)story about the *loss of power* that was traced back to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and to the arrival of the British in Iraq. The younger generation, a part of which born in Turkey, is no exception. Parents inculcate a sense of ‘Turkish pride’ and nostalgia for the ‘Turkish’ (the late Ottoman) days. It is apparently *affects rather than ideas* that are transmitted to following generations.

The reason why I use here the word ‘affect’, but not ‘emotion’, is that the former is a wider concept to designate emotions and desires, acting upon the action of the subject. Whether you call it affect, emotion or the structure of feeling, I am referring to a

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<sup>271</sup> This kind of parallelism is called *cinas* in Turkish, a poetic technique of paronomasia that I often come across in Turkmen *hojrats*.

discursive field and discursive practices.<sup>272</sup> Specifically, I try to understand how an arbitrary event or experience acquires social significance through the very discursive, or semiotic, processes. I explore how the territorial rearrangement and nationalization of Iraq is represented in Turkmen narratives as a painful event. What turns melancholic grief, otherwise an individual experience, into a collective phenomenon is this semiotic, or communicational, process taking place in a shared discursive field that can be described as ‘ethno-national culture’.

### On creative melancholy

*Kerkük'ün bu sarayı  
Acep noksandı neyi  
Bayrağı asılıdı  
Hani o yıldızı ayı*

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*Kerkukum fener Kerkuk  
Mum teki yanar Kerkuk  
Yag yandı fitil kaldı  
Korkum var soner Kerkuk*

*This palace of Kirkuk  
In what is it lacking, I pause  
Its flag flying there  
Where is its star and crescent?*

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*Kirkuk, mine; lantern Kirkuk  
Kirkuk burning like a candle  
The oil burnt out, the wick remaining  
I fear Kirkuk going out*

(Turkmen *hojrats*)

The contemporary Iraqi Turkmen poetry was built upon a strong oral tradition of *hojrat*, a poetic and musical form which is quite similar to *mani* in Anatolia. Recited as quatrains, the two forms are commonly characterized by the use of a simple rhyme scheme, a simple metric system (seven syllables in each line), and *cinas* (vocal and semantic parallelism).

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<sup>272</sup> Cf. Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990: 11

The Turkmen attach multiple meanings to the word *hoirat* (also uttered as *horyat*, *koryat*, *koyrat*): ‘useless remembrance’ (*kuru yad* from *koryad*), ‘prodigal’ (*hovarda*), ‘singing idly’ (*horyat*), and ‘boorish’ (literal translation of the Turkish word *hoirat*). Some have argued that these were the songs and poems of the Turkmen-speaking ‘Citadel Christians’ of Kirkuk. However, in the fifties, when the local intellectuals became increasingly interested in folklore literature and started to collect *hoirats* and *manis*, the form *hoirat* assumed a ‘national’ significance. It is based on these *hoirats* of the ‘common people’ that the local intellectuals have sought to create a national literature just as the Tanzimat writers and their followers had done in Turkey.<sup>273</sup>

Consider the following poem by a local poet, Hijri Dede (1880-1952, Kirkuk):

*Cennet vatanım alem-i gurbetde cehennem  
Ben cennetimi zahmet-i nirana deęişmem  
Ben müftehirim milli lisanımla cihanda  
Öz postumu yüz atlas-ı elvana deęişmem  
Her hoiratu var nağme-i Davud’a müşabih  
Her perdesini evc-i aşirane deęişmem*

*My heaven country is a hell in a foreign world  
I am not changing my heaven for the burden of enlightenment  
I am proud of my national language in the world  
I am not changing my own skin for a hundred of colorful atlases  
Every hoirat resembles David’s song,  
I am not changing any pitch of it for an evc-i aşirane<sup>274</sup>*

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<sup>273</sup> Here are a few men of letters from the Tanzimat period who sought to forge a national language that could be understood by ordinary people: Ibrahim Sinasi (1826-71) wrote the first play, *Sair Evlenmesi*, in 1859, with a quite simple language, and later published a collection of four thousand proverbs. Ziya Pasa (1829-80) asserted that the “genuine” Turkish language and literature were the ones still alive in the local folklore. Huseyin Rahmi (1864-1944) used narration techniques of the shadow performers and of the traditional story tellers. Ahmed Mithat Efendi (1884-1913) composed parables based on proverbs taken from Sinasi’s collection. Mehmet Emin (1869-1944) won the title of ‘national’ poet for using extensively the metric system of folk poetry and the themes expressing national feeling. See Basgoz 1994:42.

<sup>274</sup> *Evc-i aşirane* is a melodic pattern in classical Turkish elite music.

In the poem, the subject hears his own (beautiful) voice in Prophet David's song just as Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection in the pond. This expression strikes the reader as a hyperbolic statement, though a very meaningful one when we consider that, in exalting the Turkmen hoyrat, the poet associates it with something highly esteemed in all Abrahamic religions. And as I hear it, the poem conveys the following idea to me: "My hoyrat is as sublime and beautiful as a hymn."<sup>275</sup>

In locally produced anthologies, the *hoyrat* form is usually contrasted with the 'simple' *mani* form: "*Hoyrat* is stronger and has a better quality in meaning [compared to] *mani*. Therefore, it has become a high-class [*yuksek zumre*] literature while *mani* is a primitive form arranged by mourner-women or by minstrels."<sup>276</sup> So, in a way, hoyrat has become a significant cultural element of a masculine nationalist discourse among the Turkmen community.

What might sound dull and simple to an outsider can turn into a *splendid* tune as a Turkmen hears it, something that contains both the *sublime* and the *beautiful*. In Kantian parlance, the 'sublime' is moving, with a strong moral component, whereas the 'beautiful' charmingly appeals to our senses.<sup>277</sup> I argue that the ability of a folk poem with nationalist overtones in moving the Turkmen owes a great deal to the particular discursive context in which it is produced, perhaps more than it owes to the text itself. As

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<sup>275</sup> With this overpacked image, one is also tempted to think that the poet has in mind not only the beautiful voice of Prophet David but also the parable about the little David's fight with the giant Goliath: 'I am that little man who stands up against a giant warrior.' I thank Jo Anne Fordham for her insightful remarks on this and other Turkmen poems I shared with her.

<sup>276</sup> Terzibasi 1975:59.

<sup>277</sup> Kant [1763] 1960: 46-48.

literary critics maintain, “poems can only be made out of other poems.”<sup>278</sup>

Every text converses with other texts of the same mode of discourse. What is implied here is not simply a discursive exchange between texts, or a literary influence, but rather conditions of the production of a text as determined by a particular set of literary conventions.<sup>279</sup> If the meaning of a text changes in time, as Jonathan Culler reminds, “that is because it enters new relations with later texts.”<sup>280</sup> What is at stake here is not merely writing, but the process of constructing meaning as a whole, in which both the poet and the audience are involved. ‘Meaning’ is not to be understood as an original thought sealed in the author’s mind, or a transcendental truth, to be discovered, but as “a series of developments to which it gives rise, as determined by past and future relations between words and the conventions of semiotic systems.”<sup>281</sup> As the first and foremost condition of a process of meaning-making defined as such, there has to be a discursive framework, not only a system of linguistic codes but a literary tradition, from which the author could speak to its readers through the text he has crafted. In other words, there has to be an already existing discursive universe cohabited by a community of readers and writers, where certain norms and expectations have been established to guide the readers in their encounter with the text. This is the basis of what the structuralists have called *intertextualité*. In this process, as Julia Kristeva writes, “every text takes shape as a

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<sup>278</sup> Culler [1975] 2008: 34.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.: 35.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.: 155.

mosaic of citations, every text is the absorption and transformation of other texts. The notion of intertextuality comes to take the place of the notion of intersubjectivity.<sup>282</sup>

This is also about the emergence of discursivity that facilitates ‘effortlessly’ relating to a text when one hears it. Two possibilities ensue from this ‘effortless relation’. On the one hand, the act of reciting or hearing a poem is habitualized in a way that the poem becomes a monument in a public square that one does not see as s/he passes by everyday. On the other hand, the monument still retains the potential to ignite affects in a person who can relate to the memory it invokes. One could explain this second possibility in terms of the indexical effect of a cultural form or crafted object, be it a poem or a painting.<sup>283</sup> Think of painting, not necessarily a good one, and consider it as a diagram to be completed by the spectators. The latter in turn would relate to the painting and complete the diagram with the content they have acquired through folklore, through the stories they heard from their parents, or through past experience. In this case, what moves the person is not the aesthetic value of the art object, but its indexical potential to evoke memories and stir up feelings. The same thing might not move an outsider, who only cares about the aesthetic value of the piece, and yet, who lacks the appropriate affective content to fill in the diagram.

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<sup>282</sup> Kristeva 1969, cited *ibid.*: 163.

<sup>283</sup> Personal conversation with Valentine Daniel.

As they circulate among the community, these crafted objects (hojrats, poems, paintings etc.) act as what D. W. Winnicott calls “transitional objects.”<sup>284</sup> Perhaps, that is why “hojrat is a great comfort,” as the Turkmen keep saying. By using the notion of transitional object, I try to describe a process of reenacting the moment of loss within the controlled space of cultural rituals, whereby the fragmented narcissism of the subject is translated into “the formalized rhythms of the symbolic behavior,” as in the children’s fort/da (gone/here) game.<sup>285</sup> Through this game, Winnicott argues, the child learns to manage to master his mother’s absence as he administers in controlled doses the loss he is mourning (as in homeopathic cure).<sup>286</sup> As Sartner suggests, the human capacity for play with loss indicates the possibility of creative mourning; and literary creation is the best process to explore this. In Kristeva’s words:

Literary creation is that adventure of body and signs that bears witness to the affect: to sadness as the mark of separation and the beginnings of dimension of the symbol, to joy as the mark of the triumph, placing me in that universe of artifice and symbol which I try to make correspond, as best as I can, to my experiences of reality. But this testimony is one of produced by literary creation in a medium entirely different from that mood, the affect being transposed into rhythms, signs, and forms.<sup>287</sup>

Viewed in this way, those elegies and hoyrats of the Turkmen recited at every occasion, handed down from one generation to another, are ‘bread and wine’ of their grieving rituals. In this capacity, they contribute to the community’s continuous engagement with its historical losses.

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<sup>284</sup> Winnicott 1971.

<sup>285</sup> See Sartner *ibid.*: 20-21.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> Kristeva 1987:108, cited in *ibid.*:20.



## Conclusion: Normalization and melancholic resistance

Now loss, cruel as it may be, cannot do anything against possession: it completes it, if you wish, it affirms it. It is not, at bottom, but a second acquisition – this time wholly internal – and equally intense.

Rainer Maria Rilke

In “The Ego and the Id” (1923), Freud revised his earlier account of mourning, asserting that mourning cannot be accomplished without the internalization of the lost other, and this implied that there is no clear-cut distinction between mourning and melancholy. He would further pursue the subject of ‘melancholia’, yet from now on, not merely in terms of unresolved grief, but also as a process that reveals the fundamental psychic mechanism, (*introjection*), underlying the constitution of the human self. In those suffering from melancholy, Freud explained, “an object which was lost has been set up again inside the ego – that is, [an] object-cathexis has been replaced by an identification.”<sup>288</sup> Thus, what happens through ‘introjection’ is that an object-image, re-constituted as an “endopsychic representation,” becomes part of the inner self.<sup>289</sup> It is only when the ego identifies with that object-image, which is tantamount to substituting for the lost love-object, that the id can relinquish the object. This process, “especially in the early phase of development, is a frequent one, and it makes it possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the

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<sup>288</sup> Freud 1960:23. By ‘object-cathexes’, Freud refers to a human condition where the libidinal energy is focused on external objects, and by ‘narcissistic cathexis’ he describes the situations where “libidinal cathexes are called in away from external objects” to be redirected toward the ego, which will in turn “force itself upon the id as a love-object.” See *ibid.*:45.

<sup>289</sup> Jacobson 1954.

history of those object-choices.”<sup>290</sup> As Butler (1997:146) rephrased, over time, the self becomes “the sedimentation of objects loved and lost, the archaeological remainder, as it were, of unresolved grief.”

By the early nineties, Freud’s revised account of melancholy had given the radical theorists such as Douglas Crimp, Michael Moon, and José Muñoz new insights into the politics of alterity. An emergent literature, in turn, sought to “reconceptualize melancholy and melancholic subjectivity not as a pathological state that is to be worked out, but as the sign of a political, indeed hegemonic, prohibition to be worked against.”<sup>291</sup>

‘Mourning’ was being associated with normalizing and disempowering whereas ‘melancholy’ implied the possibility of freedom from hegemonic formations or resistance to them.<sup>292</sup> As Muñoz put it, “for blacks and queers [...] melancholia [is] not a pathology or a self-absorbed mood that inhibits activism, [but] a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead to the various battles we must wage in their names.”<sup>293</sup> In a critical essay, Slavoj Žižek (2000:658) alludes to the leftist disposition to ‘militant’ melancholy. Here I quote him at some length:

Against Freud, one should assert the conceptual *and* ethical primacy of melancholy. In the process of loss, there is always a remainder that cannot be integrated through the work of mourning, and the ultimate fidelity is the fidelity to this remainder. Mourning is a kind of betrayal, the second killing of the (lost) object, while the melancholic subject remains faithful to the lost object, refusing to renounce his or her attachment to it. This story can be given a multitude of twists, from the queer one, which holds that

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<sup>290</sup> Freud 1960:24.

<sup>291</sup> Biesecker 2007:148-149.

<sup>292</sup> See Moon 1988, Crimp 1989.

<sup>293</sup> Muñoz 1997:355-360, quoted by Biesecker *ibid.*:149.

homosexuals are those who retain fidelity to the lost or repressed identification with the same-sex libidinal object, to the post-colonial/ethnic one, which holds that when ethnic groups enter capitalist processes of modernization and are under the threat that their specific legacy will be swallowed up by the new global culture, they should not renounce their tradition through mourning, but retain the melancholic attachment to their lost roots.

Under the light of these arguments, I suggest that the persistent attachment of Iraqi Turkmen to Turkish ethnicity indicates a melancholic resistance against the normalizing effects of Arab nationalism, which is today strongly challenged by Kurdish nationalism that sweeps through a wide region covering northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey. I argue that this melancholic tendency is essential to the survival strategies that a marginalized community has developed against the assimilation policies of a state caught in the grip of totalitarianism, whose violent presence is immensely felt in daily life with various practices of identity correction, and particularly through the pressures it exerts on the minority language. In the next chapter, I turn to the latter aspect of minority experience of the Turkmen, by addressing how the process of minoritization took place in the domain of language as a primary marker of one's cultural identity/ difference.



**Figure 3.4** A painting by Abbas Erenay.



**Figure 3.5** A painting exhibition organized by the Turkmeneli Foundation at Ankara (May 2005).



**Figure 3.6** The Turkmeneli Night at Istanbul (September 12, 2005).



**Figure 3.7** The Kirkuk Night at Istanbul (June 2008).

## CHAPTER IV : ETHNIC IDENTITY AND LINGUISTIC NATIONALISM

An account of minority experience is impossible without a narrative of loss. In this case, what the Turkmen lost at the turn of the twentieth century was the irreversible disappearance of a present<sup>294</sup> (marked by Turkish domination) whose restitution can only be fancied through poetic or cartographic discourses of Turkmen nationalists caught in the grip of nostalgia. However, it is not a disappearance without a trace. With the nationalization of Iraq, the community was alienated from Turkey; and this, they feared, would threaten their Turkness. Thus, they remained strongly attached to what is left, to what they still possessed, which was their native tongue. Their language, as the strongest marker of Turkness, was an invaluable cultural asset so that they would never accept to exchange it with something else:

*Ben müftehirim milli lisanımla cihanda  
Öz postumu yüz atlas-ı elvana değişmem  
Her hoyratı var nağme-i Davud'a müşabih  
Her perdesini evc-i aşirane değişmem*

*I am proud of my national language in the world  
I am not changing my own skin for a hundred of colorful atlases  
Every hoyrat resembles David's song,  
I am not changing any pitch of it for an evc-i aşirane*

In this chapter, I address this refusal, as I discuss the survival strategies that the Turkmen community has developed against the assimilation policies of the Iraqi state. I

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<sup>294</sup> For a recent philosophical discussion on the experiences of loss and disappearance, see Ohri 2005.

begin with the story of Pakize Hanim (Kirkuk, 1943 b.), or rather her father's, upon which she builds up her own.<sup>295</sup>

Let us start with my father's story, because that affected our story, too. My grandfather, Tevfik Bey, was martyred at Canakkale [during the First World War]... When he died, my father was fourteen, and he had a sister. His mother, widowed with two kids, started to teach Quran lessons to young girls at home. My mother became her student. My grandmother liked her, and that's how my father got married to my mother.

The leap is obvious:

- Then, you know, the Turkish Republic was established. Atatürk made the *inkılâps* [a series of reforms]. My father joined this movement.
- The Turkist movement, you mean?
- The Turkist movement... He wore a suit with European hat and neck tie... He complied with the dress reform [1925].

The father, Muhammed Habib Sevimli, or *Mr. Mehmet* as his friends would call him probably because he wore European dress in public, was one of those who stayed in Kirkuk: “My father was around the same age with Hıdır Lütfü [a well known nationalist Turkmen poet, 1880 b.] They both stayed. Some of them [the Turkists] went to Turkey and stayed there. They settled in Istanbul, some in Eskişehir, and some in Ankara... but they were always in contact, corresponding with each other all the time.” Mr. Mehmet opened a *kıraathane* in town, named *Amaç Kıraathanesi*, a coffeehouse with library.

“The alphabet reform [1928] was established [in Turkey]. My father found books printed with the new letters and brought them all to Kirkuk. The youngsters would come to the

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<sup>295</sup> I use pseudonyms throughout the dissertation, except for prominent figures and their relatives. Pakize Hanim is one of these exceptions. *Hanim* and *Bey* are formal terms of address used for female and male adults, respectively.

*kiraathane* to read and learn Latin alphabet, paying very little for that...” The *kiraathane* served the Kirkuk community until around the year 1937. In the library, Pakize Hanim insists, were there books and periodicals *only* in Turkish and English.

On July 8, 1937, the Kingdom of Iraq signed a non-violence agreement (Sadabat Pact) with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan, which aimed at countering the Soviet “threat” in the region.<sup>296</sup> Before the signing of the treaty, the Turkish Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Economy, Tevfik Rustu Aras and Celal Bayar paid a visit to Iraq as a symbolic gesture of the friendly relations between the two countries. The Turkish delegation stopped at Kirkuk on their way to visit Baghdad.

The people of Kirkuk welcomed the Turkish delegation in exuberant joy. The Iraqi officials were simply stunned at the reception to see the delegates being carried over the shoulders. There were people who cried tears of joy, some screaming, for sure, it was an unusual day for Kirkuk. Hundreds of Turkish intellectuals were arrested and exiled to southern regions after that day...<sup>297</sup>

Around those days, Mr. Mehmet was also arrested and imprisoned for two years for “selling Turkish journal and crescent-star badge in his store.” When he came back, he found his *kiraathane* looted and empty. He ended up with three parcels of books that he had deposited at the Mosul Train Station, which means he would start from scratch with what is left. This time, the government did not allow the Turkish name, *Amaç*, so they

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<sup>296</sup> The Prime Minister who signed the Sadabat Pact was Hikmet Sulaiman (a nationalist from the Al-ahali group in close relations with Baqr Sidqi), who had been asked by the King Ghazi to form a cabinet after the coup d’etat of 1936 that overthrew the Yasin Al-Hashimi government. Sulaiman was left with a sense of vulnerability in the area largely caused by Iraq’s precarious relations with its neighbors, Iran and Turkey, both with a sizeable Kurdish population. The pact raised serious concerns among the nationalists and Pan-Arabists, who feared that such alliances would be detrimental to Iraq’s ties with the Arab world. A group of Sunni Arab officers (‘the circle of seven’), with a predominantly pan-Arab view of Iraqi identity, conspired to assassinate the Chief of the General Staff, Baqr Sidqi and forced Husain Sulaiman to resign in the middle of August 1937. See Tripp *ibid*.

<sup>297</sup> Saatci 1996:206-207.



