

Iraq and the Assyrian Unimagining:  
Illuminating Scaled Suffering and a Hierarchy of Genocide from Simele to Anfal

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Graduate Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations  
University of Toronto

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## **Abstract**

The 1933 genocidal attacks on Assyrians in the Simele region defined the birth of the nascent Iraqi nation and identity. Iraq has ever been in the spotlight of ethnic and cultural strife, especially concerning Sunni-Shia animosity, and more recently in dealing with the Kurdish people and Iraqi Kurdistan. In most cases, however, the Assyrians are completely neglected from scholarship concerning Iraq and its peoples. This work reinserts the Assyrian people into the fabric of Iraq and discusses the violent and non-violent suppression of Assyrian identity and culture through genocide, cultural genocide, and ethnic cleansing. Three fundamental factors emerge from this reinsertion with respect to Iraq and genocide. First, this approach introduces an often-neglected element in Iraqi studies: the inclusion of minorities, or micro-minorities, within the existing discourse on Iraqi studies. Second, it contributes to genocide studies by examining the impact of the non-physical, or cultural, aspect of genocide. Further, it discusses the importance of the Assyrian case in Iraq for understanding Iraqi history, and serves as a case in point of scaling suffering and for understanding how and why a hierarchy of genocide exists.

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Map No. 3835 Rev. 4 UNITED NATIONS  
January 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Cartographic Section

**Figure 1 Map of Iraq and surrounding countries. The rectangle represents the region of most importance to the demographic distribution of Assyrians. (United Nations Map 3835 January 2004)**

## Introduction

The Roots of Violence: Wealth without work, Pleasure without conscience, Knowledge without character, Commerce without morality, Science without humanity, Worship without sacrifice, Politics without principles.

–Mahatma Gandhi

In October 1933, the young Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin left for Madrid to present a paper on terrorism to the Association Internationale de Droit Penal (AIDP). He had been moved to action by the horrific massacres and violent destruction in the wake of the newly independent Iraqi state, as the Assyrian Christian village of Simele was attacked by the Iraqi army on August 11, 1933. The killing initially claimed the lives of three hundred to five hundred unarmed individuals, and continued with the large-scale looting and razing of over sixty Assyrian villages in the surrounding area.<sup>1</sup> Lemkin hoped that this event would garner sympathy for his proposals to the League of Nations for outlawing crimes against humanity. Lemkin’s proposals aimed to outlaw the crimes of barbarity, “the extermination of ethnic, social, and religious groups by pogroms, massacres or economic discrimination,” and of vandalism, “the destruction of cultural or artistic works which embodied the genius of a specific people.”<sup>2</sup>

Raphael Lemkin would later coin the term *genocide* (from the Greek *genos*, meaning “race” or “tribe,” and the Latin ending *-cide*, denoting “killing”) in the preface of his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (1943). He used the term synonymously with *ethnocide* (since he felt the two conveyed the same idea), which he defined as a combination of the crimes of

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of State, Diplomatic (no 164), P. Knabenshue, Subject: “Assyrians-Massacres in northern Iraq,” Baghdad 21 August 1933

<sup>2</sup> John Cooper, *Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for the Genocide Convention* (NY: Palgrave, 2008), 18-19.

barbarism and vandalism brought forth to the AIDP in Madrid in late 1933.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Lemkin would later liken the brutal Nazi policies and massacres against the Jews during World War II and the Holocaust, to the massacres of the Armenians in the waning Ottoman period during the nation-building process under the Young Turks.<sup>4</sup>

Thus two major events, the massacres of Simele and those within Eastern Anatolia, that Raphael Lemkin utilized during World War II to shed light on then-current human rights violations on the international stage (focusing on the rise of the Nazi party in Germany and subsequent treatment of European Jewry), specifically involved the Assyrian people. The Simele massacres—the defining, inaugural event of independent Iraqi nationhood—mirrored the Young Turk massacres of, as well as Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Kurds, and other minority Turkish groups during and after World War I as the prototypical event of the nation-building for the modern Turkish state.

Such events were not isolated and occurred throughout the Middle East in the midst of nationalization, homogenization, and colonization. The Iraqi army's campaign against the Assyrians in and around the Simele region, and subsequent destruction of villages, occurred following the termination of the British mandate in Iraq in 1932. This violent foundational moment in Iraq's struggle for independence, as referred to by Elie Kedouri, is analogous to the ending of the British mandate in Palestine in early 1948<sup>5</sup> and the beginning of Plan Dalet, which led to the April 1948 massacre of Palestinians at Deir Yassin, Israel.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lawrence LeBlanc, *The United States and the Genocide Convention* (London: Duke University Press, 1991), 18. James Martin, *The Man Who Invented 'Genocide': The Public Career and Consequences of Raphael Lemkin* (Torrance, California: Institute for Historical Review, 1984), 138.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>5</sup> Elie Kedouri, *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle East Studies* (NY: Praeger, 1970), 237.

<sup>6</sup> Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2007), 90-91.



## Renewed International Interest in Iraq

In more recent memory, the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 by the Iraqi army and the American counter-attack some six months later marked a new page in the history of Iraq and the Middle East. During the 1980s, despite regular pleading from Iraqis and some international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) concerning widespread fear and crimes against humanity in Iraq, the United States government was hesitant to act against the very country it was supplying with weapons during its war with Iran from 1980 to 1988. Immediately following the US-led attack on Iraqi forces in Kuwait in 1991, news emerged and began circulating concerning gross human rights violations committed especially against Iraq's Kurdish and Shiite populations throughout the previous decade. Statistics on the gassing and bulldozing of villages hit political and academic circles, and the general public was given a glimpse of images from the gassing of a Kurdish town, Halabja, near the Iranian border, on March 16, 1988, which claimed over 3,200 lives.<sup>7</sup>

Since 1963, consecutive Iraqi regimes, whose pro-Arab stance left little room for a pluralist state, have targeted non-Arab citizens of Iraq, such as the Assyrians and the Kurds. The Ba'th party-dominated governments utilized a policy of assimilation or destruction against minorities. Conservative estimates cite 220 to 290 Assyrian villages destroyed from 1974 to 1989, as well as some two thousand Assyrians killed in the gas campaigns in Iraq from 1987 to 1988.<sup>8</sup> The culmination of a thirty-year effort to silence

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<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 72, 327 n35. This is based on the research of Kurdish researcher Shorsh Resool.

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Without Frontiers, *The Chaldo-Assyrian Community in Today's Iraq: Opportunities and Challenges*, Mission Report November 2003 ([http://www.hrwf.net/html/iraq\\_project.html](http://www.hrwf.net/html/iraq_project.html)), 4. World Net Daily, *Faith Under Fire: Saddam's Terrorizing of Christian Villages*, August 04, 2004, Accessed 2008-02-22 10:29:52

the Kurdish autonomist struggle within northern Iraq was the state-sponsored Anfal campaign.

The Anfal campaign, which took place from February 23, 1988 to September 6, 1988, has been defined as an operation to eliminate the Kurds as a threat to the government. Though the Kurds were the main target of the conflict due to their numerical and political superiority, other minorities including the Assyrians were targeted indiscriminately. This effort speaks to a more general plan targeting any and all opposition and autonomist inclinations, which were prevalent throughout northern Iraq and specifically what is today's Iraqi Kurdistan.

The campaign was characterized by various genocidal atrocities and gross human rights violations, including mass executions and disappearances; using chemical weapons against civilian populations; bulldozing villages; salting the earth; razing crops; destroying cultural property—including dynamiting schools, churches, monasteries, and mosques; looting and land appropriation; forcibly displacing hundreds of thousands of persons, including urbanizing large populations of rural Assyrians and Kurds; arbitrarily jailing suspect persons; and establishing “collective towns” and “prohibited zones.”<sup>9</sup>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported 150 Assyrian Christian and Yezidi disappearances in seven villages during the Final Anfal, which included the regions of Sarsang, Doski, Barwar, Deralok, and Nerwa Rekan, and 632 Kurdish disappearances in thirty-six villages.<sup>10</sup> In a January 2003 report, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the International Alliance for Justice (AIJ) included in their statistics a record of 115 Assyrians who disappeared in August 1988 and 141 Muslims whose fate

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted from Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 267-268.

could not be determined. Another list compiled by FIDH and AIJ mentions thirty-five villages destroyed in the Garmian region during the Anfal campaign. This record of destroyed villages further illustrates this bleak period of wholesale destruction.<sup>11</sup> The Kurds cite the destruction of over four thousand villages and 182,000 victims.<sup>12</sup> Kurdish researcher Shorsh Resool tallied 3,739 Kurdish villages destroyed from 1963 to 1988, excluding some villages in the Mosul and Dohuk regions, and 70,000 to 100,000 victims.<sup>13</sup>

The international media's coverage of the Gulf War and Iraq's gross human rights violations, along with support from some US officials, led to the acknowledgment of crimes committed against the Kurds by the Iraqi state. However, the Assyrians of Iraq appeared to be absent from media coverage as well as political and academic discussions, despite their shared suffering alongside the Kurds. At the empirical level, this study is partially motivated to redress this shortcoming.

## **The Issue of Scaled Suffering**

Considering the various tragedies that have befallen the Assyrian people since the start of the twentieth century, some even marked publicly by scholars such as Raphael Lemkin, the question arises, why have they been relatively neglected by most studies concerning these transformative periods of history? This thesis will address several

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<sup>11</sup> International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) & The International Alliance for Justice (AIJ), *Iraq: continuous and silent ethnic cleansing; Displaced persons in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraqi refugees in Iran* (January 2003), 47-57.

<sup>12</sup> Kerim Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: The Past, Present and Future*, (London: Pluto, 2007), 65-66. Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, xv.

<sup>13</sup> Personal correspondence with researcher Shorsh Resool. Most of the research by Resool was published in a study entitled *The Destruction of a Nation*, released by the PUK in 1990. See Hiltermann, Joost, "Case Study: The 1988 Anfal Campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan," Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, February 2008, [http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id\\_article=98&artpage=10](http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=98&artpage=10), accessed 5 December 2008. Resool had worked in the media relations department of the PUK in northern Iraq in the late 1980s, joining Human Rights Watch analysts who examined the Iraqi state documents in the early 1990s.

hypotheses for this ominous silence, including the glaring oversight of the Assyrian case as the result of British imperial guilt following their negligence in ensuring minority-protection provisions after their withdrawal from Iraq. The source of this British guilt would be their inaction concerning the genocidal violence at Simele in particular, barely two decades after a genocidal onslaught against Armenians and others in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>14</sup> Was the Assyrian tragedy simply the outcome of circumstance? Had the Assyrians become “collateral damage” in the program of a pro-British, independent Iraq whose “unified” national makeup had to necessarily absorb, deny, eliminate, or unimagine this relatively small minority in order to allow the larger ethnic and religious groups to construct a functioning and formidable nation-state?<sup>15</sup>

Another key element to address is the debate over the hierarchy of genocide. There is a tendency among various scholars to emphasize (either intentionally or unintentionally) that the genocide of one national, ethnic, religious, or linguistic group overshadows the genocide of another. Thus, identifying and recognizing a genocide within a genocide has been fraught with majority-minority politics. As the primary example of this issue of scaled suffering, some scholars argue that the enormity of the Jewish suffering during the Holocaust has in many ways obscured the horridness of the Roma and Sinti experience of *Porajmos/Porrajmos*, “Devouring”.<sup>16</sup> Though genocide

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<sup>14</sup> Kedouri, *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle East Studies*, 3-4, 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> The term “imagined” or “unimagined” are based on Benedict Anderson’s concept of nations/communities/identities being constructed and deconstructed. In itself the term is not a value judgment. I use the term “unimagining” in reference to the Assyrians more in the secondary sense of the political attempt at artificializing their identity or eliminating it through forced assimilation which amounts to cultural genocide.

<sup>16</sup> See “Downplaying the Porrajmos: The Trend to Minimize the Romani Holocaust” A review of Guenther Lewy, “The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies,” Oxford University Press, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3(1):79-85, (2001) and “Nazi Occupied Europe 1941-1945: Genocide of Roma-Sinti (Parajmos),” *Prevent Genocide International*, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/edu/pastgenocides/nazi/parajmos/resources/>, Accessed 10 December 2008

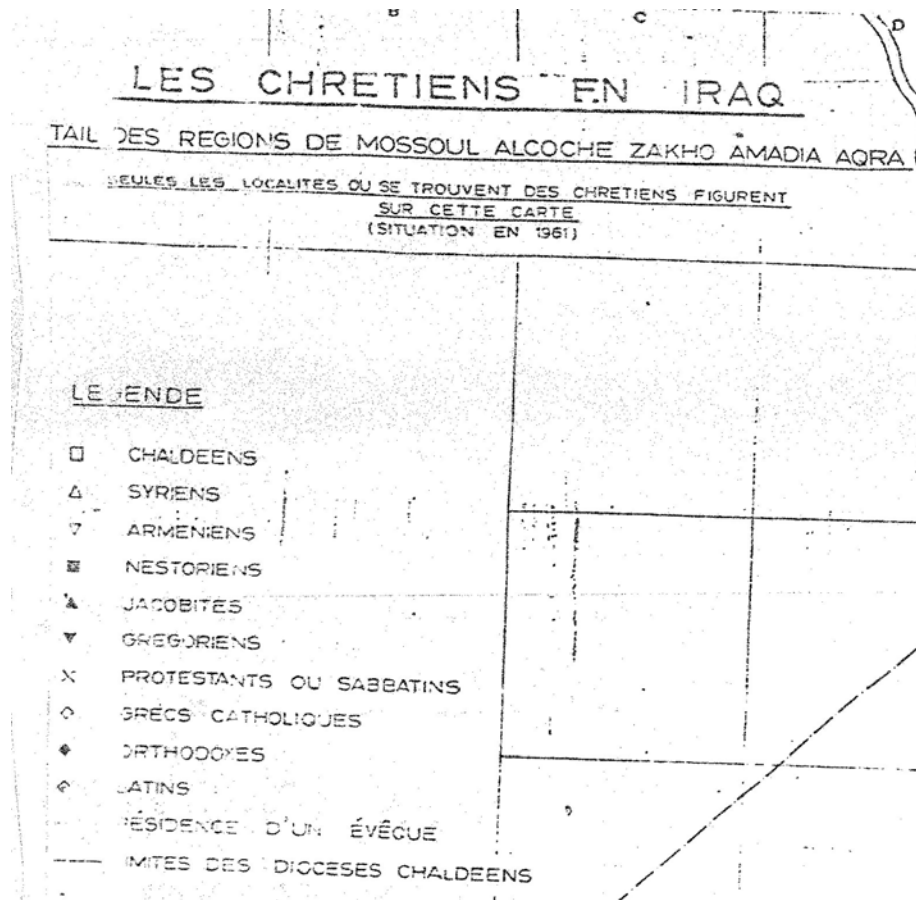
scholars are loath to admit aspects of a game of numbers in genocide research, it is my contention that the silence regarding a particular group is a byproduct of this scaling of suffering, which is directly linked to the more visible group's international political influence. As such, the reception and propagation of Anfal-related literature in genocide studies will be considered vis-à-vis the Assyrian experience, to illustrate its clear overshadowing by the Kurdish case, which is reflective of the Shoah's eclipsing of the *Porajmos*, and of the Armenian genocide over the suffering of Greeks, Assyrians, and others in the Kemalist republic.

### ***Key Sources and Mapping Assyrians***

From the mid-1850s to 1971, the Ordo Praedicatorum, also known as the Roman Catholic Dominican Order, had been converting large numbers of mostly Nestorians and other native Christians to Catholicism. Between 1940 and 1960, Father Jean-Maurice Fiey compiled a three-volume ecclesiastic geography of northern Iraq, which he later entitled *Assyrie Chrétienne* (Christian Assyria), published between 1963 and 1965. Fiey's study has become a reference guide for later works such as David Wilmschurst's *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East, 1318–1913* (2000), and for the monastic and village history of the present study.

Fiey's interest in the Iraqi Christian community prompted fellow Dominican Father Josephe Omez to detail the settlement of Christian villages in the region. The map entitled "Les Chrétiens en Iraq, Régions de Mossoul, Alcoche, Zakho, Amadia, Aqra, seules les localités où se trouvent des Chrétiens figurent sur cette carte (situation en

1961)<sup>17</sup> records over two hundred thirty Christian villages in northern Iraq, not including areas to the east such as Arbil and Kirkuk, both with significant Assyrian communities.<sup>18</sup>



**Figure 2** The legend to the Omez map showing the Christians ecclesiastical communities in north Iraq. Omez's work recorded predominantly Chaldean and Nestorian villages which will concern the majority of this study.

The work most likely was incomplete for these eastern regions, as 1961 saw the first of three waves of large-scale demographic shifting of Assyrians in Iraq during the second half of the twentieth century, which began alongside the armed autonomist movement.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> I am very grateful to Fr. Yousif Thomas, OP, of Baghdad who kindly provided me with the unpublished map through Professor Amir Harrak.

<sup>18</sup> According to page 7 of the FIDH & AIJ (January 2003), 37,720 people (including Assyrians) were forcibly displaced from Kirkuk from 1970-1990 while over 182,000 went missing.

The tireless work of Father Omez was probably based on his personal observations, Fiey's work, and many Syriac manuscripts that detailed the past significance and location of cultural sites, many of which have since been destroyed or fallen into ruin from disuse. Furthermore, the Dominican map and its key, which mention the ecclesiastic ties of each village—including Chaldeans, Syrians, Nestorians, Jacobites, Gregorians, Armenians, Protestants and Seventh-Day Adventists, Greek Catholics, the Orthodox, and Latin-rite Christians—helps to identify the religious affiliation necessary for detailing changes in religious affiliation over the years. Aside from the first four sects (which constitute the majority of Assyrians), the latter six are more recent additions to Iraq and exist mostly in urban areas.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the comprehensiveness of the Dominican father's work and my own work's indebtedness to it, there are a few limiting gaps; this work aims to fill them in utilizing modern technology such as Global Information Systems (GIS) positioning and topography. The system allows for an accurate view of the region's topography. Using the GIS system, I will be able to more accurately pinpoint the location of these Assyrian villages. I have also used Google Earth technology to review satellite images of possible sites of previously unmarked villages. The combination of these tools will allow for accurate demarcating of Assyrian villages, which, when possible, will include longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates.

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<sup>19</sup> Sometimes referred to as the Kurdish-uprising, Kurdish-Iraqi war, or Barzani-uprising; the Assyrians also appeared to have played an essential role as will be illustrated in the following chapters.

<sup>20</sup> See the report by Hormizd Rassam in a paper presented in 1883 and published as "Biblical Nationalities Past and Present," *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol 8 (London: SBA, 1885), 370. Rassam, a native Assyrian (of the Chaldean Church) archaeologist, mentions that with the exception of some Armenian families in Baghdad and Diyarbekir, the rest of the Christians of the region of Iraq and the old villayet of Mosul are "Chaldean Nestorians, Chaldeans Catholics, Syrian Jacobites and Syrian Catholics."

The importance of the unpublished map along with the historical empirical evidence gathered will help to reestablish the Assyrian indigeneity to Iraq, apart from the colonial-invented notions of “invaders” or “mercenaries” deposited in Iraq by the British following World War I. In addition, the empirical research from chapters 2 through 4 is built on the following research: The nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century histories of the villages are based on J. M. Fiey’s influential *Assyrie Chrétienne* (1963–1965), which is in turn grounded in early studies such as George Percy Badger’s two-volume work *The Nestorians and Their Rituals* (1852). All population statistics from 1850 are based on Badger as well, though his numbers should be understood in light of his own reduction of all Nestorian population numbers by one-third, as he felt the numbers had been exaggerated by the Patriarch Mar Sham’un.<sup>21</sup>

The statistics from 1913 are based on Joseph Tfinkdji’s “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui,” published in the *Annuaire pontifical Catholique 1914* (1913), but are subject to scrutiny since numbers are solely indicative of the Chaldean religious community. The numbers by Tfinkdji are also rounded estimates. Population figures from 1957 are based on the 1957 Iraqi census, which was also used by Assyrian researcher Majed Eshoo in *The Fate of Assyrian Villages Annexed to Today's Dohuk Governorate in Iraq and the Conditions in These Villages Following the Establishment of the Iraqi State in 1921* (2004).<sup>22</sup> Eshoo (a pen name) is also the main source for the situation during the 1961–1963 civil wars in Iraq. Eshoo likely utilized this pseudonym as a means of protection from possible retribution; after speaking with various Assyrians in

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<sup>21</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol 1, 392.

<sup>22</sup> Eshoo’s work is available online (<http://www.aina.org/reports/avod.htm>) originally in Arabic and translated into English by Mary Challita. Page numbers are based on the pdf version which is available at <http://www.assyriangc.com/magazine/eng1.pdf>.



Iraq, it seems that Eshoo's work had drawn the suspicion of some Iraq officials.<sup>23</sup> His compilation is probably most indebted to the Assyrian Democratic Movement's research and collections, as well as other Assyrian groups and local NGOs, including the Nineveh Center for Research and Development (NCRD), which has corroborated much of Eshoo's research and begun a collection of Anfal-related material. These studies are incorporated into the January 2003 report by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and International Alliance for Justice (AIJ) entitled *Iraq: Continuous and Silent Ethnic Cleansing; Displaced Persons in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraqi Refugees in Iran*.

The reliability of Eshoo's work is comparable to that of Shorsh Resool's research on Kurdish villages and the Anfal campaign. In the case of studying minorities, since much of the research on them is more often done by the minority themselves, the objectivity is often legitimately questioned but also illegitimately dismissed. With regard to legitimate concern over Assyrian objectivity, the Assyrian researchers have not had the benefit of added support from NGOs like Human Rights Watch (HRW) that have worked alongside Kurdish researchers since 1991. This study has elected to use these compilations under scrutiny and further substantiate the evidence through oral interviews.

As a brief aside, it is logical to expect some sensationalism in the wording of the Assyrian-compiled data, as the events were traumatic for the individuals involved. However, this should not and does not negate the data's utility and importance. If indigenous populations or minorities did not produce their own research, much of today's academic research by "outsiders" would not have been started. History is generally

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<sup>23</sup> Eshoo's writings are republished by various Assyrian news agencies and political groups including the Assyrian National Assembly (ANA - an Iraqi Assyrian political group). His writings (and those of the ANA) have singled out certain ranking persons for crimes against local Assyrians perhaps adding to possible disfavor and the need for the past and continued use of a pseudonym.

written by the victor, and even in a world of progress and technology, indigenous populations have often vanquished. One should not forget the example of Carthage and her culture, which despite its grand history, comes to us through the writings of her enemies and conquerors, the Romans, who had in fact obliterated most of the Carthaginian records.

The more recent statistics are based on the Human Rights Watch (HRW) findings, the Assyrian Academic Society's (AAS) previously unpublished "Field Mission Iraq 2004, Report and Database," and the work of M.B. of the Nineveh Center for Research and Development (NCRD), based in Qaraqosh, Iraq. Furthermore, fieldwork in Iraq today must also be scrutinized, as post-1991 and post-2003 Iraq have seen large-scale demographic shifts and even some village rebuilding. In addition, the fluidity of the destruction makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact date of devastation and, in some cases, the actual location of every village, school, and monument destroyed.<sup>24</sup>

Much of the archival documents consulted in this investigation come from the League of Nations Archives in Geneva, and both the [British] National Archives in Surrey, England and United States National Archives and Records Administration located in College Park, Maryland. The documents Many of the declassified US Department of State documents are included in the annexes for specifics and further research. In the case of Simele, most studies rely solely on British Foreign Office documents and do not consult the Assyrians themselves, making the event one-sided and lacking in depth. I elected to use many of the US documents as they seem to have a less

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<sup>24</sup> For the use of diacritics in the names of villages I have tried to remain close to the local Assyrian (and in some cases Kurdish) pronunciation and Syriac manuscript renditions but this has been difficult for the mapping section as the British and French renditions of Assyrian village names are inaccurate in accordance with the native spelling and/or pronunciation.

involved role as they [United States] still maintained a relative degree of isolation and had fewer stakes in Iraq prior to WWII as their primary foreign interest concerned Latin America. Therefore I have also consulted the archives of the Assyrian Academic Society (located in Chicago, Illinois) and the Nineveh Council for Research and Development and where directly applicable, added to the annexes of this work.<sup>25</sup>

Documents of the Iraq Memory Foundation, mostly in their Arabic originals, with translations provided in the annexes portion of this study were also scrutinized.<sup>26</sup> Concerning these Iraqi documents, it is possible that some documents may be forgeries, due to the chaos in Iraq following the 2003 invasion, where much Ba'ath stationery was stolen. Since it is impossible to detect with accuracy, I have been as cautious as possible in my approach and mentioned discrepancies where apparent.

This research is strongly dependent on the interviews conducted with over fifty Assyrians in the United States and Canada from 2004 to 2008, many immigrants from Iraq following the US-led Gulf War in 1991, concerning their lives as Christian Assyrians under successive Iraqi regimes. The interviewees were chosen based on their place of residence in Iraq (villages) and from a range of Assyrian religious communities. I have sampled predominantly Assyrians who represent the villages discussed in the body of this thesis for the period of 1933 to 1991, though some also dwelled in the major cities of Baghdad, Mosul, Dohuk, and others. The questions and approach used in the interview

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<sup>25</sup> As an important aside I must mention that there is a continued assumption that state archival research has a greater validity or academic quality than oral history or minority history. In essence I disagree with this idea which, though not explicitly stated, is obvious. The research of the Assyrians themselves is equal in both validity and applicability to this and any other study of them.

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.iraqmemory.org/EN/>. Special thanks to Professor Kanan Makiya for his aid and permission to browse the documents of the IMF.

process were evaluated and approved by the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Toronto.

There is an added importance to the inclusion of personal oral interviews with Assyrian survivors from 1933 to the Anfal campaign. These interviews will refute or corroborate the data of archival materials and secondary sources as well as provide an alternative view of events. Furthermore, as expressed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, since indigenous peoples struggled under colonialism against a Western view of their history, this allows for the Assyrians to retell their history from their own perspective.<sup>27</sup> This is the beginning of remedying an ethical dilemma created by the unambiguous assumption that the Assyrians are inconsequential to the history of Iraq and the modern Middle East.

One particular drawback to oral memory is its inconsistency, especially with, in the case of Simele, a more than seventy-year gap. This concern cannot be avoided in any historical study. Furthermore, if historians are overly concerned with the reliability of human memory, they should be equally wary of “official documentation.” As much written knowledge begins as oral knowledge, that too is subject to personal interpretation and political bias. It is equally arguable that the same historic event has multiple and often conflicting written accounts.