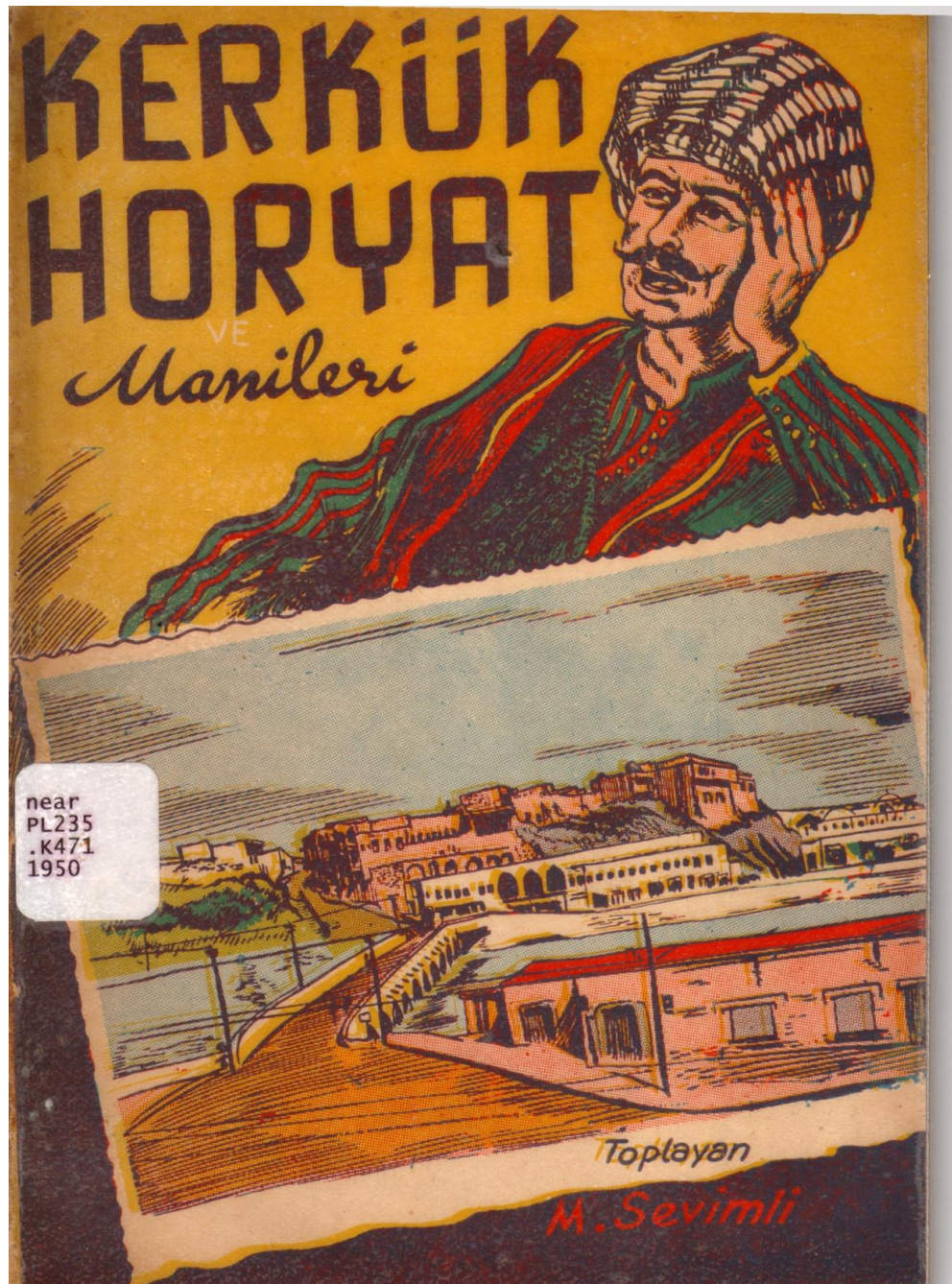
made it *Mekteb-ül Amal* ('The school of Aim' in Arabic), though the old sign stood for years against the wall inside. "We sold everything," Pakize Hanim says, "Turkish novels, periodicals, newspapers, and even American magazines, but nothing in Arabic!.. I would take care of the store at times when my father left for Istanbul to see my brother [who went to Turkey in 1949 for university education and later married to a Turkish girl from Istanbul]. We had subscribers... They would pick up the items from me when my father was gone. Lots of Turkish novels... Resat Nuri, Muazzez Tahsin, Kerime Nadir, Esat Mahmut Karakurt... People were so curious..."

*Mekteb-ül Amal* started to sell also Arabic publications after the 1958 Revolution that brought an end to the monarchic regime, and served the Kirkuk community until the Ba‘th government prohibited the sale of Turkish books in the seventies.<sup>298</sup> I suppose that it was not the only bookshop that sold, or rented, Turkish books in Kirkuk as I came across with references to several others in a few Kirkuk monographs written by the locals. Besides the bookstores, there were several printing houses, some of which were established primarily to serve the Turkish-reading community in the Kirkuk town.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Nakip 2007.

<sup>299</sup> The printing houses (matbaa) in Kirkuk were listed by a local researcher: (i) The monarchic period: *Belediye Havadis Matbaasi* (Municipal News, 1926-1959); *Tetviç* (The Crowning) to be renamed later as *Kerkük Matbaasi* (Kirkuk, 1953-present); *Terakki*, or *Beşir* (Progress, or Messenger of Good News, 1953-1959); *Hilal* (Crescent, from 1955 to 1960s); *Şimal* (North, 1956-1978); (ii) The republican period: *Belediye Yeni Matbaasi* (The New Municipal Printing House), *Neyneva*, *Ticariye* (Commerce), *Cumhuriyet* (Republic), *Belediye Ofset* (The Municipal Offset Printing), *Kasim*. See Terzibasi 2005.



**Figure 4.1** The hoyrat anthology edited by Mehmet Sevimli (1950).

The Revolution of 1958 marked a watershed in the history of the Turkmen movement. Since the Mosul province was “detached from” Turkey, the community, under the threat of assimilation, sought the ways of negotiating with the state under the influence of Sunni Arab nationalism, and their preoccupation with language was central to their negotiations. The popular interest in Turkish literature was further mobilized in the late fifties and sixties particularly through the activities of a theatrical company in Kirkuk. In the absence of formal schooling, the family and the Turkmen teachers played a significant part in language education, especially in the teaching of the Latin alphabet, while only the Arabic script was allowed in local publications.

In the meantime, the Turkmen found themselves in severe antagonisms not only with competing political forces (mainly the Arab nationalists, the Nasserites, and the Communists) but also with other local groups, the Kurds in particular. The community's relations with the Kurds were deadlocked by the end of the fifties, as the latter gained upper hand in local politics for a brief period of time thanks to their strong relations with the Communists (ICP), who won an immediate but a short-lived victory after the revolution, a subject that will be discussed at some length in Chapter Five.

Soon after the revolution, a few intellectuals in Kirkuk started to publish *Beşir* (Messenger of Good News), a weekly Turkish-Arabic newspaper, which survived only for twenty-six issues until it was closed down by the first Republican government in March 1959.<sup>300</sup> One of the editors of the newspaper, Habib Hurmuzlu, narrates the event in an essay:

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<sup>300</sup> Turkish and partly Turkish newspapers and periodicals published in Kirkuk: Ajans Jurnali (journal, the late Ottoman years, exact dates unknown), Havadis Gazetesi (News, newspaper, 1911-1918), Maarif

*On Monday, March 16, 1959, in the morning, we were working in the office to finish the twenty-sixth issue for the next day. We had a phone call in the late afternoon. The head of the Military Intelligence Bureau was calling a meeting with the editors of all newspapers... Mehmet [the editor-in chief, Mehmet Hacı İzzet] left the office for the Intelligence Bureau... We sensed that something was brewing. He came back two hours later. There was a slight tremble in his voice as he spoke: "Every newspaper in Kirkuk is asked to publish a special issue in homage to the newly arrived commander [Daud aj-Janabi, known to be a Communist]; this issue will include Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish sections praising the commander, the revolution, and the progressive (Communist) organizations. It is an official command and we are obliged to comply with it!" [...] Refusal to publish the issue would lead to the closing down of the paper; yet in our view, it was worse to obey the order. Mehmet insisted that we should publish the issue without the Kurdish section at the cost of being arrested, and assured us that he was ready to take responsibility. So, we worked all night with Mehmet until six in the morning and finished that freak issue. It was freak, because one third of the issue covered news about the Turkmen people, folklore, cultural subjects, and national poems, while the remaining part included an article on the Land Reform [The Agrarian Reform of 1958] and some poorly written poems that we were obliged to publish. Yet, the issue included only two sections, one in Turkish and the other in Arabic. On Tuesday, at noon, while we were busy with distributing the paper, the Bureau called out Mehmet asking an explanation for not having put a Kurdish section on the issue. He remained calm while reporting with great courage: "Your order is against the terms and conditions which give us the permission to publish our newspaper exclusively in Turkish and Arabic, and we could not go against this." Our message to them was clear enough: There is no room for any language other than Turkish in Kirkuk!<sup>301</sup>*

Consequently, *Beşir* was closed down as soon as its editors were arrested and exiled to different cities in the south. The editor, Ata Terzibasi, who was imprisoned at Baghdad after the event, proudly talks about *Besir* as a truly local publication. "*Beşir* was different from other periodicals previously published in Kirkuk" in the sense that "its language was clear and simple; it identified itself with the people [the Turkmen community], reflecting their wishes and desires; and it was the first periodical to include

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Mecmuasi (Education, journal, 1913), Kevkeb-i Maarif Mecmuasi (Star of Education, journal, 1915-?), Necme (Star, newspaper, 1918-1926), Kirkuk (Kirkuk, weekly newspaper, 1926-1972, published with the name Gavurbagi between 1959-1960), Afak (Horizons, newspaper, 1954-1959), Besir (Messenger of Good News, weekly newspaper, 1958). See Terzibasi 2005. For a more comprehensive research on the local media, see Kuzeci 2009.

<sup>301</sup> Translated by the author from Turkish.

a section for [the Turkmen] folklore; and in every issue, local singers were brought out and the lyrics of a local song was published.”<sup>302</sup> Local publications, particularly periodicals such as *Beşir*, made significant contributions at the dawn of the Republican period to a process of cultural revitalization marked by an increasing interest among the Turkmen middle-class in Turkish language and local folklore.

Throughout the sixties, the Turkmen community continued to negotiate with the government over their cultural rights, primarily education in native language, mainly through the activities of the Turkmen Union of Teachers. The Union held its first meeting in Kirkuk in August 1960, attended by a large group of schoolteachers who came from various towns dominated by Turkmen population.<sup>303</sup> Around the same time, a group of intellectuals living in Baghdad established *Kardaşlık Ocağı* (Brotherhood Club), a cultural association that served for years at the heart of the capital as the hub of intellectual and cultural life for the Turkmen. The bilingual monthly periodical of the club (*Kardaşlık*) became increasingly popular in Iraq, to which non-Turkmen literary figures also made contributions. The periodical acted independently until 1977, when the Revolutionary Council replaced the editorial board with a puppet team under its command.<sup>304</sup> The Club opened branches in Erbil and Mosul in the north, which similarly

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<sup>302</sup> Terzibasi ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ersad Hurmuzlu (2003) notes that committees were established in the meeting to work on various topics, including curriculum books, public and private schools, literacy campaign, higher education, translation, and publications. These committees prepared statements on such topics as education in the Turkmen language at primary schools, raising teachers to teach Turkmen, preparation of curriculum books in Turkmen, adult education in Turkmen, establishment of village institutions, allocating a sufficient quota for the Turkmen students at universities, the establishment of printing houses for exclusively publishing books in the Turkmen language.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

served from the sixties throughout the seventies as centers for cultural activity and social solidarity among the Turkmen in those regions. The headquarter at Baghdad, in the meantime, worked to encourage higher education among the Turkmen and built a dormitory in Baghdad for the university students who came from the north. The Turkmen remember the early sixties as a period of both oppression and resistance. A prominent activist, Ersad Hurmuzlu, narrates those years in his ‘documentary’ book on Iraqi Turkmen:

*At the beginning of 1961, teachers and civil servants were exiled to southern towns, while the employees of the Turkmen service of Baghdad radio were under investigation by the Military Court as they were accused of plotting against the government. [In 1962] the Turkmen Students’ Union joined the demonstrations at Baghdad University, which continued until the military coup on February 8, 1963.*

These remarks find corroboration in scholarly studies on Iraqi politics. Majid Khadduri, for instance, points out how the Qasim government sought to reduce the power of oppositional groups and closely watched leading personalities suspected of disloyalty. The military court Hurmuzlu refers to must be the notorious People’s Court, also known as the Mahdawi Court, which was established to assert Qasim’s authoritarianism.<sup>305</sup>

Hurmuzlu continues:

*The coup that overthrew Qasim in February 1963 meant a new hope for the Turkmen. A march was organized at Baghdad on March 8, which turned out to be the biggest demonstration in the Turkmen history participated by almost fifty thousand people. The Revolutionary Council accepted the Turkmen delegation at the Royal Court in the Waziriah district to hear their demands for fundamental rights and freedom. One of the delegates [criticized] the earlier governments for not having appointed any Turkmen to the cabinets although there were valuable commanders among the community such as Refik Arif, Mustafa Ragip, and Omer Ali, and respected bureaucrats, lawyers, doctors, and intellectuals. The delegates insisted that they should be included in the cabinet and*

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<sup>305</sup> Khadduri 1969.

*assured that they would accept any ministry, be it the Ministry of Hygiene responsible for the sewage system.*

Not much would change in Iraq after the 1963 coup with respect to minority rights. In 1968, a professional group of Turkmen in Kirkuk appealed the Ministry of Interior Affairs for permission to establish a Cultural Club in town. As the negotiations continued, the Ba‘th Socialist Party seized power at Baghdad for the second time and that brought the end of the process.

In the early seventies, the Turkmen children briefly enjoyed the right to have primary education in their mother tongue (yet again with Arabic script).<sup>306</sup> Those years (1970-1977) are remembered as the climax of cultural mobilization in the city of Kirkuk.

Ahmet Bey (Kirkuk, 1958b.) narrates:

- In our youth we had a particular sense, a sense of being a minority. Since we were the third nation in Iraq, and we had been oppressed by the regime, we tried to seclude ourselves. How would it be possible to sustain a minority? First, we sought to protect our language. And, my personal disposition to literature led me to learn the language. [He refers to the Istanbul Turkish dialect and the Latin alphabet]. To me, personally, 1973, 1974 is the peak. We [I] became more active. I was in high school. [...] First year, we started to read books. Turkish books. There was the Center for Turkish Culture in Kirkuk, also in Baghdad... Connected to the Turkish Consulate. I attended the center until 1976. I learned our mother tongue in the Latin alphabet. It was closed down in 1977.
- Why did they close it down?
- There was something that didn’t escape Saddam’s attention. The Turkmen girls and boys were enlightened in the Center. They would learn our language from the Turkish teachers. We were all interested in literature. Some intended to go to Turkey for education. Because of the forced imposition of the Arab language we were alienated from our mother tongue. Arabic had replaced it. We encouraged friends to attend the language course. [...] I would

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<sup>306</sup> Hurmuzlu (ibid.) points out that the cultural rights of the Turkmen were recognized, because Iraq was a signatory to the International Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1965).

read the [Turkish] newspapers that fell from the trucks. I learned a lot of things in the Cultural Center. [...] We learned marching songs. We already knew the Turkish national anthem but did not know who Mehmet Akif was [the author of the Turkish national anthem). We learned it there, and they did not teach it by force. *We* wanted [his emphasis]. We would listen to Turkish radio. [...] They all enriched our life, and we asked to ourselves: How could we reflect this wealth to the street? We learned binding books to circumvent the prohibition. We split the *The Death of the Grey Wolves* into volumes, and circulated it to others volume by volume. [...] We would cover the books with the cover-jackets of the Ba'th Party books.

*The Death of the Grey Wolves* (*Bozkurtların Olumu*, 1946), a historical-fantastic novel by a leading pan-Turk ideologue, Huseyin Nihal Atsız (1905-1975), had become particularly popular with the younger generation of conservative Turkish nationalists soon after its publication. Atsız wrote another novel, *The Grey Wolf Comes Back to Life* (*Bozkurtlar Diriliyor*), which similarly extolled the virtues of the Turkish race, namely, heroic self-sacrifice and courage.<sup>307</sup> The plots of both novels were built upon the mytho-historical Turkic past in Central Asia. The connection to ancient Turkic times was accentuated in the titles with the term *bozkurt* (grey wolf), the mythic animal of the old legends. The same image figured prominently in the monthly *Atsız*, published in the thirties. Its figure and name also appeared on the cover of other several Turkish newspapers and periodicals of the time, which were not necessarily Pan-Turkist.<sup>308</sup>

By the late seventies, the symbol of grey wolf became likewise quite popular with the Turkmen teenagers in Kirkuk. Nurettin Bey (Kirkuk, 1965 b.) narrates:

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<sup>307</sup> The poet Niyazi Yildirim Gencosmanoglu, aequally popular with Turkish and Turkmen nationalists, composed a lengthy poem on the subject. Ismet Hurmuzlu, a Kirkuk-born scriptwriter who lives in Ankara, wrote a play based on the plots in both novels. See Landau 2003:206.

<sup>308</sup> Landau 2003:206-207.



- [...] There were people among us who regularly visited Turkey, those who went there in summer vacations. We would ask them to bring us grey wolf badge key rings.
- How did you know about the ‘grey wolf’?
- We learned it from friends and our elder brothers. Not from the family. We would ask, “what is Grey wolf?” and they would say, “it stands for Turkishness; it is the symbol of the NAP.”

Nationalist Action Party (NAP), or *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP)*, was established in 1968 on the legacy of the anti-communist conservative nationalist tradition. Going back to the interview:

- Grey wolf and three crescents stand for Turkey. That’s what we were told.
- So, didn’t they tell you that NAP was only one of the political parties in Turkey?
- No. We thought that there was only one party in Turkey. There was only grey wolf and three crescents. That is how we were brainwashed. We did not have any other connections. No television, no newspapers. They would bring us grey wolf T-shirts and badges etc. They [the school administrators] would search us at school. They would look for these items on us. We would flush them out in toilet not to get caught. We gained our consciousness through these events.
- How would a person become conscious of something that he doesn’t know?
- The forbidden is appealing, just like that. The Turkmen songs were not allowed at graduation while ninety percent of students were Turkmen. Only Arabic... [And, he repeated in Arabic:] The forbidden is appealing. And that generated in us this feeling, though we knew nothing about the [national] cause [*dava*].

Nurettin Bey, who was a secondary school boy in the late seventies, tells how he was introduced with nationalism.

- [My] parents have nothing to do with such things. They are apolitical. Only my uncle and my surrounding... The youngsters of the *Musalla mahallesi* [the Musalla neighborhood]... and the earlier generation had national consciousness.[...] I went to a state school in Musalla [the *Mustakbel* School]. The head of the Student Union was from the

Ba‘th Party. The principal was Turkmen. There were both Turkmen and Arab teachers. One day, they organized a picnic tour [as they did every year]. All of the people who went to the picnic were Turkmen. A group of twenty-five to thirty was in national dresses, carrying saz [Turkish lute] in their hands. They were older than us, high school students. We knew all of them... I can relate to what I felt that day only years later. Now I understand that there was a nationalist movement... Then, we followed in their footsteps.

Turkish nationalism infiltrated into the Turkmen community in Iraq through books, periodicals, novels, poems, anthems, and through various symbolic objects such as the grey wolf souvenirs. In the thirties, people would bring Turkish flags, Atatürk badges and so forth:

*The Turkmen used to smoke Yenice [‘Newly’, a Turkish brand of cigarettes] as they longed for the motherland. There was Crescent and Star on one end of the cigarette, so they would light the other end, and once they finished it, they would keep the leftover in their pockets.*<sup>309</sup>

In considering the circulation of these tokens of Turkish nationalism among the Turkmen community, one notes that they all are meaningful at different levels. In his ethnography on the ritual symbols of the Ndembu culture, Victor Turner makes a distinction between three main fields of meaning: exegetical, positional, and operational.<sup>310</sup> Regarding the particular narrative above, ‘grey wolf’ stands for Turkishness (exegetical meaning, that is, the interpretation of the Turkmen) to a community who has read *The Death of the Grey Wolves* by Nihal Atsız (positional meaning entailed by the relationship of a symbol to other elements). One should also take into account the operational meaning(s) of a symbolic object such as a grey wolf key

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<sup>309</sup> From a memoir of Nefi Demirci, translated by the author.

<sup>310</sup> Turner 1967:50-51.

ring. Turner explains this level of meaning in terms of the particular use(s) into which a social group puts a symbol or a ritual act. The ethnographer, he writes, “must consider not only the symbol but the structure and the composition of the group that handles it or performs mimetic acts with direct reference to it. [She] must further note the *affective qualities* of these acts, whether they are aggressive, sad, penitent, joyful, derisive, and so on.”<sup>311</sup> With that in mind, I remember Nurettin Bey’s last remark: “The forbidden is appealing. And *that generated in us this feeling, though we knew nothing about the dava.*”



**Figure 4.2** The Kirkuk calendar (Istanbul, 1951).

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid.: 51, emphasis added.

During the interviews, Turkmen nationalists consistently described their movement with such words as ‘romantic’, ‘emotional’, ‘impulsive’ or ‘reactionist’, terms that were contrasted in their own narratives with ‘ideology’ and ‘doctrinal nationalism’. An activist in his fifties insisted during a conversation, “[Back in the sixties], we had no political consciousness. There was only national spirit, but no political consciousness. We knew nothing but oppression. [...] When we established the Brotherhood Club at Baghdad, we were just an emotional group. We began to act, but without a doctrine.” Such remarks indicate that, in studying a social movement, we must go beyond formal patterns of thought (i.e. doctrinal knowledge or ideology) if we are also concerned with meanings and values as they are experienced and acted out.

In studying these narratives, we should make a distinction between the oral accounts of the rank and file of the Turkmen movement, on the one hand, and the written accounts of the communal leaders or intellectuals (printed in italics), on the other. Regarding the latter, one notices that there is a considerable effort on the part of the authors to objectify the Turkmen movement as a historical fact. However, what such “framing”<sup>312</sup> narratives objectify is not only the movement but also the culture itself,<sup>313</sup> which implies that the movement leaders assert an overintegrated sense of cultural and ethnic particularity, a widespread phenomenon in ethnocentric minority and diasporic discourses. This is what Paul Gilroy refers to as “ontological essentialism” as he talks

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<sup>312</sup> I am borrowing here the notion of ‘frame’ from the sociological literature on social movements. Francesca Poletta defines frames as “persuasive devices used by movement leaders to recruit participants, maintain solidarity, drum up support and, in some instances, demobilize opposition.” See Poletta 1998:412. On the notion of frame, see, also, Snow and Benford 1988; Gamson 1988; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996.

<sup>313</sup> For other ethnographies on the objectification of culture, see, inter alia, Handler 1984, Okazaki 2002.

about “brute pan-Africanism” in *The Black Atlantic* (1993). What follows is excerpted from the *Turkmen Declaration* that was posted soon after the collapse of the Saddam regime on the website of the *Kirkuk Foundation* in Istanbul.