The utilization of Iraqi government documents seized after the fall of the Ba‘th regime will also help to illustrate the government policies aimed against the Assyrians, Kurds, and others. Following the first Gulf War, many documents were found by the Kurdish political party, the PKK, and with the aid of the US Foreign Relations Committee and Middle East Watch, brought to the United States in 1993 and housed in

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<sup>27</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, new edition 2008), 33.

Colorado for scanning and processing. In 2007 the originals were sent back to Iraq, though not to the central government.<sup>28</sup> These documents are also subject to review and reliability questioning. The Iraq Memory Foundation (IMF, and the successor to the Iraq Research and Documentation Project) went to Iraq following the second Gulf War and captured numerous documents from Baghdad that they brought back to their headquarters in Washington, D.C. and later stored at the Hoover Institution in January 2008. The question of the removal of such material from Iraq under intellectual property rights and the return to the Kurdish political parties rather than to the Iraqi National Library and Archives is another issue that must be addressed by future research.

The photographs included in this study are necessary for assessing the extent of the destruction in the various Assyrian villages. Since the villages have either been obliterated completely or, in some cases, recently rebuilt, these visual aids both verify the destruction, and allow the reader to better perceive the damage to this community's culture and obtain a sense of the magnitude of the historic importance of these sites. These visual aids will supplement the village descriptions and histories in the body of this research.

In addition, the breadth of this research is limited by various issues, including sources. In most cases, all the research conducted, including by human rights NGOs, are subject to the influence of modern politics, just as all premodern records are equally subject to political bias. Knowing this, it is understandable that most knowledge regarding events in Iraq contains various political, ethnic, and religious biases, especially due to the continuity of the state- and nation-building process still underway in both central Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan.

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<sup>28</sup> See Trudy H. Peterson, certified archivist, *Perspectives*, <http://www.trudypeterson.com/perspectives.html>

## ***Methodological Approach***

This study evaluates the question of genocide in state-building that moved a young lawyer from Poland to present a paper against the crimes of “barbarism” and “vandalism” in Madrid during October 1933. Chronologically, this study will follow Hirmis Aboona’s recent research on the Assyrians under the Ottoman Empire and international-law scholar Hannibal Travis’s work on the effects of the genocide of World War I against the Assyrians. It will also utilize genocide scholar Mark Levene’s treatment of the Simele massacres as genocide, following the massacres of World War I to the Anfal campaign in a region that Levene has aptly termed a “zone of genocide” for over one hundred years. Yet it will attempt this by looking at the Assyrian question in the context of nation- and state-creation and the treatment of indigenous peoples.

My analysis will reevaluate the identity conundrum of the Assyrians as it pertains to their recognition in academic research and international affairs. It will seek to rectify the issue of the Assyrian identity as treated by John Joseph in his informative work *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East* and seek to supplant some possibly outdated theories of Assyrian identity construction and development.<sup>29</sup>

This work will endeavor to delineate the pattern of genocide, including its ethnocidal, linguicidal, ethnic-cleansing forms, in Iraqi state-building during both the colonial period of 1918 to 1932 and in the later years under the nation-state. It will reinsert the case of Simele and its aftermath as the catalyst for the further maltreatment of Iraqi minorities. The Assyrian case is the litmus test for the treatment of minorities in the

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<sup>29</sup> See the reprint of Joseph’s 1961 dissertation *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 32. Some of this discussion is dealt with and corrected by Robert Rollinger in ‘The Terms “Assyria” and “Syria” Again,’ JNES 65: 284-287, (University of Chicago, 2006) and most recently discussed in Donabed and Mako, “Ethno-cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians,” *Chronos*, No. 19 (University of Balamand, 2009).

nation-building schema in the Middle East. Furthermore, it will illustrate that the destruction suffered by the Assyrians during the second half of the twentieth century cannot be argued in terms of religious hatreds or collateral damage, but rather as part and parcel of the unimagining of minorities and indigenous people in the struggle for economic, social, and political power—often through violent coercion and policies of fear.<sup>30</sup>

In the area of Iraqi studies, this study will highlight the geographic distribution of the Assyrians in Iraq, especially in reference to the major periods of cultural and political destruction culminating in the Anfal campaign. These include the destruction of cultural material and structures such as churches, monasteries, shrines, and ancient reliefs.

The timeliness of this research also addresses many ongoing issues in Iraq that concern the state-building process both in central Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. Accordingly, this research is applicable to enduring points of contention such as land expropriation.

“There are outstanding issues of Assyrian villages and lands, which were vacated under Baghdad's forced repatriations during the 1970s and '80s,” says Hania Mufti of Human Rights Watch. “Those issues had not been resolved when the Kurdish authorities took over and they are a bone of contention between the two groups.”<sup>31</sup>

Thus this study's political component may address some controversies regarding the current political climate in Iraqi Kurdistan, which is also in the midst of a state- and nation-building experiment.

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<sup>30</sup> This trend has continued on 24 September 2008 when Iraq's Council of Representatives voted to eliminate Article 50 of the Provincial Law. This article, which had passed into legislation only two months earlier, on 22 July 2008 guaranteed almost 50 reserved seats (as in a quota system) in provincial councils for minorities. See UNPO article (<http://www.unpo.org/content/view/8775/81/>) and UN article <http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/detail/35791.html>). The repeal of the act was marked by the ethnic cleansing of Christians in Mosul in October. See Bradley Klapper's article “3,000 Christians Flee Killing Campaign in Mosul, Iraq,” *The Huffington Post*, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/10/11/3000-christians-flee-kill\\_n\\_133912.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/10/11/3000-christians-flee-kill_n_133912.html)

<sup>31</sup> Glen Chancy, “Christians for Saddam?” (<http://www.orthodoxtoday.org/articles/ChancyIraq.php>). See also <http://www.aina.org/guesteds/20071103124836.pdf> for the more recent land issues.

This substantiation and elucidation is even more pressing in the modern state of Iraq, as the Assyrians, even in the new “democratic” constitution, have found themselves absent.

... inspired by the suffering of Iraq’s martyrs—Sunni and Shiite, Arab, Kurd, and Turkomen, and the remaining brethren in all communities—inspired by the injustice against the holy cities in the popular uprising and against the marshes and other places; recalling the agonies of the national oppression in the massacres of Halabja, Barzan, Anfal and against the Faili Kurds; inspired by the tragedies of the Turkomen in Bashir and the suffering of the people of the western region ...<sup>32</sup>

Thus any new research on Middle Eastern and specifically Iraqi state formation will be incomplete without a close examination of the significance of the Assyrian case brought to the forefront by this study, as both equal to and a catalyst for minority struggles in Iraq.

In a sense, this work forms an embankment against total annihilation and assimilation, as part of Assyrian cultural resistance to continuous genocidal eradication, marked recently by further ethnic cleansing and cultural genocide. Hopefully, this study will make the Assyrian case recognized and perhaps “popularized” for other scholars interested in new approaches to Middle Eastern studies. As minorities and indigenous cultures have utilized various means of cultural resistance from song and dance to art, scholarship is one form that, in the absence of political, economic, or social influence, has been a powerful voice for appeal. It may be as the Lakota Ghost Dancers came to comprehend, “... in the end, songs and dancers were no match for dollars and guns,” but is this author’s hope that that is not the case.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, the Assyrian question can not be fully grasped outside a framework of cultural genocide in the treatment of indigenous populations. When the Assyrians of Iraq

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<sup>32</sup> Iraqi Constitution, United Nations Assistance Mission Iraq, Preamble, [http://www.uniraq.org/documents/iraqi\\_constitution.pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/documents/iraqi_constitution.pdf), Accessed 20 August 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Elaine Eastman, *Sister to the Sioux*, from Stephen Duncombe ed., *Cultural Resistance: A Reader* (Verso, 2002), 194.



had become a “nonentity,” with neither numerical nor political strength, they became targeted by the Iraqi regime through a more complex obliteration of their cultural identity as a distinct people, as elaborated on in chapter 1. Thus the importance of illuminating the parallels of the attempt to eradicate indigenous peoples, specifically between the treatment of the Assyrians in Iraq and that of the Lakota and others in the United States, will expand the issue detailing the resemblance of atrocities committed by Eastern (sometimes ethnic) states including dictatorships, with those committed by Western “civic democracies,” where ethnic “cleansing and democratization proceeded hand in hand.”<sup>34</sup>

### ***Direction of the Work***

The work proceeds chronologically and combines both empirical and discursive elements. The first chapter takes a focused look at the historical development of the modern Assyrian identity and how it has been seen both internally by the community and externally by academia. It will analytically tackle the unique problem of labeling the Assyrians as invaders of Iraq rather than as an indigenous people.<sup>35</sup> The chapter will then give a detailed survey of the various theories behind genocide and how it relates to the Assyrian minority and the case of Iraqi nation- and state-building.

The second chapter begins with the Assyrian situation just prior to World War I and the importance of the genocide of the Young Turks against the Assyrians, Armenians, and Pontic Greeks. This period sees the first major demographic shifting of the Assyrians in the modern era and the genocidal massacres during the nation-building

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy* (NY: Cambridge University Press. 2005), 4.

<sup>35</sup> The literature concerning this phenomenon is vast. It has roots in both ancient history, and more recently, is based on those Assyrians from the Hakkâri region in today’s Turkey who settled in Iraq.

process in Turkey. It will address the importance of more recent scholarship during this formative period of the modern Middle East.

The third chapter addresses in detail the Simele massacres and is built on British and American archival material from 1933 as well as on an Assyrian survivor's eyewitness report. This chapter will expose and analyze reactions to Simele by Assyrians, Iraqis, the British, and the American government. It will set Simele as the foundational event that defined the nation-state of Iraq. The events of Simele and its aftermath, followed by the birth of the Iraqi republic in 1958, will be discussed as an example of genocide.

Chapter 4 discusses the Kurdish armed autonomist movement, sometimes known as the Barzani uprising or Kurdish-Iraqi war, and the position of the Assyrians from 1961 to 1963 in it. This period witnessed massive upheavals in all aspects of Iraqi society during the clashes between government military and nongovernmental opposition forces. The chapter looks at ethnic cleansing both as a state-sponsored program and as one equally utilized by rival non-state (ethnic) actors. Finally, it investigates the neglected massacre of the Assyrian village of Şoriya in 1969.

Chapter 5 focuses on the 1970s. This will include the renewal of internal fighting between the Iraqi government and opposition groups and further forced demographic shifting. It focuses on the villages destroyed in the mid-1970s and the border clearings of 1977–1978, including the setup of “collective towns” in the midst of a large ethnic cleansing campaign. The research examines the villages affected and their historical and cultural significance to the Assyrian population. It also takes a critical look at the

governmental policies of cultural genocide and Arabization and their effect on the Assyrians.

Following the border clearings, chapter 6 examines the 1980s from the rise of Saddam Hussein and the Iraq-Iran war, to the Anfal period and its aftermath. It begins with a review of Anfal-related material and literature. The empirical contribution of this chapter is a list of Assyrian villages destroyed during the 1980s. This list of villages and their historical significance was compiled with the aid of NGO documentation and corroborated by oral interviews parallel to those compiled in chapters 2 and 3.

The findings of the chapters concerning the Assyrians will be readdressed in the conclusion and analyzed as a case in point of violence against minorities in the nation- and state-building process. The conclusion will also address the recognition of the genocide against Assyrians at Simele in 1933 by Lemkin, which set the precedence for the creation of the UN Genocide Convention of 1948—and its subsequent neglect from popular discourse on genocide and Iraqi studies. The conclusion will also confirm the processes of assimilation or Arabization of the Assyrian identity in Iraq through ethnic cleansing and cultural genocide. This process of assimilation, which has further gone unquestioned in part due to academic dismissal of the Assyrians and their historic identity, is argued in chapter 1. Also, comparisons of Eastern “ethnic-based” nations and Western “civic democracies,” and their treatment of minorities and indigenous peoples will be explored in the context of violence in nation-building and scaled suffering as it relates to the Assyrian case.

The work will include an annex, which contains a newly revised list of Assyrian villages destroyed during Simele and important primary-source documents from that

period. It also incorporates original Iraqi government documents in their Arabic original (alongside English translations) from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s that pertain directly to the Assyrians and their situation within the state.

Finally, the annex concludes with a list of all Assyrian villages either destroyed or that had their population forcibly removed by state or non-state actors from 1960 to 1990. This comprehensive catalog of villages will be the first of its kind in an academic work on Assyrians.

# Chapter 1: Communal Identity and Contemporary Scholarship

## *The Assyrians: Natives Before Iraq*

The Assyrians as a numerical (quantitative) and political (qualitative) minority have found little room for inclusion in post-2003 Iraqi society.<sup>36</sup> They are also absent from much literature pertaining to the region. Perhaps part of this lacuna of distinctly Assyrian-related studies stems from a general confusion or certain ambivalence concerning the identity of the people. This identity (ever shifting as all identities) appears to be a major point of contestation in academia, the media, and, more recently, among the people themselves.<sup>37</sup> This section does not intend to argue the validity of definitions of “nationness” and nationalism in relation to the Assyrian people, but seeks to provide a brief description of the variety of ways in which they have identified themselves as a distinct people, and been identified by researchers.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the following section will briefly discuss the Assyrian identity and its contemporary appellations and usage among the community itself and, more specifically, in academia, and the necessity of clarifying the issue for accurate erudition.

The Assyrians are an ancient people. They have lived for millennia in their homeland of northern Mesopotamia (ancient Assyria), part of today’s northern Iraq; they speak a modern form of Aramaic/Syriac (the language spoken in the neo-Assyrian

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<sup>36</sup> The use of political for qualitative is based on the understanding that economic and social power are precursors to and the building blocks of political power.

<sup>37</sup> Such issues are illustrated on various Wikipedia pages concerning the Assyrians.

<sup>38</sup> For a basic outline of Assyrian nationalism as it pertains solely to the Church of the East see Andrea Laing-Marshall, *Modern Assyrian Identity and the Church of the East: An Exploration of Their Relationship and the Rise of Assyrian Nationalism from the World Wars to 1980* (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 2001).

Empire);<sup>39</sup> and they belong predominantly to one of the following religious communities: the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Church of the East (also referred to as Nestorian), the Syrian Orthodox Church (also referred to as Jacobite), and the Syrian Catholic Church and has long been divided, perhaps even more today than in 1900. In the past two millennia, they have been more widely known by their ecclesiastical designations. They have been variously called Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Syriacs, and, more recently, Arameans by a variety of Western scholars adding to the divisions and general confusion.<sup>40</sup> This study is concerned with any and all persons of Assyrian heritage, regardless of religious denomination, living in Iraq from 1915-1991, though it will focus mostly on the Nestorians and Chaldean Assyrians of northern Iraq.

In general, Assyrians refer to themselves as *Sūrōyō/Sūrāyā*, and their native tongue *Sūrayt/Sūreth*; these terms were rendered by some early scholars as “Syrian people” and “Syrian language,” while more recent scholarship renders these terms as “Syriac people” and “Syriac language,” respectively—the latter more aimed at distinguishing the people from the modern Arab state of Syria. In either case, this naming has added a great deal of confusion, especially since the time of the creation of modern Syria and the development of Syrian nationalism. Perhaps the most telltale statement

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<sup>39</sup> See Geoffrey Khan, “Remarks on the Historical Background of the Modern Assyrian Language,” *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* Vol. 21, No. 1, pp 1-6 (2007), 5-6. This is a more detailed account of modern Assyrian and its relation to Aramaic/Syriac and Akkadian. See also Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Identity in Ancient Times and Today*, 9 and Parpola, “National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times” *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 2004

<sup>40</sup> In English, the initial name employed by the Jacobite Church of the United States as an ethnic, religious, and linguistic identity was the Assyrian Apostolic Church of Antioch and according to early 20th century US census accounts, Assyrian respectively. Donabed & Donabed, *Assyrians of Eastern Massachusetts* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 78.

made on behalf of the Assyrian cause was a communication from Bishop Severius Ephrem Barsoum<sup>41</sup> in April 1920:

Nous avons l'honneur d'exposer à la Conférence de la Paix que S.B. notre Patriarche nous a chargé de venir lui porter l'écho des malheurs et des vœux de notre nation syrienne, ancienne descendante de la race assyrienne, qui reside en general en Mésopotamie et en Arménie.<sup>42</sup>

[We have the honor to bring before the Peace Conference information entrusted to us by S.B., our patriarch, information concerning the sufferings and the wishes of our Syrian (Suryani) people, descendants of the ancient Assyrian race, who chiefly reside in Mesopotamia and Armenia.]

That the bishop understood himself and his people to be part of the ancient Assyrian race is clear, yet whether this belief had been superseded by the Syrian (Arab) identity so obvious in the creation of the independent Arab kingdom of Syria under Faisal I in 1920, is subject to further scrutiny.

Following the mass destruction of large segments of their population during World War I, a delegation of the various Assyrian religious communities (including Jacobite bishop Barsoum mentioned above) attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, petitioning for a national homeland. This was published later as *The Claims of the Assyrians as Presented to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, which defined the Assyrian people as including the following: Nestorians, Chaldeans, Jacobites, a Maronite element, Persian Assyrians, Assyrians in Russia, and a Muslim Assyrian group that included Shakkaks<sup>43</sup> and Yezidis.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Barsoum became patriarch of the Jacobites in 1933.

<sup>42</sup> Archevêché Syrien De Syrie, Memorandum 128 Archevêque Severius Barsoum, (Paris: 2 April 1920). See also Sebastien de Courtois, *Le génocide oublié: Chrétiens d'Orient* (Paris: Editions Ellipses, 2002), 334-335.

<sup>43</sup> Shakkak (Shikak) most probably refers to the Kurdish tribe situated to the west of Urmia and Salamas. Their leader, Ismail Simko was the assassinator of the Nestorian Patriarch Mar Benyamin Sham'un and 150 of his bodyguards in March of 1918. The reason for their inclusion may stem from some Assyrian records which refer to the Shikak Kurds using the honorific "uncle" for the Nestorian Patriarch. See Joel Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia or the Assyrian Nation and Church*, (Published by the Author: 1924), 201.

<sup>44</sup> See *Claims of the Assyrians as presented to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* in Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia*, 199-202.

It is evident that the definition espoused by the Assyrian delegation at the 1919 conference highlighted their ethnic character, both past and present, as well as their overwhelmingly Christian adherence. This definition may be reflective of, or simply correspond to, the principles of the “fourteen points” of American president Woodrow Wilson, released on January 8, 1918, and the findings of the King-Crane Commission report, dated August 28, 1919. The ideas expounded by Wilson and the commission regarding self-determination of ethnic groups most likely influenced the Assyrians, who saw their Christian background as a favorable bargaining chip that might give them the ear of the West.<sup>45</sup>

At present, most Assyrians align themselves closely with the following dictionary designation which I myself feel to be the most accurate and inclusive while allowing for degrees of disagreement:

Remnants of the people of the ancient Mesopotamia, succeeding the Sumero-Akkadians and the Babylonians as one continuous civilization. They are among the first nations who accepted Christianity. They belong to one of the four churches: the Chaldean Uniate, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Syrian Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. Due to the ethnic-political conflict in the Middle East, they are better known by these ecclesiastical designations. The Assyrians use classical Syriac in their liturgies while the majority of them speak and write a modern dialect of this language. They constitute the third-largest ethnic group in Iraq with their communities in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Russia and Armenia. Today they remain stateless, and great numbers of them left their homeland and settled in Western Europe, the United States, and Australia.<sup>46</sup>

This description of the Assyrians is supplemented by a recent report by the International Association of Genocide Scholars, which uses “Assyrian” as an umbrella term to include persons who have been identified or identify as “Chaldeans, Nestorians, Syriacs,

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<sup>45</sup> It is also true that the Assyrian desire for an autonomous region and/or to remain in the regions of Mesopotamia which would be under British or American mandate was out of fear of persecution by their Muslim neighbors. See the section concerning Mesopotamia in *The King-Crane Commission Report*, August 28, 1919. The commission was an official investigation during 1919 by the United States government into the circumstances and conditions existing in certain parts of the former Ottoman Empire.

<sup>46</sup> Agnes Korbani, *The Political Dictionary of the Modern Middle East* (NY: University Press of America Inc., 1995), 26.



Arameans, Eastern Orthodox Syrians, and Jacobites.”<sup>47</sup> Chaldean and Syrian/Syriac<sup>48</sup> designations are solely the province of members of the Chaldean and Syrian Churches, respectively, and thus not inter- or cross-denominational. Not only is acknowledging the Assyrian appellation culturally and historically accurate, but it also crosses ecclesiastic boundaries, and thus appears to be the simplest solution to the appellative issue.

The ethnic “Chaldean” label is an Iraqi phenomenon (lacking saturation among the religious community) as the Chaldeans of Bohtan, Turkey and Urmia, Iran are self identified Assyro-Chaldeans (a term coined only in French usage as many of these immigrants now live in France) and Assyrians respectively. Much of the rise in Catholic (Chaldean) converts in Iraq from the Church of the East (Nestorian Church) can be traced to the influence of Rome and France through the Dominican order.<sup>49</sup> This would cause the Church of England to send various representatives to the Church of the East to gather information on the growing Catholic influence. Unlike the members of the Church of the East, the Assyrian identity issue is both a matter of contention and lacks any unanimity.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Press Release by the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS), *Genocide Scholars Association Officially Recognizes Assyrian, Greek Genocides*, 16 December 2007

<sup>48</sup> The phenomenon within the Syrian Orthodox community made its first solid appearance in reference to the United States year 2000 census. See the joint encyclical of two bishops for the United States concerning how church members should self-identify <http://sor.cua.edu/SOCNews/2000/Census2KEncycEng.html>.

<sup>49</sup> Chaldean was used by the Nestorian Uniates of Cyprus to distinguish themselves from the non-uniate Nestorians. There must have been some sense of continuity with ancient Mesopotamia for the uniates to adopt the ancient name Chaldean. It may also been in reference to Babylon as the Church of the East long maintained a major presence in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in southern Iraq. See reference to the Council of Basel 1431-1445, Session 14, 7 August 1445. <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum17.htm>

<sup>50</sup> Raphael Bidawid (Chaldean Patriarch from 1989-2003) in an interview with the *Assyrian Star* magazine in (September-October 1974), 5 stated: Before I became a priest I was an Assyrian, before I became a bishop I was an Assyrian, I am an Assyrian today, tomorrow, forever and I am proud of it.” Also just before his death in 2003 Bidawid gave another interview with the *Assyrian Star* 55/3, (Fall 2003), 20 stating: “I personally think that these different names serve to add confusion. The original name of our Church was the ‘Church of the East’ ... When a portion of the Church of the East became Catholic, the name given was ‘Chaldean’ based on the Magi kings who came from the land of the Chaldean, to Bethlehem. The name ‘Chaldean’ does not represent an ethnicity... We have to separate what is ethnicity and what is religion... I myself, my sect is Chaldean, but ethnically, I am Assyrian.” See also Parpola, “National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times” *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 2004, 22 ft85.

As with any nation, community, people, etc., especially one which lacks a modern nation-state with which to identify (in a world where someone more or less must have a certain “nationality” for legal purposes) there is a lack of unanimity. In this study, the Assyrians are sometimes referred to by their religious community for ecclesiastic reference only. The terms Chaldean, Jacobite, and Nestorian are used to refer to the Assyrian members of the Chaldean Catholic Church, Syrian Orthodox Church, and Assyrian Church of the East, respectively, solely as the simplest point of reference.

### ***Contributions to Fields of Study***

The Assyrian predicament since the creation of the post-Ottoman Middle East has been one of continuous overshadowing or eclipsing by larger, more politically potent, forces and ambitions. These ambitions, while ethnic, religious, political, economic, and social, reflect an aspiration for power and dominion. In all these cases, what happened to the Assyrian minority in Iraq, and why, has remained shrouded in obscurity or stated in a passing footnote of history and remains unexamined.

Though the Assyrian studies as a discipline is under-explored, calling for this long-needed research, theories concerning the basic threads of violence in nation-building and the role of minorities in state formation can be found within the general fields of Iraqi studies and genocide studies. Since the problem of the Assyrians in Iraq is one of identity, it is only fitting that we begin our literature review and discussion there.

### **Identity and Nationalism**

Assyrians, as an ethnic or national group, certainly define themselves from various angles, as having a common culture and ancestry. This first section is concerned

with how and why they have been defined by external and internal sources, especially during a rising tide of nationalist sentiment in the Middle East. To that end, conceptually, the most comprehensive frameworks of analysis for exploring the development of nationalism follow either the primordialist path espoused by Anthony Smith or the modernist path proposed by Benedict Anderson. These two scholars are sometimes incorrectly perceived as contradictory, while in truth their theoretical structures are not mutually exclusive.

Anthony Smith suggests that although “nationalism” may be a modern concept, the question remains as to “whether the nations that nationalism creates are wholly modern creations *ex nihilo*.”<sup>51</sup> In the case of the creation of the Iraqi state, ties to its ancient Mesopotamian past, Arab past, or some semblance of a historic navel creates a partial historical validation (in the minds of Iraqi nationalists) for its existence as does the connection with ancient Assyria for Assyrian nationalists.

Anderson’s work, on the other hand, is concerned with with the discursive construction or “imagining” of a nation based on the influence of mass-produced printed material from newspapers to maps and census material. The relevance of an Andersonian analysis in relation to the growth of “national consciousness” among Iraqis through the medium of print-capitalism, including mapping, census accounts, and general literature, is both valid and appropriate. This framework allows for a better explanation of the Arabization of Assyrians in Iraq (part of identity fabrication or artificialization), which

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<sup>51</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 65.

increased exponentially following a massive swell in the printing of Iraqi Arab-based nationalism.<sup>52</sup>

Sami Zubaida tackles the Assyrian identity indirectly in an article entitled “Contested Nations: Iraq and the Assyrians” (2000). He states, “The Assyrians, previously divided by tribalism and only united in religion, were now seeking re-definition as a ‘nation’, entitled to self-determination and a homeland.”<sup>53</sup> This sentiment is perhaps partially yet problematically true. If we are speaking solely of the Nestorians (a problem which will be discussed further) we must also admit that these people were also united in language and culture. It would be incorrect to assume religion was the only source of unity. As for a re-definition as a nation, this is certainly the case. Not for a lack of communal or cultural identity, but rather in the more modern European sense of nationalism. There can be no doubt that as there was for millennia the idea of France, so too since the time of the Assyrian Empire was there a continued idea of an Assyria.<sup>54</sup>

Assyrian identity, as opposed to Iraqi identity, is a longer continuous tradition steeped in oral folklore, ancient history, and deep-seated Eastern Christian beliefs. This is not to say that Arab identity is not also steeped in history. The Andersonian examination of national character is less attuned to the Assyrian identity than to the modern Iraqi or Syrian or even Arab. This is also due in part to their success, or perhaps more correctly, their statehood. It should be stated that through no fault of its own, the Andersonian model is not universal, contrary to its previous scholarly treatment. From this analysis, I

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<sup>52</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 36.