*The Turkmen movement is of the opinion that close interaction with Turkey and Turkic Republics of Central Asia will greatly benefit the Turkmen in Iraq. Given that the Turkmen people use Turkish in their literary works and local printed media, this interaction will enrich the cultural treasury of Iraq.*

*The Turkmen movement refutes wrong and misleading insinuations regarding this issue. It asserts that these affairs are limited to intellectual and cultural exchange, and do not include political content. It warns [the incumbent government] that inhibiting this cultural exchange would be same as inhibiting the cultural exchange between the Arab people of Iraq and other Arab countries. The Turkmen movement demands that extensive relations be maintained with the Turkic states and communities of Central Asia and Caucasus [...] In this context, the Turkmen movement assures that the political decision and conduct of Iraqi Turkmen will be shaped on the very Iraqi lands and their prime concern will be the interests of all brotherly peoples living in Iraq.<sup>314</sup>*

The public texts produced by the leading activists differ from the oral accounts of rank and file in another sense. These framing narratives involve a particular moral content that seeks to discipline the participants of the movement. In doing so, they convert a threatened sense of self and group into a powerfully mobilizing identity.<sup>315</sup> There might emerge a sense of victimization in these narratives, as they speak about state oppression or the violation of citizenship rights. Yet, in these public texts as in all nationalist writings, there is always a ‘narrative consciousness’ in the sense that the text is written for a particular purpose, or for a particular audience, the latter being sometimes the Western public. Thus, a gesture of mourning prevails over the sense of victimization and grieving once a text is published and distributed. All those particular memories of

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<sup>314</sup> Translated by the author from Turkish.

<sup>315</sup> Polletta *ibid.*

disenfranchisement and deprivation are translated into a rhetorical form on cultural rights that also utilizes the universalistic discourse of human rights. Consider the following passage from the English version of a public text (2003) which is cited above. I quote it without paraphrasing:

*Chapter Three: International Treaties and Covenants*  
*Section One: International Treaties Governing Human Rights*  
 [...]

*In practice, the Iraqi regime stripped all Turkmen citizens of their rights to the dignified and free life granted by the International Declaration of Human Rights and by most of the international agreements and treaties which prohibit racial discrimination. Discrimination against the Turkmen was based not on their rebelliousness or disobedience to the establishment, but solely on the fact of their ethnicity.*

*Observing the current events, we are obliged to focus on those human rights granted to the entire human race, regardless of ethnicity or geographical location. The Turkmen, together with their brethren from other nationalities, including Arabs, were all deprived of their rights [...]*<sup>316</sup>

## Concluding remarks

Ethnic identity is “fictive” in the sense that it is collectively fabricated “from elaborated differentiations and constructed communications,”<sup>317</sup> and yet it is actualized and reproduced through networks of daily practices.<sup>318</sup> Ethnicity persists to the extent that those practices embodying it are habitualized and transmitted across generations, a process in which language and kinship play the most crucial roles.<sup>319</sup> In this chapter, I have focused on language with a view to thinking it in terms of the survival strategies of a marginalized community. In what follows, I will conclude my discussion by touching

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<sup>316</sup> Hurmuzlu 2003.

<sup>317</sup> Balibar 1991, 1995: 186.

<sup>318</sup> Bentley 1989.

<sup>319</sup> Wallerstein 1991.

upon a peculiar aspect of language, which is its high capacity to sustain a sense of historical and cultural continuity that could challenge the civic premises of a territorial state.

As Benedict Anderson (1983:196) writes, “a few things seem as historically deep-rooted as languages, for which no dated origins can ever be given.” It is this quality of language that works to ‘primordialize’, and even ‘naturalize’, one’s narcissistic attachment to a minority group speaking a particular language or a dialect. That might, in turn, challenge the civic bonds of the subjects to the given state and to their co-nationals that constituted the majority or other minorities.<sup>320</sup> In the context of Iraqi Turkmen, ethno-nationalism emerged as a minority discourse largely based upon language, not only because the latter prevailed over other markers of difference such as religion, sect, and social customs, but also because the threat posed by the Iraqi state to the cultural identity of the Turkmen as a non-Arab community was felt most intensely in linguistic domain.

Needless to say, language is the handmaid of nationalism, especially when the latter constitutes an elite project that entails the transformation of cultural traditions of everyday life into strong historical claims.<sup>321</sup> As Ernest Gellner suggests, this transformation is made possible partly by the development of a literate “high culture” largely based upon preexisting folk styles and dialects.<sup>322</sup> This applies not only to state-sponsored nationalism but also to ethno-nationalism as a form of popular politics.

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<sup>320</sup> Shils 1957, Geerts 1963.

<sup>321</sup> Calhoun 1993.

<sup>322</sup> Gellner 1983, cited in Calhoun *ibid*.

After Gellner, Anderson more systematically addresses the cultural aspect of nationalism in his seminal book, *Imagined Communities*, where he focuses attention to the role of ‘print capitalism’ in constructing the ‘nation’ as a community of fellow-readers.<sup>323</sup> The function of the newspaper and novel, or another narrative-bearing medium, is to “provide a ground on which readers can constitute their own subjectivities through identification with scenarios set out in the text.”<sup>324</sup> The development of print-languages is essential to this process, which ends up in the emergence of certain dialects as “languages-of power” at the expense of others. As Anderson puts it,

[T]he fixing of print-languages and the differentiation of status between them were largely unselfconscious processes resulting from the explosive interaction between capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity. But as with so much else in the history of nationalism, once ‘there’, they could become models to be imitated, and where expedient, consciously exploited in a Machiavellian spirit [...] The fate of the Turkic-speaking peoples in the zones incorporated into today’s Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and the USSR is especially exemplary. A family of spoken languages, once everywhere assemblable, thus comprehensible, within an Arabic orthography, has lost that unity as a result of conscious manipulations. To heighten Turkish-Turkey’s national consciousness at the expense of any wider Islamic identifications, Ataturk imposed compulsory romanization.<sup>325</sup>

The case of the Turkmen dialect spoken in Iraq is exemplary of linguistic marginalization in two senses. First, with the foundation of the Iraqi state, Arabic replaced the Ottoman Turkish as the official language and the Turkmen dialect was relegated to a minority language with highly limited access to formal education, print media and broadcasting. On the other hand, as a spoken Turkic dialect, it was already in a

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<sup>323</sup> Anderson 1983.

<sup>324</sup> Bowman 1996:140.

<sup>325</sup> Anderson *ibid*:45-46.



subordinate position vis-à-vis the ‘Istanbul Turkish’, which assumed a new politico-cultural eminence with the rise of Turkish nationalism. Therefore, the local efforts of the Turkmen to revitalize Turkish in Iraq were not only significant in terms of the identity politics of a minority group. They were also highly meaningful to the extent that they indicated an attempt on the part of the Turkmen community to recover the lost contact with other Turkic-speaking peoples beyond the Iraqi borders. In their folklore studies, the local intellectuals pointed at oral traditions common to various Turkic communities in the Middle East and Caucasia. The anthologies are remarkably full of references to the similarities between the poetic forms produced by the ‘Turks’ in Iraq, and those in Anatolia, or in Azerbaijan, as in the case of the almost identical forms of *hoayat* in Iraq and *mani* in Anatolia. With these efforts, in other words, the Iraqi Turkmen asserted that they were part of a trans-national ‘Turkish World’.

## CHAPTER V : TERRITORIAL AGGRESSION IN KIRKUK: ANTAGONISM AND IDENTITY

In a recent article, Glenn Bowman (2003:320) criticizes the “material determinism” of Benedict Anderson (1983) who correlates the emergence of national consciousness in the West with the modern developments in systems of communication and exchange:

Mandate Palestine and pre-dissolution Yugoslavia were –in terms of the development of print culture and trans-regional economies– ‘modernized’ to extents quite capable of supporting nationalist consciousness prior to the articulations of Palestine, Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian nationalisms, but these national movements did not emerge until antagonisms between groups occupying those territories were interpreted in ways which split the field of sociality into domains of the nation and its enemy. [...] Communication might suffice to promote an abstract idea of community, but it was the matter communicated which transformed that abstraction into something with which to identify and for which to struggle. For nationalism to arise it was vital that one not only had to see one’s identity as integrally linked with that of the wider community but also had to sense that that community, and the identity with which it provided oneself, were at risk.

This criticism may be challenged, given that, in *Imagined Communities*, Anderson is concerned with the construction of *civic* national identities in modern territorial states, whereas Bowman makes his point based upon certain historical cases marked by *ethno-territorial* conflicts. However, Bowman’s intervention is not without merits for it serves to underline the constitutive role of “antagonism” in the formation of identities, be they national or sub-national. Laclau and Mouffe (1985:124-125) define antagonism as a radical challenge to one’s sense of completeness: “the presence of the ‘Other’ prevents

me from being totally myself.” However, a word of caution is in order.

Antagonism indicates neither a ‘real opposition’ (based on the ‘objective relation’ between A and B) nor a contradiction at conceptual level (“it is because A is *fully* A that being-not-A is contradiction”). To quote Laclau and Mouffe (1985:125):

Insofar as there is antagonism, I cannot be a full presence to myself. But nor is the force that antagonizes me such a presence: its objective being as a symbol of my non-being and, in this way, it is overflowed by a plurality of meanings which prevent its being fixed as full positivity. Real opposition is an *objective* relation – that is, determinable, definable – among things; contradiction is an equally definable relation among concepts; antagonism constitutes the limits of every objectivity, which is revealed as partial and precarious *objectification*. If language is a system of differences, antagonism is the failure of difference: in that sense, it situates itself within the limits of language and can only exist as the disruption of it – that is, as metaphor.

Viewed in this way, antagonism defines the condition of possibility for a particular identity. Every identity is paradoxically based upon a threatened negation of its ‘essence’ or ‘being’. A peasant becomes aware of his ‘peasantness’ only after a landowner threatens to expel him from his land. “With that threatened expropriation of the land certain aspects of everyday life explicitly come to the fore of consciousness, and serve to ground the constitution of a new politicized identity as a ‘peasant’.”<sup>326</sup>

As a historical construct, the Turkmen ethnic identity has been largely shaped by the reformulation of the community’s relation with a neighboring community in northern Iraq, the Kurds. These two social groups, for several decades now, consider themselves as rivals competing for recognition rather than co-nationals, even if they do not often enunciate such attitude.<sup>327</sup> In this chapter, I examine how the Turkmen have recognized a

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<sup>326</sup> Bowman 2002:449.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Ibid.

collective self and developed a sense of communal solidarity against a Kurdish other. This entails a historical reading of an antagonism that becomes more obvious at certain moments in time. I focus here on a particular occurrence, the Kirkuk events of July 1959 – a milestone for Turkmen nationalism, which has largely determined the course of the contemporary identity politics of the community. In what follows, I outline the history of the inter-communal conflict over the city of Kirkuk, by referring to the dynamics of the Iraqi politics that marked the first two years of the Republican period. In the latter part of the chapter, where I juxtapose different accounts of the Kirkuk event, I discuss the constitutive role of ethnicized violence in identity politics as it pertains to the Turkmen case.

### **Kirkuk: a city of contestation**

Regarding the current situation in Iraq, among the many disputes paralyzing the national politics, one has been particularly intractable: the conflict between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan regional government in Erbil over the oil-rich district of Kirkuk. The territorial struggle over Kirkuk, however, is coeval with the modern Iraqi state.

Kirkuk has a thorough mix of ethnic and religious groups – Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and a small group of Chaldo-Assyrian Christians.<sup>328</sup> The city has experienced dramatic demographic changes in the course of the twentieth century. More recently, the Ba‘th (resurrection, renaissance) government carried out for thirty-odd years the

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<sup>328</sup> There used to be a number of Armenian and Jewish families in town, as well.

notorious Arabization Program, a campaign of massive expulsion of ethnic minorities from Kirkuk and the surrounding towns. While thousands of people were forced to leave the country,<sup>329</sup> many were relocated either in southern Iraq or in northern provinces under the Kurdish control ('safe region') to be replaced with low-income Arab families (mostly Shi'i it seems) from the south.<sup>330</sup>

According to the official census of 1957, which is widely accepted as the last and the most reliable census before Saddam Hussein's campaign of ethnic cleansing and nationality correction, the Turkmen and the Kurds constituted the numerical majorities in town and rural populations, respectively.<sup>331</sup> Historical literature supports the provincial results of the 1957 census, by pointing at the 'Turkish' identity of Kirkuk and the Kurdish predominance in the surrounding villages.<sup>332</sup> International NGO's indicate that the Turkmen sustained their demographic predominance in the town until 2003, and they still make up a sizeable minority in the governorate.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Human Rights Watch (2003) reported that the Iraqi government displaced approximately 120,000 persons (mainly Kurds but also Turkmen, Chaldo-Assyrians, and Shi'i Arabs) from Kirkuk and other cities in the northern region between 1991 and 2000.

<sup>330</sup> See Bruinessen 2005.

<sup>331</sup> See Batatu 1978.

<sup>332</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>333</sup> See, for example, ICG 2005, 2006. Population figures became a highly controversial issue between the Kurds and Turkmen of Iraq. Most of the Turkmen resources claim that the Turkmen population in Iraq is around three million (13 percent of the Iraqi population). This estimation is based upon the 1957 census in which Turkmen were allowed to register themselves as Turkmen and their population was estimated to be 567,000 out of 6.3 million total population in the country. From the Kurdish perspective, this is a highly overestimated figure and the Turkmen population in Iraq should not be more than 5 percent of the total population.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Turkmen community was composed of a well-educated, relatively conservative group of upper- and middle-class bureaucrats, merchants, landowners, and businessmen. Historians such as Hanna Batatu argue that there seemed to be a correlation between ethnic identities and class positions in the city of Kirkuk. In general, the Turkmen belonged to the land-owning and bureaucratic elite, and the mercantile classes. With the breakdown of the political supremacy of the Ottoman Turks in the aftermath of the First World War, however, Turkmen's social dominance gradually weakened. As for the Kurds, in Kirkuk they formed the poorer segment of the town's population, whereas in rural areas, there were Kurdish aghas and landless peasants working in fields owned by either Kurdish, or Turkmen and Arab landlords.<sup>334</sup>

The demographic structure of Kirkuk started to change drastically in the 1930s with the emergence of oil-industry and significant improvements in agricultural irrigation. As large numbers of Kurdish and Arab labor immigrants flooded in the town in search of work in the oil company built on its outskirts, the monarchic government (1932-1958) encouraged Arab tribes from the south to settle in the cultivable lands of the district.<sup>335</sup> The massive labor immigration of Kurdish peasants into Kirkuk continued through the 1960s.

The territorial claims of Kurdish nationalists on Kirkuk were crystallized into a political project as early as the late fifties. In 1963, the leaders of the Ramadan

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<sup>334</sup> Batatu *ibid.*:46-47.

<sup>335</sup> Batatu *ibid.*, McDowall 1996.

Revolution (the coup of February 8, 1963) pledged co-operation with the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). The revolutionary government later announced that it would guarantee ‘the rights of the Kurds’. During the inconclusive negotiations, the Kurds insisted on the principle of autonomy, also demanding to include Kirkuk in the proposed autonomous Kurdish region.<sup>336</sup>

The peace agreement of March 1970 between the Kurdish insurgent forces and the central government, ending nine years of guerilla war, changed further the demographic composition of the region, leading this time to dire consequences. With this agreement, the central government recognized the autonomy for the entire regions where Kurds constituted the majority of the population.<sup>337</sup> This, yet, eventually led to a series of deportations of Kurds and Turkmen from the towns and villages around Kirkuk as well as the Khaniqin and Sinjar districts. Forced resettlement was obviously a tactic to nullify the territorial claim of the Kurds on these oil-rich and strategically important regions.<sup>338</sup> Social engineering continued unabated through the 1980s culminating in the genocidal *Anfal* (spoils) campaign (1986-1988), in which “at least fifty thousand and perhaps several times that number were killed”.<sup>339</sup> In the meantime, the government demolished

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<sup>336</sup> Khadduri 1969.

<sup>337</sup> Bruinessen 2005.

<sup>338</sup> As Martin Van Bruinessen (2005:3, 4) notes, “autonomy, for part of the Kurdish region (notably excluding Kirkuk, Khaniqin, and Sinjar) was formally proclaimed in 1974 and never withdrawn in spite of the renewed Kurdish uprising of 1974-75, in which the Kurds received unprecedented levels of Iranian, Israeli and American covert supports”. See, also, Cook, 1995:23-33.

<sup>339</sup> Bruinessen *ibid*:4; see also Bruinessen 1994, HRW 1995.

80 percent of the Kurdish villages and confiscated the properties of many Kurdish and Turkmen families who lived in the region.

In 1972, the *Kirkuk*<sup>340</sup> Governorate was renamed as *Ta'mim* (nationalization) in order to symbolize the Arab identity of the region and to glorify the nationalization of the oil company. As Bruinessen (2005) notes, the government's determination to keep this province under central control was the major reason why the 1970 peace agreement did not hold and a new war broke out in 1974. During the process, the area of the Ta'mim Governorate was reduced by annexing four Kurdish areas to the neighboring governorates, and thus rendering the Kurds a minority. Despite the Kurdish claims, the city of Kirkuk was outside the Kurdistan Autonomous Region delineated in 1975. Of the cities captured and then lost by the Kurdish forces in the uprising of 1991, only Kirkuk subsequently remained under the control of the central government.

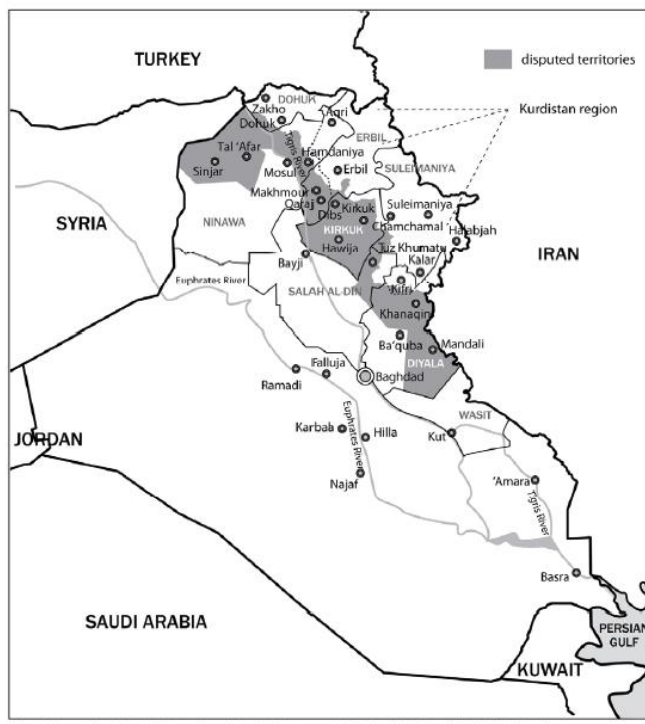
Their territorial claims over Kirkuk eventually brought the Kurds into fierce conflicts with the other claimants to the city, particularly the Turkmen and the Arabs. Since 2003, the district is under the sway of the Kurdish forces. Other local communities strongly oppose any plans to annex Kirkuk to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). The Turkmen, in particular, defend the territorial integrity of Iraq, *provided that* Kikruk is connected to the central government. The second option could only be a regional autonomy with equal distribution of power and economic resources among the local

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<sup>340</sup> It is generally argued that the name 'Kirkuk' comes from the Chaldean phrase, Kerh Suluh. As the story goes, the city was built with a citadel by the Assyrian ruler, Sartnabal in the eight century BC. 'Kerh' is an Aramaic word for citadel while 'Suluh' is the real name of the ruler.



communities. The Turkmen assert that “they want to be part of the whole, and in no case the part of a portion,”<sup>341</sup> as the city remains in political limbo.



**Figure 5.1** The map of Iraq with disputed territories claimed by the KRG.  
Source: ICG 2009.

<sup>341</sup> This is the motto of the Turkmen nationalists that I heard for several times during my fieldwork. See, also, the interview of the French journalist Anne Nivat with a Turkmen woman in Kirkuk (Nivat 2005:41).

### **Republican fever: the first episode of ‘ethnic’ violence in Kirkuk**

The 1958 Revolution is usually considered as a landmark in the history of the Middle East. To many, it represented the ‘common will’ of the Iraqi nation to throw off the yoke of British imperialism and its puppet kingdom. Prior to the revolution, Iraq was dominated by a wide elite class composed of the monarchy, merchants and property owners, the latter including tribal shaikhs, high-ranking civil servants, and professionals. The class interests of the elite were guided mostly by British advisors and capitalists, whose primary concern was to maximize their oil revenues through the Iraqi Petroleum Company they largely owned and controlled. Besides, the United States had already dispatched its advisors to the Iraq Development Board as it sought to gain a foothold in the country now considered as an anti-Soviet outpost. The West presumed that the Iraqis would respond in the same way as the British and Americans to the ‘perils’ of the cold war. However, on 14 July 1958, a group of young officers from the Royal Iraqi Army revolted under the leadership Brigadier Abdel Karim Qasim in order to overthrow local elites and eliminate foreign influence. With this event, Albert Hourani notes, “the British lost their air bases, and eventually, their oil revenues. The Americans lost the political and military influence of the Baghdad Pact, which they had helped to construct but had never joined. At least in its direct manifestations, Western imperialism ended and Iraqi public life turned in new directions.”<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Hourani 1991:xiii-xiv.