<sup>53</sup> Sami Zubaida, “Contested Nations: Iraq and the Assyrians,” *Nations and Nationalism* 6 (3), (2000), 372.

<sup>54</sup> There has, since the time of the Assyrian empire, been a region (Mosul and its environs to the north) which has been known as Assyria in various tongues. *Athor, Athur, Asuristan*, etc. The present country of Syria is a testament to this continuity as well.

argue that the Assyrian identity (along with all others) is better seen as a continuously evolving one rather than simply ‘constructed’ one ex nihilo.

The impact and influence of oral traditions and folklore on Assyrian identity is not divorceable from a constantly evolving historical construct, evident in the heroic epic of *Qaṭīne Gabbara*.<sup>55</sup> The importance of that epic in the construction, or perhaps remembrance, of Assyrian historic culture is comparable to Prasenjit Duara’s example of the pan-Chinese myth of Guandi, which allowed different groups to participate in a “national” or universal culture.<sup>56</sup>

Traditionally, the heroic epic *Qaṭīne Gabbara* (Qaṭīne the Great/Mighty) had been orally transmitted within the various Assyrian ecclesiastical communities throughout the Middle East as a fundamental oral narrative.<sup>57</sup> The original folktales were transferred into literary form in 1961 by poet-musician William Daniel and, through the medium of print-capital, transmitted to other, mostly urban and diasporic, Assyrians.

Most studies have discussed the Assyrians from the perspective of confirming or refuting the legitimacy of their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic historicity. Academics discussing Assyrian identity have typically been focused on proving Ernest Gellner’s “historical navel” as of paramount importance for the accuracy of the Assyrian nomenclature. Some scholarly work reflects a tendency to doubt the historic Assyrian identity. Opponents of the Assyrian identity range from Western scholars to Assyrians

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<sup>55</sup> For a more indepth discussion of *Qaṭīne* and its ancient heritage see Nineb Lamassu’s “Gilgamesh's plant of rejuvenation and Qatine's Sisisambar” paper presented at the Melammu Symposium: *Globalisation in the First Millenium*. (Sophia, Bulgaria: September 2008). As Lamassu contends, *Qaṭīne* is likely a segment of the continuous oral tradition of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

<sup>56</sup> Prasenjit Duara, “Historicizing National Identity, or Who Imagines What and When,” 150-177, in Eley and Suny ed. *Becoming National: A Reader* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 153.

<sup>57</sup> Sargon Donabed, “The Assyrian Heroic Epic of *Qaṭīne Gabbara*: A Modern Poem in the Ancient Bardic Tradition,” *Folklore*, 118 (December 2007), 351.

themselves.<sup>58</sup> Many press their case under the pretense that modern Assyrians assume an unevolved continuity with ancient Assyria. This contention is presumptuous in view of the fact that there is no documented evidence of such a belief among the Assyrians themselves. Thus other reasons for the contention will be explored in this study.

The assumption that the Assyrian cultural and ethnic identity of the Chaldeans, Jacobites, and Nestorians is a romanticized Western archeological notion based on Sir Austin Henry Layard's rediscovery of the ancient city of Nineveh is shortsighted. Some early travelers' accounts of interactions with these religious communities tell a different account. The seventeenth-century Italian world traveler Pietro de la Valle married a Christian woman of Mardin (in today's southeastern Turkey) called Maani. Maani is referred to, long before the archeological finds of Layard, as an Assyrian.<sup>59</sup> Assyrian self-identification was also common among Jacobite Christians in Harput, Turkey in the mid-1800s. According to Horatio Southgate,

At the Armenian village of Arapout, where I stopped for breakfast, I began to make inquiries for the Syrians. The people informed me that there were about one hundred families of them in the town of Kharpout, and a village inhabited by them on the plain. I observed that the Armenians did not know them under the name which I used, *Syriani*; but called them *Assouri*, which struck me more at the moment from its resemblance to our English name *Assyrians*, from whom they claim their origin, being sons, as they say, of Assour [Asshur], who "out of the land of Shinar went forth, and builded Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resin between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This anti-Assyrian leaning of the non-Nestorian ecclesiastical communities is seen initially in documentable data after the Simele massacres in 1933 among the non-Nestorian religious communities. Although it may be argued that the anti-Nestorianism of the Catholic mission in Iraq was the precursor to future inter-religious community angst.

<sup>59</sup> See Pietro Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle: il pellegrino descritti da lui medesimo in lettere familiari all'erudito suo amico Mario Schipano*, vol II (Brighton, UK: G. Gancia, 1843), 53, 163, 854. See also Pompa Banerjee, *Burning Women: Widows, Witches, and Early Modern European Travelers in India* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 20. See also the *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. VII (London: Parbury Allen and Co., 1832), 176.

<sup>60</sup> Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian Church of Mesopotamia* (NY: Dana and Company, 1844), 87.

The statement “being sons, as they say, of Assour [Asshur]” reflects a self-identification of the Jacobites of Harput prior to Western missionary influence and the discovery of ancient Nineveh by Layard years after Southgate’s travels.

Following the massacre at Simele in 1933, the non-Nestorians (namely the Jacobite and Chaldean communities) began distancing themselves from any connection to an Assyrian identity. Historian Hirmis Aboona, in his work *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, however, postulates that the current acrimonious divisions within the Assyrian community should be traced to the effect of missionary work following the massacres inflicted on the Assyrians by the Kurdish notable Bedr Khan Beg, sometimes referred to as the *amir* (prince) of Bohtan, from 1843 to 1846. At that time, the Nestorian foothold in the plains of Nineveh, in particular at Rabban Hormizd in Alqosh, was finally shattered by the Dominican missions, who were converting the bulk of the region to Catholicism, propelled by a hostile view of the “heretical” nature of the “Nestorian” Christian doctrine.<sup>61</sup> The coercive conversion to Catholicism of those Hakkâri Nestorians seeking refuge in the Mosul region in exchange for basic sustenance, and the lack of support and aid for those Jacobites and Nestorians unwilling to convert, is testament to such enmity.<sup>62</sup> This development is parallel to the treatment of many Irish Catholics and their forced conversion to Anglicanism (and subsequent loss of Irish identity) following *An Gorta Mór*, the Great Famine, during roughly the same period, 1845 to 1852.

Beyond affirming that the Nestorian Assyrians are indeed native to Iraq, Aboona’s work further develops the idea that the Catholic influence in the region served two purposes: First, to convert the Nestorians by any means, including bribery, which was

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<sup>61</sup> Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 279.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 82.

utilized in abundance, and preferential treatment for converts, as seen in the relatively poor treatment of the local Nestorians and Jacobites.<sup>63</sup> Second, the Catholic missions endeavored to further French imperial interests in the region in order to offset growing British authority. It is possible that the less-than-cordial reaction of the patriarch of the Church of the East (Nestorians), Mar Sham'un, to the Catholic bribe and promise to make him head of all Christians of the East sparked French-led Catholic vengeance.<sup>64</sup>

Tell your master that I shall never become a Catholic; and should you even induce my whole people, to the last man, to do so, I would sooner become a Dervish, or a Koordish Moollah, than degrade myself by an alliance with the people.<sup>65</sup>

This patriarchal “insolence” (as far as the Catholic Church was concerned), coupled with the already ingrained Catholic revulsion for the “heresy” of the Nestorians and Jacobites, further fueled the mission to actively convert the entire region, or see the end of an ancient heresy. The French used this opportunity and the guise of the Catholic Church to increase their control over the region as well.<sup>66</sup> It is the Assyrians, however, who would reap the problematic consequences of these communal divisions inculcated by various colonial powers.

The inability of scholarship to delineate the Assyrians properly has created further problems. Sami Zubaida mentions in his abstract that the Assyrians are, “Christian mountain tribes, mostly refugees from Turkish Kurdistan under British protection...”<sup>67</sup>

This seems to continue the confusion of who these Assyrians are. He goes on to mention

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<sup>63</sup> Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian Church of Mesopotamia*, 237-238. Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 170.

<sup>64</sup> Justin Perkins, *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia Among the Nestorian Christians: With Notices of the Muhammedans* (NY: Allen Morrill & Wardwell, 1843), 278. Perkins mentions the amount 4,000 tomans.

<sup>65</sup> American Sunday-School Union, Committee of Publication, *The Nestorians of Persia: A History of the Origin and Progress of the People, and of the Missionary Labours Amongst Them With an account of the Nestorian Massacres by the Koords* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1848), 125.

<sup>66</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 72-74.

<sup>67</sup> Sami Zubaida, “Contested Nations: Iraq and the Assyrians,” *Nations and Nationalism* 6 (3), (2000), 363.



that Colonel R. S. Stafford, British administrative inspector for Mosul, states that a massacre was also planned “in Alqosh, another Assyrian center...”<sup>68</sup> Here one must beg the question, is Alqosh an Assyrian center? If Alqosh (just 30 km north of Mosul) had been a center for the Chaldean Church since the early 1600s when its monastery and local population converted to Catholicism from the Nestorian/Church of the East, can they be Assyrian if the Assyrians are “Christian mountain tribes, mostly from Turkish Kurdistan” as Zubaida states? One can see where this has become problematic.

Most Chaldeans in Iraq converted from Nestorianism in the mid-1800s and not during the initial split in the sixteenth century. Unlike the Chaldeans and Nestorians living in mostly rural regions of Iraq outside Arab influence, many (mostly Chaldeans) living in predominantly Arab regions of Iraq began to be subsumed into Iraqi Arab society. This occurred with the exception of some villages in the northern regions of Iraq, which retained some measure of protection against Arabization due to their geographic disposition.

Following the events of Simele, the Chaldean Church—which, as stated earlier, had been part of the Nestorian Church, or Church of the East, until 1553—began to distance itself from the “Nestorians,” who were now seen as the “ignorant Assyrians.”<sup>69</sup> During this period, many Chaldeans began identifying themselves solely by their religious community, or simply as Iraqis, Iraqi Christians, or Arab Christians rather than with the Assyrian community as a whole. This is also true of the Syrian Orthodox

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 370.

<sup>69</sup> USDOS, (no 167), “Christian Religious Heads and Assyrian Massacres” 23 August 1933. See Annexes figures 22-26.

Church, which, prior to the events, considered itself part and parcel of the Assyrian people.<sup>70</sup>

Under pressures from the Iraqi regime, two Chaldean and one Syrian Orthodox clerics sent letters of support to the Iraqi regime following the massacres, as reported by *Al Ikha Al-Watani* in Baghdad on August 20, 1933: Mar Yousef VI Emmanuel II Thomas of the Chaldean Church; Athanasius Thoma Kassir, Syrian Orthodox bishop of Mosul; and Priest Wadisho of Alqosh.<sup>71</sup> American resident minister and eyewitness Paul Knabenshue related to the US secretary of state that these letters were most likely written under threat and duress: “The exaction of false testimonials from the various Christian dignitaries, virtually at the point of the pistol, is a sad testimonial to the integrity of the Iraq government.”<sup>72</sup> Whether or not this was true, the end result was as clear as it was blatant. “Assyrian” as an identity and culture became increasingly identified with the Nestorians alone, while the Chaldeans and Syrian Orthodox as church communities distanced themselves completely from one another.

An expanding division had begun between the Nestorians and their Chaldean and Syrian Orthodox brethren. This added to the latter two’s distancing from their Assyrian heritage.<sup>73</sup> The reverberation of religious animosity between these communities still continues today, a testament to the machinations of politics in the nation-building of the Middle East.

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<sup>70</sup> Donabed and Mako, “Ethno-cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians,” 108. This became evident in many interviews with elderly Jacobite or Syrian Orthodox in Tur Abdin in 2005 where many not only spoke a smattering of the “Eastern dialect” or *sureth* but also spoke of their fathers’ time in the army of Agha Petros Elia.

<sup>71</sup> USDOS, (no 167), 23 August 1933, 1-5. See Annexes figure 22-23.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. See Annexes figure 26.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. See Annexes figure 24.

The suppression of Assyrian culture and the discord of its religious denominations by both internal and external sources increased exponentially in the following years. Upon closer inspection of the official Iraqi yearbook, which mentions four ethnic groups in Iraq—Arabs, Kurds, Turkomens, and Persians—it is evident that the Assyrians had begun to be subsumed into an Iraq that appeared apathetic toward their very existence.<sup>74</sup> This trend of methodical political indifference—a form of subtle assimilation—was further exacerbated by internal sources, including the four major churches within the Assyrian tradition—further unimagining this people. Such actions on the part of the churches, perhaps initially a method of self-preservation, marked the beginning of perhaps an unforeseen loss of Assyrian identity.

The Chaldean (Catholic) Church has generally had continuous positive relations with succeeding governments of the Middle East, perhaps due to the relative proximity of its members' geographic distribution to predominantly large Arab-dominated cities.<sup>75</sup> Forced migration from northern villages to large Iraqi cities in the central and southern region was argued from a preservation standpoint “to demonstrate their desire of integration into the country and to adopt its agenda.”<sup>76</sup> Such intentions (whether sincere or otherwise) aided the Chaldean Church community's survival, and at times prosperity, within greater Iraqi Arab society.

Furthermore, following the transfer of the patriarchal see of the Syrian Orthodox Church to Homs, Syria, the Jacobite clergy also became influence by a rising tide of Syrian nationalism and Arabization. The issue of the Nestorian Assyrians at Simele had repercussions for Syria, since some four thousand armed personnel had crossed the

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<sup>74</sup> *al-Dalīl al-'Irāqī* (1936), 44-45.

<sup>75</sup> Much of this was thanks to earlier trends of urbanization.

<sup>76</sup> Petrosian, “Assyrians in Iraq,” 125.

border from Iraq and settled in the Khabur basin. Thus the desire to seem distinct from their militant brethren was an additional reason for the Syrian Orthodox Church to further distance itself from its former identification as Assyrian.<sup>77</sup> The assimilation process of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Syria is matched by that of the Syrian Catholic and Chaldean Churches in Iraq.

An attempt to eliminate the independent sentiment and Assyrian nationalist tendencies of the Church of the East occurred much later, during the consecration of another break-off from this church—the Ancient Church of the East, whose then-patriarch resided in Baghdad under the close watch of the Ba‘th regime. The former Church of the East’s influence in Iraq lessened dramatically after 1933 and following the subsequent exile of its patriarch to Cyprus and later to the United States.

The ecclesiastical animosities were exacerbated by the political work and by a general fear of the Iraqi government. Such issues speak to a strong tie between ecclesiastic organizations and larger cultural ones. This tension would continue to be exploited by state and non-state actors against the development of an integrated Assyrian identity.<sup>78</sup>

Though most efforts by Assyrian researchers are rarely consulted by scholars, they present a version of the state of affairs the Assyrians faced, which is essential to any historical study. Although it has not been explicitly stated, the lack of academic material which consults the Assyrians themselves (or their research) leads to three major conclusions. Firstly, that such material is unobtainable. Secondly, that the Assyrian

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<sup>77</sup> The trend is explained in detail in Sargon Donabed and Shamiran Mako, “Ethno-cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians,” *Chronos*, University of Balamand, Lebanon, (University of Balamand, 2009)

<sup>78</sup> See Annexes figures 50-51, Document E.

material is, in some sense, unreliable. Finally, the third possibility, that the Assyrians or their research are simple inconsequential. Indeed, any study on the Assyrians without in some sense the voice of the Assyrians is incomplete.

Reverend Joel Werda's work *The Flickering Light of Asia or the Assyrian Nation and Church* is indispensable for two reasons: first, for the author's addition of the *Claims of the Assyrians* in 1919 Paris, and second, for its Assyrian perspective on Assyrian-Kurdish relations prior to and during World War I, Werda presents a multitude of data from the September 1917 Assyrian-Kurdish conflict known as the "Battle of Chal"<sup>79</sup> (with an eyewitness Assyrian account) to the assassination of Mar Sham'un Benyamin by the Shikak Kurdish leader Smail (Ismail) Agha Simko during peace talks.<sup>80</sup> At this time, many positive Kurdish-Assyrian relations become, at the very least, strained. This perhaps adds to the later Assyrian distrust toward certain Kurdish tribes, and may account for the neutral Assyrian stance in 1961 while the Barzani Kurds warred against the Iraqi government-supported Zebari, Bradost, and Surchi Kurds. In the process, the heavily Assyrian-populated Dohuk-ʿAmēdīyāh region suffered immensely for its neutrality during the Kurdish armed autonomist struggle, which will be discussed in the following chapters.<sup>81</sup>

The strength and weakness of Werda's work is based on his Assyrian narrative. Though he worked for a variety of Assyrian organizations, wrote frequently in *Izgedda* and was present at the conference in Paris 1919, Werda lacks proper raw data and

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<sup>79</sup> Chal is also known as Çukurca, Hakkâri Province, southeastern Turkey.

<sup>80</sup> Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia*, 117-125.

<sup>81</sup> Avshalom Rubin, "Abd al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, Resistance and Revolt, 1958-63," *Middle East Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Routledge, 2007), 369.

archival materials to corroborate his work. This limitation however is not preset in other Assyrian sources.

The research of Yusuf Malek relates in detail the intricacies of British-Assyrian relations during the mandate period and immediately following, during the events of Simele. *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians* includes eyewitness reports as well as official British documentation concerning events that both directly and indirectly affected the Assyrians. What sets Malek apart from Joel Werda is his usage of archival material to substantiate the personal accounts of the Assyrians including himself. Malek's eyewitness account and experience working in Iraq under the British mandate gives an excellent minority view into a largely British-dominated period of correspondence. This study's annex contains a partial list of those villages looted (sixty-two of them) and Assyrians killed from August 11 through 16, 1933 during the Simele massacres, as well as a list of twenty-eight Assyrians assassinated on September 16, 1933, almost one month after the official massacres.<sup>82</sup> Malek's remains one of the only works containing such detail (names, dates, village of origin) concerning the Assyrians affected during this period.

This study does not intend to rehash outdated discussions on Assyrian identity, but rather to briefly describe the overall conundrum and the part played by contemporary scholarship. The various arguments that refute the Assyrian appellation and historic identity are summarized by Middle East scholar John Joseph (an Assyrian) in *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East* (2000), a reprint of his earlier work *The Nestorians and Their Muslim Neighbors* (1961). In the recent edition, Joseph dedicates the entire first chapter "Nestorians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Arameans, Assyrians," to this past

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<sup>82</sup> Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 324-325, 333-339

dilemma. Notwithstanding the various arguments Joseph makes, the fact that the above-mentioned designations must be discussed in conjunction with each other speaks to their interconnectivity and, further, to the appropriateness of an umbrella term. Despite Joseph's reluctance to use the term in the initial printing of his work, he could not deny its continuity and usage, and thus republished his original work using "Assyrians" in the new title.<sup>83</sup>

The most recent legal work on the Assyrian people (including the article by Hannibal Travis) concerning the genocidal campaign of World War I, "Native Christians Massacred: The Ottoman Genocide of the Assyrians during World War I," utilizes the Assyrian appellation not only as the most historically and politically appropriate, but as the most practical. This umbrella term is applied to the various religious communities that make up the Assyrian people.

Modern legal studies on the Assyrians reflect this usage. Paul Isaac, in his "The Urgent Reawakening of the Assyrian Question in an Emerging Iraqi Federalism: The Self-Determination of the Assyrian People" realizes the intricacy of identifying Assyrians in academia and elsewhere. He reminds the reader of the problematic issue of the modern state of Syria and cites the judicial case concerning *Mansour v. I.N.S.*, 230 F.3d 902, 907-09 (7th Cir.2000) where an Assyrian man "remanded a Board of Immigration Appeals decision because the board mistakenly classified the plaintiff as a *Syrian* Christian, rather than an *Assyrian* Christian." He further explains his Assyrian terminology as such:

For the purposes here, the inclusive classification of being both Aramaic speaking and historically Christian captures the essence of a right of self-determination as belonging to the Assyrian people

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<sup>83</sup> Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, 32.

because language, religion, and relative historical continuity constitute the centrally unifying features of all these groups.<sup>84</sup>

These issues seem to be reflective of Assyrian minority syndrome; being a numerical and political minority. Since Assyrians have yet to break into academia in any major way, their identity is easily disputed by foreign scholarship.

## Genocide Studies

The events described in this study will be explained through an overarching theoretical framework of violence in nation- and state-building.<sup>85</sup> Thus this research will reevaluate the category of genocide as a component in nation-building, which serves as a suitable description for the Assyrian experience in Iraq. This is significant, as it provides a cogent analysis of historic events relating to Assyrians in Iraq, with a focus on key periods and their consequences.

This project has attempted to be as path-dependent as possible with regard to its method of unraveling major events and the reasons they occurred. The concept of path dependency is discussed in detail by political scientist Paul Pierson, who argues that the “focus on path-dependent processes suggests the need to develop analyses that may incorporate substantial stretches of time.”<sup>86</sup> In other words, the planning of the Anfal campaign was not deliberated in 1988: it was part and parcel of the social, political, and cultural development of Iraqi nationhood, which can only be truly delineated by

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<sup>84</sup> Paul Isaac, “The Urgent Reawakening of the Assyrian Question in an Emerging Iraqi Federalism: The Self-Determination of the Assyrian People,” *Northern Illinois University Law Review*, vol 29 issue 1 (Fall 2008), 211. See also Youash, Michael, “Iraq’s Minority Crisis and the U.S National Security: Protecting Minority Rights in Iraq,” *American University Law Review*, Vol. 58 no 3, (February 2009), 342.

<sup>85</sup> Although Human Rights Watch, *Iraq’s Crime of Genocide* (1995) is an essential study for this research, the work will be commented on in detail in Chapter 6 on the Anfal.

<sup>86</sup> See Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 45.



beginning the study at a point in the historical process when Iraq defined itself by the assimilation, suppression, or elimination of non-Arab minorities.<sup>87</sup>

This study assumes that the until recent overshadowing of (and deliberate and non-deliberate discounting of) the genocide against Assyrians in the waning Ottoman Empire under the Kemalist nation-building project allowed for the future (seeming intentional) disregard of the genocidal Simele massacres during the nation-building process in 1932–1933 Iraq. This dismissal has not only limited the scope in which the Assyrian case is developed, analyzed, and scrutinized, it has also perpetuated much of the neglect within the current discourse. As Alex Alvarez succinctly notes, “the failure to study genocide, to call attention to this form of crime, to make conscious and self-conscious choices about the objects of research attention, results in a diminished sense of concern and urgency, thus facilitating its perpetration.”<sup>88</sup> Thus Simele is viewed here as both a consequence of Iraq’s early attempt at nation-building (or perhaps nation-solidifying) as well as Iraq’s first crime of genocide as an independent state.

Similarly, the subsequent Arabization policies by successive Iraqi governments (including compelling Assyrians to declare their ethnicity as Arab on the 1978 and 1987 census accounts) following the collapse of the monarchy in 1958 characterize cultural genocide and ethnic cleansing, as each government attempted to create a homogenous nation-state.<sup>89</sup> However, in order to capture the significance of these events, an

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<sup>87</sup> Again here I must stress the importance of distinguishing Arabs from the Iraqi nationalist agenda which happened to be Arab-based and Arab-driven. The same situation would have been true were any other ethnic group the majority. In other words, it is not due to being an Arab that such treatment of non-Arabs took place, but rather as a byproduct of nation- and state-building which is usually accomplished (though I believe does not have to be) through the destruction of indigenous peoples and minorities.

<sup>88</sup> Alex Alvarez, *Governments, Citizens, and Genocide: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approach* (Bloomington, IN.: Indian University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>89</sup> See the report by Franca Arena during a Meeting of New South Wales Parliament, “Assyrian Oppression,” September 14, 1993

exploration of the emergence of genocide as a discourse and its proliferation within the international arena is important, as it illuminates the role of the state- and nation-building processes in relation to genocide (and subsequent categories defining the varying acts of genocide, particularly those concerning cultural genocide) as it pertains to the Assyrian case.

Raphael Lemkin's usage of "crimes of barbarity" and "crimes of vandalism" as put forth in 1933 following the Simele massacres (and influenced by the Kemalist-sponsored devastation during World War I) inspired widespread adoption of the concept of genocide within the international arena. For Lemkin, genocide denoted a calculated effort:

... of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of such groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.<sup>90</sup>

This definition would come to be used in its international form in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948. Article 2 of the convention defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group":

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation - Analysis of Government - Proposals for Redress* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 79.

<sup>91</sup> Convention on Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, Officer for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/p\\_genoci.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/p_genoci.htm), (Accessed 12 May 2008)

Though there is a lack of consensus surrounding the convention's definition, particularly regarding its scope, it has been supplemented by various international mechanisms in the form of international treaty and customary law, which will be referred to in the following passages.

Since its early introduction by Lemkin, the definition and scope of genocide has been deeply rooted within the confines of the state as the key actor and facilitator of genocidal campaigns and other related crimes against humanity. This is evidenced by the emphasis placed on the state as primary agent in the varying definitions of genocide found in major works on the subject, namely those of Fein, Horowitz, Dadrian and Porter.<sup>92</sup>

The focus on the nation-building processes employed during the emergence of newly formed states has been a prevalent theme within existing discourse, as the state has been the focal point of analysis. For Eric Weitz, whose comparison of genocide in the twentieth century places the state at the core of its analysis, a distinguishing element of genocide is the pervasiveness of calculated, state-induced policies perpetuated by nationalist elites, as seen during the waning of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the Young Turks, Nazi Germany, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and the former Yugoslavia, and the current Israeli treatment of Palestinians. A point of differentiation from previous pogroms and massacres that characterizes genocide in the twentieth century has been the ability and capacity of the state to systematically devise and execute policies on an unprecedented scale, to “mobilize and unleash their bureaucrats, armies, and loyal citizenry to carry out extreme acts of violence, which may appear random at the

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<sup>92</sup> Adam Jones, *Genocide: a Comprehensive Introduction* (NY: Routledge. 2006) 19.

moment they occur.”<sup>93</sup> Thus the state, with its capacity to mobilize and utilize state resources, becomes the central actor and agency that propagates and implements genocide within its structures and institutions, often mobilizing civilians and labeling perceived targets and threats. Such an atmosphere sets the stage whereby the state, operating as the ultimate sovereign, categorizes perceived undesirables along social and racial lines, resulting in the elimination of state laws protecting the weak in the name of progress and evolution.<sup>94</sup>

Similarly, Arjun Appadurai claims that “the idea of a ‘national ethnos’” is one of the most dangerous notions of, and indeed an innate element in, the ideology of the modern nation-state. A “national ethnos” feeds the notion that the sovereignty of the state is built upon some form of ethnic genius.<sup>95</sup> The undesirable and the weak can be quickly incorporated into the vernacular of justification and legitimization of absolutist state policies that advocate purging and eliminating groups perceived as enemies during the nation-building process, or at times of upheaval in already established states. The events of the various genocidal campaigns in Iraq are a product of both the state-building process and the development of a national ethnos, beginning with the country’s establishment following the end of the colonial mandate.

The termination of the British Mandate in Iraq in 1932 and the creation of Iraq as a sovereign territory required the newly formed government to legitimize its claim over the territory by asserting its sovereignty. Simele thus came to symbolize the tenacious power and valour of the newly formed state to quell the Assyrian demands for territory.

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<sup>93</sup> Eric Weitz, *A Century of Genocide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) 7.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>95</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

Rebellions by the Kurdish minority in the north from 1930 to 1932 (stopped with bombing from British warplanes) and the Shi'a majority in the south in 1920 and again in 1935 created an unstable political environment, thus minimizing the sphere of tolerance for dissidents and minorities. For Michael Mann, such an environment provides the justification for the state, as a factionalized, radicalized, and an unstable geopolitical entity, to perpetuate “murderous cleansing ... calling for tougher treatment of perceived ethnic enemies.”<sup>96</sup> Iraq's crimes of genocide would be repeated in 1988 during the chemical attacks against the Kurds in Halabja and other regions.

### **The Cultural Aspect of Genocide**

The cataclysmic, state-sponsored suppression of ethnic pluralism from the 1970s onward under the guise of Arabization, resulting in cultural genocide, must be explored further. Cultural genocide/ethnocide, introduced by Lemkin as “acts of vandalism,” is essential in examining the consequences of the Arabization policies on the Assyrian community in Iraq following the Ba'ath's rise to power in the 1970s. Thematically, “ethnocide means that an ethnic group is denied the right to enjoy, develop and transmit its own culture and its own language, whether collectively or individually.”<sup>97</sup> It was first codified in article 7 of the Draft Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 1994.<sup>98</sup> Following the adoption of the declaration in 2006, cultural genocide, or ethnocide, was reworded to indirectly characterize ethnocide as part and parcel of genocide.<sup>99</sup> The

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<sup>96</sup> Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 7.

<sup>97</sup> UNESCO and the Struggle Against Ethnocide, Declaration of San Jose, December 1981, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0004/000499/049951eo.pdf>, (Accessed 20 August 2008.)

<sup>98</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 1994 [http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.SUB.2.RES.1994.45.En](http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.SUB.2.RES.1994.45.En), (Accessed 10 December 2008).

<sup>99</sup> International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, <http://www.iwgia.org/sw248.asp>, (Accessed 15 August 2008)

declaration further stated, “ethnocide, that is cultural genocide, is a violation of international law equivalent to genocide.”<sup>100</sup>

In French ethnologist Robert Jaulin’s analysis of the notion, it is not the means but the end that defines ethnocide or cultural genocide. Accordingly, cultural genocide would be the systematic destruction of the thought and the way of life of people different from those who carry out this enterprise of destruction.<sup>101</sup> Pierre Clastres best describes cultural genocide or ethnocide as “the systematic destruction of the modes of life and thought of a people who are different from those who carry out this destructive enterprise.... Genocide kills their bodies, while ethnocide kills their spirit.”<sup>102</sup> Essential to understanding the causes and effects of cultural genocide is violence resulting from the nation-building, particularly for newly emerging states, best exemplified by the experience of indigenous populations in North America and Australia.

Ronald Niezen provides a comprehensive analysis of indigeneity and the cultural genocide of indigenous populations. Niezen contends that this practice occurs in the aftermath of subjugation. Cultural genocide is created in a crucible of yearning for hegemonic control first evident in a state’s push to secure a national identity; this yearning is evidenced by various policies of assimilation (as opposed to integration) designed to eradicate major cultural distinctions such as language, dress, folklore, art, and music, and by “rival claims to sovereignty that arise from first occupation of a territory. Its goal is the elimination of knowledge of, and attachments to, distinct and incontinent

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Mario Sáenz, *The Identity of Liberation in Latin American Thought* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 1999), 18.

<sup>102</sup> Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State* (NY: Zone Books, 1988), 52.

ways of life.”<sup>103</sup> This critical reading of Niezen will supplement both the aspect of cultural genocide against the Assyrians as well as their status as an indigenous minority, making this research, while strongly comparative with other Iraqi communal groups, unique and necessary for indigenous studies as well as minority and state formation. Accordingly, this framework becomes an essential method of delineating oppression against the Assyrians following the events of Simele, which eliminated chances for uprisings in the wake of the establishment of the Iraqi state and the consolidation of Iraq’s national unity as a newly formed sovereign entity.

According to Human Rights Watch, the stress of simply “being” Assyrian in Iraq forced large numbers of people to effectively “not be” Assyrian for fear of physical or socio-economic retribution:

...the teaching of the Assyrian language, even in churches, is forbidden, and Assyrian Christians who identify themselves as such suffer official discrimination. However, other Christians and those Assyrians who identify themselves as ‘Arab’ seem to face no particular discrimination. In fact, many Muslim Iraqis consider Christians to be a favored minority under the Ba’ath regime.<sup>104</sup>

This non-physical attempt at assimilation illuminates the impact of Iraq’s policies and their aim at both the physical and non-physical destruction of ethnic diversity in Iraq. This would place cultural obliteration/ethnocide directly within the discussion on genocide, as the policies become part and parcel of the violent process of exclusion and elimination by successive Iraqi governments.

If we are to accept that the Assyrians were subject to ethnic cleansing alongside Kurds, this ethnocidal option targeted Assyrians specifically. Unlike the outright denial of being a “Kurd” in Turkey or their dismissal as “mountain Turks,” Kurd as an ethnic

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<sup>103</sup> Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (London: UCAL Press, 2003), 5, 55.

<sup>104</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Iraq: Middle East Watch* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 35.

identity was not denied in Iraq. The Assyrian situation differed, as they neither were nor are considered a recognized ethno-cultural minority. This is illustrated by Iraqi census accounts where Assyrians were forcefully identified as either “Arab” or “Kurdish” Christians.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the Assyrians of Iraq, as well as of Syria, Iran, and Turkey, fared (and still fare) no better than the Kurds in Turkey in terms of being recognized as an ethnic minority.

Relevant to the current analysis of genocide and its related categories is ethnic cleansing, as widely recognized following the atrocities resulting from the collapse of Yugoslavia, which saw the dissolution of single states into smaller states. International legal instruments resulting from those events have defined deportations and forcible population transfers (in an effort to homogenize an otherwise multi-ethnic region) as characteristics of ethnic cleansing.

Examples of such international legal instruments include the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, which implicitly recognized the gravity of ethnic cleansing. Article 49 of Convention 4 regarding the protection of civilians in time of war states,

Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.<sup>106</sup>

Article 5 of the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia promulgated deportation during armed conflict as a crime against humanity in light of the ethnic cleansing campaigns implemented in former Yugoslavia.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, article 7 of

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<sup>105</sup> The Assyrians of Turkey are also not recognized as a minority and are sometimes referred to as “Semitic Turks.” See Mehlika Aktok Kaşharlı, *Mardin ve yöresi halkından Turko-Semitler* (Kayseri: 1991), 7-9.

<sup>106</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*, August 12, 1949, (Accessed: 12 September 2008) <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/92.htm>

<sup>107</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, *Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia*, Feb 2006, (Accessed: 12 September 2008)



the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court stipulates that deportation or forcible population transfer is a crime against humanity within the framework of international law.<sup>108</sup> In Drazen Petrovic's study on the methodology concerning ethnic cleansing, he defines the act simply as policies and practices aimed at achieving security through displacement of an ethnic group from a particular territory and may or may not include violence.<sup>109</sup>

Ilan Pappé provides a pertinent paradigm of ethnic cleansing when analyzing the impact of Zionism on the resettlement of Palestine by Jewish settlers. For Pappé, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine was not a cause and effect of war, but rather a fundamental element of Jewish resettlement—which was ingrained in the origins of Zionism as the ideological cause for the ethnic cleansing that ensued prior to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.<sup>110</sup>

Though war is sometimes cited as an excuse for human rights crimes and violations, especially by state actors, Michale Mann's approach to the motivation behind crimes such as genocide (including ethnic cleansing, cultural genocide, and politicide) is centered on four modes of social power. I posit that the fundamental bases behind all motivations to commit such crimes are embedded in power and the ability to utilize it; as such, Mann's work is essential to understanding the Assyrian case. He postulates that such violence is the result of the interrelated sets of power networks, namely ideological, economic, military, and political power, with one usually being "causally primary."<sup>111</sup>

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<http://www.un.org/icty/legaldoc-e/index-t.htm>

<sup>108</sup> International Criminal Court, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, July 1998, (Accessed: 12 September 2008), [http://www.icc-cpi.int/library/about/officialjournal/Rome\\_Statute\\_120704-EN.pdf](http://www.icc-cpi.int/library/about/officialjournal/Rome_Statute_120704-EN.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> Drazen Petrovic, "Ethnic Cleansing—An Attempt at Methodology," *European Journal of International Law*, Vol.5. No. 4. (1998), 2-3.

<sup>110</sup> Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 7.

<sup>111</sup> Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 30-32.

Ethnic or religious hatred cannot be the prime reason for violent human rights violations; they are part of a larger, more complicated series of human ambitions.

In our case of the Assyrians, Mann's definition of ethnic cleansing appears to be most appropriate: a result of the age of democracy since the notion of rule by the people began to entwine the *demos*, "all the ordinary people," with the dominant *ethnos*, "ethnic group."<sup>112</sup> As "Iraqi" became "Arab" (or rather always had been from the foundation of the Iraqi state), these understandings of ethnic cleansing are directly applicable to the Assyrian case. From the early 1960s, a period that witnessed the confiscation of many Assyrian villages by state and non-state actors and widespread demographic shifting and urbanization, the Assyrians were simply not part of the Iraqi *demos*. The forced removal of Assyrians from their villages along the Iraqi border with Turkey and Iran in the 1970s follows this trend, which reappears during the Anfal campaign in the late 1980s and includes the arbitrary redistribution of the population in collective towns. The same can be said of the Kurds and the Iraqi state initially. Where the cases differ is in latter years, since the Kurds became a recognized *ethnos* within the Iraqi *demos*.<sup>113</sup>

From the avenue of cultural genocide, Mann stipulates that "cultural suppression" (which I view as an essential component to cultural genocide) involves complete elimination through institutional coercion, where the minor group's identity is assimilated into the dominant group: Arabs in Iraq and later Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>114</sup> The various policies inculcated by the state's dominant group necessarily result in the monopolization of power leading to the suppression of perceived dissidents. This path toward cultural

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>113</sup> It is important to note that even recognition, as in the case of the Kurds, did not end the ethnic cleansing campaigns as is evident from the Anfal.

<sup>114</sup> Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 14

genocide, along with the imprisonment of persons identifying in Arabic as *Ashuri* (Assyrian), mass destruction of ancient religious structures, mass deportations and elimination of the Assyrian way of life, were integral to the Iraqi treatment of Assyrians seen most visibly from 1974 onward.

Of intrinsic importance to this research are two articles by Mark Levene that deal with those two major events that moved Lemkin to action in 1933. Levene asserts that modern genocide is a product of nation- and state-building. In his article “A Moving Target, the Usual Suspects and (Maybe) a Smoking Gun,” Levene, quoting Sir Francis Humphrys, the British high commissioner in Baghdad from 1930 to 1932 and first British ambassador to Iraq 1932-1935, points out that perhaps the British inaction concerning Assyrian demands prior to the events of Simele (and following the atrocities) were born of a general fear of a domino effect of demands by other minorities, which would decidedly weaken the authority of Baghdad. In essence, the British had decided against a multiethnic Iraq and that “the Assyrians represented the threat of a bad example.”<sup>115</sup>

Levene believes rightly that what occurred at Simele was neither isolated in time nor place and was duplicated frequently over the next sixty years against Assyrians.<sup>116</sup> Thus Simele “represented a sort of dress-rehearsal” for Iraq’s and other ruling national elites’ attempts to annihilate a threat (in the form of a particular population) believed to be impeding the formation of a strong nation-state whose ultimate aspiration is to become a powerful contender on the international stage.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Mark Levene “A Moving Target, the Usual Suspects and (Maybe) a Smoking Gun: The Problem of Pinning Blame in Modern Genocide,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 21.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

These instances are amalgamated by Levene into a regionally based designation rather than an ethno-religious-based one. At first glance, “zone of genocide” is a fitting description for the region of Eastern Anatolia, a territory pivotal in the nation-building schemes of various world powers at the expense of “Armenians, Kurds, Pontic Greeks, and, on a smaller scale, Assyrians.”<sup>118</sup> Levene argues that the claim of religious or historical hatred between Muslim and Christian, while a predictable scapegoat, is not a feasible formula for distinguishing perpetrators and victims especially when Muslim Kurds were targeted alongside Christian Assyrians in both Turkey and Iraq.<sup>119</sup> Though this argument is accurate and religious hatred was certainly not the sole cause of genocides perpetrated in northern Mesopotamia and southeastern Anatolia, it is also true that the Muslim-Christian dynamic (dhimmitude) did play a factor.

Yet, while Levene’s attempt at creating a viable inclusive term for the region and shared suffering is amiable, his distinction of the Assyrian plight as “smaller scale” promotes a continued overshadowing or scaling of suffering that in the culmination of this research may prove to be inadequate.<sup>120</sup>

## **Iraqi Studies**

Iraqi studies are equally as Anglo as they are Iraqi, and should be noted as such, especially in relation to the Assyrian case. Much of the early work on Assyrians is based on British documentation that was later incorporated into postcolonial native Iraqi works

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<sup>118</sup> Mark Levene, “Creating a Modern ‘Zone of Genocide’: The Impact of Nation- and State-Formation on Eastern Anatolia, 1878-1923”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 12 No. 3 (Winter 1998), 396.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 398.

<sup>120</sup> Beyond the issue of its inappropriateness, the numerical concern is completely misunderstood and misused. While in terms of actual numbers of people killed, it may be that the Assyrians had fewer casualties than the Armenians at the end of the Ottoman period due simply to their fewer number. Yet it can be argued that the Assyrians ‘suffered greater,’ proportionally speaking.

and more recent Western academic literature regarding Iraq. Despite this, many current works give insight into the Assyrian case through the medium of Iraqi studies by attempting to understand the creation of the state of Iraq.

Sami Zubaida's "The Fragments Imagine the Nation: The Case of Iraq" (2002) is a starting point for both the construction of Iraq and its perception by the peoples or fragments that would create the country. Zubaida notes that Iraq is the product of two colonial projects: the modernization of Turkey under the Young Turks, and the subsequent British Mandate and push for strong centralization that would cause various intercommunity issues.<sup>121</sup>

Though it does not mention the Assyrians, and the Kurds are discussed only in passing, overall Zubaida's work claims that a "fractured Iraqi nation was formed as a consequence of the formation of the state by external colonial maneuvers."<sup>122</sup> He refers to Ernst Gellner's notion that in order to survive, nationalism requires a certain degree of homogeneity, which is evident in the early Sunni-Arab-dominated ministerial positions.<sup>123</sup> In this sense, it is a political intelligentsia that truly "imagines" the nation. Though Zubaida argues that the state creates the nation, he falls short of examining the violence (including genocide) accompanying that process as evident in the case of Simele.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, one must question the duality of the Iraqi nation-state, which, according to Zubaida, has these possibilities of imagining itself: Iraqism or Pan-Arabism.<sup>125</sup> Are the two truly mutually exclusive or is Iraqism inherently Arab?<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Sami Zubaida, "The Fragments Imagine the Nation: The Case of Iraq," *IJMES* 34 (2002), 205.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 206 and 211.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes & The Revolutionary Movements In Iraq* (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 410-411, 700.

In his earlier article “Contested Nations: Iraq and the Assyrians” (2000), Zubaida attempts to deal with the reasons for the failure of Assyrian integration into Iraq, citing a list of issues from their being non-natives to their being unsatisfied with equal rights and land settlement.<sup>127</sup> The Assyrians desired a homeland while the British and “Iraqis” were busy building a new nation-state. Zubaida’s explanation for why such violence exists, especially in the case of minorities, concerns the modern process of nation- and state-building:

It is, then, not so much the persistence of ‘primordial’ or traditional affiliations and solidarities which perpetuate distinctions, antipathies and conflicts between communities, but the very processes and practices of the modern states themselves. Common citizenship and national integration can only occur on the basis of stability, common participation in civil institutions and the rule of law, conditions actively inhibited by modern political authorities and systems in the region, as well as by the effect of politicised religion.<sup>128</sup>

Zubaida neglects to deduce certain facets of the problem of Assyrian integration in Iraq. Instead, he remarks that most Christians in high positions are not “Assyrian” (in reference to former vice-president Tareq Aziz) and furthermore that “Assyrian” is a religious minority.<sup>129</sup>

Works concerning the initial state-building of Iraq during the British/Hashemite period are the ground level for all research on Iraq, with special attention to the Assyrians and indeed to Simele. William Polk deals with the attempts in integrating Christians and Jews into a predominantly Muslim state; he refers to the early Arab invasions into the region and the treatment of Arabized converts as “outsiders.” Yet the state of Iraq was a different matter. Jews and Christians were initially part (though in a minor role) of the government of what he terms “British Iraq.” As echoed by Zubaida (2002), the issuing of

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<sup>127</sup> Sami Zubaida, “Contested Nations: Iraq and the Assyrians,” *Nations and Nationalism* 6 (3), (2000), 366-368.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

the Assyrian levies by the British and the rise of Zionism would set back the Assyrians' acceptance as part of the "nation," thus the attempts at assimilation and forced expulsion, and the unimagining process concerning the Assyrian presence.<sup>130</sup> Reva Simon strongly attributes the moment of Iraqi national unity, the inaugural moment of the birth of the nation, to be exemplified by the increase in positive and gleeful popular reactions to the massacre of the Assyrians.<sup>131</sup> The British self-interested desire for Iraqi national unity ultimately surpassed the colonialists' concern for the safety of the vulnerable Assyrian minority in Iraq.

Zoë Preston's 2003 study makes significant claims on the importance of genocide against the Assyrians as the foundation of the new Iraqi state. Preston comments that the massacre at Simele exemplified the problem of Iraq's state-building, which "could only progress via 'nation destroying.'"<sup>132</sup> She remarks that "true concern" for minorities within Iraq was ignored by the British, who remained more concerned for their own interests in the region (including oil and saving face), further highlighting the issue that the chosen Iraqi identity was both "unrepresentative and exclusionary."<sup>133</sup> This choice of words is based on what Preston sees as the British-imposed subordination of minorities (including Arabic-speaking tribes) to an Arab Sunni government through both political and military means. Preston's study leaves some question with regard to the state of Assyrian Christians, as they are referred to under various appellations, which serve to create confusion. In some cases, the terms Assyrians, Nestorians, and Chaldeans are used;

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<sup>130</sup> William Polk, *Understanding Iraq*, (NY: HarperCollins, 2005), 104-105.

<sup>131</sup> Reeva Spector Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: The Militarist Origins of Tyranny* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), 112.

<sup>132</sup> Zoë Preston, *The Crystallization of the Iraqi State: Geopolitical Function and Form* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 251.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 252.

in others, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Yakubi, Keldani, and so on, when quoting Ottoman statistics. Preston follows previous scholarship using “Assyrians” specifically to refer to those Hakkâri Nestorians who were murdered during the massacres at Simele.<sup>134</sup>

Since the new state of Iraq has been marred by political violence against minorities, the Assyrian case must be considered as part of a larger practice of political power. In reference to the June 1–2, 1941, attacks on the Jews of Baghdad, sometimes termed *farhud*, “pogrom,” Eric Davis has argued that despite the view of the event as an isolated incident, it exhibited uncanny parallels to the Simele massacres, probably in its use of ethno-religious hatred as a red herring from power politics.<sup>135</sup> Davis sees this accurately as a consequence of how political instability and rising frustrations (and perhaps even economic instability, from a Marxist perspective) led to violence against minorities. What Davis does not spell out in his study is that although such horrific events do occur during political, social, and economic instability, such problems are not a justification of violence against minorities. Indeed many nations hide behind what Pappé calls a “paradigm of war,” which nation-states, historians, academics, and politicians offer as a rationalization for acts such as massacres and ethnic cleansing.<sup>136</sup>

Archibald M. Hamilton’s *Road through Kurdistan: The Narrative of an Engineer in Iraq*, elucidates events concerning both inter- and intra-community activity within northern Iraq as perceived by a British civil engineer who lived in Iraq from 1928-1932. More importantly, it dismisses the now discredited conjecture that the Assyrians were

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 88-94.

<sup>135</sup> Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 70. A major difference is the fact that the Gaylani coup exhibited a pro-German stance and thus the attack on the Jews in 1941 may have been significantly influenced by anti-Jewish Nazi sentiment and not solely part of the Iraqi nation-building agenda.

<sup>136</sup> Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, xvi.



afforded special treatment by the British based on their religious conviction. Rather, it appears that the Assyrians, along with the Kurds and even Arabs, were victims of British arrogance.<sup>137</sup> Yet while the Arabs gained in south and central Iraq, and the Kurds in the north, the Assyrians were forced to the lowlands of the country, again seeing a change in the ever-shifting demography of northern Iraq. Hamilton's discussion with a young Malik Yako, an Assyrian of Upper Tiyyari, unmistakably confirms that the new British-backed Baghdad regime took various measures to ensure the Assyrians would be left out of a new Iraq, including minimizing their presence in the police force and dismissing any Assyrians holding a government position.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, those areas "set aside" for Assyrian resettlement were either militarily vulnerable or "malarial and unhealthy."<sup>139</sup> The previously assumed well-intentioned resettlement of the Hakkâri Assyrians was debunked by Hamilton's firsthand account and interaction with the last vestige of Assyrian military strength in the Middle East.

Though it is incorrect to completely align the ideology of the colonial/monarchy period with that of the Ba'ath regime, they are in fact not largely dissimilar. The desire for national unity and for a united national Iraqi identity was still a major obstacle for both governments. While the British-backed colonial monarchy's problems and attempts at resolving them were overt (as evidenced by Simele), that of the Ba'ath were more ideologically oriented, at least initially. Karsh and Rautsi point to the Ba'ath attempt, which followed the outline introduced by the 'Abd al-Karīm Qassim-led government's

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<sup>137</sup> Archibald M. Hamilton, *Road Through Kurdistan: The Narrative of an Engineer in Iraq* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), 216-217.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-220.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

view, at making all Iraqis heirs to the great Mesopotamian civilization.<sup>140</sup> In some ways, Qassim's regime, which took over the leadership of Iraq in 1958 following a coup that eliminated the vestiges of the Iraqi monarchy, paved the way for this Ba'th policy. The idea allowed non-Arabs to be part of a new and inclusive nation under Qassim, but was distorted by the Ba'th years later. When the Ba'th government implemented their new ideology beginning in the early 1970s, they simultaneously Arabized all periods of Mesopotamian history, which could not tolerate an Assyrian identity separate from an overarching Arab identity, and left the Kurds wondering how they fit into the new mosaic.<sup>141</sup> Thus the "cultural reforms" of the 1970s must be seen as an assimilatory attempt rather than the charitable act of bridging community divides.

In relation perhaps to the neglect of Assyrian-related studies in scholarship, Charles Tripp's contention that the Kurdish question typifies the question of Iraqi identities is of importance for readdressing the issue. The Washington Agreement of 1998, which was essentially a peace treaty signed by the two rival Kurdish parties (KDP and PUK, the most influential political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan), recognized the multi-ethnic makeup of Iraq and specifically Iraqi Kurdistan. This agreement's wording is reflective of two major points that are important to the current study. First, the externally created safe haven in 1991 allowed for greater self-expression of Kurds as well as of Turkomen and Assyrians, once again tying the groups together.<sup>142</sup> Second, it reminds us that the United States was the active hand that influenced the creation of a roughly unified Kurdistan Regional Government. In a logical deductive manner, if the British creation of modern Iraq necessarily required the subjugation or elimination of minorities

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<sup>140</sup> Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars*, 160.

<sup>141</sup> Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein, a Political Biography* (Oxford: Brassey's, 1991), 123.

<sup>142</sup> Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 274-275.

for the sake of a powerful politically unified nation, would not the same be true of the current American desire to create a strongly unified Kurdistan?

Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett's work further reflects the difficulty in removing the Assyrian situation from that of the Kurds, and he fails to do so. The demographic data mentioned by Sluglett from 1977 to the Anfal campaign in 1988—the number of villages destroyed, people killed, and collective towns created by the Ba'ath government—all reflect Human Rights Watch's (HRW) research on the Kurds, which is in turn based on PUK sources. The studies have left little room for the importance of the Assyrians as a minority among the Kurdish-dominated regions.<sup>143</sup> As the definition of minority is desirable, it must be redefined constantly, and as the Assyrians are an ethno-religious, linguistic, and political minority in Iraq as a whole, they are similarly a minority if measured against a Kurdish majority.

As per recent Kurdish-oriented Iraqi studies, Kurdish human rights researcher and activist Kerim Yildiz's study follows these examples of sidestepping the minority-within-a-minority issue, which is eclipsed by a seemingly more important Kurdish issue. Though his treatment of Anfal is somewhat based and dependent on the work of HRW, he adds little to the theoretical background. In addition, Yildiz diverges from other recent works as he neglects the Assyrians (even simply as Christians) in discussions on Anfal, and more specifically, in the amnesty decrees discussed in detail by HRW.<sup>144</sup> Though most Kurdish-based scholarship is dependent on HRW, Yildiz bypasses discussion of the Yezidis and Christian Assyrian disappearances in the general amnesty decree of

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<sup>143</sup> Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: IB Tauris, 2001), 268-269.

<sup>144</sup> Amnesty is usually an executive or legislative decree used by a government body or state to restore the innocence to those persons which have been deemed guilty of offense. The general amnesty issued by the Iraqi government and its affect on the Assyrians will be discussed in the discussion on Anfal.