Nevertheless, it was only a matter of time that the ‘national coalition’ would dismantle as a result of clash of opinions over two major issues, Arab unity in the Middle East and land reform. At the time of the revolution, the tide had already turned in the direction of an Arab world unified under Nasser’s leadership with the establishment of the United Arab Republic (the UAR, February 22, 1958).<sup>343</sup> Qasim, on the other hand, pursued Iraqi nationalism, and this led him to a serious conflict with the nationalist groups in the cabinet, particularly the Ba‘th members and Colonel Arif, who called for an immediate merger with the UAR.<sup>344</sup> As for the land reform, which emulated the Egyptian Agrarian Reform of 1952, it proved to be inconsequential in terms of eliminating social inequalities in the country. Instead of destroying the old landed classes as promised, the new regulations only worked to curb their economic and political power.<sup>345</sup> Iraqi Communist Party (founded in 1935, hereafter the ICP) emerged at this point as the strongest voice in national politics to criticize the government for its conciliatory approach toward old landed classes. The Communists had supported the national revolution, which they regarded as a necessary step toward the socialist revolution. Now, they found themselves carrying the banner of the poor as they enjoyed a large popular base, including the landless Shi‘i peasantry in the south and the Kurdish population in the north as well as the working class and unemployed in large cities. Qasim, in turn, approached the Communists as he sought to break with Pan-Arabist groups and to reduce

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<sup>343</sup> See Khalidi 1991.

<sup>344</sup> See Haj 1997.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

Arif's power. In doing so, he catalyzed the struggle between the Communists and Arab nationalists. This struggle, Batatu argues, would release "age-old antagonisms, investing them with an explosive force and carrying them to the point of civil war."<sup>346</sup>

It is against this historical backdrop that the violent events of March at Mosul should be considered. The city of Mosul was a potential tinderbox. The Free Officers were split between two factions, one led by the anti-revolutionary Colonel Abd-al Wahhab Shawwaf and the other by Muhammad Aziz. The former represented mainly the landed class with pan-Arabist view while the latter group, favoring the Qasim regime, aligned itself with the poor and minority groups.<sup>347</sup> As Batatu writes,

What added to the acuteness of the conflicts [in Mosul] was the high degree of coincidence between economic and ethnic or religious divisions. For example, many of the soldiers of the Fifth Brigade were not only from the poorer layers of the population, but were also Kurds, whereas the officers were preponderantly from the Arab middle or lower middle classes. Again, many of the peasants in the villages around Mosul were Christian Arameans, whereas the landlords were, for the most part, Moslem Arabs or Arabized Moslems. Where the economic and ethnic or confessional divisions did not coincide, it was often not the racial or religious, but the class factor that asserted itself. The Arab soldiers clung not to the Arab officers, but to the Kurdish soldiers. The landed chieftains of Kurdish al-Gargariyyah sided with the landed chieftains of Arab Shammar. The old and affluent commercial Christian families [...] did not make common cause with the Christian peasants.<sup>348</sup>

The events were prompted by the decision of the Partisans of Peace<sup>349</sup> to organize its second annual conference at Mosul. The Arab nationalist Free officer, al-Shawwaf,

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<sup>346</sup> Batatu *ibid.*:866.

<sup>347</sup> The population of Mosul was at the time composed of Arab and Kurdish Sunnis, Assyrian and Aramean Christians, Turkmen Shi'is, and Yezidis. See *Ibid.*:867.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*:866.

<sup>349</sup> The Partisans of Peace emerged in 1946 and progressed by recruiting its members from leftist professionals. It was suppressed for two years after its foundation on the grounds that it maintained clandestine relations with the Communists. It was allowed to resume its activities after the July Revolution

already irritated by the Communist ascendancy, asked Qasim not to give permission for the conference, but the latter had already encouraged the move. A commander of the Second Division in the Kirkuk-Erbil area, Nazim Tabakchali, who was highly respected by the Turkmen of Kirkuk, similarly warned the government of Communist infiltration into the region and was assured by the prime minister that latter's influence would be soon restricted.<sup>350</sup> Frustrated by Qasim's ambiguous attitude toward communism, the Free Officers decided to co-operate for a revolt at Mosul.

Majid Khadurri argues that the social climate in the province was quite conducive to a counter-revolutionary movement:

Mosul, where the Shawwaf uprising broke out, may be said to represent an environment in which there are complex social problems. Before the Revolution its inhabitants had keenly felt that their city, though second in the country, had long been neglected, many of its sons had to move to Baghdad to participate in politics or improve their social status. This feeling of neglect began with the separation of Mosul from the former Ottoman provinces to form a part of the new state of 'Iraq, when Mosul's commercial ties with Syria and Turkey were severely restricted. It never really recovered economically under the new regime. As a result, Mosul remained disaffected, although many of its sons held influential positions in the central Government.<sup>351</sup>

In political terms, the city was reputed as both a nationalist and a conservative stronghold.<sup>352</sup> Also, it was riven by a sharp inequality. To the landless peasantry and urban poor, the July Revolution promised the improvement of economic conditions; to the upper class, it meant "the end of isolation and beginning of general prosperity. Thus

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under the leadership of Aziz Sharif, the former leader of a leftist political party. The organization held several meetings at Baghdad and other southern cities. See Khadduri *ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> Khadduri *ibid.*:107.

<sup>351</sup> Al-Mallah 1966, cited in Khadduri 1969:105.

<sup>352</sup> Batatu *ibid.*

the Revolution was to be a panacea. Qasim's failure to understand social grievances and the inability of his regime to pay attention to them necessarily created the feeling that he betrayed the aims of the July Revolution."<sup>353</sup>

As soon as a peace rally was announced on March 5, communists, Peace Partisans and supporters of government rushed into the city from neighboring towns and villages, and marched in the streets chanting slogans to assert their support for Qasim. The following accounts of the subsequent events are based on Batatu (1978) and Khadduri (1969).

In the quarters of Mosul, usually characterized as nationalist and conservative, a rumor spread out that 'there was going to be a massacre', particularly targeting the landed wealthy locals. By the mid-morning of March 7, the Peace Partisans had already arrived in town, accompanied by some Communists; and in the rest of the day, the tension climbed with demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. Toward 2:00 pm, Ba'athists and their sympathizers from an-Nabi-Shit, led by Fadil ash-Shagarah, rushed into Faruq Street and attacked burned to the ground a number of leftist bookshops and 'Ali al-Khajju coffee-house – a rendezvous of the Communists. Later, around 4:00 pm, the Ba'athists, supported by clients of the Kashmullah family, some of whom were armed, ran into the Communists near the Post Office. The fight ended with a discharge of firearms and casualties, whereupon the army interfered and a curfew was ordered.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Khadduri *ibid.*: 105-106.

<sup>354</sup> Batatu *ibid.*: 880.

The revolt was announced on 8 March, sharply at 7:00 in the morning.

Over the following two days, the pan-Arabs were in full control of the city. Having heard of the impending revolt, the Shammar tribes from the northwest rushed into the city to support Shawwaf, but they failed to do so as the resistance collapsed. Qasim responded swiftly to suppress the uprising, by ordering the leading officers, including Tabakchali and Shawwaf, to stop action. In a short duration, he was able to eliminate Shawwaf's force. Following the tussle between the pan-Arabs and Communists, Shawwaf's headquarters and other key positions were bombed by planes sent from Baghdad. In the mean time, Shawwaf was assassinated by a Kurd loyal to the Qasim regime, and this led to the collapse of the Pan-Arab resistance and then to the takeover of the city by the Communists.<sup>355</sup> As Batatu notes, counter-revolutionaries were "strung up on lampposts or their bodies dragged about in the streets. 'As soon as it came to the knowledge of the [crowds] that so-an-so was wealthy... there was a beating of drums on the next morning before his house which was then searched or pillaged.'"<sup>356</sup>

In the aftermath of the Mosul events, Qasim awarded Mosul's communist leaders and made a gift of 1,500 dinars to the Communist Party. Furthermore, he reaccepted

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<sup>355</sup> Khadduri *ibid.*:109-110.

<sup>356</sup> Statement, 17 March 1963 on Iraqi radio and television by ex-Brigadier Hasan 'Abbud, who succeeded Shawwaf in the command of the Mosul garrison. Cited in Batatu *ibid.*:886.

Mahdi Hamid<sup>357</sup> into the army, promoting him to the Commander of the People's Resistance Forces<sup>358</sup> in the entire northern part of the country.<sup>359</sup>

The estimates of the death toll of the Mosul events are expressed as the hundreds. According to the communists, one hundred and ten persons were killed and three hundreds were wounded, "thirty of the former and twenty of the latter followers of Shawwaf, and the rest soldiers and 'men of the people'." The nationalists, on the other hand, "counted up at least forty-eight killed in their own ranks and in the ranks of their allies. They also placed the total number of dead at around two hundreds."<sup>360</sup>

### ***Barzani's return and the revival of Kurdish nationalism***

The return of Mulla Mustafa Barzani from exile in the Soviet Union to Iraq soon after the July revolution is a remarkable event in local history. The son of a tribal shaikh, Barzani had become a legendary figure among the Iraqi Kurds to such extent that there is considerable fiction intermixed with the facts of his activity. As early as the thirties, he was regarded as an outlaw and a renegade fighting for Kurdish rights and independence by the Turkish, Iranian, and Iraqi governments. Together with a large group of militia, he was driven over the frontier in 1945 after he was defeated by the Iraqi army. He took

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<sup>357</sup> Mahdi Hamid was "a Kurdish ex-artillery lieutenant from Sulaimaniyyah, as supporter in 1945 of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, a member of the Communist party since 1958, an inmate of royalist prisons from 1949 to 1958. For the testimony of Mahdi Hamid, see Ibid.:884-885.

<sup>358</sup> People's Resistance Force (al-Maqawama al-Sha'biyya) was established by the Qasim government on 1 August 1958 as a paramilitary instrument to support the regular Iraqi army. "It consisted of volunteers, men and women of Iraqi nationality as well as other Arabs of other nationalities. Its functions were to train citizens in civil defence as a means of helping the regular militray forces to maintain order..." See Khadduri ibid.:83.

<sup>359</sup> Batatu ibid.:887-888.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.:888-889.



service with the short lived Kurdish Republic of Mahabad (1945-46) in Iran, and on its collapse he escaped to Soviet Armenia, where he was given a high military rank and encouraged to broadcast in Kurdish from Erevan.<sup>361</sup>

The region of Barzan was a remote and economically poor district on the Turkish frontier which never submitted willingly to regular administration. However, before 1945, many argue, unrest in Barzan had never been associated with Kurdish nationalism. In historical discourse, Kurdish nationalism is traced back to the time of the semi-independent principalities that survived in the Ottoman and Persian empires (in parts now in Turkey and Iran) until the mid-nineteenth century. In its modern form it developed on parallel lines with the Arab and Armenian movements.

Needless to say, the aspirations of the minorities who lived in the Ottoman territories were encouraged by the self-determination project of Woodrow Wilson, particularly by Point Twelve concerning the autonomous development of the non-Turkish subjects of the Ottoman Empire and Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Among the participants of the Peace Conference were there also Kurdish delegates. The Treaty of Sévres (August 1920), which was never ratified, provided for the creation not only of Arab States of Hijaz, Syria, and Iraq, but also of an Armenia and a Kurdistan.

Owing to the military revival of Turkey under Mustafa Ahmet, The Treaty of Sévres was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, which confirmed the provision for the Arab states south of the Armistice line of 1918, but made no mention of an Armenia or a Kurdistan. However, the project of a Kurdish state in the Middle East remained on record

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<sup>361</sup> For the biography of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, see British National Archives, FO 371/140682.

in an international document and was never forgotten. Though not applicable, the Treaty of Sévres stimulated for years the hopes for independence among the Kurds. More interestingly, the Turkish nationalists are still haunted by a fear of territorial loss rooted in this treaty.

After 1920, armed Kurdish risings occurred in all three countries. The Iraqi Kurds, for some years, resisted the central government under Shaikh Mahmud. In Turkey the most formidable revolt was that of Shaikh Said of the Kharput region in 1925, and there were others in the east Anatolia. In Iran, Sayyid Taha and Ismail Agha Shikak achieved widespread successes for a time since 1922. Apart from armed struggles, the Kurds also carried out cultural activities in Iraq, and kept negotiating with the monarchic government over their 'national' rights, particularly the right to education in their native language. As noted in a British report on the Kurdish minority in Iraq,

Resentment against the ruling majority was perhaps less in Iraq than in the other two countries [Iran and Turkey], because it was here that the Kurds had had the fairest deal: only in Iraq were they legally recognized as a minority having certain rights of their own *qua Kurds*, or was their language used for elementary education, local administration and legal proceedings, or was there any lively cultural and journalistic activity. This was due to: (a) the obligation on the Mandatory Power to keep open until 1923 (Treaty of Lausanne) the possibility of their adhering to a Kurdish State; (b) the conditions under which the League of Nations had awarded the Mosul Vilayet to Iraq in 1925; and (c) the guarantees demanded by and given to the League when Iraq was admitted to membership in 1932. One or two Kurdish ministers were normally included in every cabinet.

It was nevertheless generally felt, not without reason, that the guarantees were being largely ignored or at best grudgingly implemented and the Kurds were not getting their fair share of social services (especially education) and development projects. Many of the younger generation, with racial grievances added to the feelings of frustration and discontent common to youth of many countries besides Iraq, were tending to look to Russia for their inspiration...<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Report received on 29 April 1959, British National Archives, FO 371/140682, emphasis added.

A significant factor in the rise of Kurdish nationalism, and, likewise, of Turkmen nationalism in Iraq, is the state's inability to create a territorially based national identity. The Arab society was already riven with sectarian conflicts; and pan-Arabism, which sought to achieve a transnational union, proved to be a strong ideology to deflect many Arabs from Iraqi nationalism. The Kurdish nationalism was, thus, given impetus by an increasingly aggressive Arab nationalism. The monarchic government did not live up to its promises, and rather imposed administrative restrictions on the constitutionally recognized cultural rights of its minorities. In 1946, the Kurds at Baghdad applied for permission to establish a political party, but their application was rejected on the ground that such a party would stimulate nationalist aspirations among the minority. Unable to organize a political party to stress their national character, the Kurdish young generation was left with no choice other than to affiliate with leftist parties, the ICP in particular.<sup>363</sup>

The Kurds welcomed the July revolution, perhaps more enthusiastically than any other minorities did. Some of the Free Officers sympathized with the Kurds, and Qasim declared them "co-partners with Arabs" within a unitary Iraqi state.<sup>364</sup> He also granted amnesty to all "villagers and tribesmen in the mountains" as well as exiled insurgent forces.<sup>365</sup> That is how Mulla Mustafa Barzani returned from Russia on October 5, 1958.

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<sup>363</sup> Khadduri *ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> See Article 3 of the provisional constitution of 1958, cited in Khadduri *ibid.*: 175.

<sup>365</sup> The proclamation was issued on 25 June 1959, and was announced twice in Arabic and in Kurdish. See British National Archives, FO 371/14083 (EQ 1821/41).

As Khadduri rightly argues, “Qasim showed a great interest in Mulla Mustafa as a supporter of his regime but failed to understand the forces of Kurdish nationalism.”<sup>366</sup>

The ICP played the major role in the politicization of young Kurds in Baghdad. It was likely that many of the young generation were acquainted with Marxism before Kurdish nationalism as soon as they joined the Communists. To quote Khadduri,

A monthly magazine called *Hiwa*, published under the auspices of the Kurdish Club, openly interpreted Kurdish nationalism in Marxist terminology. But very soon other papers appeared, such as *Khabat*, and there was lively interest in the Kurdish language and culture. In the meantime young Kurds in Europe and the West began supporting Arab-Kurdish co-operation. Meetings and conferences were held at which resolutions were passed supporting the new Revolutionary regime, but the underlying tone was always to stress Kurdish culture and language, although political aspirations were necessarily implied.<sup>367</sup>

It was not until 1960 that the Kurdish Democratic Party (hereafter, the KDP) was licensed by the government. In the meantime, nothing was being done to improve the social and economic conditions in the Kurdish region. A war broke out two years after the revolution, in which the KDP became necessarily involved, although, until then, it had officially advocated no revolutionary course in fighting for the national rights of the Kurds. Barzani found himself leading the KDP while, as a person of tribal origins, he maintained a quite different view of Kurdish nationalism than that of the young generation. As C. J. Edmonds observed, Barzani’s reputation as a national Kurdish figure increased in spite of his tribal background.<sup>368</sup> He had apparently strong rivals in the

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<sup>366</sup> Khadduri *ibid.*: 176.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*: 176.

<sup>368</sup> Edmonds *ibid.*

north such as the Zibari tribes, but he managed to keep them at bay, thanks to greater resources now made available to him.

### ***The Kirkuk events (1958 - 1959)***

In late October 1958, a serious clash occurred in Kirkuk between Turks and Kurds during Barzani's arrival in town en route to Sulaimaniyyah, on his return from Russia.

The Turkish News Agency reported from Baghdad soon after the event:

About 5,000 Kurds armed with weapons supplied secretly by Nasser during the Nuri Said regime, had assembled in Kirkuk in order to welcome Barzani. These Kurds demonstrated in Kirkuk streets attacking the Turks and looting Turkish shops. Many people from both sides were wounded in clashes which ensued.<sup>369</sup>

The incident was covered in several Turkish newspapers, some of which using a language with distinctly emotional overtones. The following news was clipped from *Vatan*, dated November 6, 1958.

#### **IRAQI TURKS PLEA FOR AID**

##### Curfew in Kirkuk [Turkish News Agency reports]

BAGHDAD 5 – Kirkuk, where tanks and armored vehicles have been patrolling the streets, is today relatively silent. The city is under curfew, which was imposed following the bloody clashes between the Turks and the Communist Kurds.

#### **ARMY MAJOR MARTYRED**

A moving funeral was held for Hidayet Aslan, who was martyred during the clashes. Aslan was a major of Turkish origin serving in the Iraqi army. A national mourning was proclaimed in Kirkuk. Turkish shops damaged during fighting are being repaired with the help collected [from the locals]. The authorities indicated that the Kurdish invaders would be punished after they are tried at Baghdad.

#### **TELEGRAPHS**

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<sup>369</sup> Avni Dogan, *Vatan*, 19 November 1958, cited in FO 371/140682.

The Iraqi Turks [in Turkey] today sent telegraphs to Celal Bayar, Refik Koraltan, and Fatin Rustu Zorlu in order to ask them to ensure protection of their lives and properties. The telegraph reads:

“We deeply regret to hear that our racial kin in Kirkuk, the centre of the Iraqi Turks, were exposed to violent attacks by communists. We respectfully implore the compassion and attention necessary for ensuring the protection of the lives and the properties of our kin, who are the loyal subjects of the Iraqi state and who have always resisted communism.”

It is possible to argue that the news above had two different sources, the Turkish News Agency and the Iraqi Turkmen living in Turkey at the time, a small group of university students, intellectuals and professionals. The latter included a young journalist, Izzettin Kerkuk (Kirkuk, 1929 b.), a naturalized Turkish citizen, who was actively involved in community politics as well as cultural activities (for example, organizing Kirkuk nights in Istanbul and publishing anthologies of Turkmen poetry). He wrote political articles on Iraqi Turkmen in periodicals (such as *Turkish Culture*) using the pen name *Sönmez Ateş* (Unquenchable Fire). Izzettin Kerkuk is also known to have worked as the Turkish correspondent of the Lebanese newspaper *al-Belag* (1956-1960).<sup>370</sup> In the late fifties, Mr. Kerkuk and his Iraqi friends sought to “create awareness” among the Turkish public about the Iraqi Turks through press releases, public meetings, and demonstrations. So, it was probably this group who sent the telegraphs to the Turkish President, the Chairman of the National Assembly, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Next year, the same group of people would establish in Istanbul the Iraqi Turks Society for Culture and Solidarity (*Irak Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği*, or the ITSCS), which is the first diasporic organization of the Iraqi Turkmen.

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<sup>370</sup> Saatci and Tutuncu 2005.

In January 1959, there was another incident, which was prompted by an assault by armed Kurds on a Turkish quarter and resulted in the killing of several people.<sup>371</sup> The Local Committee of the ICP was the chief power in the city. On March 22, the committee issued a leaflet “in which it warned that: ‘reactionaries and chauvinists were exciting in the hearts of Turkmen the fear of Kurds and Arabs and at the same time arousing suspicions and spreading calumnies among the Kurdish masses against their Turkmen brethren’, and summoned all citizens ‘to vigilance, ... unity, and brotherhood.’”<sup>372</sup> The city remained relatively tranquil for a couple of months. As Batatu narrates, it was the sudden removal on June 29 of Brigadier Daud aj-Janabi and Captain Mahdi Hamid (the leader of the People’s Resistance Forces) “that probably changed the mood of the Kurds, and so charged the atmosphere as to make possible the ghastly violence in the days of July 14-16.”<sup>373</sup>

### *Official accounts*

We have access to three ‘official’ versions of the Kirkuk event of July 1959. These are the “on-the-spot inside accounts,” as Batatu describes them, which differ in perspective due to “the opposite sympathies” of the two witnesses. One of the testimonies, quoted below, was given by the Kirkuk chief of police, Jasim Mahmud as Suudi, allegedly a communist sympathizer, and the other version was provided by the

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<sup>371</sup> Letter No. 497 of 17 July 1959 from the Kirkuk chief police to the mutasarrif (governor) of Kirkuk province, cited in Batatu.:913.

<sup>372</sup> *Ittihad-ush-Sha'b*, 27 March 1959, quoted in Ibid.:913-914.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.:914.

chief of security, Nuri al-Khayyat, who was known to be an anti-communist.

This is what happened on July 14 according to the chief of police:

The Kirkuk Committee for the Celebration of the Anniversary of the Revolution had appointed for six in the evening of 14 July as a procession of the popular organizations that was to march through the principal streets of the city. In view of the deep rooted enmity between the Kurds and the Turkmen... and provocative acts by the latter both before and during the festivals, appropriate precautionary measures were taken by us...