September 1988 by simply explaining that the amnesty allowed “the return of refugees from Turkey,” followed by their internment in collective towns or camps.<sup>145</sup> In reference to villages destroyed and persons killed, since the work is entitled *The Kurds in Iraq*, even when no mention is made of the ethnic background of persons or villages affected, the reader’s assumption is that all victims are necessarily Kurdish. After a look into the development of Kurdish nationalism, Denise Natali concludes her study *The Kurds and the State* (2005) stating, “Kurdish communities Kurdified what the state elite Arabized, Turkified and Persianized.”<sup>146</sup> This serves as an explanation for the trend that supports this study and illustrates probable reasons for the Kurdish refutation of Assyrians affected by the Anfal campaign, parallel to the Armenian disregard of the shared suffering of Greeks and Assyrians alongside them during the Kemalist nation-building project.

Thus the Assyrian question has been continuously overshadowed by superior political forces, which is illustrated by the Assyrians’ representation, or lack thereof, in academia. That said, it is no surprise that some studies that address the Assyrian issue stress a neoconservative component.<sup>147</sup> It may be that the underlying motive is based in Islamophobic attitudes, exploiting the Assyrian predicament (in most cases as Christians only) in order to justify Western involvement in Middle East issues. This is not unlike the rationale behind Dominican, Anglican, and American Protestant missionary activities among the Assyrians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This link between Western manipulation for the sake of exploitation is parallel to the Eastern powers’

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<sup>145</sup> Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: The Past, Present and Future*, 30-31.

<sup>146</sup> Denise Natali, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 180.

<sup>147</sup> See articles on from *Middle East Quarterly* found online at [www.meforum.com](http://www.meforum.com).

attempts at assimilation and/or neglect in tandem with the ideologies of modern Arab, Kurdish, or Turkish-centric politics.

## **Chapter 2: Deteriorating Empires, Colonial Expansion, and a Vulnerable Minority**

The maltreatment of Assyrians did not commence during the rise of nationalism and nation-states in the Middle East.<sup>148</sup> Atrocities were not always perpetrated by governments or state-sponsored programs. The desire for dominion and increasing wealth is an ancient concept, and therefore generalized intolerance against the Assyrian Christians as “others” perpetuated from Timurlane in the fourteenth century, to Nādir Shāh in the eighteenth century, to Bedr Khan Beg in the nineteenth century (1842), who killed approximately ten thousand people among the Assyrian tribes of the Bohtan and Hakkāri regions in one campaign.<sup>149</sup> Bedr Khan’s campaigns were initially directed against Ottoman rule, and as Hirmis Aboona mentions in his recent work on the Assyrians in the Ottoman period, in many cases Assyrians and Kurds fought together to “defend their autonomous status.”<sup>150</sup> Yet once the Ottomans ceased their attacks on Bedr Khan in 1842, he directed his attention toward the Assyrians—the culmination of an attempt at power consolidation. Aboona postulates that the Ottomans capitalized on the

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<sup>148</sup> Robert Fisk, *The Great War For Civilization: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), 412-413. See also the continuity of the “Assyrian target” expressed by Levene in “A Moving Target, the Usual Suspects and (Maybe) a Smoking Gun: The Problem of Pinning Blame in Modern Genocide,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 33, No. 4, (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 5-6 which draws a direct linear progression and connection from the events of Simele through the Anfal Campaign.

<sup>149</sup> Travis, “Native Christians Massacred”, 329. Also see Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 196-208. Both studies indicate an even earlier trend of mass killings and destructive policies (or patterns) aimed at the Assyrians by both state and non-state actors.

<sup>150</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 190.

ambitiousness of Bedr Khan, and once the independent Assyrian tribes had been subdued, the Ottomans planned to then eliminate the bastion of Kurdish power.<sup>151</sup>

That few if any native Assyrian sources (such as Syriac chronicles) are utilized by historians of the modern Middle East is perhaps due to language barriers, as few scholars study neither classical Syriac nor modern dialects of the Assyrians. Recent translations and publications such as Amir Harrak's "Northern Mesopotamia in a Nineteenth Century Syriac Annalistic Source" (2006) have begun to eliminate that pretext.<sup>152</sup> Much of the information utilized by scholarship on the Assyrians in the 1800s stems from travel literature and missionary journals, and exhibits discernible Western colonial "empathy." The materials do, however, allow for several insights into the culture of the Assyrians through the eyes of Westerners. In fact, it is evident that Western Protestant missionary activity—evangelization missions—in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, though nonviolent, was another aspect contributing to intra-Assyrian social and religious antagonism.<sup>153</sup> It is evident that such evangelizing activities among the Assyrians, especially among the Nestorians of Urmia (Reza'iyeh, Iran), were seen as opportunities for conversion and forced modernization (ripe with a Christian martyr complex) in the guise of humanitarian aid:

In their eagerness to foster a culture of missionary service among Nestorians, the Americans encouraged their students to identify with a vision of the future in which Christians who suffered persecution became leading agents in Christ's triumph of the world. This vision nurtured expectations of martyrdom and happened to coincide with the violence that the Nestorians were actually suffering at the hands of Muslims, partly as a result of missionary involvement in Nestorian affairs. Missionaries took the massacre of mountain Nestorians by Kurds in 1843 as an opportunity to foster conversion experiences in the refugees who poured into Urmiah, and Asahel Grant wrote positively about the effect of survivors' sufferings on their religious lives: "A new

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>152</sup> Amir Harrak, "Northern Mesopotamia in a Nineteenth Century Syriac Annalistic Source," *Le Muséon: Revue D'Études Orientales* (Louvain: 2006).

<sup>153</sup> For the literature of American protestant missions in north Iraq see Salibi & Khoury, *The Missionary Herald: Reports from Northern Iraq (1833-1870)*, (Beirut: Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, 1995)

hope seemed to kindle in their bosoms,” he wrote after the massacres; “they eagerly drank the encouragement I presented.”<sup>154</sup>

The “aid” of Asahel Grant further fostered anti-Christian sentiments among the Assyrians’ Muslim neighbors. It also added to inter-denominational intolerance, which, in the case of Eastern Christianity, certainly needed no supplementary fuel.<sup>155</sup> Finally, as Aboona notes, the American “missions” had “stirred up and created much hostility between the various tribes, on the one hand, and the *maliks* and the patriarch, on the other,” thus dividing the previously independent and reasonably unified Nestorian Assyrian community.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, American missionary inculcation accomplished something that is continually overlooked by historians and anthropologists dealing with the current situation of the Assyrians: it contributed to a general Assyrian culture of apathy, a defeatist or despondent mindset, evident in some Assyrians today who perceive continued persecution as ordinary and unworthy of thought and rectification. This mental anguish impressed upon the spirit of many Assyrians closely resembles the early effect of Western colonialism on indigenous peoples of North and South America.<sup>157</sup>

As a paradigm for the physical and material diminishment of the communities, George Percy Badger, a nineteenth-century English scholar of the Nestorian Church, a missionary priest and traveler who spent years among the Nestorian religious community, cites the total population of Mosul according to the 1849 census as having 2,050 Muslim

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<sup>154</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 75.

<sup>155</sup> Eden Naby, “The Assyrians of Iran: Reunification of a ‘Millat,’ 1906-1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (October 1977), 239.

<sup>156</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 206. Most other works focus on the damaging effect the missions had on Assyrian-Kurdish, Assyrian-Arab, or Assyrian-Turkish relations while neglecting the more negative consequence within the Assyrian community itself.

<sup>157</sup> For a case on the conversion of indigenous groups to Catholicism see Peter Iadicola and Anson D. Shupe’s *Violence, Inequality, and Human Freedom*, (NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 197.

families, two hundred Jewish families, and 1,100 Christian families.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, Badger states that ‘Amēdīyāh had over two thousand Assyrian Christian and Jewish families in the 1840s. A decade later, there were barely three hundred remaining Assyrian and Jewish families in those communities combined, due to continued oppression by what he termed “Mohammedan despotism.”<sup>159</sup>

French geographer Vital Cuinet estimates that around 1870 there were approximately 97,000 thousand Assyrians living in the Hakkâri region, 52,000 of who were considered autonomous.<sup>160</sup> In this region, despite the many Kurdish-Assyrian inter-communal calamities, there is much evidence of an uneasy yet functional coexistence at the tribal level. The tale of Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan and his relatives who found refuge from Turkish forces among the Nestorians of Tkhuma in the Hakkâri range is a testament to such inter-tribal affinities.<sup>161</sup> This anecdote, though a footnote in the struggles and wars of the early twentieth century, speaks to the perhaps not easy but tentative receptivity of the Kurds toward Assyrians, and vice versa, during the resistance movement of the 1960s, and to the relative intimacy before the rise of nationalism, capitalist agriculture, and missionary activity. In other words, previous tribal alliances

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<sup>158</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol 1, 82.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 202.

<sup>160</sup> Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie : Géographie administrative, statistique, descriptive et raisonnée de chaque province de l'Asie-Mineure*, Vol. II. (Paris, 1890-95), 526-527 and Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 197. In the sense of being autonomous, these Assyrians were not subject to any Kurdish Amirs or Aghas. Those “autonomous” Assyrian regions are as follows: Baz, Diz, Jelu, Tkhuma, and Tyari. There are no precise population statistics of the Hakkâri Nestorians. The relative inaccessibility of certain Nestorian villages of the mountainous region, probably made an accurate tally highly difficult in the 1870s.

<sup>161</sup> David Barsum Perley J.S.D., *Whither Christian Missions?* (NJ: Kimball Press, 1946), 24.



certainly played a role in the organization and acceptance of a distinctly Assyrian element as part and parcel of the Kurdish and Assyrian armed autonomist movement.<sup>162</sup>

## ***World War I***

A brief mention of the important events of World War I as they pertain to the Assyrians and Iraq is necessary in order to delineate the overall pattern of destruction and demographic change in the periods that followed. In most cases, World War I was the epitome of violence in an age of nationalist and colonial fervor. In fact, the events that transpired during WWI would set the stage for the next ninety years.

Assyrians suffered tremendous losses during the First World War, a fact that has escaped much of recent scholarship, given that it is overshadowed by the Armenian case. By March 1915, in the Urmia region alone, over 103 Assyrian villages were destroyed while twelve thousand refugees fled to the Caucasus and over twenty-seven thousand men, women, and children were butchered. In the village of Geotapa, some two hundred Assyrians were locked inside a church and burned alive. Meanwhile, in an act of gendercide in Gulpashan, the last of the villages to be destroyed by March 1915, Kurdish forces urged on by Turkish promises exterminated the entire male population of the village and carried away its young women.<sup>163</sup>

Prior to the creation of the modern Middle East, the Iraq, Syria, and Turkey of today's maps were still part of an Ottoman Empire with ever-shifting borders. Assyrians—along with the Armenians, Kurds, and Yezidis—lived in these regions (including the

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<sup>162</sup> It is also true that in the shadow of WWI that many nationalist political parties of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Kurds, showed some minority solidarity in supporting each others' struggles.

<sup>163</sup> The San Antonio *Light*, "US Flag Saves Christians in Turkish Raid," 25 March 1915. This is echoed by the eyewitness account of Paul Bedjan to Syrian Orthodox Bishop Afram Barsoum. See Khalid Dinno and Amir Harrak "Six Letters from Paul Bedjan to Aphram Barsoum the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Syria and Lebanon," *JCSSS* 9 (2009), 55-73. See specifically pages 55, 56, 65.

Urmia region of Iran) for centuries, traveling frequently between them with little state interaction. The later division of the region into modern states served to alienate largely homogeneous populations from each other with the stroke of a pen. Thus the Assyrians (like the Kurds) became divided within four modern nation-states, which, from the Assyrian and Kurdish perspective, certainly reflect artificial demarcations.

Though exact population statistics are difficult to ascertain, the Assyro-Chaldean delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 provided the following figures of surviving Assyrians, which reflect the decimation of a large segment of the population:<sup>164</sup>

<b>Table 1 Assyrian Population Figures Presented to the Paris Peace Conference 1919</b>	
<b>Region</b>	<b>Number of Assyro-Chaldeans</b>
Mosul	122,000
Urfa and Aleppo	16,000
Deyr-Zor	4,000
Sa'irt (Seert)	61,000
Hakkâri	165,000
Urmia and Salamas	78,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>563,000</b>

There are various explanations for the unreliability of population statistics, especially those of the Ottoman Empire. One reason stems from the fact that large numbers of Assyrians had lost their own language. In the case of those Armenian-speaking Assyrians, for instance (especially in the regions of Harput, Malatiya, and Adana), “one hundred seventy-five thousand Assyrians perished and were listed under

<sup>164</sup> This refers to the population in 1914 but neglects those Assyrian regions under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate (i.e. Harput, Erzerum, Van, Bitlis, and Sivas) where the Armenian Patriarchate estimated 123,000 Assyrians living in this region to the north of those regions included in the Namik and Nedjib document in 1919. See Gaunt (2006), 405-406. James Tashjian, *Turkey: Author of Genocide, The Centenary Record of Turkey 1822-1922* (Boston: Commemorative Committee on the 50th Anniversary of the Turkish Massacres of the Armenians, 1965), 23-24 refers to 500,000 Assyrians of all Christian denominations living in Turkey. This is also likely without regard to those under the Armenian Patriarchate.

the Armenian atrocities.”<sup>165</sup> This is partly because, in the example of the Jacobite church (and the Nestorian, in some instances), “they remained attached to the Armenian patriarchate for civil affairs.”<sup>166</sup>

The massacres of Assyrians and others in the waning Ottoman Empire and Persia during World War I, which saw the deaths of possibly two-thirds of the entire Assyrian population,<sup>167</sup> were the inaugural enterprise of the Kemalist intention to eliminate the Assyrian presence from their ancestral homeland as part of the Turkish nation-building project.<sup>168</sup> Though the Assyrians were not completely eradicated, the genocidal massacres and forced expulsion caused a major demographic shift that would outline Assyrian relations with what would become the new state of Iraq.

### **The Subsequent Years and the Assyrian Settlement<sup>169</sup>**

Many of the tribulations the Assyrians faced were the result of a large-scale demographic shift following World War I. Most of the Nestorian highlanders of Hakkâri were forced out of their homes and settled among their kin in northern Iraq following the war. The British attempt to “settle” the Hakkâri Nestorians in northern Iraq is a highly

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<sup>165</sup> “The Claims of the Assyrians Before the Preliminaries of the Peace Conference” as seen in Werda, *The Flickering Light of Asia Or The Assyrian Nation and Church*, (Published by the Author 1924), 199-200.

<sup>166</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Nineteenth Century Ottoman Diplomacy and Reforms* (Istanbul: Isis, 1999), 395.

<sup>167</sup> David Gaunt in *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I*, (Gorgias Press: 2006) cites preliminary numbers at around 200,000 persons. See also Travis, “Native Christians Massacred”, 350 n.2. James Tashjian, *Turkey: Author of Genocide, The Centenary Record of Turkey 1822-1922* (Boston: Commemorative Committee on the 50th Anniversary of the Turkish Massacres of the Armenians, 1965), 24 cites 424,000 Assyrians killed under the failing Ottoman state since 1895.

<sup>168</sup> In a 16 December 2007 press release, the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) voted overwhelmingly to recognize the genocides inflicted on Assyrian and Greek populations of the Ottoman Empire and succeeding state between 1914 and 1923.

[http://www.genocidescholars.org/images/PRelease16Dec07IAGS\\_Officially\\_Recognizes\\_Assyrian\\_Greek\\_Genocides.pdf](http://www.genocidescholars.org/images/PRelease16Dec07IAGS_Officially_Recognizes_Assyrian_Greek_Genocides.pdf)

<sup>169</sup> See Betty Cunliffe-Owen’s *Thro’ the Gates of Memory: From the Bosphorus to Baghdad* (London: Hutchinson & CO., 1924) for a very candid account of events following WWI concerning the Nestorian Assyrians in Iraq and Urmia region of Iran.

misunderstood period of statecraft on behalf of England's state-building agenda in Iraq. In most cases, these Assyrians were resettled in malaria-infested regions (such as the Nahla Valley), where disease and death were as plentiful as the land. Thus it seemed the British did not have the best intentions for aiding their "smallest allies," or "protégés," as the Assyrians have often been termed.

Several British officials felt compelled to honor the Assyrians' rights, while others did not. Since there was no political benefit in aiding this powerless minority, it may be argued that those dissidents among the British officers who spoke out against the poor treatment of the Assyrians were fulfilling an unheeded sense of military honor and loyalty.

The Assyrians deserve well of us. They have had less than justice at our hands. They can expect it from no other Government, and care for their interests is, in my humble view, one of our major obligations in Iraq.<sup>170</sup>

Whether or not the British desired good for the Assyrians at an individual level was superseded by larger political expediency. The desire to create both a Kurdistan and an Assyria in the region was discussed by both the British Foreign Office and A. T. Wilson, the British civil commissioner in Iraq from 1918 to 1920. In fact, imperial historian and participant in British colonial decision making, Arnold Toynbee, also proposed another autonomous enclave for the Assyrians of Tur Abdin within the Mosul Vilayet, to effectively make two regions.<sup>171</sup> Of course, neither of these wishes came to fruition.

## **Prominent Assyrians**

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<sup>170</sup> Arnold T. Wilson, "The Middle East," *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, Vol. 5 No. 2. (March 1926), 96-110.

<sup>171</sup> John Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-19* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 251-252.

The Assyrians were not without some power of their own, and their intellectuals regularly lobbied for an Assyrian homeland and guarantees for equal rights, much to the chagrin of the British and French authorities. Some of these figures, across ecclesiastic lines, included Dr. Abraham K. Yoosuf, of Harput (Jacobite); writer Yusuf Malek, of Baghdad (Chaldean); Bishop Severius Afram Barsoum, of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch (Jacobite); *Agha* Petros Elia, general of the Assyro-Chaldean forces; and Mar Eshai Sham'un, exiled patriarch of the Church of the East (Nestorian).

### **Abraham K. Yoosuf (1866–1924)**

Yoosuf, an army parademic, was born in Harput (Kharput), Elazig in 1866. He graduated from Central Turkey College in Aintab in 1886.<sup>172</sup> In 1889 Yoosuf moved to the United States and in 1895 graduated from Baltimore Medical College. He founded the Assyrian Benevolent Association in 1897. As a response to what he felt was continuous persecution against Christians in the Ottoman state, Yoosuf published *The Religion of Mohammed and Christian Sufferings*, wherein he speaks on the religious reasons for intolerance against Christians in the East and specifically on the Armenian question in Turkey.<sup>173</sup> He then conducted postgraduate work in both London and Vienna in 1912 before returning to Turkey at the onset of the Balkan Wars, where he volunteered as a surgeon for the Red Crescent Society. Dr. Yoosuf was decorated for his medical prowess by Sultan Abdel Hamid.<sup>174</sup> Yoosuf returned to the United States and soon offered his medical services again during World War I among the American forces, where he attained the rank of major. He eventually settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. Following

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<sup>172</sup> Harold Perch, "Biography of Abraham K. Yousef," *Fiftieth Anniversary of St. Mary's Assyrian Apostolic Church* (Worcester: 1974)

<sup>173</sup> Abraham K. Yoosuf, *The Religion of Mohammed and Christian Sufferings* (Worcester, MA: 1905).

<sup>174</sup> See *The Lowell Sun*, "Real Terrors of War," 10 September 1914 and Donabed, *Remnants of Heroes*, 93.

the war and the massacres committed against the Assyrians, Yoosuf, along with fellow Assyrian Joel Werda, attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Speaking on Turkish reforms and the division of the Ottoman Empire, Yoosuf remarked: “Reforms under the Turkish rule must be dismissed as hopeless. The history for the past hundred years has been a history of reform written in the blood of Assyrians.”<sup>175</sup> After what he and fellow Assyrians felt was a conference on unfulfilled promises, he returned to the United States. Yoosuf published various academic articles in the field of medicine and wrote prolifically for various Assyrian publications, including *The Assyrian Progress* and *The New Assyria*, both published in the United States.<sup>176</sup>

### **Petros Elia (1880–1932)**

Generally referred to using the honorific *Agha*, Petros Elia was born in the Hakkâri region of Baz and was a member of the Chaldean Church. He worked in the Turkish consulate of Urmia, as he was fluent in eight languages, and became consul in 1909. He was a weathered military leader of the Hakkâri Assyrians, which consisted entirely of voluntary recruits from Tur Abdin and Syria as the Assyrians attempted to defend their lands from foreign dominance. From 1919 to 1923 he worked ceaselessly for the Assyrians until he was exiled by British-Iraqi authorities to France for a period following the war.<sup>177</sup> In Lausanne, the Assyrians futilely lobbied the Turkish government for the right to return to their indigenous lands in the Hakkâri region.<sup>178</sup> Elia was mysteriously poisoned to death in his home in Toulouse, France in 1932 as he worked on

<sup>175</sup> *The Lowell Sun*, “Capt. Yoosuf Pleads Assyrian Cause,” 7 September 1919.

<sup>176</sup> For a full history of Yoosuf’s accomplishments in New England see Marquis, Albert Nelson, *Who’s Who in New England*, 2nd edition, (Chicago: A W Marquis and Company, 1916), 1189.

<sup>177</sup> Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (London: IB Tauris, 2006), 261.

<sup>178</sup> Ismet İnönü, “Hey’et-i Vekîle Riyâsetine,” *Turkish Historical Society*, No. 353, 15 January 1923 (translated by Racho Donef)

his memoirs concerning the Assyrians and their treatment at the hands of Western powers.<sup>179</sup>

### **Severius Afram Barsoum (1887–1957)**

Bishop Barsoum was born in Mosul, Iraq. He was part of the Assyrian delegation (along with Captain Abraham K. Yoosuf) to request a homeland for the Assyrians at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.<sup>180</sup> He later became patriarch of the Jacobite/Syrian Orthodox Church in 1932, the same year the patriarchal residence was moved to Syria from Deir Za‘afaran in Mardin, Turkey. Beginning first in 1933, following the tragedy of Simele, Barsoum and the church took an avid anti-Assyrian stance. The churches of the Middle East began distancing themselves from anything Assyrian-related. All the Jacobite churches in the United States previously bearing the name “Assyrian Apostolic Church of Antioch” (with the exception of two) would eventually change their names to “Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.”<sup>181</sup> Barsoum authored numerous books, including *The History of Syriac Literature and Sciences* and *The History of Tur Abdin*.<sup>182</sup>

### **Yusuf Malek (1899–1959)**

Yusuf Malek was born 1899 in the Chaldean stronghold of Tel Keppe (Telkaif) in Iraq. He was educated at Latin College in Baghdad and later at the American College in Basra.<sup>183</sup> Captured by the Turks during World War I, Malek later escaped and took work with the Iraqi Civil Service from June 1917 to September 1930. In 1920, he was special

<sup>179</sup> *Canberra Times*, “Friend of Allies Dies,” 11 April 1932

<sup>180</sup> See Donabed and Mako, “Ethno-cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians,” 106. See also Donabed, *Remnants of Heroes*, 97.

<sup>181</sup> Donabed and Mako, “Ethno-cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians,” 78 & 106-107.

<sup>182</sup> Abrohom Nuro, *My Tour in the Parishes of the Syrian Church in Syria & Lebanon* (Beirut: Pioneer Publications, 1967), 182.

<sup>183</sup> See the back cover of Malek’s *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*.

assistant to the governor of Samarra, and finally he held the office of secretary for the administration inspector in the Nineveh (Mosul) region. He left Iraq to Beirut in April 1931 and along the way, remained in Aleppo for a general conference of Assyrians and Kurds. Malek regularly challenged the British high commissioner in Iraq for his treatment of Assyrians in official positions, which led the commissioner to complain to the French authorities in Lebanon. Malek made regular attempts to return to Iraq but was continually denied readmittance by the Iraqi government at the behest of the British consul-general of Beirut, Sir Harold Satow.<sup>184</sup>

Two days following the initial massacres in Simele, the French authorities in Beirut asked Malek to leave Lebanon, where he published a regular newspaper *Atra/Waṭan* (Country). He was later freed, thanks to Assyrian community complaints, and fled to join the exiled patriarch of the Church of the East in Cyprus in order to take the Assyrian cause to the international community. Following the horrendous events of Simele in August 1933, the two Assyrians left Cyprus for Geneva, Switzerland, to petition the League of Nations in September and October of that year. Malek wrote his magnum opus, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians* (1935), in protest of the continuous maltreatment of the Assyrians by the British administration in Iraq, and especially in response to the Simele massacres.<sup>185</sup> Malek also published further works in English, French, and Arabic, including *Les consequences tragiques du mandat en Iraq* (The tragic consequences of the mandate in Iraq) in 1932, *Simmel, the Cemetery of Betrayed Giants* in 1938, *Kurdistan, Aw Bilād Al-Akrād* (Kurdistan, or the land of the Kurds) in 1945, and

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<sup>184</sup> Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, ii.

<sup>185</sup> *Assyrian Star Magazine*, Vol. 48, No. 2, March-August 1996



a weekly political newspaper, *Al-Ḥurriya* (Freedom) from 1957 until his death two years later.

### **Mar Eshai Sham'un (1908–1975)**

The exiled leader of the Nestorian Church, or Church of the East, was born into the patriarchal family in Qudshanis, in the vilayet of Van, Ottoman Turkey, in 1908. At the age of eleven, Eshai was chosen, by his aunt Lady Surma, in the line of hereditary succession, as the twenty-third patriarch in 1919-1920, following the death of his uncle during the massacres of World War I.<sup>186</sup> He was educated in England at Westcott House, University of Cambridge. After his return to Iraq, Mar Eshai regularly lobbied the Iraqi government and the British administration for greater Assyrian rights and autonomy. On June, 18, 1931, Mar Eshai sent a petition to the high commissioner and chairman of the Permanent Mandates Commission signed by all the Nestorian bishops and tribal heads with nine demands for the Assyrian people. The demands are summarized as follows:

- 1.) Assyrians be recognized as a nation in Iraq and not only a religious community.
- 2.) Hakkâri be annexed to Iraq and under Assyrian rule.
- 3.) a.) If 2 is not possible, then a national home must be founded for the Assyrians  
b.) That the new home include 'Amēdiyāh and the adjacent parts of Zakho, Dohuk, and 'Aqra.  
c.) Existing settlements be given adequate funding and that Assyrian lands be registered in their names.  
d.) Assyrians in this region should be given preference to become officials in this region.
- 4.) Temporal and spiritual authority of the patriarch over the Assyrians be recognized and annual subsidy provided.
- 5.) Assyrians have a member in the chamber of deputies nominated by the people and patriarch.
- 6.) The Iraqi government establish schools where the Assyrian language be taught.
- 7.) The League of Nations or Iraqi government make a gift of 500,000 rupies for the creation of a Church of the East headquarters.
- 8.) A hospital be created in the Assyrian region.

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<sup>186</sup> Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*, 264.

9.) Rifles earned by the Assyrians through service in the Levies not be confiscated.<sup>187</sup>

The patriarch returned to Baghdad in May 1933 after being summoned to a meeting.<sup>188</sup> He was first forcibly detained by the Iraqi regime when he declined to sign a declaration of loyalty to King Faisal, and later deprived Iraqi citizenship and sent into exile in Cyprus by the Iraqi regime on August 19, 1933, just prior to the planned massacres at Simele.<sup>189</sup> Following these horrid events, Eshai and Malek left Cyprus for Geneva, Switzerland, in September 1933, working in tandem to petition the League of Nations to aid the Assyrians. He translated and wrote several books on the theology and history of the Church of the East. The circumstances of his assassination in 1975 are addressed in the succeeding chapters.

These Assyrians, along with others, represented various cultural and social organizations both in the Middle East and the diaspora. Assyrian nationalism<sup>190</sup> was fostered and allowed to grow in the West within Assyrian social and cultural circles. Many of these Assyrians worked together to demand their territorial rights seen plainly in the United Nations document “Claims of the Assyrians as Presented to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.”<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> British Foreign Office Report, Colonial Office no. 59-65, *Special Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Progress of Iraq for the period January to October, 1932*, (London: 1933), 7-8.

<sup>188</sup> Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 80.

<sup>189</sup> “Assyrians’ Leader Deported by Iraq,” *NY Times* 19 August 1933

<sup>190</sup> Not all of the above mentioned Assyrian intellectuals advocated a staunch nationalism with hope of an independent state, though some did. Some Assyrian writings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century lack a call for an armed struggle for a homogenous state. Some rather concentrate on overcoming internal religious animosity.

<sup>191</sup> See *Claims of the Assyrians as presented to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* and Donabed & Donabed, *Assyrians of Eastern Massachusetts*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 81.

In the case of the British, recent research points to their demands for the protection of the Assyrian Christians in the new Iraq following the war, which appears contrary to a desire to aid the Muslim communities, furthering the assumption of religious partiality. John Keay, however, offers a pertinent lay historian's insight into the beginnings of an ethnocidal campaign—something scholarship has seemingly overlooked:

These guarantees [of protection] now proved worthless, largely because what the Iraqis and the British considered fair treatment—protected status leading to assimilation within Iraq—fell far short of the full and lasting autonomy desired by the Assyrians.<sup>192</sup>

More noteworthy than the Arab Sunni elite's aspirations for Iraq to pacify and assimilate the Assyrians is the aspirations of their former allies, the British, to execute an ostensibly identical policy. The Assyrians were once again disregarded in the face of a newly formed country, which desired its immediate assimilation into a culture to which it was foreign.<sup>193</sup> To the independent Assyrians, especially those Nestorian tribes of the Hakkâri, this was both undesirable and unacceptable.

In most cases, the so-called settlement of the Nestorian Assyrian refugees in Iraq is best divided into three major periods: 1920 to 1925, 1925 to 1932, and 1932 to 1933.<sup>194</sup> During the first period, 1920 to 1925, the Assyrians successfully repelled the Turkish invasion of Mosul. The second, 1925 to 1932, saw a number of Hakkâri tribesmen attempt to resettle in the Hakkâri region only to be rebuked by the Turkish forces during the beginning of what was termed the "Z" Plan.

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<sup>192</sup> John Keay, *Sowing the Wind: The Seeds of Conflict in the Middle East* (Norton, 2003), 232-233.

<sup>193</sup> I use the term "assimilation" based on the fact that entrance into Iraqi culture was a form of Arabization as there was no early distinguishing element between being an Arab and being an Iraqi. There is no evidence that either the early Iraqi regime (including the monarchy) or the British authority desired an "Assyrian" Iraq, or for that matter a "Kurdish" Iraq.

<sup>194</sup> Yusuf Malek, *The Assyrian Tragedy* (Annemasse, Switzerland: Granchamp, 1934), 36.

The “Z” Plan, implemented by the Iraqi authorities with direction from the British, was used to spread the Hakkâri Assyrians throughout northern Iraq. As Humphrys, the British high commissioner in Baghdad, stated, “the Assyrians provide an excellent buffer vis-à-vis the Kurds”<sup>195</sup> for the Iraqi state. Many Assyrians succumbed to infectious diseases such as malaria, which ran rampant through the settlements. These settlements, resembling ramshackle refugee camps, became so disease-ridden and famished that at times the death toll was estimated at above 95 percent in particular areas.<sup>196</sup>

Because of the poor conditions of their settlement, many Assyrians desired to return to their Hakkâri villages. Meanwhile, the Turkish consul-general in Baghdad stated on June 25, 1928: “The Turkish amnesty law did not cover the Assyrians, who would not be permitted in any circumstances to enter Turkey; and that any Assyrian who attempted to enter Turkey would be punished.”<sup>197</sup> Thus the Hakkâri Assyrians had no way home, and whether of their own volition or not, they would become a pawn for the British in protecting the territorial integrity of both Turkey and Iraq especially after the extension of the Soviet rule over Caucasia in 1921.

Finally, the third period, 1932 to 1933, saw an attempt to settle the Assyrians based on a League of Nations resolution. No plan came to culmination, leaving the Assyrians as targets once again. Despite their military role in World War I (at least that of the independent Hakkâri tribes), the events of the conflict would cripple this people for decades to follow. The Western romanticization of their downfall was expressed by

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<sup>195</sup> USDOS, (no 170) “Assyrian Problem – British Policy,” 23 August 1933

<sup>196</sup> Yusuf Malek, *The Assyrian Tragedy*, 18-20.

<sup>197</sup> League of Nations Secretariat, *League of Nations Questions*, (1935), 12.

emeritus imperial historian D. K. Fieldhouse as an unfortunate yet otherwise acceptable event:

Such was the beginning of the end of an ancient, brave, and warlike race of mountaineers. They lingered for another twelve to fifteen years and more will be heard of them later; but the fact [that] they had joined the victorious Allies and lost everything as a result was the primary cause of all their subsequent troubles, and historians will no doubt have great difficulty in excusing the Allies—particularly the British—for the way this small and gallant nation was let down ...<sup>198</sup>

### ***British Favor and the Rise of Inter-Communal Fragmentation***

*Kha millat surta d'Suryaye  
Pishla zlimta b'Europnaye  
Jwanqo pishe akh giwaye  
'Ayne 'al zuze d'Englisnaye*

A small nation of Assyrians,  
Persecuted by Europeans.  
Her young men became as beggars,  
Their eyes upon English money.

*Goranan pishe 'uldiye  
Zubna millatan w'rupiye  
Kul Kha tawuye bar qnete  
D'gerwis leh shimma d'beteh*

Our leaders were fooled,  
They sold our nation and tossed it aside.  
Everyone seeking after his own welfare,  
To further his family name.

*Raba shinne min qameta  
Atur kikhaqmawa kullah brita  
Jare 'alo,  
Ha dia b'kurre dwiqta beta*

Many years since the beginning,  
Assyria enlightened the entire world.  
Weep for her,  
As now she rents [her] home.

*Kma d'litalan khubba w'khuyada  
Gow da ahwal sawakh baqyada  
Har akh d'how nasha sayada  
Dar gerdu letla paida*

As long as we do not have love and accord,  
In this situation our thirst will continue to burn.

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<sup>198</sup> David K. Fieldhouse ed. *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: The Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq 1918-44* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2002), 83.

Just as that hunter,  
Whose snare casting yields nothing.<sup>199</sup>

This transcription of oral culture serves as a piece of social criticism, an irreplaceable element in any indigenous society, which is vital for understanding the period of British occupation, as it provides one of the few glimpses into the consciousness of the Assyrian people outside written texts. The song captures heart-wrenchingly the Assyrian predicament in the new Iraqi state and people's response to the consequences of the political maneuvers of colonial powers and the rise of ethno-nationalism. It grieves that the Assyrians placed their hope in the European powers, particularly the British, who would later abandon them. More than this, one portion laments the loss of Assyria (in the ancient sense) which had "enlightened the entire world" and yet today its people have become homeless, and their acceptance of this bleak situation clear. It seems apparent that the folksong portrays the Assyrians as a people resigned to their fate, not unaware of their own naiveté. These basic issues coupled with distrust fostered by power politics and endless religious and tribal divisions and disunity.

But how did the Hakkâri Nestorians become entwined with the British authorities, especially in the case of the Iraqi levies<sup>200</sup>, and how did this affect their identification both internally (within the larger Assyrian community) and externally, by the British, Iraqis, and others? As an extension of the minority conundrum, the labeling of the

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<sup>199</sup> As sung by Shimson Orahem Babela to the author in California during an informal but recorded interview during the summer of 2006. Babela was born in the Urmia region in Iran and lived much of his life in Iraq in the refugee settlement of Gaylani Camp named after the infamous Rashid 'Ali Al-Gaylani. Shimshon and his family were among those forced to leave Iraq under Ba'th pressure for being "Iranian" in the early 1980s. The song was sung by him in the midst of a recorded conversation with the author about the Assyrian situation in Iraq following British withdrawal. The song seems to be solely oral in character as other Assyrians of the same generation remember various stanzas of the song including some of those interviewed for this thesis.

<sup>200</sup> The Iraqi levies were the first Iraqi military force formed by the British in British mandated Iraq. A greater account of the levies will occur in the following pages.

Nestorian highlanders of Hakkâri as *the only* Assyrians (leaving out other members of this ethnic community not belonging to the Church of the East) as has been historiographic tradition, has caused a great deal of confusion and tension; as it was used by the early Iraqi state during Simele to frighten an already fragile Christian populace. In essence, Assyrians of other (non-Nestorian) local Christian denominations became hesitant to identify themselves with the *Nestorians* and therefore as *Assyrians* for fear of retribution from the Iraqi government.

As a further means of clarification, it must be affirmed that the majority of the citations of “Assyrian” in British archival documentation (Foreign Office reports among others) refers to those Nestorian highlands of Hakkâri in present-day Turkey, who lived as independent tribes prior to the start of World War I. In all probability, the British interest in the martial spirit of the Nestorians of Hakkâri was militarily beneficial, especially the skills of the independent tribes of the Tiyari, Tkhuma, Jilu, Diz, and Baz tribes. These Assyrians also became (for them) problematically referred to as “British protégés” in the Middle East, due to their Christian religious affiliation, which may have exposed this group to further persecution and further fragmentation from their Assyrian kin of the Chaldean and Syrian church communities.

Concurrently, one would assume the favor shown the Assyrians by the British would be calculable or measurable in various capacities, particularly by the education system. However, a detailed look at the education system by Stephen Hemsley Longrigg (1893–1979), British officer and petroleum company executive, tells a considerably different story. By the end of 1919, seventy-five primary schools had been opened throughout Iraq. Fifty-six employed Arabic as the primary language, eleven Turkish,

seven Kurdish, and one Persian.<sup>201</sup> Longrigg states that the Jewish and Christian schools, as well as foreign mission schools, were, however, “fostered by support and subsidy.”<sup>202</sup>

Colonel R. S. Stafford (1890–1972), British administrative inspector for Mosul, is usually regarded as a staunch Assyrian supporter, which has furthered a misleading assumption. Contrary to the initial assumptions of British favor, it is evident the British considered the Assyrians to be as “savage and uncivilized” as the Kurds, exemplifying the typical colonial disdainful attitude for all the peoples of the region regardless of religious adherence.<sup>203</sup> In many cases, this attitude was comparable to early portrayals of Native Americans (American Indians) as savage and uncivilized, which in later years, developed into a more romanticized (and perhaps slightly less degrading) view of the “noble savage.”

The same can be said of printing presses in Baghdad, Basra, Najaf, Sulaymaniyah, Mosul, and Kirkuk during the same period.<sup>204</sup> Neither the language of the Assyrians nor they themselves were represented. Both of these social and educational institutions by the British further ostracized the Assyrians, and specifically those of the Nestorian community, from the general Iraqi populace, further widening the gap of their integration into Iraq’s cultural mosaic. Those Assyrians familiar with Arabic became influenced and later assimilated by the Iraqi political machine through the printing press and as of the late 1930s by radio, while some (many Hakkâri Nestorians) were labeled at times as a “tiny foreign Christian community.” They became victims of a construction, an

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<sup>201</sup> Longrigg, *Iraq 1900-1950: A Political, Social and Economic History*, 110.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Ronald S. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians* (London: G. Allen & Unwin 1935), 12

<sup>204</sup> Longrigg, *Iraq 1900-1950: A Political, Social and Economic History*, 110.



“imagining” of an Iraqi nation, which in the process “unimagined” a living indigenous community that espoused a distinct ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity.

### **The Period of the Iraq Levies**

Knowing that they needed a local security force in the region of Iraq, the British adopted the same strategy as in India. A militia would be recruited from among the local population and subjected to training and deployment under a British officer to be both well trained and loyal. This would ensure the protection of His Majesty’s interests, including oil reserves and air bases, in the newly established Iraq. In 1915 British officer Major Eadie of the Indian Army “recruited forty Mounted Arabs from the tribes round Nasiriyah, on the Euphrates, for duty under the Intelligence Department.”<sup>205</sup> After various name changes, this growing force became known as the Iraqi Levies.

Though originally consisting of solely Arabs and later a mixture of Arab, Assyrian, Kurd, Turkomen, and Yezidi soldiers, the levies were eventually comprised of a majority of Assyrian troops.<sup>206</sup> The British did not begin to train Assyrian soldiers until 1921, while Arabs had been trained beginning in 1915 and Kurds from 1919, which led to one official renaming of the Iraq levies on August 12, 1919, to the “Arab and Kurdish Levies.”<sup>207</sup> Thus the initial postulation of most previous scholarship concerning the Assyrians as holding a favored position within the British military is incorrect. Contrary to this proposal, the Assyrians were quite late in joining the Iraqi Levies. Only after small Assyrian battalions had fought the Barwari, Goyan, and Guli Kurdish tribes in ‘Amēdīyāh on August 8, 1919, and shown fighting prowess, did this catch the attention of the

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<sup>205</sup> J. Gilbert Browne, *The Iraq Levies, 1915-1932* (London: Royal United Service Institution, 1932), 1.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 4 & 14.

British.<sup>208</sup> In 1921, whilst the new Iraqi Army was being created, many of the Arabs were advised to transfer from the levies to the newly fashioned armed forces. It was clear that the British chose this opportune moment to recruit the services of the Assyrians to assist in the majority of levy duties.<sup>209</sup>

Sensing that the Assyrians would not be well received in the new Iraqi Army nor Iraq itself, the British presented recruitment of the Assyrians as a way for them to retain their martial spirit; this further otherized them from the newly created Iraqi polity. The British also fostered co-religionist sympathies, which would cause the Assyrians much anguish throughout the succeeding decades.

The initial British recruitment of these Nestorian Assyrians, formerly of Hakkâri in Turkey, began at the Mindan camp. “All they wanted was that the British should send them back to their country [Hakkâri], which they had lost through joining the Allies.”<sup>210</sup> After constant urging by the British officers and Rev. W. A. Wigram, whom these Assyrians had held in high esteem, some fifty men conceded and were unceremoniously guided into the British ranks.

Though initially relenting to British designs, these fifty men attempted once again to withdraw but were blocked. To further distance these men from their families, two leading British officers took the new troops and some of their family members first heading toward Nabi Yunis, and the secondary troop toward ‘Aqra. Among those first levy officers were Rab Khamshi<sup>211</sup> Yusuf Yokhana I, and later Daniel Ismail, the son of

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>211</sup> *Rab* – is a common ancient Assyrian title for soldiers of rank. In this instance the *rab-khamshi* denotes that Yokhana was the commander of fifty men. There were also higher and lower ranked officers denoted by the amount of men under their command including for instance *rab- isra*, *rab-imma*, *rab-trimma*, or commander of 10, 100, and 200 respectively. The highest rank of general was referred to as *rab-khaila*.

Malik Ismael, leader of the Assyrians of Upper Tiyari.<sup>212</sup> This distancing from their cultural and communal relations invigorated a sense of cultural survival among the resettled Assyrians, a sense embedded in folklore and ancient cultural characteristics that had been preserved for centuries in their mountainous enclaves.

Over the years the Assyrians skirmished with various groups attempting to take advantage of their precarious situation. September 1919 saw the Assyrians successfully defend the Assyrian Repatriation Camp at Mindan, thirty miles northeast of Mosul, against Kurdish forces. In July 1920, when “Arab rebels” attacked the Baqubah refugee camp, where many Assyrians had sought refuge after the destruction of their lands in Hakkâri and Urmia, the Assyrian forces led a successful defense and counterattack, though outnumbered.<sup>213</sup>

The Assyrians were used indiscriminately by British forces to spearhead attacks, defend military camps, and in some cases, to suppress rebellions and uprisings. This is exemplified by the tale of the Assyrian levies’ containment of two Kurdish chiefs who had led rebellious activity against the British mandate in Iraq, initially against Sheikh Maḥmud Barzinji in 1919, who proclaimed himself king of an independent Kurdish state, and later against Sheikh Aḥmed of Barzan, the older brother of Muṣṭafa Barzani (leader of the KDP) in 1931.<sup>214</sup> This followed the failed attempt by the Iraqi army under General Abdul-Jabar Barzinji (later friend to Barzani).

Although the Assyrians, like the Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans, worked with the British to secure the newly formed Iraqi state, and in many cases were instrumental in

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<sup>212</sup> Browne, *The Iraq Levies, 1915-1932*, 15.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 73.

suppressing various sectarian revolts and movements, they were singled out in the following years for the brunt of anti-British and anti-Western sentiment.<sup>215</sup>

Prior to the dissolution of the levies in 1955, its soldiers worked predominately as guards, with an overall composition of approximately twelve hundred Assyrians, four hundred Kurds, and four hundred Arabs.<sup>216</sup> This evidence, contrary to the “British protégé” claim, is further attested to by the official disbanding of the levies in 1955 and the handover of Habbaniya by the British to Iraq, leaving the Assyrians (again) at the mercy of the Iraqi government. This perceived the highly trained and well-armed Assyrians a threat to its sovereignty—a sovereignty founded by Arab elites, which were dependent on the national unity of an otherwise pluralist society.

Iraqi fears of a possible threat posed by the still-armed and well-trained Assyrians outlined the blueprint for plans to urbanize the Assyrians. These plans were optimal in both pacifying and later Arabizing the Assyrian community in Iraq. Assyrians resisting Arabization and assimilationist policies were alienated as foreigners. It was these non-assimilated Assyrians who would face the brunt of animosity at Simele and the surrounding regions; and the massacres would set the course for the next seventy-six years of Iraqi history.

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<sup>215</sup> Surprisingly whether due to their small numbers or hope that the British would make good with their word to grant them an autonomous region, the Assyrians did not participate in any “rebellion” up to this point in Iraqi history. For a further reading on rebellions during the levy period see Browne, J. Gilbert, *The Iraq Levies, 1915-1932*, (London: Royal United Service Institution, 1932).

<sup>216</sup> Assyrian Levies RAF, <http://www.assyrianlevies.com/gpage4.html>

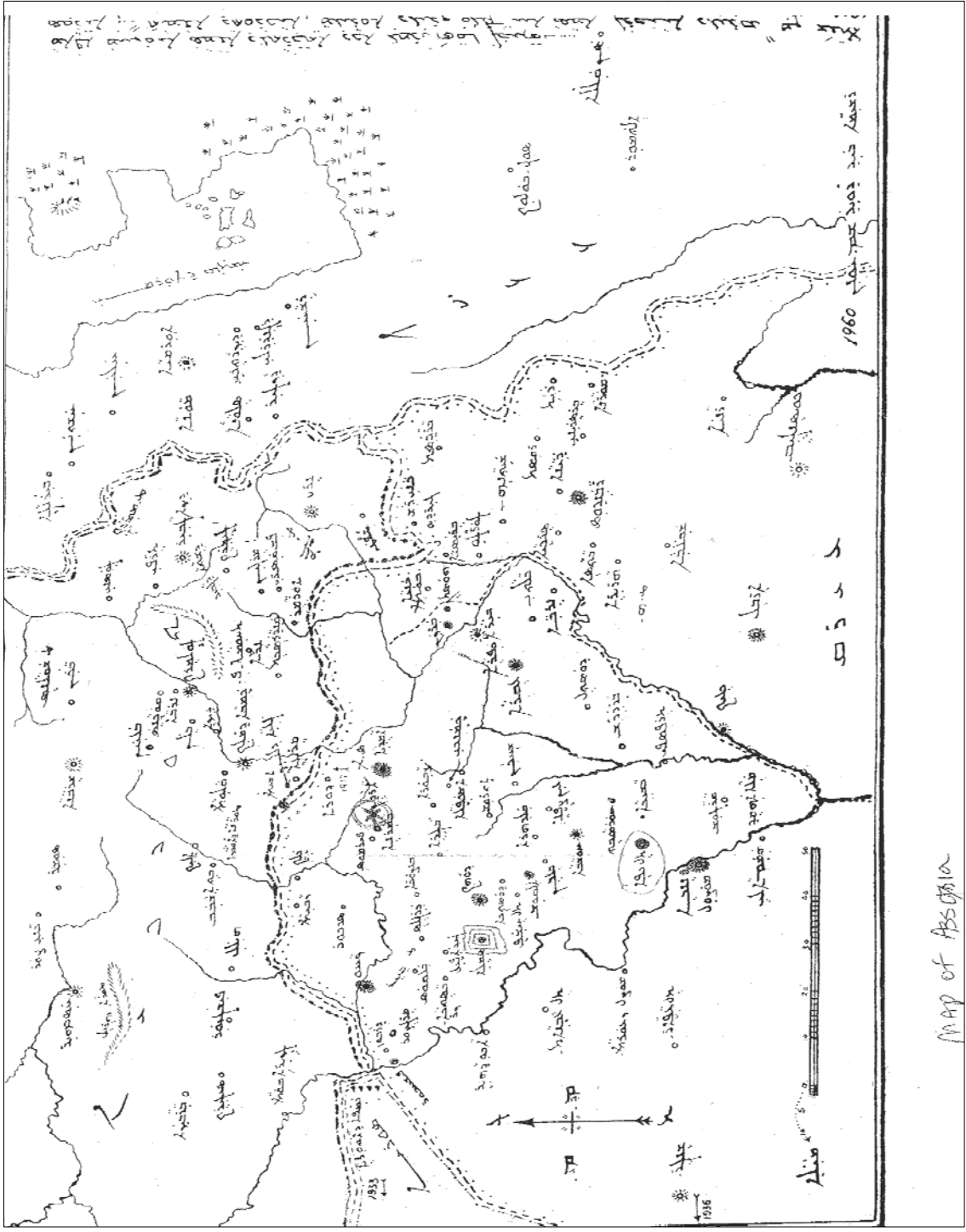


Figure 3 Partial map of Assyrian villages in Iraq and surrounding countries, drawn by Deacon Dawid Younan 1960. (From the Aprim Rays collection.)

## Chapter 3: Iraq and the Building of an Arab Nation-State

We preferred our own way of living. We were no expense to the government. All we wanted was peace and to be left alone.

–Crazy Horse, Oglala Lakota, 1877

### 1933 Simele Massacres

According to eyewitness Yusuf Malek, then working for the secretary for the administration inspector in Mosul, as early as 1929, circulars from the Iraqi ministries were disseminated throughout the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq pressing for a general massacre of the Assyrians.<sup>217</sup> It may have been solely thanks to the progressive thinking and general humanitarianism of a single Kurdish leader, Majid Agha Mizuri, that many of the tribal factions did not attack the Assyrians outright following the distribution of the leaflets. Malek, quoting Majid in conversation with British high commissioner Sir Francis Humphrys, warned, “*Mamurai Araban fasad kan baima wa Asuri*” (The Arab officials are causing dissension between us and the Assyrians).<sup>218</sup>

Immediately following that failure to incite the Kurds to attack the Assyrians, a general call for the massacre of all Christians was announced. This call appealed to fundamentalist religious convictions, attempting to bridge the gap between Kurdish and Arab Muslims in the government’s effort to eliminate the Assyrians in Iraq.<sup>219</sup> In this second instance, it was the British forces in the streets of Mosul that prevented an immediate massacre.

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<sup>217</sup> Though Malek mentions this, I am unable to find actual documentation. Most of this is mentioned in oral accounts. See the story of Ezra Warda (Effendi) of Baz and his interception of the government telegram calling for an Assyrian massacre in ‘Abdyešu‘Barzana’s *Šinnē d’ ‘Asqūtā: Qrābā d’Dayrabūn wa Gunhā d’Simele* [Years of Hardship: The Battle of Dayrabūn and the Simele Massacre] (Chicago: Assyrian Academic Society, 2003), 212-220.

<sup>218</sup> Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 263.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

Throughout this period, Assyrians had been targeted by central-government maneuverings. In his study on the Assyrians, Malek compiled a list of seventy-six individuals marked for political assassination.<sup>220</sup> In 1930, five Assyrians were found murdered near Rawanduz, and more near Mosul, with no criminal investigation into the killings.<sup>221</sup> The machinations of Baghdad became obvious in its attempts to pit the Kurds and Assyrians against each other, while at the same time uniting Iraqis in their hatred of these “outsiders,” these “tools” of Western occupation.

In 1931, the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations decided to allow Iraq admission as “an independent sovereign state” into the League of Nations, with the recommendation that it guarantee certain rights to its minorities.<sup>222</sup> Both Assyrians and non-Assyrians voiced many fears concerning the situation of the Assyrians.<sup>223</sup> The Iraqi Assyrians held a general conference in Mosul in October 1931 to petition the League of Nations for special consideration to migrate to French-controlled Syria, or out of the Middle East. The request fell on deaf ears, and the British desire to leave Assyrian Levy officers as guards for the airbases of Habbaniyya and Shu‘aiba with feeling no obligation to protect them paved the way for the atrocity that would occur two years later.<sup>224</sup> In 1932 Iraq was admitted to the League unanimously, yet Britain retained

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 324-325.

<sup>221</sup> *Report by the UK to the League of Nations on the Administration of 'Iraq for the year 1930*, colonial No. 62, (London: 1931), 29.

<sup>222</sup> Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 74.

<sup>223</sup> The general cross-religious community concern for these Nestorian Assyrians was seen throughout the diaspora. See letter from the Jacobite Assyrian organization United Assyrian Association of Massachusetts to Senator David Walsh dated 22 August 1933 in Donabed & Donabed, *Assyrians of Eastern Massachusetts*, 68.