At about seven as the procession got to the Old Bridge on its way to the Qal'ah [Citadel] side, it came upon a demonstration of Turkmen riding in army vehicles. Intervening, I kept the two sides apart. The procession moved on, with myself at its head. On entering Independence Street, I saw a column of about 60 soldiers carrying ropes and marching in the opposite direction. On my orders, the police deflected them into the side street of the Directorate of Education. When the procession, flowing forward, reached the Fourteenth July Coffee-house, a haunt of the Turkmen, shots rang out. Who did the firing could not be determined, but the marchers became excited and a scuffle followed in which at first stones the sticks of streamers were used, but which quickly led discharges of firearms by soldiers and the men of the people and of the Resistance. Twenty Turkmen were killed and their bodies dragged about in the streets. Among the dead were Retired Captain 'Ata Khairallah, Uthman Chaichi, owner of the Fourteenth July Coffee-house, and [daughter and two sons of] Fuad Uthman, the head of al-Khassa quarter. The injured numbered 130. In addition, 70 shops, cafes, and casionos were sacked. All this was the doing of soldiers, the members of the Resistance, and the men of the people. Elements of the Resistance also attacked the Imam Qasim Police Station, broke into the arsenal and seized the weapons belonging to the Resistance and 18 police rifles... This attack, we have since learned, was carried out upon the initiative of Retired Police Commissioner Nuri Wali and his group.<sup>374</sup>

In another testimony by a sergeant, the retired police commissioner, Nuri Wali, was claimed to have "handed out the arms to a crowd waiting outside, which shortly afterwards, hurriedly set off in the direction of the bridge and Qa'lah [Citadel], firing in the air and crying: 'The Turkmen have slaughtered all our Kurdish brethren!'" The group

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<sup>374</sup> Letter No. 497 of 17 July 1959 from the Kirkuk chief police to the mutasarrif (governor) of Kirkuk province, cited in Batatu *ibid.*:915-917.



mentioned in the account above partly consisted of the relatives of Nuri Wali, who, Batatu argues, were mobilized by ethnic rather than political sentiments.<sup>375</sup>

The most fiercely debated issue among other questions that were never clarified was ‘who started the fights’. We have seen that the chief of police points to the Turkmen. As Batatu narrates, on the other hand, the chief of security accused “the noncommissioned officers and some of the soldiers of the predominantly Kurdish Works’ Company and Military Police Detachment of the Second Division.”<sup>376</sup> The latter, as the chief of security indicated in his testimony, had been quite active in the time of the communist ex-commander Daud aj-Janabi. As for the Communists, Batatu writes, “they point to paid hirelings of the Anti-Subversion Committee of CENTO.”<sup>377</sup>

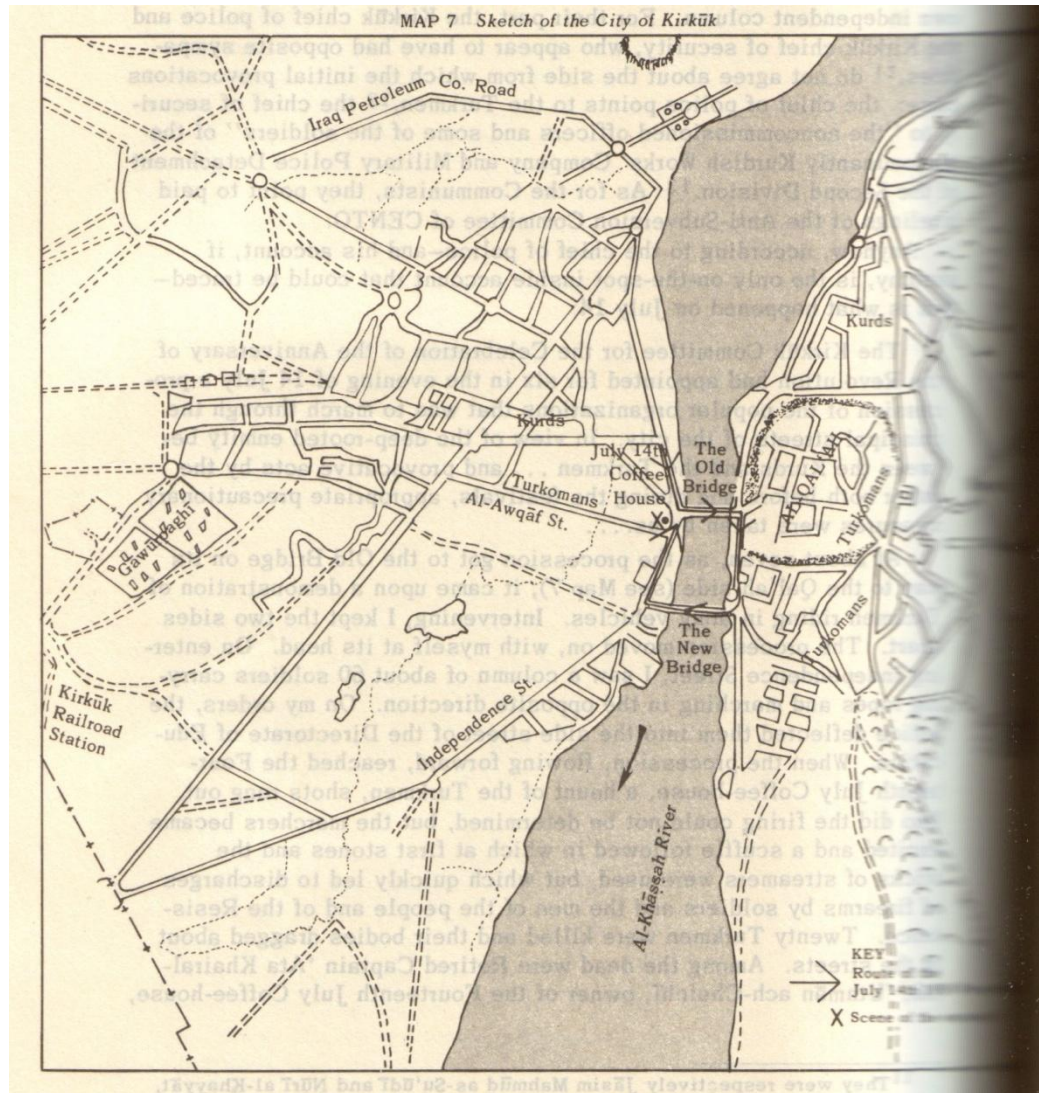
Let me outline the sequence of events on July 15. Some Kurdish soldiers from the Fifth Brigade, using mortars, shelled the Turkmen-owned Atlas and ‘Alamein Cinemas and some of the Turkmen houses in the citadel (al-Qa‘lah) from which, they claimed, fire had been aimed at them. On the other hand, in his letter to the government, the chief of security accused the communist organizations (Youth Union and the Resistance) for initiating the events. In another report he maintained that it had come to light that on the fifteenth, Retired Captain al-Jabbari of the National Front, Beiruzkhan of the Youth Union, and others, accompanied by certain members of the military police, were “designating to be slain and dragged about every person whom they considered to be

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid.:917.

<sup>376</sup> Letter No. 6433 of 17 July 1959 from the Kirkuk chief security to the director general of security, Baghdad, cited in Ibid.:915.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.:915.



**Figure 5.2** The city map of Kirkuk. Source: Batatu 1978.

hostile to them and whom they happened to meet at the gate of the Divisional Headquarters or the club,” where many Kirkuklis had taken refuge.<sup>378</sup>

Now, I turn to a British report that outlines the events from July 14 to July 19, when order had been fully restored in Kirkuk after the arrival of military forces from Baghdad. It is not possible to identify the “various sources” this particular report is based upon. Yet, we learn from earlier confidential letters sent by the British Embassy to the Foreign Office that these sources included the reports submitted to the Turkish Embassy by the Turks from Kirkuk who arrived in Baghdad as the events continued.<sup>379</sup>

July 14:

- i. Outbreak of violence when a Kurdish mob supported by the PRF [People’s Resistance Forces] attacked a Turkish coffee shop because they objected to some Turkish writing on a decorative arch. The coffee shop was destroyed and the owner killed.
- ii. This led to a general attack on the Turkish quarter in which a number of leading Turks were killed and shops and public buildings were set on fire. The mob had obtained arms from a police station which they had attacked.
- iii. Kurdish troops of the Second Division joined with the mob and the PRF in attacks on the Turks. A curfew was imposed by the Government but this was ignored by the Kurds. Some of the Turkish community managed to barricade themselves inside an old fort [Citadel, or Qa‘lah].

July 15:

- i. Kirkuk remained in the hands of the Kurdish mob and the PRF throughout the day.
- ii. The mob tried to attack the Turks in the fort and they were supported by dissident troops of the Second Division.

July 16:

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid.: 918.

<sup>379</sup> British Ambassador’s telegram 978 dated 19 July 1959, cited in Al-Hirmizi 2005:130.

i. Government reinforcements arrived under the command of Colonel Abdul Rahman Arif (Director of the Armored Corps and brother of the late Deputy Prime Minister). He ordered troops of the Second Division to barracks and the PRF to their homes. Preliminary steps to restore order were taken and the Turks were persuaded to leave the fort.

ii. The commander of the 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Qasim Brigade) Abdul Karim Mohammed, arrived from Baghdad and took over command of the Second Division.

July 17-19:

Law and order was restored.

In piecing together our evidence, it seems that the riots did begin as a clash between the Kurds and the Turks but the Communists took full advantage of the disturbances.<sup>380</sup>

It is significant to note here that the British had certain concerns at the time, particularly about the Kurdish and communist ascendancy in Iraq. Therefore, accounts such as this one should be read against the particular biases of the British reporters. As early as 1952, the latter was vigilant to Kurdish nationalism rising with the 'red tide':

In fact, of Iraq's minority population nearly three quarters consist of groups which differ from the majority not in religion but in race and language. The minority problem in Iraq is therefore much more one of relations between Arabs and non-Arabs than elsewhere. That such different races can live together harmoniously is shown by the example of Kirkuk where Turcomans (who form the majority), Kurds, and Arabs work side by side. Iraq's major problem in the North is still however the Kurds in the mountains. Tribal feeling among the Kurds is stronger than Kurdish nationalist feeling, but new factors of unity have arisen in the last generation or so which have weakened tribal loyalties and strengthened Kurdish nationalism. A Kurdish town population has grown up and a young Kurdish intelligentsia has emerged which wants Kurdistan for Kurds. Communist propaganda has skillfully exploited the desire of the Kurds for autonomy and their resentment against the central Government.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Confidential report 10133/6/59 dated 24 July 1959 to Foreign Office, British National Archives, FO 371/140920, cited in Al-Hirmizi *ibid.*: 132-138.

<sup>381</sup> Report on ambassador's visit to the liwa of Mosul, 21-25 April, 1952, British National Archives, FO 371/98738.

After order was fully restored in Kirkuk, a committee of inquiry was sent to the city from Baghdad, which, in turn, provided the Prime Minister Qasim with detailed information about the events. On July 29, at a press conference, Qasim showed the photographs of those killed and mutilated, asking “Are these the actions of those who claim to be democrats? They are the acts of barbarians. Your brother Turks are not enemies of the people.” He also indicated that there was a plot against the Government, which would take action throughout Iraq similar to that in Kirkuk as he presented some maps of the town with certain houses marked with the intention of attacking their residents.<sup>382</sup> Later, an appeal was issued to the refugees from Kirkuk to return to their home.

As to the victims, the chief of security declared on July 20 that the known dead were thirty-two, but also “estimated that there were twenty others buried in places that were still being searched.” On August 2, Qasim announced the number of victims as seventy-nine, but later, after having recovered from an armed attack by the Ba‘thists, he reduced the figure to thirty-one. The final official estimate for the injured was one hundred and thirty.<sup>383</sup>

*An explanation by the communists*

The following includes the memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister Qasim by the representatives of “democratic organizations” in Kirkuk following the July events:

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<sup>382</sup> From Qasim’s press conference on 29 July 1959; see Telegram No. 1024, FO 371/140920.

<sup>383</sup> Batatu *ibid.*:918-919.

To H.E. the Leader and Deliverer, Major General Abdul Karim Qasim,

Incidents of provocation have for some time been intensified against the democratic organizations, in particular after the return of the internees who were released as a result of Your Excellency's sympathy shown to them in the hope of reforming them, making them recover their senses and giving them an opportunity to reform themselves so as to become good citizens able to serve the Republic. [...] The provocations in question created an atmosphere of anxiety, chaos and loss of confidence among the citizens. [...] They frankly said that conditions would change to their benefit and that no unions or organizations would exist after the 14<sup>th</sup> of July. Provocations reached their peak in the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of July when reactionary elements began to stage hostile provocative demonstrations during which they shouted slogans hostile to the forces loyal to the Republic. The Army Command and organizations endeavored to calm the situation by addressing several appeals to the public stressing the necessity of keeping strictly to the slogans and chants agreed upon by the July 14<sup>th</sup> Celebrations Committee.

The official processions started in the evening, and included a representative of the Army Command, the commandment of Police, the Mayor, the Commander of the Popular Resistance Forces and members of the Celebrations Committee. Behind them came the ecclesiastical body, the partisans of peace and various organizations, and also Government officials, doctors, advocates and various classes of the people of all races and religious and political inclinations. And armed police vehicles preceded all.

These processions went on in an organized manner, a fact which was admired by the responsible authorities [...] However, the forces of evil and conspiracy were quite the opposite. They had prepared themselves to stage a bloody massacre and to spread disturbances [...] by throwing stones at them and later by opening fire. [...] This criminal act aroused the gallant soldiers who stood in the vicinity of the Guard Company and they hastened to protect the lives of the citizens and to check the aggressors.

[T]his reactionary conspiring force resumed on the second day a new series of aggressions by opening fire from machine guns, rifles and revolvers on members of the Army, people, Popular Resistance Forces, the Headquarters of the Second Division and the Popular Resistance Forces, Qorya Police Station, Imam Qasim Police Station, the Post Office, and the offices of the people's organizations. They had fortified themselves in the districts of the Citadel, Biryadi, Ali Musalli, Al Alamain Cinema, Al Atlas (Cinema), and a number of houses of reactionary elements in various parts of the town. Frenzied fire was opened, a fact which proves that they had been prepared for this frightful massacre in an organized and pre-arranged manner. This fact aroused the Acting Commander of the Second Division, who ordered the Army to interfere in the matter and take a firm step vis-à-vis this criminal act which is hostile to the republican system. After strong resistance which lasted one full day, the Army was able to paralyze the resistance of the aggressors. However, firing continued on a smaller scale the third day also. There existed in the Citadel thousands of innocent people who came down to the town after an appeal had been addressed to them by the Divisional Command. The

inhabitants of Kirkuk gave them shelter and ensured their livelihood until the return of affairs to their normal course.

[T]his rebellious movement was not only an act of aggression against the democratic organizations, but also directed, in accordance with a pre-arranged and organized imperialist plan, against the Republican system and the authorities, and in particular, the Army. The fighting took place between the Army forces and the conspiring forces hostile to the republican system.

The role played by the organizations in these events is that they took upon themselves the maintenance of internal security, protection of its headquarters, assisting the authorities in prohibiting acts of looting and pillage, and restoring security and stability to the town.<sup>384</sup>

### *The Turkmen's account*

Here is the memorandum submitted on July 18, 1959 to the Iraqi government by the representatives of the Turkmen community in Kirkuk.

The joy of the noble Iraqi people grows since the glorious 14 July Revolution. The Turkmen are granted their human rights they have been stripped of [...] They believe that there is no return to dark days of the past. The voice of the Turkmen, who are the third element of Iraqi society, is now being heard [...]

The main reason behind the Kirkuk massacre [which took place] on the Republican Day and resulted in the death of innocent people, is that we have not joined certain groups and do not share their views. We have been informed that these groups seek to obliterate the Turkmen element for the latter resists their divisive schemes. The real purposes of the instigators and plotters are evidenced in the events that took place in Kirkuk at the time of the Brigadier Daud aj-Janabi, known to be a traitor. Nothing had been experienced in the darkest days of the past, comparable to the oppression and terror that now covers the gloomy sky of Kirkuk.

This aggression has exclusively been directed at the Turkmen. The Brigadier Daud aj-Janabi arrested over a thousand people among the Turkmen, submitting them to the force and torture of the officers and soldiers of the Second Division. This all took place within the knowledge of the Commander of Second Division, and under the guidance of the district attorney, the judge, and the deputy chief of security. The authorities, furthermore, searched the Turkmen houses for weapons as they tried to convict them of treason. Nevertheless, the Divine justice is superior to everything, and the good intentions are always clearly seen by the public. They sought to mislead the people, although they found nothing apart from a few licensed guns and hunting rifles.

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<sup>384</sup> FO 371/140920.

They asked the authorities at Baghdad to expel the [leading Turkmen figures] from Kirkuk. Dozens of military officers, workers, and civil servants (mostly teachers) were exiled upon the request of the organizations, societies, and unions under the control of these instigators. In the meantime, the weapons of the innocent people seized by force were given to [these] organizations of sabotage and to those who call themselves Popular Resistance. All of these acts marks the beginning of the massacre planned to annihilate the Turkmen in Iraq.<sup>385</sup>

In his book, *The Turkmen Reality in Iraq*, Ersad Hurmuzlu (2005), a leading Turkmen nationalist who currently acts as the Advisor to the Turkish President for Middle Eastern Affairs, provides the English-readers with a detailed account of the Kirkuk events. I am quoting some passages from his narrative, by paraphrasing when necessary:

[While] the National Front, [composed of] the Communist Party and the [Peace] Partisans, boycotted the ceremonies of the 14<sup>th</sup> July, [the] Turkmen organized a celebration and built triumphal arches all over the city. More than one hundred and thirty arches were decorated with the picture of the only leader [Qasim] and Iraqi flags.

The [members of] democratic organizations and the National Front started to harass the Turkmen citizens everywhere. With Russian flags, ladders and chains [in their hands], they [chanted]: “We are the National Front... Iraq-Soviet friendship forever... Turkmen will die... We are the National Front, no retreat no change...” The Turkmen [shouted back]: “No leader but Kareem [Qasim], no leader but Kareem.”

[...] Suddenly, some opportunists started to attack the people [standing] on the pavements [with] stones and sticks. The [people] dispersed, [...] [running] to their houses. [Next,] the [mob burned] down the arches [...], except [the ones built] by the People’s Union. [Later,] they attacked the Fourteen July Coffeehouse, Bayat Coffeehouse, and Al-Alamain Cinema, [killed] their owners, and [dragged their bodies] through the streets, and hanged them on trees.

At 9:00 p.m. curfew [was imposed in] the city. Thus, streets were empty [and] safe for the armed members of the organizations of the National Front who attacked the Imam Qasim police station and seized all the weapons [inside]. It is [important to note] that the Reserve Lieutenant Nouri Jamil al-Talabani had ordered [soldiers] to arm the members of the National Front.

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<sup>385</sup> Kuzeci ibid.:52-54, my translation.



Those people started to [destroy] everything in the city, attacked the Turkmen shops and houses. They [robbed the stores,] burning what they could not take. [This] continued until 3:00 a.m.

[Next morning, that is, on July 17,] the troublemakers [went on] attacking houses, killed people, dragged them out, and hanged them on trees and street lampposts. These barbarian acts continued for three days until army troops arrived from Baghdad and took the situation under control.<sup>386</sup>

### *An insider story*

The Kirkuk event is marked as the date of the ‘national awakening’ in movement narratives told by the Turkmen activists. To many others, however, it was a moment of ‘awakening’, but not in the sense of political consciousness. During interviews, whenever I asked what happened on July 14, 1959, the person would usually highlight the event as an unexpected occurrence:

We never expected such a thing. It happened out of the blue. We had no conflict with the Kurds until that time... My father’s driver was Kurd. We had land; our shepherd was Arab. My childhood passed among the Arabs... My father got along with Arabs and Kurds. My uncle married to an Arab in Bahdad although he was a Turkist.

The past (the pre-1959 period) in such narratives is depicted as *a time of bliss* that was suddenly interrupted by a violent event. Such representation is quite a contrast to many of the nationalist writings that trace back the suffering of the Turkmen community in Iraq back to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, to the British arrival in the land, and to Turkey’s renouncing her sovereignty over the Mosul province in 1926. Before I elaborate on this point, I will refer to a first-person account of the Kirkuk event. The

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<sup>386</sup> Al-Hirmizi 2005:118-120.

narrator, Resmiye Hanim (Kirkuk, 1948 b.), is a retired medical doctor who currently lives in Istanbul together with her family. She starts with pleasant memories:

- I had a nice childhood. So nice... We had a large family; my parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts... Neighbours... So nice. Everyone was like a relative, having been together at the same place throughout their lives. Their children, grandchildren.
- Was everyone Turkmen around you?
- Yes, Turkmen... Pure... Us... No one else... Relatives... I had a very nice childhood... Then... Until the revolution in '58. They toppled the Kingdom. [Resmiye Hanim smiles] I remember that the King Faisal was engaged with Fazila. They were going to their summer house in Sulaimaniyyah. They stopped over in Kirkuk. They decorated the street with arches. And I presented them with some flowers. [Smiling] I remember. It's a sweet memory. That was right before the revolution. A very nice childhood, very nice environment... Everything is nice...

The tone of her voice abruptly changes at this moment:

Then, everything turned upside-down with the revolution [the July Revolution]. They overthrew the King, dragged Nuri Said [the prime minister of the period] through the streets at Bagdat. I was a curious child. I would read the papers everyday. I began to scent flesh while reading the papers. It was terrible. The pictures of dead bodies... They killed the king, dragged people through the streets, the prince and royal family.... And they showed this on newspapers. It was such a shock... My childhood was gone; I opened my eyes to another world. And I scented flesh on papers; it was so disgusting... This happened in July, and then schools were opened. Now, we saw something else at school. Some people put on slingshot badge on their jackets [anti-communists], and some had white dove [communists]. And at that moment, we knew that communism had taken over. They [the Qasim government] released the communist prisoners, they all got out. And then, something was going on in Kirkuk. Until that moment, okay, everyone was Turkmen, and we do [did] not consider anyone as 'the other', neither Arab nor Kurd... but just as human being. We speak Arabic at school, Turkish at home. As a matter of fact, everyone speaks Turkish. All of my teachers were Turkmen; there was only one Arab among them. The rest was all Turkmen. There were Christians in the Citadel (*Qa'lah*), but they were also

Turkmen. [...] Then we heard of an anti-government rebellion in Mosul, the Tabakchali event, against Qasim. It was not a revolution. We were told they just hung people to get rid of them. Back in Kirkuk, there was something going on. The Kurds are coming into Kirkuk in groups. They march. Then, [Molla Mustafa] Barzani came. He passed by Kirkuk. By the way, when Qasim took over power, he made this statement: “Arabs and Kurds are co-partners in this country”. Then, he brought Barzani to Iraq [a Kurdish leader who had been exiled in Russia]. [...] Then... An atmosphere of freedom, except that there is no Turkmen on the stage. Now, the Turkmen started to ask, “why are we absent?” Our children, our elders started to think, “Then, what are we? If they are co-partners, what are we?” And we were *many, many* more [her emphasis] back then... [Resmiye Hanim, then, recited the towns around Kirkuk where the Turkmen were predominant.]

And here is Resmiye Hanim’s version of the event:

– They [the Qasim government and the Communists] brought in this thing called, Mukavemeti Şabiye [al-Maqawama al-Sha‘biyya], that is, People’s Resistance Force. When Qasim came, he got along with the Communists. And the Communists were so good in using the Kurds. And the Kurds were inclined toward communism. So, they all subscribed [enrolled in al-Maqawama al-Sha‘biyya]. No one did among the Turkmen. It was a voluntary thing, outside the army. Women and men, everyone put on a uniform, and an automatic rifle on the back. You see them marching. Huh... Now, we, the Turkmen, are going to celebrate the Republic. [Smiling] We sometimes hear our name being uttered [in official speeches], like “Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Armenians, Assyrians... this and that... are the owners of this country.” As we heard this, we said, “Then, let us do something.” And we started to make preparations for July 14, the first anniversary of the Republic. Arches were built in streets. All [the Turkmen families] had Turkmen clothes tailored for their children. For girls and for boys. We prepared a truck at school for the parade. We were nicely dressed. We sang songs, recited poems on the truck. Other trucks were passing by in the parade, all ornamented. All of the Turkmen were marching. But, only the Kurds, [i.e.] communists, carrying ropes. They were marching with ropes and knives in their hands.

– Were they local people?

– Look, believe me. I can't tell this to anyone. They were *not* [her emphasis]. There were no Kurds in Kirkuk, I can't tell this to anyone. There was a neighborhood, we would call it Zehve [unconfirmed]. There were Kurds over there. There were several houses scattered along the Sulaimaniyyah road. There were a few along the Erbil road. Am I clear? There was none inside the town, nor there were a businessman. There were no Kurds. Am I clear? I would never give false testimony! I am telling you what I have experienced. There was *none* [her emphasis]. There was a Kurd in my class, [smiling] and I liked her very much. We would invite her to our house so that she wouldn't feel like an outsider. They lived in the Citadel. We liked everyone. We got along with everyone. [Notice the leap:] But, ropes are flying in the air, "Torani, Torani!" they shout. Torani means Turanian [*Turançı*]. We came to the middle of the Atlas Street, and we noticed people scuffling. We were on the truck. Everyone was on the street, all of the Turkmen. [She was smiling as she spoke:] Candies in their hands, to throw in the air while celebrating. A holiday spirit, that's how it was. Arches... Colorful banners... Everyone came over for joy. [...] Then, we noticed the scuffle. There was music on the truck, so I didn't hear the gunfire. Even if I heard, I wouldn't know, cause I never heard it before. But, people are running. What is happening, my god. They [gendarmerie] took us to the military headquarter at the end of the Atlas Street. They told us not to worry. Then, we heard that Mukavemeti Şabiye broke in the arsenal and seized all of the weapons. We stayed in there until midnight. We didn't know what was happening, shots rang out, bang bang bang... They keep telling us not to worry, but we are all children. [...] At midnight, an officer showed up to deliver us to our families. We arrived at our house, the officer knocked the door. They [the parents] piled all the furniture against the door. Everyone did the same thing in the neighbourhood. Bullets fired in the air. I don't know what is happening. My mother opened the door when she heard my voice. [...] Next day, our door was knocked. "No one will remain at home. The Citadel will be bombarded [where the house of Resmiye Hanim was located]. Do not keep any weapon at home, otherwise you'd be hanged." Now, what are we going to do?! Should we walk out or not? All of the neighbours got together in one of the houses. Noone had a gun. Only we had one, and that was a present to my father from one of his friends in the army. And it had rusted away. There were no bullets in it. [She chuckled:] We began to worry about that... Then, we decided to boil water upstairs. If they [the militia, i.e. Mukavemeti Şabiye] ever

come, we will pour boiled water on their heads. They made an announcement, “The citadel will be bombarded. All houses should be vacated.” We decided to walk down the citadel. Men, women, children, all of us. Can you imagine?! We locked our doors and began to walk down. Now, we are walking down, my mother, father, three uncles, grandfather, grandmother, aunt – all of us would live in the same house. We arrived at the Citadel gate. Girls and boys from Mukavemeti Şabiye were standing at the gate. We thought, ‘what should we do? Let’s go to our relatives’ house down the street’. At that moment, they [the militias] pointed at my father, “That’s not him. He is Armenian or Assyrian”, because my father had blue eyes and light skin. [So, the family was released.] We went to our relatives’. Fifteen minutes later we arrived there... [smiling] guns [were pointed] at our heads... They broke in the house. They tied rope around my father’s neck. Around my grandfather’s neck. Around my uncle’s neck. My mother is crying, begging them to release [...] They dragged them out... The Ata Khayrullah and Ihsan Khayrullah brothers, we heard, had already been killed. Ata Khayrullah was the leader of the Turkmen. One of their relatives was with us. We hid him at the house, behind the curtain, cause if they found him, we thought, they would kill all of us. We hid another relative, a seventeen year old boy. We put him in the cradle, covered him with a blanket. They took away the rest. Took away... In a little while, someone showed up, someone who knows us. He said, “there is somebody who is responsible of all these. He lives at the next door. He has a list of people. Go talk to him, perhaps they would release your people.” My mother and aunt went to the guy’s house. It turned out that the guy was the imam of the mosque in the Citadel, the mosque behind our house! A Kurd from Sulaimaniyyah. We would feed him at our house, at least once a week. [Chuckling] We accepted him as an Imam! My mother was shocked to see him, “Mullah, is that you?... They took away our people! You know us well. What have we done?!” There was a notebook before him, my mother tells, with names written in it. Believe me, this is what happened, that’s just how it is. This is what my mother told me. “Mullah” she said, “For God’s sake, look, they took them away! They will hang them all!...” “Don’t worry,” he replied, “No one will get hurt, go home and sleep well, nothing will happen.” And they [mother and aunt] came back. My grandmother didn’t eat anything for two days, nor she uttered a word. She was just sitting. After this event, she suffered from heart disease. And later, she died because of that.... Two days

later, an officer among us, the father of Faruk Abdurrahman, fled Kirkuk for Baghdad to report. [...]

I was told by that the person who reported the events to the Turkish Embassy at Baghdad had to walk for three days as no trains were running in and out of Kirkuk. Resmiye Hanim continues:

The army arrived only three days later. During those three days, they hanged people on lampposts, cut off people's heads!.. They washed them out, shouting "This is Torani blood!" Anyways, we heard the troops came in. My mother and aunt went to the police station. They had taken my father and the others to a school. They would have just shoot them all if soldiers hadn't showed up. They didn't eat anything for three days. No food, no water. And you can't imagine how hot Kirkuk would be in July. You can't remain outside for three minutes. When they [mother and aunt] went there [the school], they saw a box of tomatoes on the floor thrown before the people, and everyone trying to eat them. They somehow brought my father and others to our house... After the army came in, they didn't shoot anyone else. But, before that, they tied one foot to one car and the other to another car... We saw the residues of the bodies on the bridge. No one could identify the bodies. [...] It was a shock to a child [Resmiye Hanim was only eleven years old when this event took place.] It was indeed a trauma... For what reason! For nothing... All our fault is to speak Turkish.

### **The Turkish discourse on the Kirkuk conflict**

The Kirkuk events were covered in the Turkish press with the typical anti-communist remarks of the cold-war period. The following is a front-page headline from *Son Havadis* (The Last News) on July 29, 1959:

THE REDS SEEK TO STRAIN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND IRAQ

Communists confess: the bloody events in Kirkuk were instigated by the red organization, 'Mukavemeti Sabiye'.

## Communist activities prohibited in Iraq

### A Communist plot discovered

BEIRUT, 28 (AA) – Based on the information given by [some] Iraqis the bloody acts were plotted by the agents of International communism and carried out by the militia of Mukavemeti Sabiye. Communist agents confessed to nationalists that they took order from the very top, and the purpose was to strain the relations between Turkey and Iraq. The best evidence is the disinformation spread by the Moscow radio claiming that the Turks of Kirkuk founded a society for the annexation of the Kirkuk region to Turkey. It is a tactic of the strategists of International communism for damaging the relations between the two countries.

The witnesses of the events also indicated that many Arab nationalists came to rescue the Turks, as the latter were being attacked by the communists. A colonel among the Arabs was slain by the communists. A few days after the events, the nationalist Arabs [empathized with the Turks]: “We have seen how violent the Communists are and for whom they work. So, let us support each other.”

According to Iraqi Turks, all Iraqis despise communism, and the government is expected to take strong measures against it.

A decade later, one of the leading Turkmen nationalists wrote an essay on the Kirkuk events of 1959 in *Devlet* (State), a pan-Turkist monthly periodical issued in Anatolia. Among other things, the feeling of having betrayed by the Motherland (Turkey) is remarkable in the language:

*The kingdom is disposed with a revolution on July 14, 1958. The leading figure is Colonel Abdulkarim Kasim... Previously a toady of the king, Kasim, who sometimes acts like an Arab nationalist and sometimes like a communist sympathizer, is essentially a dishonest and miserable man, a British puppet... He takes over the country by force and in a bloody way. He plans for a new constitution, which does not mention the Turkish community whose existence in Iraq has been verified. How and by which reasoning would he dare to ignore the Turkish community that constitutes one-sixth of the Iraqi population? This was apparently a tactical move of the British to nullify the claim of a considerably powerful state (Turkey) to an oil-rich region in the Middle East. And it takes its strength from the Lausanne Treaty and from the very conciliatory attitude and neglectfulness of Turkey. Turkey has not protested the new constitution. The Turkish ministers did not only fail to grasp the graveness of the issue, but also sympathized with Qasim, saying “We will not ruin our friendly relations with Iraq because of a few hundreds of Turks.” [...]*

*The Turkish region was appealing to Barzani in both geopolitical and economic terms. So, they [Kurds] needed to annihilate the Turks for the establishment and survival of the Kurdish state they had dreamed of. So, they would take the earliest opportunity to crush a minority which has been left outside the sovereignty of Turkey. [...] Here is the plan: The communist Kurds will commit the massacre; the government will overlook, and not accept any responsibility but just punish only a few so-called convicts.*

*And this is how the plan was carried out:*

*On October 22, 1958, Barzani leaves Kirkuk for Sulaimaniyyah, as a large crowd bade him a fond farewell. On his return (October 24), he is accompanied by hundreds of communist Kurds, who, in a fury, cause troubles by insulting every Turk standing in their way. They chant as they march: "Leave Kirkuk! Kirkuk is ours." And clashes ensue between the demonstrators and the offended Turks. That night, Barzani meets with a group of Kurdish leaders at a house to make plans and give them orders. Next day, another demonstration is arranged as a farewell to Barzani as he leaves for Baghdad. The armed demonstrators cause troubles again after they return from the airport. [...] The Turkish shops are looted. Turkish store signs are brought down. They chant in the most barbarian manners slogans like "Death to the servants of imperialism! Kirkuk is Kurdish!" [...] The major Hidayet Aslan dies of heart attack [...] The locals arrange a magnificent funeral, attended by ten thousands of people. The crowd maintains a dignified silence as they proceed toward the gate of the Second Division, and disperses upon the warning of the leader [Retired Captain] Ata Khayrullah. [...] <sup>387</sup>*

We should pause for a moment to think about this sense of betrayal still haunting the Turkmen nationalists today if we are to understand the political dynamics of their relationship with the Turkish state and Turkish nationalism. As clearly manifested in the text above, the originary moment of frustration was the Lausanne Treaty, at which the Turkish state failed to negotiate over the minority status of the Turkmen who lived in the Mosul region that would soon be relinquished to the British mandate. I quote below another remark demonstrative of the discontent of the Turkmen with the Iraq policy of the Turkish government of the time:

*Iraqi Turks were profoundly frustrated by the decision of the League of Nations on the Mosul question [March 16, 1925]. The region was left to the British hands with the*

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<sup>387</sup> Kuzeci 2004:96-97, my translation.



*Ankara Treaty [June 5, 1926]. In this way, Iraqi Turks were left to their fate like a dejected orphan.*<sup>388</sup>

Let me explain how this sense of betrayal has resurfaced over the recent years. As widely observed, the Turkish state has cultivated a posture of studied ambiguity with respect to the Kirkuk question.<sup>389</sup> In an invincible fear of territorial loss (‘Sèvres syndrome’<sup>390</sup>), the state elite has usually considered Turkey as a rightful stakeholder in the negotiations over the political fate of the Kirkuk district. They are worried for a long time that the Kurdish ascendancy in Iraq will stir up secessionist sentiments among its own Kurdish minority. Many viewed sending troops across the border as “a legitimate response to an impending or actual Kurdish take-over of Kirkuk that would –in Turkish eyes almost by definition– threaten the rights of [the] Turkmen population.”<sup>391</sup> In other words, a Kurdish regional government that incorporates Kirkuk was a “red line” for Turkey. However, it remained cloudy whether an independent Kurdistan *without* Kirkuk would be acceptable or not. The ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) has given green light to the Kurdish state, by emphasizing that Kirkuk should be granted a special status based on the principle of equitable power sharing among the principal communities (Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, and Chaldo-Assyrians).

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<sup>388</sup> Saatci 1996.

<sup>389</sup> ICG 2005: 12.

<sup>390</sup> I am referring to the Treaty of Sèvres signed between the victorious Allied powers of the WWI and the Ottoman government on August 10, 1920. The pact obliged the latter to renounce all rights over the Arab provinces and North Africa. It also provided for an independent Armenia, for an autonomous Kurdistan, and for a Greek presence in eastern Thrace and on the Anatolian west coast, as well as Greek control over the Aegean islands commanding the Dardanelles. Rejected by the new Turkish nationalist regime, the Treaty of Sèvres was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.:11.

Since the establishment of the ‘safe-heaven’ in northern Iraq in 1991,<sup>392</sup> Turkey has developed a number of preemptive tools, such as deploying troops on the border, primarily to prevent the Iraqi Kurds from infiltrating and to fight the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). It also preserved a military foothold in the northern Iraq throughout the late nineties until 2004 on the pretext of ensuring peace in the Kurdish autonomous region. The KDP and PUK, after three years of fighting, signed an armistice in 1997, a treaty known as ‘Ankara Peace Process’, with Turkey, the UK and the U.S. acting as the international mediators. The armistice entailed a monitoring process, which means, Turkey would be able to keep a troop of security forces at Erbil (Peace Monitoring Forces), the capital of the safe-heaven, recruiting its soldiers from the local Turkmen and Chaldo-Assyrian communities. For the Kurds, the military presence of Turkey in the region was a thorn in their side for they considered it as a tool of Turkish intervention.<sup>393</sup> They felt similarly about the Iraqi Turkmen Front (*Irak Türkmen Cephesi*, hereafter the ITF, or the Front), a political organization founded in 1995 at Erbil. The ITF was a product of collaboration between the Turkish government, military elite, and the Turkmen lobby in Turkey. Seeking to unite the Turkmen under its roof, the organization later became a coalition, incorporating several Turkmen parties. In this way, it sought to function as a local actor, which would consistently call on Turkey to intervene in the Kirkuk dispute.

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<sup>392</sup> Following the 1991 uprising of the Iraqi people against Saddam Hussein, many Kurds were forced to flee the country to become refugees in bordering regions of Iran and Turkey. A northern no-fly zone was established following the First Gulf War in 1991 to facilitate the return of Kurdish refugees. As Kurds continued to fight government troops, Iraqi forces finally left Kurdistan in October 1991 leaving the region to function de facto independently.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

Turkmen nationalists at first supported the ITF, as the latter sought to establish itself in Kirkuk after the regime change in 2003. On the other hand, in the eyes of many native Turkmen, the ITF was an organization with foreign provenance, and this obviously raised the question of legitimacy.<sup>394</sup> Many Turkmen activists I interviewed in Turkey openly criticized the ITF, some of them claiming those who worked with the ITF was doing their job only for the salary. The Turkmen in Iraq did not have too many options, many admitted. But, the ITF had serious administrative problems, they all agreed, including the members of the organization. In particular, the younger generation complained about excessive Turkish control over the Turkmen politics. Following its failure at the elections of December 2005, the representative power of the ITF, as well as its autonomous character, became highly controversial.

Over the time, the leading Turkmen intellectuals and political activists were increasingly frustrated by the inconsistent attitude of Turkey toward the Kurdish politics and the Kirkuk dispute. Their hope for Turkish support had been disappointed once again, when the national assembly voted in March 2003 against the legislative proposal of discharging Turkish troops to Iraq. Related to that, I remember a particular moment from my fieldwork. It was my second visit in 2005 to the headquarters of the ITSCS at Istanbul. I was there for the commemoration of ‘the Kirkuk Massacre of 1959’. After the event, I was wandering around the place to take some pictures when I saw a framed poster, useless and idle, standing on a stack of chairs in one of the rooms. With a

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<sup>394</sup> A significant part of the Shi‘i Turkmen in northern Iraq joined Shi‘i-based Turkmen Islamic Union, which would later merge with Shi‘i-based United Iraqi Alliance following the spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani.

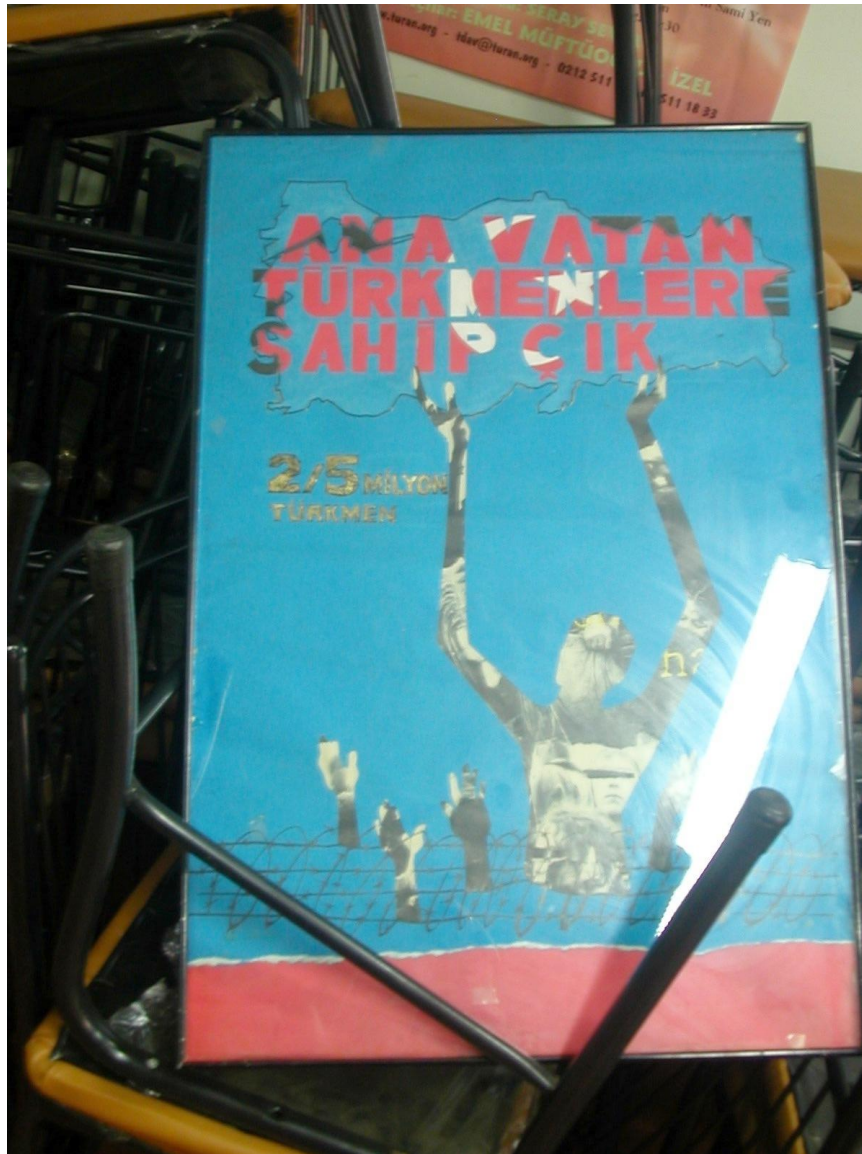
contoured map of Turkey on a blue background, it was captioned in the red and white colors of the Turkish flag: “MOTHERLAND, HOLD ON TO THE TURKMEN” (Figure 5.3).