<sup>224</sup> Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 75. See also William Wigram, *Our Smallest Ally: A Brief Account of the Assyrian Nation in the Great War* (NY: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, The Macmillan Co, 1920 & 1966).

many previous relations, especially those with the Iraqi Sunni elite, even during Iraq's sovereign period.<sup>225</sup>

Events peaked once again in 1933, one year after Iraq had been granted its independence from British rule. The head of the Nestorian Assyrians, Patriarch Mar Eshai Sham'un, addressed Assyrian autonomy with the Iraqi government in Baghdad during meetings in May 1933. Following a breakdown of the talks, Baghdad had decided it would be necessary to retain the cleric in custody, which infuriated the Assyrian population around the world. Planning to clash with the Assyrians as the situation heightened between May and June 1933, government campaigns urged people to donate funds for military supplies that would be used to quell the Assyrian unrest. Iraqi deputies made speeches in parliament on June 29, 1933 inciting hatred toward the Assyrians, which was disseminated and published in *al-Istiqlal* newspaper among others.<sup>226</sup> The ministry of education solicited funds from students and teachers to purchase a tank, while Arab nationalists of Syria proposed to send funds for a plane or tank to be named "Southern Syria."<sup>227</sup>

When word spread among the Assyrians, many former levy officers and their families attempted to cross the border to settle in the Khabur basin in Syria, since the Assyrians had been given leave to emigrate from Iraq.<sup>228</sup> But in Syria, French authorities turned the Assyrians back, and when they returned, they were met by hostile Iraqi forces

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>226</sup> Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 121.

<sup>227</sup> USDOS 890g.00 General Conditions/5, Knabenshue, Baghdad May 3, 1933 and USDOS 890g.00 General Conditions/6, Knabenshue, Baghdad May 24, 1933

<sup>228</sup> Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 254. See also Yacoub's *The Assyrian Question* (Chicago: Alpha Graphic Printing, 1986), 14-15. For more on the Nestorian settlements along the Khabur in Syria see Report of the Committee of the Council on the Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq in the Region of the Ghab, *The Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq* (French Mandated Territories of the Levant) Series of League of Nations Publications, VII 12. 3 (1935)



determined to either disarm or eliminate them. During the confrontation, dozens of Assyrians and Iraqi military were killed. The catastrophe that ensued was categorically ignored by the British and indeed the entire international community, including the League of Nations.

### **Iraqi Government Reaction<sup>229</sup>**

A cold-blooded and methodical massacre of all the men in the village then followed, a massacre for which in the black treachery in which it was conceived and the callousness with which it was carried out, was as foul a crime as any in the blood-stained annals of the Middle East.

—R. S. Stafford

In August of 1933, the first major Iraqi military offensive was launched and directed toward its own population in and around the Assyrian village of Simele. The Iraqi media justified the government's actions by portraying the Assyrians as part of a "sinister design" by the British to retake control over the northern region of Iraq. Any fleeing Assyrians were shot on sight. The government had incited Kurdish irregulars to attack Assyrian regions, and in Dohuk and Zakho, over one hundred peasants, including priests on three occasions, were taken out of their houses by the Iraqi Army and "shot in batches."<sup>230</sup> In one incident, eighty-one men of the Baz tribe who had surrendered were massacred in a single house. Even Goriyyil Yonan of Baz, known to be friendly toward the Iraqi government, was shot while hoisting a white flag of parley. Nine-year-old Assyrian girls were raped and burnt alive.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Simele massacre see Longrigg, *Iraq 1900-1950*, 231-236 and Malek's *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians* (Chicago: The Assyrian National Federation & The Assyrian National League of America, 1935).

<sup>230</sup> Ronald S. Stafford, "Iraq and the Problem of the Assyrians," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1931-1939), Vol. 13, No. 2. (March-April 1934), 176.

<sup>231</sup> Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 269.

Looking for survivors of Simele in the last ten years, I have encountered only two. E.B. is one of the few Assyrian men of any age to survive the atrocities in Simele and the surrounding villages. As a seven-year-old child, he recalls,

My friends and I saw a plane fly into Simele and start firing on us. Assyrians gathered in houses. [Since the men were being slaughtered,] the women began making the young boys look like girls so they would not be killed. The third day after the killing began, they (some wearing Iraqi uniforms some not) rounded up some Assyrians and said, Either become Muslim or we will kill you.<sup>232</sup>

E.B. lost his father and suffered personal bodily injury, including being shot in the arm, and continues to feel discomfort and pain from shrapnel still lodged above his lip.

Approximately 138 Assyrians of Baz lost their lives during the massacres.<sup>233</sup> In his account of the disaster, Gerald de Gaury, British military officer to Saudi Arabia, lamented,

Whoever fired the first shot in a brush on the Syrian frontier on the fourth of August, there could be no justification for the shooting down of Assyrians in villages far away.... The people killed were entirely innocent. It was enough for them to be Assyrians to be shot.<sup>234</sup>

As King Faisal was abroad, reigning Prince Ghazi gave permission to the leader of the governmental forces, Colonel Bakr Sidqi, to eliminate any and all Assyrians. Sidqi, of Kurdish descent and born in Kirkuk, was among many non-Arabs influenced by a growing tide of Iraqi Arab nationalism. Sidqi used the murdering of thousands of these Assyrian “separatists,” as they became popularly termed by the Arab media, to catapult his career as a military hero, which gave him the power to challenge the Iraqi establishment in a failed coup attempt in 1936. For thousands of injured and slain Assyrians, 1933 was more than a simple government offensive or even massacre.

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<sup>232</sup> E.B. (Hejerke-Simele), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Gerald de Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad: The Tragedy of Iraq's Monarchy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1961, reprinted 2008), 89.

British response to the situation was indifferent. Yusuf Malek, quoting Sir Arnold Wilson, who had been British civil commissioner in Baghdad from 1918 to 1920 (Sir Percy Cox's predecessor), states, "... four squadrons of British Air Force, whose intervention has been confined, of recent months, to dropping leaflets on Assyrians telling them to surrender. [The Assyrians] did so and were massacred a day or two later in cold blood."<sup>235</sup> It was apparent that the British knew of this possibility and, in fact, indirectly facilitated the massacre of unarmed Assyrians. This statement serves as yet another example that the Assyrians did not receive any favor from their "allies."

It has been recorded that at least "sixty-four Assyrian villages were looted and destroyed by them [Kurdish irregulars] and by Arab tribesmen" during the mayhem.<sup>236</sup> Stafford mentions sixty "looted" in Dohuk and Sheikhan and another four in 'Amēdiyāh.<sup>237</sup> From my research, however, the number of villages destroyed, looted, or forcibly abandoned during the massacres appears to exceed one hundred.<sup>238</sup> The tribal groups cited to have participated in the actions were the Sindi, Quli, and Slevani Kurds; Jubur, Shammar, and Ḥadidiyin Arabs; and a minority of Yezidis.<sup>239</sup> In at least one incident, 315 Assyrian men, women, and children were gunned down.<sup>240</sup> And the government's response was complete denial:

The Iraq Government denies the massacre, claiming that it was punitive action against rebels. Obviously Government officials, the police and the army will not testify to it, and there seem to be no male survivors. Also intimidation would doubtless play a part in the prevention of testimony.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 262 quoting Sir Arnold Wilson from "The Crisis in Iraq" in the October issue of *The Nineteenth Century and After*, (London: 1930).

<sup>236</sup> Levene, "A Moving Target, the Usual Suspects and (Maybe) a Smoking Gun", 4. Also a list of 62 of the destroyed and looted villages are mentioned in the Annexes Table 7, based on the list provided by Malek in *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 338-339.

<sup>237</sup> Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 168

<sup>238</sup> See figure three for a full list of villages affected during Simele.

<sup>239</sup> Longrigg, *Iraq 1900-1950*, 234.

<sup>240</sup> Hamilton, *Road Through Kurdistan*, 224.

<sup>241</sup> USDOS, (no 170) "Assyrian Problem – British Policy," 23 August 1933

The response to these massacres by the Iraqi government and, to a certain extent, its non-Assyrian populace, was enthusiasm and glee, according to eyewitness and American representative in Iraq, Paul Knabenshue. Parades for Iraqi troops in both Baghdad and Mosul were met by cheering men, women, and children. Shops were closed and a holiday ensued amid cheers, while women threw flowers and rosewater, showering the “victorious” troops.<sup>242</sup>

One section of the victorious Iraq army returning from the front is now quartered at Mosul, and another section is arriving at Baghdad to-day. Mosul gave an enthusiastic welcome to its allotment. Triumphal arches were erected, decorated with watermelons shaped as [Assyrian] skulls into which daggers were thrust and with red streamers suspended, intended, it is assumed, to represent blood.<sup>243</sup>

Estimates of the total murdered vary from three hundred (in the village of Simele alone) to six thousand people throughout the region, predominantly civilians.<sup>244</sup>

It is imperative to note that the massacres centered on Nestorian villages, more specifically those that had settled in Iraq during and immediately following World War I. It is well known that Sidqi had desired to further attack Alqosh immediately following the first wave, but was apparently dissuaded.<sup>245</sup> Undoubtedly, this action, along with the destruction and looting of the Assyrian villages, should warrant some recognition of a

<sup>242</sup> USDOS, (no 177) “Iraq’s Victorious Army Returns to Baghdad” 30 August 1933 (figure 6)

<sup>243</sup> USDOS, (no 165) “Suppression of Assyrian Revolt” 23 August 1933 (figure 9)

<sup>244</sup> Burchard Brentjes, *The Armenians, Assyrians, and Kurds: Three Nations, One Fate?* (London: Rishi, 1997), 64-65 mentions 6,000 dead whereas Stafford, “Iraq and the Problem of the Assyrians,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 2. (March-April 1934), 175 count 320 dead in one incident at Simele on 11 August 1933 though according to American ambassador P. Knabenshue in USDOS, (no 164), “Assyrians-Massacres in northern Iraq,” Baghdad 21 August 1933 most of the bodies were hidden prior to Stafford’s arrival. Since the event caused some concern within the international community, British policy usually dictated minimizing the extent of destruction. Furthermore, it must be mentioned that the events which occurred in the village of Simele itself saw over 300 dead. Joseph Yacoub, *Les minorités dans le monde: Faits et analyses* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1998), 689 mentions at least 3,000 victims by Assyrian count and 2,000 dead by the *Journal de Genève*. Yusuf Malek *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 281, quotes British sources and references over 2,000 victims in the span of less than one week. See also Malek (333-336, 1935) for a sample list of Assyrians killed. Before his passing, Malek had been working on a list of 2,000 more victims. The killings continued until 11 November 1933 and spread into other regions of northern Iraq.

<sup>245</sup> Longrigg, *Iraq 1900-1950*, 235. Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 284.

genocidal act, since the intent to eliminate the Assyrians as such was transparent. Yet, despite being the first major action of the Iraqi military following its independence in 1932, this act is scarcely mentioned today.<sup>246</sup>

Though the atrocities committed were horrendous, stories of some local Arab police officers and Kurdish *aghas* protecting and aiding innocent women and children (and in some cases men) is testament to a sliver of humanity that remained during the events.<sup>247</sup> Such verification of a semblance of charity in the midst of bedlam speaks to the compassion at an individual level, an important factor in the comprehension of the state of affairs in colonial Iraq. Fundamentally, such empathetic behavior illustrates a reality where, contrary to government-orchestrated political mechanisms of fear and hatred in the call for the genocide of the Assyrians, on no account was there an ingrained communal hatred for Assyrians.

### **Research Concerning Simele**

As a community, the Assyrians would see no recompense, neither in word nor deed, following the massacre. In Iraq as in Geneva, the Assyrians had been betrayed, and there was no inquiry into the massacres, nor anyone held responsible for the brutal acts. In stark contrast, in the wake of the crimes perpetrated against mostly unarmed civilians, Colonel Sidqi was promoted and received a “victory parade” upon his return to Baghdad. Furthermore, beginning at this crucial juncture, British official documentation on Iraq shows less frequent mentions of Assyrians in subsequent years, until they essentially

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<sup>246</sup> The United States Government has also neglected this key event in its timeline of Iraqi history. See, [http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive\\_Index/Timeline\\_of\\_Iraq\\_19322003.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive_Index/Timeline_of_Iraq_19322003.html). This is true of most books on the history of Iraq. Simele is either mentioned in passing or not at all. This is of interest as it was the beginning of what would occur throughout the next 70 years including the Anfal Campaign.

<sup>247</sup> Stafford, “Iraq and the Problem of the Assyrians”, 176, and Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, 270.

become a non-entity. It seems the British had finished exploiting them and had deemed their ruin a reasonable by-product of progress. No sooner had the British voiced their fear for the safety of the Assyrians than they themselves stalled the inquiry commissioner, representative of the League of Nations, from entering Iraq in the immediate aftermath of Simele. As Peter Sluglett reminds us,

Since they had created this state of affairs, the British authorities were naturally disinclined to change it. Even after the end of the mandate, the embassy was more concerned to cover up for the Iraqi government than to deplore their sins of commission: after the Assyrian massacre in the summer of 1933, Sir Francis Humphrys recommended that Britain should do her utmost to forestall the dispatch of a League of Nations Commission of Enquiry.<sup>248</sup>

Perhaps the comment by American William Yale sums up the colonial and Middle Eastern perceptions concerning the Assyrians and their harsh predicament: “These valiant and stubborn people had come to the end of their long tempestuous history, victims of hatreds engendered by the clash between Western imperialism and the rising nationalism of Near Eastern peoples.”<sup>249</sup> Though many influential writers and researchers simply lamented the Assyrian predicament, some strove to remedy the situation. In the most well-known case, the Simele massacres (alongside those of the Ottoman Empire) were not only invoked but became viable paradigms that influenced a young Raphael Lemkin in the development of a framework concerning the “legal concepts of mass murder.” Lemkin’s work would later become the keystone of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide ratified by the United Nations on December 9, 1948.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country, 1914-1932* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 212.

<sup>249</sup> William Yale, *The Near East: A Modern History*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 326 as referenced in Key’s *Sowing the Wind: The Seeds of Conflict in the Middle East*, (Norton, 2003), 233.

<sup>250</sup> American Jewish Historical Society, Guide to the Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) Collection, 1763-2002, (bulk 1941-1951), Accessed 9-12-2007, <http://findingaids.cjh.org/?fnn=Lemkin02-03&pnm=AJHS#>

Most discussions on Simele are based on British Lt. Col. Stafford's account of the events. That the number of Assyrians killed at Simele ranges from three hundred to six thousand stems from a misunderstanding. The number three hundred is based on Stafford's account of what occurred on August 11, 1933 in the Simele village itself. This was not the only incident, and the killing, raping, and pillaging did not cease for one month. Much research assumes the least number of casualties, though this is mostly from a misinterpretation of events and the scope of the conflict.

Most Iraqi (and some later British) scholarship concerning the Simele massacres demonized the Assyrian element, as displayed by both Mohammed Tarbush and Khaldun Husry.<sup>251</sup> Husry introduced his article on the Simele massacres in these words:

“History,” Ernest Toller once observed, “is the propaganda of the victors.” Alas, it may often be so; but the case of the Assyrian Affair of 1933 history has been decidedly the propaganda of the victims.<sup>252</sup>

Husry further elaborates by examining the romantic ideals of the British when dealing with the Assyrians and Kurds, but mentions little of this when dealing with the Arabs. Though mentioning T. E. Lawrence as a British spy and therefore denying the British romanticization of the Arabs, Husry fails to discuss the formation of Arab nationalism as useful to and initially supported by British colonialist designs in the late- and post-Ottoman Middle East.<sup>253</sup> Following the discovery of oil in Iraq, Europe had a strong interest in the stability of the region, in order to make their economic ventures a simpler pursuit. This stood in contrast to the Kurdish and Assyrian cultural awakenings, which

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<sup>251</sup> See Mohammed Tarbush, *The Role of the Military in Politics: A Case Study of Iraq to 1941* (Boston: Kegan Paul, 1982), 100-101 for reactions by the general population of Iraq to the incident at Simele.

<sup>252</sup> Khaldun Husry, “The Assyrian Affair of 1933,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2. (April 1974), 161-176

<sup>253</sup> Though the creation of various Arab states by the British is well known, it must be remembered that in later years when it no longer suited their political and economic interests (a major point of contention being Egypt's recognition of communist China), the West abandoned the Arab nationalists, most obviously seen in Nasser's Egypt in 1956.

were neither supported by the British military, nor developed in Iraq.<sup>254</sup> Clearly, it could be stated that the Assyrians and Kurds received the least assistance and attention (with the exception of unfulfilled promises) following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire from the Western powers, whereas the Arabs and Arabic-speaking tribes (in part due to British machinations) initially benefited significantly.<sup>255</sup> This was not based on either the British or American favor for Arabs or Arab nationalism, but rather as strong and secure centralized ally state which would stand as a bulwark against Soviet advancement.

### ***Road to the Republic***

The events of Simele served as a blueprint for the succeeding governments' further treatment of minorities, while catapulting the army into the center of Iraqi politics.<sup>256</sup> Already, from 1933 to 1940, under the reign of Prince Ghazi, a series of military coups attempted to take control over the country until Ghazi's death in 1939. Not two years after Ghazi's death, on April 1, 1941, while Iraq was under the regentship of Prince 'Abdallah (ruling for the underage Faisal II), prime minister and anti-British Arab nationalist Rashid 'Ali Al-Gaylani staged a successful coup of the government.

In June 1941, after the Anglo-Iraqi War had ended, the Pan-Arab agenda under the leadership of Al-Gaylani became frighteningly apparent when Yunis Sab'awi, an associate of Gaylani's government and a member of the al-Muthanna Club, led a mob attack on the Baghdad Jewish community, an assault sometimes referred to as the

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<sup>254</sup> Much of the explicit self-identifying references to Middle Eastern people being descendents of the ancient Assyrians are seen among the Jacobite Christians in Harput, Turkey in the mid 1800s. For evidence of this see Horatio Southgate's *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian Church of Mesopotamia*, 80.

<sup>255</sup> This is also due in part to similar Russian involvement with the Armenians, Assyrians and Kurds.

<sup>256</sup> *Farhud* is an Arabic word meaning pogrom or violent riot. For a full account from eyewitness survivor accounts see 'Abdyešu'Barzana's *Šinnē d' 'Asqūtā: Qrābā d' Dayrabūn wa Gunhā d' Simele* [Years of Hardship: The Battle of Dayrabūn and the Simele Massacre] (Chicago: Assyrian Academic Society, 2003).



*Farhud*.<sup>257</sup> Thus the ubiquitous terrors of Simele began to be felt by other Iraqi minorities. In the aftermath of Simele and the disbanding of the Iraqi levies, the Assyrians were beaten and distraught, too weak to resume their struggle for autonomy in Iraq. Integration into Iraq was their new concern. Yet though they held some junior positions in the newly formed government, discrimination and hatred remained deeply seated.

Most sedentary/urban Assyrians managed to integrate with greater ease into the new Iraq. Such was the case for the Nestorian, Chaldean Catholic, Syrian Catholic, and Syrian Orthodox church communities in cities like Mosul (Nineveh), with the exception of Chaldeans and Nestorians farther north in the Dohuk and Zakho regions, where Arab influence was negligible.<sup>258</sup> In the example of the Mosul region, most urban dwellers identified solely with their religious community. Indeed, Aramaic had been lost among the majority of city dwellers of the region (those of the outlying villages excluded), though the form of Arabic spoken in Mosul (as well as the Syrian Jezirah) retained a strong Aramaic and Akkadian influence.

Undoubtedly, those Nestorian Assyrian tribes of the Hakkâri region lacked this assimilationist deportment and rather retained aspects of a fiercely sovereign tribal warrior culture, something akin to their Kurdish neighbors. Such an attitude and mindset would be the prime reason for the incorporation and formation of Assyrians into elite battalions under the British Royal Air Force.

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<sup>257</sup> Davis, *Memories of State*, 70.

<sup>258</sup> David Wilmschurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East, 1318-1913*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Vol. 582, Subsidia 104 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 126, states that on the eve of WWI there were 4,000 Nestorians and 12,000 Chaldeans in 'Amēdiyāh, Barwar and 'Aqra regions. These numbers were extremely minimized as all cases of Christian populations in the densely Muslim East. Smaller statistics guaranteed less attention from what were perceived as possibly hostile Muslim groups. Despite this discrepancy, it is certain there existed a significant number of Assyrians in the extreme north of what later became Iraq prior to the settlement of the Nestorians of Hakkâri.

An added issue that has recently become embedded in Iraqi history is a deliberate policy to contain any spread of Assyrian (as well as Kurdish and Turkoman) nationalist sentiments. It should be emphasized that this phenomenon cannot be regarded simply as human hatred due to ethnic and/or religious differences. Rather, it must be understood as a deliberate requirement of Iraqi nation- and state-building, formulated ostensibly around an exclusive Arab national identity<sup>259</sup>—no different from the suppression of minority rights following the birth of the Turkish republic or the punishments imposed upon Gaelic speakers under the iron fist of Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, as part of a transitional government.

The Assyrians found themselves bereft of positions and titles in the new Iraq. They counted neither among the “senior officials, magistrates, judges, army officers, or ministers” nor deputies in parliament, while other communities benefited tremendously, specifically the Arab population.<sup>260</sup> Under these conditions, lacking both internal strength in numbers and political clout and external (foreign) support, the Assyrian cultural and national movement developed more slowly and with more difficulty than that of their Arab and Kurdish neighbors. This was especially true following the detrimental fragmentation of its religious communities, as seen above, through foreign and domestic influence, and as a repercussion of the Simele genocide.

Thus, the early attempts at creating Assyrian cultural and political groups to aid in the establishment of Assyrian ethno-religious, cultural and political rights in Iraq were

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<sup>259</sup> Professor Amir Hassanpour has reminded me here of the same issue prevalent in the nation- and state-building of civic nations which will become more evident in the conclusion as I have drawn on various oppressive events and policies to which indigenous peoples were subjected to in North America. The same is the case for the civic nation of Great Britain which can be seen from a further look at the treatment of the Celtic peoples namely the Cornish, Irish, Scottish and Welsh peoples.

<sup>260</sup> Hamilton, *Road Through Kurdistan*, 216.

minuscule. Some underground groups were established during this period, the most renowned of which was Khubba w Khuyada Athōraya (Assyrian Love and Unity), the first of two organizations with identical acronyms, Kheith Kheith Allap (KKH), was founded during the early 1940s as an underground organization by Osta Moshe in Habbaniya. KKH lasted until the end of the decade, when it disbanded in the midst of the chaos that ensued following the dismantling of the remaining Assyrian levy battalions and their abandonment by the British military.

### **Assyrians and the ICP**

The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) had long been a refuge for Assyrians and other minority groups. More than most, the Assyrians always retained a presence within the ICP. From its founding in 1934 until the 1970s, the ICP played a fundamental role in shaping the political history of Iraq. Notably, the birth of communism in Iraq is generally attributed to Pyotr (Petros) Vasili.<sup>261</sup> Vasili, raised and educated in Tbilisi, Georgia, was the child of an Assyrian immigrant from the ‘Amēdīyāh region in Iraq. Vasili immigrated from Tbilisi to his father’s homeland in the early 1920s, where he began to build a strong ideological following. Until his exile in 1934, he lived and worked as a tailor throughout the country and was celebrated for “teaching his competitors more modern methods of tailoring.”<sup>262</sup>

The ICP grew intensely among the minorities in Iraq, especially the secular elites and academics. In 1941, Fahd (Panther), the cadre name of Vasili’s fellow Assyrian,

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<sup>261</sup> Batatu, *The Old Social Classes & The Revolutionary Movements In Iraq*, 404.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 404.

Yusuf Salman Yusuf,<sup>263</sup> became secretary of the party and set about restructuring the organization and expanding membership among the working classes.<sup>264</sup> Yusuf integrated a greater population into the Communist Party, and between 1941 and 1949, Assyrians made up a sizeable percentage of the party. Interestingly, despite the strong Assyrian involvement in the party, most works mention them briefly if at all, or generically as “Christians.”<sup>265</sup>

The ICP was involved in the most important national uprisings and demonstrations of the 1940s and 1950s but suffered heavily from 1978 onward under the regime of Saddam Hussein. The founding of the ICP, and Assyrian involvement therein, remains of intrinsic importance to future developments concerning the Assyrians in Iraq, as they would become casualties of power politics between Iraq and the Soviet Union, the United States, Israel, and Iran.

It is evident that there are a plethora of players, internal and external, all of which influenced the situation of these Assyrians in the succeeding following decades. It is of primary importance to see that the Assyrian situation in northern Iraq became very closely intertwined with that of the Kurds. Thus, although the Assyrians physically existed in the region, they had slowly begun to be phased out of the literature and the

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<sup>263</sup> This is more of interest to the later part of this research. In view of the lacuna element of Assyrians and the minimization trends within scholarship, it is noteworthy to mention that Salman is only mentioned in Ghareeb's, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq* on one occasion within the ICP entry but never as an Assyrian while most personalities identified throughout this book contain some reference to their ethnic background. This may be due to Ghareeb's personal leanings which may also explain Tareq Ismael's description of Fahd as “a young Iraqi political activist” and in fact does not mention Assyrians at all. See Tareq Ismael, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 21.

<sup>264</sup> Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, 177.

<sup>265</sup> See Walter Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956) for a description of minorities in the communist party in the Middle East. The Kurds occupy eleven pages, Armenians two pages, and Assyrians are mentioned once in passing. Despite his famous status, Fahd or Yusuf Salman Yusuf, an ethnic Assyrian, is only mentioned briefly under “The Christian Orthodox Churches.” Pyotr (Petros) Vasili, the initial proponent of communism in Iraq, is not mentioned at all.

documentation of this period concerning the West, Iraq, and eventually of the Kurds as well. The following chapters will shed further light on the above-mentioned period, with special attention to the Assyrian minority.

## **Summary**

In reference to the 1948 Genocide Convention, the massacres of Simele constituted an attempt by the Iraqi regime to eliminate “in part” the Assyrians “as such” from the state of Iraq. Government agencies called for their elimination, while local fear and mass hysteria (founded mostly on government-controlled media messages) created a general atmosphere of despair for Assyrians throughout Iraq, Chaldean, Jacobite, and Nestorian alike.