A Turkmen organization based in the Netherlands (Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation) recently published (2009) on its website a report on Turkey’s Turkmen policy that rebukes the ITF.<sup>395</sup> The report describes the ITF as a “puppet organization” that has marginalized the Turkmen intellectuals and politicians both inside and outside Iraq and acted against Turkmen national interests. Consequently, it has “lost the support of the Iraqi Turkmen population,” including the activists and intelligentsia.

The current debate on the ITF is more clearly understood when we look at a few insider accounts of the Turkmen movement in the political context of the nineties. Ersin Bey (pseudonym) was one of the members of the National Turkmen Party (*Milli Turkmen Partisi*, hereafter the NTP) founded in 1991 as the first ‘nationalist’ party of the Iraqi Turkmen. The party was established in exile (Ankara) and headquartered in Erbil, since it was impossible for any minority group to be politically active in other places of Iraq. “We were so excited by the NTP,” said Ersin Bey. “It was actually the political declaration of the underground activities in the sixties. The party members were the followers of the Turkmen leaders executed in 1980. The purpose was exclusively national.” He was referring to the autonomous character of the party, and he added, “we didn’t have any connections with whatsoever. It was rooted in the Turkmen people.” As

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<sup>395</sup> [http://www.turkmen.nl/1A\\_soitm/Rep.6-B2208.htm](http://www.turkmen.nl/1A_soitm/Rep.6-B2208.htm)



**Figure 5.3** “Motherland, hold on to the Turkmen”

for the political project of the NTP, they demanded equal cultural and political rights within the territorial integrity of Iraq and representation by population.

The problem was that the party had only limited contact with its potential constituency in places outside the autonomous region where the Turkmen population was concentrated, particularly Kirkuk and its surroundings. “Over time,” Ersin Bey said, “the party forgot about its social base and began to act like a Turkish party.” Around 1993, the Kurds established their first parliament in the autonomous region and invited the NTP to their government. Turkey in turn urged the party to join the Kurdish government. At that moment, the NTP was split into two camps. While some of the members submitted to the Turkish demands, the rest insisted that they first had to agree on the borders of what was called ‘Kurdistan’. As there was no possibility of agreement, Ersin Bey and others who thought similarly resigned from the party. As the split became obvious, the party began to lose popular support. “Our people has a lot of respect for Turkey, so we couldn’t explain this to them. We couldn’t simply tell them Turkey has been trying to impose itself on us. It wouldn’t be proper to share this with the public. It was something we had to contain among ourselves.”

Many of those who resigned from the NTP did not establish any other parties in Iraq, and some of them left for Turkey, and “continued to serve the Cause” from Istanbul and Ankara. The rest stayed in Iraq and founded a few parties that are still active today, but have failed to make inroads in any of the elections. It was around those days that the ITF emerged as an alternative organization to combine the local actors, yet it soon turned

out that a significant part of the nationalists were left outside or simply did not want to be part of the ITF.

### **On recollecting and framing violence: Private reminiscences and public constructions**

Resmiye Hanim recounts the childhood years as the days of absolute happiness spent together with the family and the relatives. Almost no one else is remembered except for the Turkmen in town. Everything seemed to be in its place; everything was the way it was supposed to be. And *home was a place of sameness rather than difference* – until their life was interrupted by a sudden, as much as irrational, violence.<sup>396</sup>

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002) makes a similar observation related to the popular representations of the Partition of 1947 India-Pakistan, where the past is depicted as a ‘golden age’ and the home as an idyllic place.<sup>397</sup> He argues that this type of narrating violence has been a significant rhetorical element of Hindu Bengali nationalism. The same also applies to contemporary Turkmen nationalism that frequently alludes in an elegiac tone to the city of Kirkuk of the Ottoman times. Consider the following poem from the fifties, which interestingly reminded a Christian friend of the Akathist Hymn to the Holy Virgin when I first recited it to her.

*Asirlarca bize melce-i sefkat olan Kerkuk  
Bugun bin kayd ile bin sahne-i mihnet olan Kerkuk (1)*

*Yakin bir mazide bir necm-i saadetken*

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<sup>396</sup> This applies to the experiences of other displaced people across the world. For a case of internally displaced Turkish Kurds, see Ustundag 2005.

<sup>397</sup> See Ustundag *ibid*.

*Sonu dehşet-menun bir ateş-i vahşet olan Kerkük* (6)

*Çıkan petrolleriyle şöhreti afakı doldurdu  
Yabancı ırklara bir menbe-i servet olan Kerkük* (8)

*Akan altın bulaktan sahibi mahrum olup gitti  
Yanan kalpler gibi ateş-i firkat olan Kerkük* (9)  
(Hidir Lutfi, "Kirkuk")<sup>398</sup>

The stanzas can be rendered into English roughly as:

*A place of compassion to us for centuries,  
Kirkuk is now a scene of troubles, bound with fetters of iron.* (1)

*Once a star of happiness,  
Kirkuk is a fire of terror.* (6)

*Now worldly famous with its oil,  
Kirkuk is a spring of wealth for foreign races.* (8)

*With its owner deprived of the golden spring,  
Kirkuk is a fire of separation in burning hearts.* (9)

This argument leads us to another point, where one could delineate memory and history as two distinct forms of discourse on violence. To quote Chakrabarty (2002:116-117),

The narrative structure of the memory of trauma works on a principle opposite to that of any historical narrative. At the same time, however, if memory is to be that of trauma, it must place the event, the cause of trauma [...] within a past that gives force to the victim's claim. This past must be shared by the narrator and his audience. Yet it cannot be a historicist version of the past, one that aims to diffuse the shock of the traumatic by explaining away the element of the unexpected.

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<sup>398</sup> Hıdır Lutfi was born in 1880 and died in 1959 in Kirkuk. He was imprisoned at the time of the Nuri Said government for his political activities.



Thus, it seems that, in the context of private reminiscences, violence resists explanatory frameworks. It is not surprising that Resmiye Hanim was still having difficulty in understanding what happened in July 1959: “For what reason! For nothing... All our fault is to speak Turkish.”

Frameworks are, however, employed in public histories for “coding practices.”<sup>399</sup> In the case of Turkmen, it is the ethnic language that is immediately available and legitimate framework that “imposes itself on, or at least suggests itself to, actors and analysts alike.”<sup>400</sup> I will give two examples from the monarchic period. One of them is the event of 1924, which is widely remembered among the Turkmen as the ‘Armenian massacre’, although it was Assyrian Christians rather than Armenians who were involved in the conflict. Here is the historical backdrop of the incident.

During the First World War, the Hakkari Assyrians (in South East Anatolia) rebelled against the Ottomans with the Russians’ support; but the rebellion was ultimately inconsequential as the Bolsheviks let them down after the October Revolution. Many of them thus sought refuge in Mosul and Iraqi Kurdistan, harboring aspirations for greater self-determination and autonomy under the auspices of the British. The Assyrians for long insisted on regional autonomy, and this constituted a pretext for the violent attacks by the national army in 1933.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Brubaker and Laitin 1998.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.: 428.

<sup>401</sup> See Zubaida 2000.

The Hakkari Assyrians were re-settled by the mandate government in a mountainous area between Tigris and Zab in the north inhabited by Kurdish tribes. Their relations with the neighbouring Kurds were largely determined by tribal rather than religious or ethnic factors. During the mandate period (1920-1932), the British recruited battalions of Assyrians to defend the borders against the Turkish incursions and to quell Kurdish rebellions, and this contributed to both tribal and religious antagonisms in northern Iraq.<sup>402</sup> The growing tension between the Assyrians and the local Muslims, which included not only Turkmen, but also Arabs and Kurds, ended up at times with impulsive acts of communal revenge. Most noticeable was the incident of 1924, in which a group of Assyrian levies attacked the townspeople in Kirkuk to retaliate a reported injury. It is likely that the event is largely forgotten in the official Iraqi history, while being often invoked by the Turkmen political leaders and intellectuals as a historical example of the British conspiracy to eliminate the Turkmen identity in the Mosul region.

The second example is the workers' strike of 1946 at the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), an incident widely remembered as the 'Gavurbagi massacre'.<sup>403</sup> According to the Turkmen nationalists, the event makes a case for 'racial (ethnic) oppression'.<sup>404</sup> Here, I will not get into the details of the event, but just quote Batatu for an alternative historian account:

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<sup>402</sup> Zubaida *ibid.* See, also, Atiya 1968, Stafford 1935, Betts 1978.

<sup>403</sup> Gavurbagi is the name of the district on the outskirts of Kirkuk where the IPC located.

<sup>404</sup> See, for example, Al-Hirmizi 2005.

On July 3 (1946), 5,000 workers of the Iraqi Petroleum Company went on strike in Kirkuk. The initiative definitely came from the Communist party, but the inflation, the low wages, the strangling of the trade unions laid the road to the strike. Throughout the next eight days meetings were held continuously at Gavurbagi, to the west of Kirkuk. The strikers listened to orations, poems, and reports on the latest developments. The guiding hand of the party was everywhere evident. The culminating point came on July 12 when the police, in an attempt to break up the meetings, fired volleys on the workers, killing at least ten and wounding twenty-seven. The outrage not only added fire to the resentment against the government of the period, but more significantly, gave point, in the eyes of the strikers, to the Communist argument that the government was the guardian not of the workers but the oil company. (Batatu 2004:532-533)

The coding bias – for instance, labeling an event as a pogrom – might have significant consequences.<sup>405</sup> As Brubaker and Laitin (1998:428) argue, framing is not merely external way of registering an event and coming to terms with it intellectually, but it is “partly constitutive of the phenomenon of violence.” “Our coding bias,” they note, “may actually increase the incidence (and not simply perceived incidence) of ethnic violence.” One could describe what is called ‘framework’ in sociology of memory as a hegemonic account that interpellates the ‘victimized’ subjects. The latter,

addressed in terms marked by ‘ethnic’ by diacritics of language, script, cultural and historical reference or site of address, [are] ‘interpellated’ into national subject positions by their recognition that it [is] they who [are being] addressed. (see Althusser 1971:152-165.) Subsequently the addressee [is] ‘worked on’ by a narrative which [focuses] his or her diffuse and oftentimes inchoate anxieties upon powerful and graphic images of violences inflicted by the members of other communities... Here the violences the addressee encountered in his or her life [are] *the same as* those which the national enemy inflicted on the bodies of the tormented objects of the discourse. Recognition that one’s own apparently minor sufferings [are] in fact premonitions of the greater violence the enemy intended to inflict on all who [share] one’s national identity [impel] the addressee to defensively join in inflicting violence on that other under the inspired leadership of those politicians who had ‘recognized’ the real nature of those violences and the implications of the previous order in their infliction.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Brass 1996, Bowen 1996.

<sup>406</sup> Bowman 2003.334.

This is not to argue that the Turkmen sought to retaliate the injury inflicted by the Kurds; on the contrary, apart from a short-lived militant spirit emerged in the sixties, the community tends to develop non-violent means of survival and resistance, as discussed in the previous chapter. My point is that the Kirkuk event of 1959, or more accurately the way it has been ‘coded’ in ethno-nationalist terms, has largely shaped the way the Turkmen community redefined their relations with the Kurds in terms of an antagonism, which in turn constituted the discursive limits of a Turkmen self and a Kurdish other. In studying how the Turkmen formulate their ethnic identity, one observes that their self-image was constructed as the symmetrical opposite of the figure of the Kurdish antagonist.<sup>407</sup> For example, they are proud of being “civilized,” “educated,” “peaceful,” “loyal Iraqi citizens,” as opposed to “barbarian,” “uneducated,” “aggressive,” “traitor” “mountain Kurds.”

In accounts of local history, the Kirkuk event is depicted as the epitome of the genocidal brutality of the Kurdish other (See Figure 5.6). The commemorative aspect of remembering plays a significant part in the Turkmen politics when we consider how suffering has become a valuable asset in human rights market. The Turkmen community struggles for recognition, yet at stake is not only the full recognition of their democratic rights they were deprived of during the former regime, but also full acknowledgement by the ‘significant Others’ –primarily, the West– of the traumas they endured for decades. The Kirkuk event, while providing a “powerful and emotional argument for those Turkmen who fear for security and safety in a region dominated by the Kurds,” serves the

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<sup>407</sup> Cf. Malkki 1995.

ethnic elite, who tries to convey their desire for restitution to the international community.<sup>408</sup>

There can be certain moments in the histories of political communities, be they national or ethnic, which are viewed as turning points in the making of their collective identities. The Kirkuk event of 1959 is one such moment in the Turkmen history. It is particularly evident in accounts that refer to the event as an instance that sparked off the political mobilization of Iraqi Turkmen. To some, the most significant repercussion of the pogrom was that it enabled the Turkmen to redefine their relations with the Arab majority in Iraq, by rendering the 'Turkmen' a *publicly visible* social identity. In the past, as recounted, the Arabs who lived in the south would mix up the Turkmen with the Kurds. With the proclamation of the Republic in 1958,

*the Iraqi Turks were renamed as 'Turkmen'. The purpose of the state was to dissociate the Turkmen from Turkey and the great Turkish world. The truth is that Iraqi Turks adopted this new name, because they believed it would facilitate the recognition of their identity by the Arab majority in Iraq. After the newspapers covered for days the Kirkuk massacre on their front pages, the word 'Turkmen' was firmly established in the Arab mind as the third Iraqi element. The anti-communist Arabs sympathized with the Turkmen, considering them as a heroic figure standing against the Communists.*<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Anderson and Stansfield 2009:60.

<sup>409</sup> Hurmuzlu 2004.

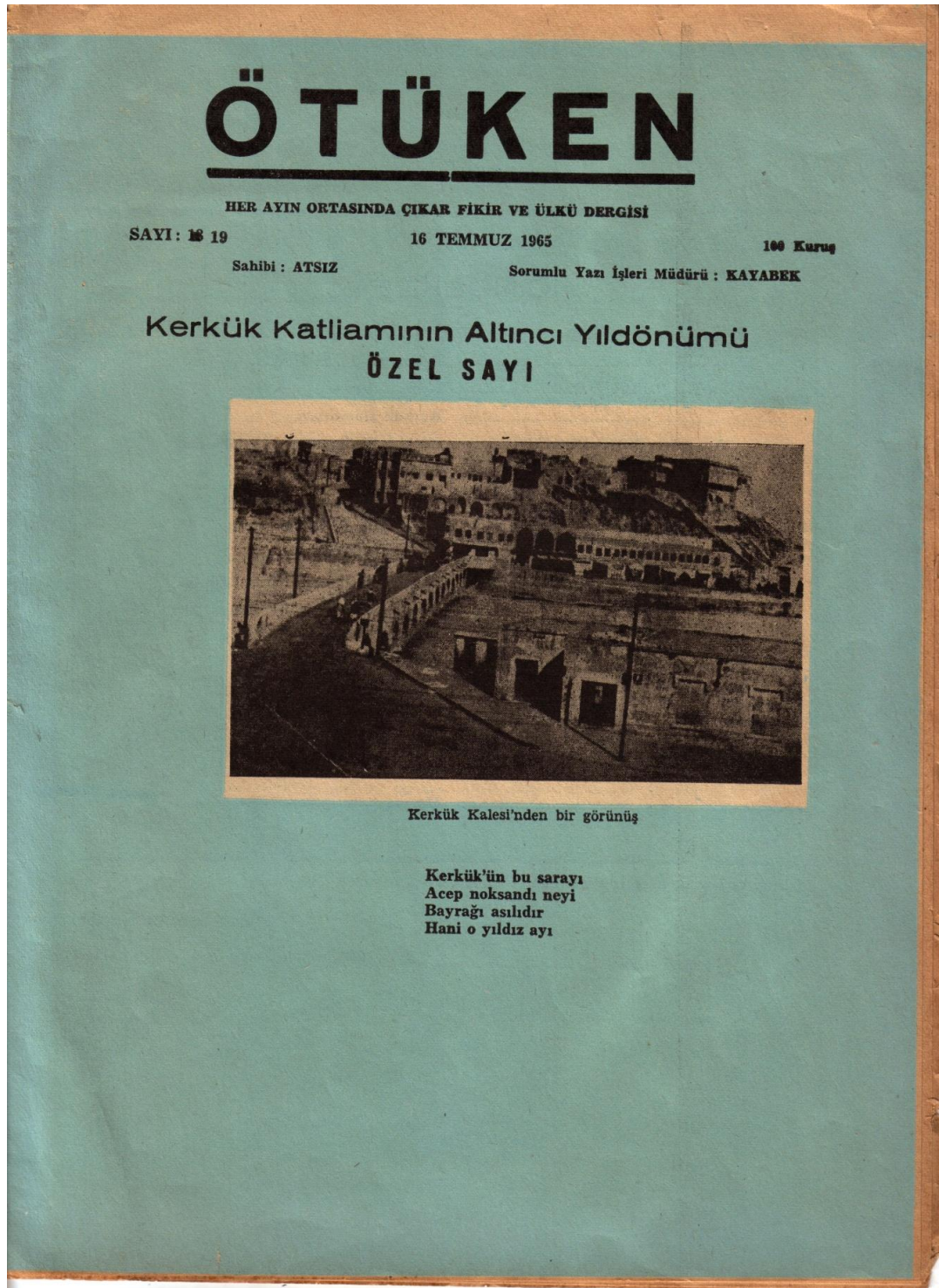


**Figure 5.4** A snapshot in Kirkuk (1959): the trees cut down after the victim's bodies were removed. Source: *Al-Arabi* (1963), reprinted in a journal of *ITSCS*, *Turkmen Bohcasi* (Turkmen Bundle)



**Figure 5.5** The Kirkuk meeting of 1961 in Istanbul.





**Figure 5.6** The Turkish Journal, *Otuken* (Special issue on the 1959 Kirkuk Massacre, 1965).



<p><b>COMMEMORATIVE CEROMONY FOR TURKMEN MARTYRS</b></p>  <p>Hasan Hayrullah   Sakir Zeynel   Cahit Fahrettin   Ata Hayrullah</p> <p><b>The struggle of the Turkmen Society will continue...</b></p> <p>The Turkmen society in Iraq has commenced a new struggle period after the collapse of the dictatorial regime. The Turkmen population has to struggle more than the past in order to prevent its community from inhuman pressure and unfair actions as applied against them until today. The Turkmen do not demand more than living in peace and dignity. As a matter of fact they would like to participate in the rebuilding activities of Iraq as an important factor. The Turkmen would like to see a single</p>  <p>Cihangir Muhtar Fuat</p> <p>flag, single state and single army in their homeland and they would like to be recognized as the third major community of the country. Furthermore they would like to be represented at the parliament according to their ethnic population ratio. They would like to be represented by their own representatives in the local administration where they are the majority of the population. They should resume within the frame of the legal legislation their own agricultural lands and houses which have been captured by force in previous years.</p> <p><b>IRAK TÜRKLERİ KÜLTÜR VE YARDIMLAŞMA DERNEĞİ</b>  Address: Millet Cad. Sadi Cesme Sok. No: 25 Kat: 5 Aksaray - İstanbul / TURKEY  Phone: +90 212 534 88 29 / +90 212 534 88 42 Fax: +90 212 534 98 23</p>	<p><b>44<sup>th</sup> ANIVERSERY OF KERKUK MASSACRE</b></p>  <p><b>THE TURKMEN OF IRAQ</b></p> <p>THE WEEK OF MARTYRS (14-19<sup>th</sup> July 2003)</p>
<p><b>44<sup>th</sup> ANIVERSERY OF KERKUK MASSACRE</b></p>  <p><b>COMMEMORATIVE CEROMONY FOR TURKMEN MARTYRS</b></p> <p><b>COMMEMORATIVE CEROMONY FOR TURKMEN MARTYRS</b></p> <p><b>MARTYRS 44<sup>th</sup> ANIVERSERY OF KERKUK MASSACRE</b></p> <p>Turkmen who have been living in Iraq more than thousand years became citizens of the newly founded Iraq State under the mandate of Britain after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The most important settlement area of the Turkmen is in vast geographical region from the northern west to the southern east of Iraq near Baghdad, namely it begins from Telsifer district which sits at the western part of the Musul toward the villages nearby, then down to Erbil, Altunkopru, Kerkuk, which is the most important cultural centre of the Turkmen society, Tazehurmat, Tavuk, Tuzhurmatu, Bayat villages, Kifri, Hanekin, Karatepe and Mendeli.</p> <p>Turkmen society is the third largest community in Iraq according to the population ratio however, they have been</p> <p>subject to ruthless pressure and restraints which conducted by the dictatorial regimes for many years. The houses and agricultural lands of the Turkmen society have been confiscated by the said regimes and their commercial activities have been restricted. Hundreds of Turkmen civil servants have been discharged from their jobs and many of them have been exiled by using force from their own lands.</p> <p><b>Kerkuk Massacre</b></p> <p>Despite very difficult living conditions Turkmen society has survived but also, has been subjected to a number of massacres which conducted by different administrators. The Turkmen society has faced sorrowful days which were unable to forget in 1924, 1939, 1946, 1959,</p>	<p><b>COMMEMORATIVE CEROMONY FOR TURKMEN MARTYRS</b></p>  <p>1980 and 1991. The massacre which occurred on July 14, 1959 was one of the tragedies which they faced. The aforementioned barbarous-ness and atrocious massacre is known as "Kerkuk Massacre" in the history. The whole Turkmen population was celebrating with their children the first anniversary of the Announcement of the Republic wearing their national dresses at the streets of Kerkuk. The murderers attacked the unarmed Turkmen irrespective whether they are children, women or elderly people. Those murderers have carried out a massacre against unprotected Turkmen people with previously designated plans.</p> <p>Following the curfew, the Turkmen society who always obeyed the current laws respected this announcement. However,</p> <p>many of them have been picked up from their houses and taken to the army laagers in Kerkuk and they have been executed by shooting after adjudicated by the supposedly People's Court in 5-10 minutes. The corpses of the Turkmen martyrs have been dragged with motor vehicles in the streets of Kerkuk. The massacre has been continued three days and some corpses of the Turkmen martyrs have been hanged on the electrical poles under the red-hot sun light. Some of them have been buried while they were alive.</p> <p>Hundreds of Turkmen have been also wounded seriously during the aforementioned massacre. The commercial premises and shops of the Turkmen population have been looted.</p>

Figure 5.7 A bulletin prepared by the ITSCS in the Week of Martyrs (2003).



## In the wake of the Just War: The latest episode of the Kirkuk conflict

*Good friend, for Jesus' sake forebear  
To dig the dust enclosed here!  
Blest be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.  
William Shakespeare<sup>410</sup>*

*Kerkük'te,  
Şafakla birlikte, çöpçüler  
Kimsecikler görmeden  
Attılar beni Hasa çayının çöplüğüne:  
"YANAR KERKÜK  
MUM KİMİN YANAR KERKÜK  
YAĞ YANDI FİTİL BİTTİ  
AHRINDA SÖNDÜ KERKÜK"  
Hoyratı ile birlikte,  
Virane olmuş Hasa köprüsünün  
Harcına karıştık...  
Ben ve o hoyrat.  
Bizimkiler yok  
Hep onlar sokakta...  
Çiğnendik ayakları altında  
Ben ve o hoyrat:  
"YAĞ YANDI FİTİL BİTTİ  
AHRINDA SÖNDÜ KERKÜK"  
Oradan göğe ağırdık  
Sonradan da ARŞ-I ALAYA...  
Sazlayan kadınlarımız da  
Göç edip gitmişler,  
YASIMIZI TUTAN DA KALMADI  
AH...RIN... DA SÖNDÜ KERKÜK...*

*In Kirkuk,  
the garbage men,  
dumped me at dawn to the Hasa creek,  
without anyone seeing:  
"KIRKUK IS BURNING,  
LIKE A CANDLE, KIRKUK IS BURNING  
NO MORE OIL, NO MORE WICK  
KIRKUK WENT OUT AT LAST"  
That hoyrat and I  
mixed with the mortar of the ruined Hasa bridge...  
Me and the hoyrat.  
Our people are gone.  
They are always in the street...  
We are crushed under their feet.  
Me and the hoyrat:  
"NO MORE OIL, NO MORE WICK  
KIRKUK WENT OUT AT LAST"  
From there we reached the sky,  
then, the HEAVEN...  
Our wailing women, too,  
passed away.  
THERE IS NO ONE LEFT TO MOURN FOR US  
KIRKUK WENT OUT AT... LAST...*

İsmet Hürmüzlü, "There is no one left to mourn for us"

<sup>410</sup> Shakespeare's epitaph was quoted by Mikdat Beyoglu in his essay posted on the website of Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation at the Netherlands, or *Stichting Onderzoekcentrum Iraaks Turkmeense Mensenrechten* (SOITM).

The US-led military invasion of Iraq in March 2003 was claimed to be a ‘just war’ waged to ‘liberate a tormented populace from a barbaric tyranny’ and ‘bring democracy to Baghdad’. In the aftermath of the war, Iraqi people, persecuted for decades by an extraordinarily authoritarian regime and too desperate to resist the American neo-conservatives’ false promise of salvation, woke into a bloody nightmare much more dreadful than that in Saddam Hussein’s time. The US congressmen soon had to admit that, after the occupation, violence in Iraq “increased in scope, complexity and lethality.”<sup>411</sup> If there was any freedom brought by the coalition forces into Iraq, it was “the freedom of political idleness” – freedom without power and rights.

The country is now riven with ethnic and sectarian strife, and the most remarkable is the plight of people living in the “disputed territories” of which the political fate is still in limbo. Unsurprisingly, the most fiercely contested place among these territories is Kirkuk. Although the territorial struggle over Kirkuk is coeval with the modern Iraqi state, the military intervention of the coalition powers marks a watershed in the conflict, having unleashed beastly destructive and possessive drives.

I saw Kirkuk for the first time on TV screen in April 2003. A cheerful crowd was celebrating the fall of Saddam Hussein. After a while, I saw the ecstasy of freedom shading into something else, something a kin to rage rather than to effervescent joy. In a few days, some images of ‘vandalizing Kurds’ popped up in Western press.

“Kirkuk’s takeover on Tuesday was followed by hours of stealing, mostly by Kurds returning to the city that Hussein’s government had driven them from by the tens of thousands. [...] ‘We’ve seen people take everything,’ said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Dillard of

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<sup>411</sup> The Iraq Study Group Report, 2006:3

Omaha at the newly established traffic control point the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne had set up just outside Kirkuk on the highway heading the east. ‘Mattresses, refrigerators, small houses,’ he said.” (Vick and Vogel 2003a)

“As dusk gathered over a city without a sanctioned authority or electricity, Kurdish militiamen in black berets began an abrupt crackdown on looting at a downtown intersection. The militiamen cocked their assault rifles and slapped the windshields of any vehicles loaded with cargo, allowing angry men to clamor aboard and spill the booty onto the streets.” (Vick and Vogel 2003b)

“Marauding gangs of armed Kurds attacked Arabs and Turkmen on Saturday [April 12, 2003], looting homes, hijacking cars and killing and kidnapping in a wave of violence that threatened to escalate into ethnic war in oil-rich northern Iraq.” (Landay and McDonald 2003)

“More buildings of the ruling Iraqi Baathist party were looted and at least one was set ablaze on Friday as children and families searched rubble left by vandalism and U.S. bombing. [...] A supermarket in central Kirkuk still smoldered and a party administration office was completely gutted by fire. [...] Several groups of peshmerga could be seen taking away cartoons of ammunition. [...] Turkish-speaking Turkmen were also uneasy, having the targets of robbery at the hands of Kurds.” (Pan 2003)

International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported in September 2004 that 12,135 Kurdish and 3,925 Turkmen families (IDP, i.e. internally displaced people) returned to Kirkuk over the past year. The number of the returnees rapidly increased with refugees coming back from the neighboring host countries. At the beginning of my fieldwork in Turkey, I was told that many Turkmen families went back to Iraq right after the war. Toward the end of my study, however, I found out that a significant part of these families had to leave their hometown once again, particularly due to unemployment, poor conditions of life, and daily terror (suicide bombings and kidnapping cases).

The return of the displaced to Kirkuk has been the subject of contentious debate. The Turkmen, as well as other non-Kurdish residents, claim that the return program has been systematically manipulated by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the two principal Kurdish parties leading the coalition of the

Kurdish Regional Government (KRG).<sup>412</sup> From 1991 to April 2003, these two political parties ruled over a quasi-independent enclave that encompassed predominantly Kurdish areas, including the governorates of Erbil, Dohuk, and Suleimaniyeh, but excluded, notably, those mixed-population areas in the lowlands that had been marked for Arabization by the former regime, most importantly the oil-rich governorate of Ta‘mim and its capital Kirkuk.<sup>413</sup> The KRG administers today the same three governorates while the issue of “disputed territories” such as Kirkuk, Khanikin, and Sinjar awaits resolution.

In the meantime, the Kurdish Parties proceeded with plans to stage a referendum on the political status of the Kirkuk region, invoking the Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, which prescribed the resolution of the status of Kirkuk and other “disputed territories” within a certain timeframe (before December 31, 2007) by means of a process called “normalization” –a multifaceted reversal of Arabization –as well as a census and referendum.<sup>414</sup> It is based upon this article that the Kurdish IDPs were encouraged to move back to Kirkuk as the *Wafidin* (Arab newcomers) were being forced out, who had been settled by the Ba‘thists in the region with the Arabization program. The controversial issue was the *real* place of origin of the Kurdish returnees. The non-Kurdish communities claim that the Kurdish authorities brought non-Kirkuki, and even non-Iraqi,

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<sup>412</sup> See ICG 2005.

<sup>413</sup> See ICG 2004.

<sup>414</sup> The Article 140 (2) subsequently annexed to the constitution states: “The responsibility placed upon the executive branch of the Transitional Government stipulated in Article 58 of the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period shall be extended and conferred upon the executive authority elected in accordance with the constitution, provided that it completes normalization, a census, and a referendum in Kirkuk and other disputed territories to determine the will of their citizens before 31 December 2007”. See ICG 2007:1.

Kurds to the city with the purpose of increasing Kurdish numbers in advance of a census, elections, and a possible referendum on the area's political status. The Kurdish parties, on the other hand, claim "they have sought to prevent mass return to Kirkuk, assert that most if not all returnees are original inhabitants of the town or governorate, pledge to send any non-Kirkukis back to their temporary homes elsewhere."<sup>415</sup> The International Crisis Group (ICG) has argued that both sides may have a case. On the one hand, there is a strong evidence of political manipulation:

When schools opened and Kurdish IDP families realized their children could not continue their education due to a shortage of classroom space, teachers and furniture in Kirkuk, many pragmatically packed up their meager belongings and moved back to Erbil and Suleimaniyeh. Around the same time, it was announced that the national census scheduled for 12 October 2004 had to be postponed indefinitely, obviating the immediate need for Kurds' physical presence in Kirkuk. "See," say non-Kurdish Kirkukis: "The Kurds were directed by the parties to come to Kirkuk only in order to be registered in the census and not because they really want to live here."

On the other hand, both Kurdish returnees living in dire conditions in Kirkuk and internally displaced Kurds remaining in the Kurdish governorates have complained bitterly of what they consider Kurdish leadership failure to provide political, logistical and humanitarian support for their long-desired return to Kirkuk and to expel "imported" Arabs. (ICG 2005:3)

Given that the proposed referendum has been deferred to undefined date, the issue of power and resource sharing in Kirkuk remains a major concern for all parties, the federal and regional governments as well as the local communities. The politics of return is an important aspect of the ongoing conflict over Kirkuk, of which a full-fledged analysis is not possible without a follow-up field research in the city, which would

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<sup>415</sup> ICG 2005:2.

address the property disputes between the Turkmen returnees and expatriates, on the one hand, and, the Arab and Kurdish occupants, on the other.

It is difficult to fully explain at this juncture what happens to the Turkmen identity in the face of an emergent Kurdish “ethnocracy”<sup>416</sup> in northern Iraq. Yet, I argue that a new minority discourse is taking shape, which seeks to incorporate ethnic sentiments and (be)longings into a kind of civic nationalism. In the emergent rhetoric, the Turkmen intellectuals and activists seek justify their claims of ethnic particularity based on universal principles of human rights. I will try to demonstrate this with two examples. The first one is a declaration recently issued by a group of Turkmen expatriates in Turkey, which places a strong emphasis on both the territorial integrity of Iraq and the cultural ties of the Turkmen community to the Turkic world. This declaration was posted soon after the collapse of the Saddam Hussein’s regime on the website of the Kirkuk Foundation in Istanbul:

*The Iraqi Turkmen have accepted this country as their homeland (vatan) since the foundation of the Iraqi State, and have worked for the survival and sublimity of Iraq in spite of all kinds of coercion and injustice they have been subjected to. Although there have been so many violations of their rights and Turkmen intellectuals and leaders have never been a part of the decision-making mechanisms of the state, Turkmen still consider Iraq as their own.*

*All Iraqis acknowledge that the Turkmen are loyal to their land. The Turkmen have never been involved in any separatist and racist movements, [...] have not resorted to mass migration in the face of dreadful assimilation and cruelty [...]*

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<sup>416</sup> Oren Yiftachel (2002:367-368) defines ethnocracy as a “non-democratic regime which attempts to extend or preserve the disproportional ethnic control over a contested multi-ethnic territory. Ethnocracy develops chiefly when control over territory is challenged, and when a dominant group is powerful enough to determine unilaterally the nature of the state. Ethnocracy is thus an unstable regime, with opposite forces of expansionism and resistance in constant conflict.”

*The Turkmen assert that they defend the territorial integrity of sacred Iraqi lands. With these feelings, [they] summon all sectarian formations and citizens of all persuasions to unite around this understanding and to reach an agreement upon the basic principles of the territorial integrity of Iraq.*

My second example is an excerpt from my interview with a leading Turkmen intellectual and political activist, Ersad Hurmuzlu, who currently acts as the main advisor to Abdullah Gul on the Middle East. This is how he responded to my question about the idea of reuniting with Turkey, and the Turkish irredentism of the cold War period:

Nation and state are two separate entities. As a nation, we are part of the Turkish world, and this is an established, inescapable truth. We have never felt ashamed of this, and I explained in my book how to convey this. It is my right to love the Turk in Azerbaijan just as an Arab in Tunus loves an Arab in Iraq. The United Nations made a decision about it in 1992: [he refers to the U.N. Declaration of 1992] *“Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group and with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.”* [Article 2, Item 5] The U.N. is saying this, I am not! [...]

There is the Turkish State and the Iraqi State. I did not found [the Iraq state], but have to live with it, just as people diagnosed with cancer have to live with it. And this is not a cancer. This is a matter of national continuance. If I could preserve the Turkish element in Iraq, I would be serving Turkey, as well. If I wished that Kirkuk be annexed to Turkey, I would not be so different from a man in Çorum or Kastamonu. More importantly, that would not be different from the Kurds' expansionist politics. For this reason, we stand for the unity of Iraq. There is a state, named as Iraq, and we shall stand against whoever tries to destroy it.

[...] Our people do not think similarly to the way the expansionist idealists do [referring to extreme Turkish nationalists]. If you tell a layman in Kirkuk that the Turkish army arrives tomorrow to raise a Turkish flag here, he would cry, “Allah!” It comes from within. But,

he is a layman. [...] On the other hand, politically speaking, that would be nothing but map fascism, and as Turkmen, we should avoid this. [...] What is our ideal in Iraq? It is to participate in the political decision-making mechanism without having to lose our dignity and to insure the future of our children. That place [Kirkuk] is a Turkish soil; it might not be a Turkish territory, but it is a Turkish soil.

With these two examples, I suggest that there is the possibility of change in the Turkmen public discourse, which is an indicator of a transformation in the very structure of feeling or desire from which the Turkmen nationalists are speaking. What I observe is a loss that has been mourned, that is the political alienation from Turkey. Thus, my final argument is that, Turkmen nationalism today is looking for the ways to constitute boundaries between the Turkmen self and the lost Turkish other. This is not to say that nothing remains of the lost object. Following Žižek, I maintain, “there is always a remainder that cannot be integrated through the work of mourning.”<sup>417</sup> And in this case, it is the ethno-linguistic identity to which the Turkmen community remains faithful.

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<sup>417</sup> Žižek 2000: 685



## CONCLUSION

How can we study the politics of ethnic difference in a non-Western context where power relations have been significantly changing? If we conceive what is called ‘ethnicity’ in terms of drawing of political frontiers around a particular community by way of externalizing a threatening outside, we also have to take into account that those frontiers are flexible enough to be redefined under new conditions marked by shifting configurations of power. Prior to that, one needs a perspective to situate ethnicity and nationalism firmly within the realm of historical processes and power struggles. That is what I have primarily tried to do in this dissertation.

I have described the social construction of ethnic identity, not simply as an act of self-imagining, but as an imaginary process of identification that needs to be studied under the light of psychoanalytically informed theories of power. In the initial chapters, I started with the founding moment of modern Iraq with an intention to study how the Turkmen community experienced that moment, and how the following generations relate themselves to that particular past and seek to reconstruct the national history of Iraq. Towards this end, I focused on the expatriates’ retrospective accounts of certain events (oral and written) and locally produced cultural texts that are still widely circulated among the Turkmen community in Turkey.

I have demonstrated that the foundation of the Iraqi state – and all particular events such as the crowning of King Faisal and the annexation of Mosul – was represented in Turkmen narratives with negative and emotionally charged expressions such as ‘detachment’, ‘separation’, ‘rift’, ‘agony’ and so forth. With a focus on folk poetry, I showed how the community mourned for its alienation from Turkey in the aftermath of the First World War, and described this mourning as an unresolved grief, which partly explains the disaffection of the Turkmen with the monarchic government (1932-1958). To the earlier generations, ‘modern Iraq’ signified the marginalization and minoritization of the Turkmen, which used to be a strong community in both political and economic terms during the Ottoman times. I have argued that the nationalization of Iraqi lands generated a feeling of loss among the Turkmen, and this feeling haunts the community for generations in various guises – first, as the loss of power, the loss of land, and later as linguistic marginalization, expropriation, the loss of home, and so forth.

My take on ‘mourning’ has largely been shaped by a post-structuralist perspective that enabled me to understand the melancholic tendencies of the ethnicized subject in terms of one’s struggles with, or resistance against, the normalizing discourse of a centralized or decentralized power (in Iraqi case, Arabization or Kurdification). By focusing on loss and melancholy, I have not intended to portray the Turkmen as a victimized and disabled historical subject. On the contrary, I maintain that melancholy, as an essential stage of mourning, is a matter of self-constitution or of identity

(re)construction, in other words, a “metaphor of becoming,”<sup>418</sup> which indicates that the self is altered after having reinstated its lost object in its inner landscape.

Thus, I have focused on the survival strategies of the community against the assimilation policies of an authoritarian state regime. Such an approach has eventually informed the way I deal with the resilience and reproduction of ethnicity in this particular case. In Chapter Four, I suggested that the Turkmen ethnicity was marked by linguistic boundaries as it emerged on the margins of a dominant Arab culture in the form of a minority discourse. I argue that language is still central to Turkmen ethnicity, indeed a crucial symbolic capital the nationalist elite and intellectuals deploy as a cross-sectarian marker of identity as they seek to unite Sunni and Shi‘i Turkmen in Iraq.

Diasporic participation in contemporary Turkmen politics is quite obvious, and Turkey, with its large size of expatriates, has proved to be the best site to observe this. My research has shown that Istanbul and Ankara both play crucial part in the rise and persistence of ethnic consciousness among the educated Turkmen elite and bourgeoisie, who mostly live in Turkey but retain strong social ties to Iraq. The migrant organizations in Istanbul (the ITSCS and the Kirkuk Foundation) are the hub of public life for the expatriates, as well as the Turkmen visitors from Europe and Iraq, where they can debate and discuss the homeland issues. In my dissertation, I have argued that Turkish nationalism constituted a significant ideological force in the formation of the ethnic subjectivity of Iraqi Turkmen.

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<sup>418</sup> Min 2003:233.

It is important to note here that the Turkmen perspective is not limited to ethno-nationalism; on the contrary, there is a range of opinions represented by various local political Turkmen organizations in Kirkuk. Among the Turkmen community in Iraq, there are Shi‘i Islamists, staunch Iraqi nationalists, and even ‘pro-Kurds’ seeking to integrate Kirkuk into KRG.<sup>419</sup> However, the most salient element informing the terms of the ‘defensive’ mobilization of the Turkmen in their current struggle over the city of Kirkuk is their long-term antagonistic relationship with the Kurds.

In an essay on ethnic politics, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1996:29) claims that ethnic identification differs from class solidarity in that it is “confined to particularist agenda while class politics carries a universalist component of social justice.” This case study has shown that ethnicity-based popular politics does not necessarily exclude universalist claims. In Chapter Five, I argued that a new discourse emerges that seeks to incorporate ethnic sentiments and (be)longings into a kind of civic nationalism and to justify the Turkmen claims of ethnic particularity based on universal principles of human rights. It is crucial to reiterate that this new identity discourse, which foregrounds the civic bonds of the Turkmen to Iraq, develops mainly in response to a Kurdish ethnocracy that emerged in the post-2003 period. Also, that the Turkmen nationalists place greater emphasis on the territorial integrity of Iraq should be considered within the current political context marked by the Kurdish project of incorporating the oil-rich Kirkuk city into the KRG.

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<sup>419</sup> Anderson and Stansfield 2009.

## GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

*Anfal* – literally spoils; a genocidal campaign conducted by the Ba‘th regime against the

Kurdish people in northern Iraq in the late eighties

*bey* – a formal term of address in modern Turkish used for male adults

*bozkurt* – grey wolf

*dava* – cause (in the sense of political end or ideal)

*efendi* – a generic term in Ottoman Turkish usually for literate townsmen

*hanım* – a formal term of address in modern Turkish used for female adults

*hoyrat* – a poetic form of the Iraqi Turkmen

*kıraathane* – a coffeehouse with a public reading space

*liwa* – *sanjaq*, or the sub-division of a province in Ottoman Empire

*ICP* – Iraqi Communist Party

*ICG* – International Crisis Group

*IPC* – Iraq Petroleum Company

*ITF* – Iraqi Turkmen Front

*CUP* – Committee of Union and Progress

*ITSCS* – Iraqi Turks Society for Culture and Solidarity

*KRG* – Kurdish Regional Government

*KDP* – Kurdish Democratic Party

*NAP* – Nationalist Action Party (founded in 1968 in Turkey)

*SOITM* – Stichting Onderzoekcentrum Iraaks Turkmeense Mensenrechten (Iraqi

Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation)

*mallak* – *mülk*-holder

*mullah* – a Muslim learned in Islamic theology and sacred law

*mülk* – the land held in absolute freehold ownership.

*Mukavetemi Şabiye (al-Maqawama al-Sha‘biyya)* – People’s Resistance

Forces (established by the Qasim government on August 1, 1958 as a paramilitary instrument to support the regular Iraqi army)

*PUK* – Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

*NTP* – National Turkmen Party

*sanjaq* – the sub-division of a province in Ottoman Empire

*tapu* – title deed

*UAR* – United Arab Republic

*Al-thawra* – the anti-British uprising of 1920 in Iraq

*vilayet (wilayah)* – province

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