For the Assyrians, not only the massacres, but also the repercussions from them, would exponentially affect the Assyrians and Iraq as a whole. According to American missionary Mr. Cumberland in his letter to P. Knabenshue, Simele ushered in a variety of consequences:

One is that the reputation of the Assyrian warrior has vanished. Second, the tribes have seen with their own eyes that the British armed forces, whether land or air, took no part in the recent operations. Third, old animosities between Muslims and Christians have been aroused and new ones created in recent months. Forth (of local significance in the Dohuk district only, unless it should spread) two of the Kurdish tribes have quarreled over spoil, and it would take only a small incident to set them upon each other. Fifth (a seemingly absurd thing, but nevertheless significant) there is a shortage of eligible Kurdish girls at present; a good bride costs about 300 dollars; and whether the young Kurds would consciously start out to get brides by conquest or not, the situation does make them restless. Sixth, The Semeil massacre and similar events have gone far to destroy the confidence of the Assyrians and other minority groups, especially Christians, in the good faith of the Government. Seventh, there seems not to be the personal integrity in the government services to form a stable administration. To be sure, we as Americans are not in a position to throw stones; but the objective fact remains that corruption is the rule rather than the exception in this country, and that it is not condemned by any body of public opinion that is strong enough to check it.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> USDOS 890g.4016 Assyrians/110, Knabenshue-Letter from Mr. Cumberland Concerning Assyrians, September 13, 1933

Regardless of the foundational reasons for the state-sponsored cleansing of the Assyrians from the Simele region, the intent and results of the event were genocidal. Though Michael Mann would disagree, as he believes “genocide requires numbers and intentionality,” I believe there is no doubt that this event must be addressed as genocide.<sup>267</sup> Arguing the numbers game is an endless black hole and essentially puts a price on human suffering, making it an elitist tool rather than a tool for ending shared suffering. Furthermore, since the Assyrian case is one of a numerical and political minority, it is essential to address the genocide as both physical and cultural.

Though the violence was directed toward the Assyrian levies and their families, those non-Nestorian Assyrians who identified as such began to feel the brunt of ethnic and religious animosity as well. Following 1933, Assyrian ethnic and cultural identity became undesirable. It was the events of Simele that indirectly caused the Chaldean and Jacobite Assyrians to distance themselves from their common heritage with the Nestorians. This contributed to the initial process of auto-cultural genocide among members of both churches, who claimed Assyrian descent and a shared ancestry with the Nestorians.

The physical genocide of Simele sparked a cultural genocide against the Assyrians. As illustrated in the letters by the Chaldean and Jacobite clergy, whether made by force or of their own volition, their anti-Assyrian statements echoed a fear of death, since as Gerald de Gaury stated, “it was enough for them to be Assyrians to be shot.”<sup>268</sup> This was made more pronounced by intra-religious enmity, which, as Hirmis Aboona has explained, had been fostered by a longstanding Catholic hostility toward the Church of

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<sup>267</sup> Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 140.

<sup>268</sup> de Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad*, 89.

the East for its “Nestorian heresy,” one of the many undying and ancient Christian animosities.<sup>269</sup>

It is evident that prior to these created divisions, both Iraqi and non-Iraqi Assyrians, such as Dr. Abraham K. Yoosuf, Yusuf Malek, Mar Eshai Sham‘un, Severius Afram Barsoum, and Petros Elia (among others), asserted their Assyrian identity in various ways. This identity included various Christian denominations, but that played a less important role than their umbrella identity of being part of the Assyrian people. Whether through books, magazines, articles, music, war, or politics, these Assyrians asserted their identity in the Middle East and abroad, an identity that linked a people living in different nation-states and of various Christian (and sometimes non-Christian, in the case of the Yezidis and Shakkaks) denominations. Even those Assyrians like Fahd, who worked as part of the communist movement, struggled against a tide of human rights violations and cultural suppression for all Iraqis.

This trend of cultural suppression—or, more adequate by cultural genocide—continues against the Assyrians today. Its perhaps harshest form, auto-cultural genocide,<sup>270</sup> has become more pronounced within the non-Nestorian religious communities. In the 1970s and 1980s, Jacobites identifying as Assyrians or giving their children ancient cultural Assyrian names were shunned and denied marriage, baptismal,

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<sup>269</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 279.

<sup>270</sup> The term autoethnocide/cultural genocide has been extrapolated from the term autogenocide which is used most frequently in reference to the atrocities committed by Khmer Rouge government of Cambodia against its own citizens. Essentially, autoethnocide or auto-cultural genocide is the cultural suppression, violent, social, economic or otherwise, of a people by its own government or authority; in this case church hierarchy.

and burial rights within the Syrian Orthodox church throughout Europe and the Middle East.<sup>271</sup>

State-sponsored violence during the following fifty-five year time span was made possible by the feigned ignorance of the “international community,” thus granting the Iraqi government continued exoneration for its awful actions.<sup>272</sup> The Iraqi government massacres against the Assyrians of Simele and over one hundred surrounding villages constituted a genocide from physical murder, gendercide, to ethnic cleansing.

Even in the highest circles there was talk of the ‘rid me of this turbulent priest’ order. ‘Let all the Assyrian men be killed,’ they cried, ‘but spare the women and children as the eyes of the world are on us. Let the Arabs and Kurds be raised against the Assyrians. Let trouble be stirred up in Syria against the treacherous French.’<sup>273</sup>

Regardless of whether or not the “highest circles” issued a final decree in such bold words (most bodies committing genocide rarely leaving a concrete paper trail), the actions taken by the Iraqi Army and the experience of the Assyrian civilians amount to the same.

[Since the men were being slaughtered,] the women began making the young boys look like girls so they would not be killed.<sup>274</sup>

This “talk” as mentioned by Stafford above was not simply words. They were indeed carried out by the army against the Assyrians of the region. Furthermore, the long term effects of this targeting planted the seeds for the cultural genocidal/ethnocidal and indeed auto-ethnocidal/cultural genocidal consequences that the Assyrians would come to face into the current day.

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<sup>271</sup> See Donabed and Mako, “Ethno-Cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians,” for a more thorough discussion of this issue.

<sup>272</sup> This feigned ignorance was due to power politics and imperial desires. The Simele massacres bear an uncanny resemblance to the Massacre at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota in December of 1890 when over 300 Lakota men, women, and children were killed by the United States 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry in the midst of the “taming of the West.” Such parallels between indigenous groups will be discussed further in the conclusion.

<sup>273</sup> Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 162.

<sup>274</sup> E.B. (Hejerke-Simele), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada



## Chapter 4: The Bloody Birth of the Iraqi Republic

Beginning with Soviet expansion into Central Asia and the Caucasus in 1921, Western powers had begun a policy of supporting highly centralized, nationalist, and militarist regimes in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. The power of the Iraqi king was failing, and a young Faisal II could not control the ambitions of his regent, the General Nur al-Din Maḥmud, who had declared martial law in November 1952 after widespread discord and protests by the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). Such discord resulted in eighteen executions, various parties banned, and over three hundred arrested.<sup>275</sup>

In 1955 Western powers signed the Baghdad Pact, or the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), in an attempt to keep Soviet influence in the Middle East at bay. This “great game” would shape the fate of the Assyrians and others who would become part of a Cold War battlefield. By February 1957, an opposition front had been established consisting of the National Democratic Party, the Istiqlal, the ICP, and the Ba‘th; according to Batatu, the Ba‘th had approximately three hundred members in Iraq in 1955.<sup>276</sup> It became apparent that the opposition had no true power with which to contest the regime. Instead, it operated as a clandestine organization of military officers who brought about the July 14, 1958, coup.

### ***The 1958 Coup and Renewed Internal Strife***

On July 14, 1958, the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy and the formation of the Republic of Iraq under Abdul Karim Qassim gave new hope to a frustrated population. Renewed promises of minority rights gave Iraq’s non-Arab population reason for

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<sup>275</sup> Phoebe Marr, *A Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985), 112-113.

<sup>276</sup> Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958*, 45.

celebration. The new republic recognized Kurdish “national rights” and allowed Kurdish nationalists to organize openly after many years in hiding. In April 1959 the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was given permission to publish the daily newspaper *Xebat* (Struggle), and in the same month Muṣṭafa Barzani along with 850 other Kurds returned from exile in the USSR aboard Soviet ships.<sup>277</sup>

Soon relations between the KDP and new Iraqi regime deteriorated. Yet while outwardly the KDP retained its anti-Qassim stance, some members within the KDP had agreed with “the ICP’s general view that Qassim should be supported because of his general commitment to anti-imperialism and his refusal to join the UAR [United Arab Republic].”<sup>278</sup> During this period of general discord, tensions flared up between the Barzani-led KDP and Qassim’s regime over what political concessions Iraqi Kurds would be granted.

On November 5, 1960, Barzani left once again for the Soviet Union to garner more support, with the aim of forcing Qassim’s government toward concessions. By the time he returned in January, fighting had erupted between the Barzanis and neighboring Bradost and Zebari Kurdish irregulars. In the summer of 1961, further fighting broke out between the Barzanis and their traditional Kurdish rivals, the Herki and the Surchi, who had been supported by the Iraqi government.<sup>279</sup> In September of the same year, Barzani forces occupied Zakho, causing the government to retaliate with air attacks on Barzan.

Assyrians played the minority role in this issue, since they had neither the backing nor numbers of the Kurdish struggle. Qassim was not their enemy, and initially the Assyrians remained sidelined within the struggle, until Muṣṭafa Barzani began a tour of

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 81.

the northern region attempting to recruit Assyrians to his cause prior to the outbreak of the war in 1961. The strongest in the Barwar region, Barzani's message to the Assyrians was straightforward: join the movement or yield weapons for the movement.<sup>280</sup> The Assyrians found themselves at a critical juncture: desiring freedom and self-governance, yet fearful of both the Iraqi regime and its Kurdish opponents.

The two options Barzani presented to the Assyrians had various implications: (1) they could support the Kurdish movement, which already had received backing from outside sources, and struggle alongside the Kurds for Assyrian rights, or (2) they could flee south to the major cities and assume the mantle of urbanization and thus Arabization. As a result of both options, a major demographic shifting of the Assyrians in north Iraq was under way, and regardless of the choice made, their final fibers of autonomy and connection to their ancestral lands would soon become detached.

The Assyrian region of 'Amēdīyāh, which preferred to remain neutral, "passed from Barzani to Zebari hands in autumn 1961, and the pro-government forces pillaged and destroyed numerous villages."<sup>281</sup> In the winter of 1961, Kurdish forces loyal to Barzani and those working for the Iraqi government remained in a stalemate. When Barzani's forces returned in December, they accused the Assyrians of treachery. In the village of Annūnē (Kani Masi), Barzani's men took revenge by killing every male above the age of fifteen whom they could capture, including two priests. Those who managed to

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<sup>280</sup> Hirmis Aboona, Interview, October 2007, Mississauga, Canada. It is of note to mention the tradition that keeping a weapon as a means of defense of one's family is a matter of personal honor. Relinquishing a weapon was tantamount to helplessness in the minds of the mountaineer Assyrians and also their Kurdish neighbours.

<sup>281</sup> Rubin, "Abd al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, Resistance and Revolt, 1958-63," 369.

escape fled to Turkey and eventually made their way to Baghdad.<sup>282</sup> By early January, approximately forty-five hundred Assyrians had fled their homes for other parts of Iraq.<sup>283</sup> Though the Assyrians were left with few options, some held strong to their previous autonomy and independence, further strengthened by the *bazikke*<sup>284</sup> tribal system, which strengthened intertribal relations during times of war.

In 1961 some five thousand Kurds and Assyrians attacked the Lolani and Zebari Kurdish tribes that were unwilling to accept Barzani's leadership of the armed resistance.<sup>285</sup> Since the Assyrians were not unified in their stance, being neither entirely for nor against the autonomist movement, they faced repercussions on all sides. One result was the razing and plundering of the Episcopal see of 'Amēdīyāh by Zebari Kurds, another retaliatory massacre of the Assyrians in the Barwar region in 1963.<sup>286</sup> Hence, the first martyr of the sometimes prematurely designated "Kurdish cause" was an Assyrian from Barwari Bala.<sup>287</sup>

Given the complexities surrounding the communal relations during this period, it is premature to assume that the autonomist movement was indeed a specifically ethno-national Kurdish struggle; it was perhaps something larger. Those Assyrians interviewed in this study reflected this issue, as some identified as Assyrian *pêşmerge* (opposition fighters). To these individuals, they fought as Assyrians for freedom from oppression alongside Kurds, rather than as supporters of a solely Kurdish cause.

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<sup>282</sup> United States National Archives, Baghdad to State, "Kurdish Revolt – Continued; Government Pretends Kurds Crushed; Reports Massacres in Christian Villages," 10 Jan. 1962, NA/RG59/787.00/1-1062

<sup>283</sup> Rubin, "Abd al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, Resistance and Revolt, 1958-63," 369-370.

<sup>284</sup> An associated tribal system which solidified relations between tribes in times of war in the Hakkâri region.

<sup>285</sup> Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt: 1961-1970* (London: Archon Books, 1973), 74-75.

<sup>286</sup> Jean-Pierre Valognes, *Vie et mort des Chrétiens d'Orient: Des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 763 and Dann, *Iraq Under Qassim*, 335.

<sup>287</sup> Hirmis Aboona, Interview, October 2007, Mississauga, Canada.

The Kurdish armed resistance for autonomy and recognition gained momentum, although the outbreak of military actions initially went unrecognized by the international community.<sup>288</sup> The fighting that had begun in 1961 in the northwest between the Barzanis and their tribal allies, and the Zebari tribe and their allies, initially resulted in victory for the Barzanis, routing their enemies far into Turkish territory. During this time, some Assyrians north of Mosul who found common cause with the Barzanis earned the deep respect of their Kurdish allies.<sup>289</sup> Later, ideological and political conflicts within the KDP, between Muṣṭafa Barzani and the political bureau of the KDP, led *Xebat* editor Ibrahim Aḥmed and future leader of the PUK Jalal Talabani to eventually split from the party in 1964.

Some Assyrians, ever distrustful of the Iraqi government, united with the Kurdish struggle, hoping that through resistance they too would be granted equal rights within Iraq.<sup>290</sup> They were joined by additional opposition groups, including—unofficially—members of the Iraqi Communist Party, which also had a large minority contingent including Assyrians.<sup>291</sup> General numbers given for the paramilitary fighters vary. Some estimate twenty thousand troops and forty thousand reserve fighters, although whether these were entirely made up of ethnic Kurds is uncertain.<sup>292</sup> More likely, they were a *mélange* of Kurds, Assyrians, and others working against the Iraqi regime, though the Kurds were certainly the majority. In July 1963, the USSR and Mongolia accused Iraq of

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<sup>288</sup> Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East*, 42.

<sup>289</sup> Dann, *Iraq Under Qassim*, 334-335.

<sup>290</sup> Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*, 210.

<sup>291</sup> In 1946 when Qadi Muhammad proclaimed an autonomous Kurdish region, the Mahabad republic in Iran, he was supported by Soviet troops in Azerbaijan. The USSR did not begin to officially support the Kurds and Barzani in Iraq until June of 1963.

Whether such Soviet support of the Kurds (through the ICP) extended to Iraq in the 1960s is uncertain. See Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958*, 29.

<sup>292</sup> Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East*, 43.

attempting to eliminate the Kurds and questioned the country's military actions as genocide under international law.<sup>293</sup> This claim, like the genocidal actions that took place in Simele and its surrounding villages in 1933, was largely ignored by the international community.

As a minority (ethnic, linguistic, and religious) within a minority (non-Arab peoples of Iraq), Assyrians lacked independent parties to protect their rights, since they had been subservient to British power under the levies. With the dissolution of the levies, the Assyrians looked toward the formation of cultural and political parties that would protect their interests. Auspiciously for the Assyrians, April 1961 saw the birth of Kheith Kheith Allap II under the name Khuyada w Kheirūtha Athōrayta (Assyrian Unity and Freedom). Their mission, according to one founder, was to “spread among our youth and students raising awareness about our rights and educating them about our history.”<sup>294</sup> Since the formation of such a party was outlawed, Baghdad and Kirkuk were dangerous places to be active. Though it succeeded among students and elites, the movement also took root among villagers in the Assyrian north. This progress would lead to some Assyrians in the remote northern regions to side with the anti-government forces.

Soon after the initial skirmishes in 1961, the Qassim's government began its redress of the Kurdish (though not Assyrian) question as military actions commenced again dissidents in the north. In many cases, the Iraqi military employed Zebari and Bradost<sup>295</sup> Kurds as militias against the opposition, both Assyrian and Kurdish. The

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<sup>293</sup> See Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq* (NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 68. Note that Ghareeb does not mention the issue of genocide. See UN Economic and Social Council report, A/5429 36<sup>th</sup> session, 11 July 1963, 109.

<sup>294</sup> Y.C. (Darbandoke-Baghdad), Interview, September 1, 2006, Chicago, Illinois. The initial *Kheith Kheith Allap* was started in Habbaniyya by Osta Mushe in the 1940s.

<sup>295</sup> Also spelled as Baradost and Biradost.

Zebari and Bradost irregulars forced many Assyrians, including those who had not found cause with “Barzani’s revolt,” to flee their villages, while the Zebari tribesmen ransacked, confiscated, and resettled them.<sup>296</sup>

As stated earlier, during the 1961 fighting between the Iraqi government and opposition factions, some Chaldeans and principally Nestorians living north of Mosul were sympathetic to the Barzani-led opposition to the government, while many Nestorians, Chaldeans, and Jacobites of the Mosul region remained on good terms with the Iraqi government and thus generally neutral during the armed resistance. Alqosh, however, long a bastion of the ICP under the leadership of native Toma Tomas, was sometimes in support of the opposition and at other times remained neutral, depending on ICP leanings.<sup>297</sup> Regardless of the tactical shifts, the town would become further subject to raids and massacres by both Kurdish forces loyal to Barzani, and the government militia forces, as power and politics fluxuated.<sup>298</sup> Though support of the Iraqi opposition remained on the individual level, many Assyrians north of Mosul sided with this anti-government cause because it defended ideas of freedom and equal rights.

Among those Assyrians fighting alongside Barzani’s faction was Hurmiz Malik Chikko.<sup>299</sup> Along with fifty of his followers, he joined the uprising in 1961 in hopes of promoting Assyrian cultural rights and in hopes of combating perceived injustices by the then-Iraqi regime.<sup>300</sup> Kheith Kheith Allap II was able ideologically to recruit Chikko to its cause. Chikko accepted on the condition of monetary support, which he hoped would

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<sup>296</sup> Dann, *Iraq Under Qassim*, 335. The Assyrian villages which were resettled by Zebari Kurds after 1961 are discussed in further detail in the following pages.

<sup>297</sup> Hirmis Aboona, Interview, October 2007, Mississauga, Canada

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> “Should I have to put up a statue in Kurdistan, I would make one for the martyr (Hurmiz Malik Chiko).” See Muṣṭafa Barzani website <http://barzani.org/main.php/barzani-as-a-leader-2.html>.

<sup>300</sup> Y. C. (Darbandoke-Baghdad), Interview, 1 September 2006, Chicago, Illinois

allow the Assyrian resistance to be independent of the Kurdish parties,<sup>301</sup> by having his men receive financial assistance directly rather than through the KDP. Chikko and his men fought against the Iraq regime for some time alongside the Kurds, earning him notoriety within Iraqi government circles for his battle prowess. Therefore, while he garnered fame among the Assyrian peasants, the Iraqi Ba’thists, much less forgiving of what they considered non-Arab transgressions since the death of Qassim in February 1963, followed Chikko closely.

Chikko increased his activities over the next two years until the Ba’thists, along with foreign aid, cornered the Assyrian military commander. He and six of his soldiers were surrounded by Syrian military and killed in the battle of Aloka on December 2, 1963.<sup>302</sup> Some Assyrians were among those Syrian military forces sent to stop Chikko. Most interviewees believe that the Syrian government was well aware of the irony in the plan to send fellow Assyrians from Syria to impede Chikko (without knowledge of who the target was), and did so at the behest of the Iraqi regime to strike at the heart of any Assyrian resistance. According to eyewitness accounts, when the Assyrians within the Syrian battalion realized whom they had helped murder, they were unable to hold their weapons, fell to their knees, and wept for their fallen brother and for their deed.<sup>303</sup>

Following Chikko’s death, Muṣṭafa Barzani requested the directors of Kheith Kheith Allap II to appoint a replacement. The leadership then spoke with Talia Shino, a former Iraqi Levies officer, who accepted under the condition that his kin be protected

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> D.T. (Blejanke), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>303</sup> Y.D. (Annūnē), and K.S. (Dūre), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada. Like many Yezidis and Christian Assyrians, Chikko fought against an oppressive regime during the armed autonomist movement. He was quite well respected by Muslims, Christians, and Yezidis that his body was taken and buried in the Yezidi village of Sharia and a monument was erected in his honor.



and cared for.<sup>304</sup> Soon after, one founder recounts, “I and four of my comrades, members of the politburo, were arrested by Iraqi government agents in September 1965, and the organization ceased to exist.”<sup>305</sup> The group members were subject to many types of physical and psychological torture during their imprisonment. Talia Shino himself was killed immediately following the destruction and dissolution of Kheith Kheith Allap II, in early 1966.<sup>306</sup>

The political proximity of certain Assyrian tribes to the Barzani clan in particular is noteworthy. A popular view held by many Assyrians suggests that the Barzanis were in fact former Nestorians who had converted to Islam in the nineteenth century.<sup>307</sup> Since the Assyrians and the Kurds have inhabited roughly the same geographic area for centuries, certain ties and similarities in culture are visible, especially between the Nestorian Assyrians of the Hakkâri and the Kurds of that region, which include a distinct tribal society that retained a strong degree of independence during Ottoman rule. These tribal affiliations later shifted to nationalist aspirations and sometimes to shared concerns within the communist movement in Iraq. Tribal politics among Kurds and Assyrians were not completely eliminated at this time, but rather shifted to include a sense of secularism, though still very much tied to tribal and religious structures.

Whether through the political maneuvers of Western powers or through active policies of assimilation and control in Iraq, the Assyrians further became a trivial

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<sup>304</sup> Y.C. (Darbandoke-Baghdad), Interview, 1 September 2006, Chicago, Illinois

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Robert Brenton Betts, *Christians in the Arab East* (Athens: Lycabettus Press, 1975), 179. This is also based on oral tradition of some Assyrians. Furthermore, most Assyrians who converted to Islam usually adopted the culture/ethnicity of the most numerous Muslim groups in the region whether Turkish, Kurdish, Persian, and Arab. Thus the discussion of Assyrian Muslims is usually a moot point since any converts to Islam (like many early Assyrian converts to Christianity) lost any sense of their ancestral identity. One exception is that of the Mhalmoye (Maḥallmiyeen) people living in Southeast Turkey in the Turabdin region, many of whom assert Assyrian descent.

minority. Another blow for the Assyrian community occurred in 1964, which saw the split of the Church of the East and the installation of a new patriarch in Baghdad for what was renamed the Ancient Church of the East. This move aimed to distinguish it from the Church of the East under the exiled patriarch Mar Eshai Sham'un, a constant vocal opponent of the Iraqi state. This division, though on the surface based on "calendar" issues, may have been an attempt by the post-Qassim Iraqi regime to control a rogue element of the Nestorians, mostly those of the Tiyari and Ashita tribes. The Iraqi regime had no immediate control over the exiled Mar Eshai Sham'un, who had been stirring up trouble among Assyrians in the West, particularly in the United States. As a political maneuver, the installation of a new patriarch or forced cleavage was tactically brilliant, giving the Iraq regime almost total control over all segments of Iraqi Assyrians through their highly influential religious leaders. This infiltration scheme was tantamount to the method enacted by the Iraqi government to co-opt many Kurdish tribal leaders to use against their brethren.

### ***Demographic Situation: Before and After 1961***

The period of internal fighting between the Iraqi government and Kurdish and Assyrian forces reshaped the region of northern Iraq. The demography of this region, which can easily be argued to be linked to some semblance of a continuously inhabited Assyrian homeland for over four thousand years,<sup>308</sup> became altered following the armed struggles between the Iraqi government forces and autonomist sympathizers. Most

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<sup>308</sup> See Simo Parpola, "Assyrians after Assyria" *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol. XIII No. 2, 1999 Parpola, "National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 2004, and Assyrian Identity in Ancient Times and Today, *Assyrian International News Agency*, [www.aina.org/articles/assyrianidentity.pdf](http://www.aina.org/articles/assyrianidentity.pdf) and [http://www.nineveh.com/parpola\\_eng.pdf](http://www.nineveh.com/parpola_eng.pdf), Accessed 18 February 2008.

Assyrian territory lost during this period was divided between those Kurds loyal to the regime in Baghdad and those who espoused the Kurdish autonomist armed resistance (alongside many Assyrians). Yet again, the minority factor played a major role in the further demographic shifting during the period following Simele. The Assyrians lost a greater percentage of their population to the diaspora and to internal displacement (an initial stage of urbanization), while in the case of Kurdish displacement most villages (which were not totally destroyed) were often reoccupied by other Kurds. As is evident from various interviews, both the Christian factor and ethno-linguistic factor served as a further distinction of this quantifiable (numerical) and qualifiable (political, economic, and social) minority within the autonomist movement at this time.

The following data illustrate the Assyrian villages affected by the autonomist uprising from 1961 to 1963, including notes on material and cultural significance, and population statistics where known and applicable. The villages and towns affected are listed below by district.

### **‘Amēdīyāh Region (including the Upper Barwar)**

**‘Amēdīyāh** (Latitude: 37°5'36" N, Longitude: 43°29'14" E)

The town, now city, of ‘Amēdīyāh is located east of the Barwari mountain range, approximately fifty miles north of Mosul. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* reports approximately 1,820 Jewish inhabitants as late as the 1930s.<sup>309</sup> In 1835–1836, Syriac sources tell the tale of the besieging of ‘Amēdīyāh for seven years by

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<sup>309</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., s.v., “‘Amēdīyāh.”

Kurdish chief Mira Kora.<sup>310</sup> There were three Catholic families reported in 1850.<sup>311</sup> There once existed an old church dedicated to Mar Yozadek, an Assyrian Christian saint, though today it remains in ruins.<sup>312</sup> The city's Dominican convent was destroyed and rebuilt more than once.<sup>313</sup> 'Amēdīyāh is generally referred to as the site of the beginning of the Kurdish autonomist struggle. Here, the Barzanis fought the Iraqi Army, supported by the Zebari, Surchi, Bradost, and Herki Kurdish tribes.<sup>314</sup> Though some Assyrians fought alongside Kurdish guerillas in Barwar—including the first casualty in the struggle, Ethniel Shleimon of Dūre village—many remained neutral. Following consistent fighting between the Barzani autonomists and the pro-government forces from October through the winter of 1961, many of those neutral Assyrians began to flee. By January of 1962, forty-five hundred Assyrians were forced to flee to other parts of Iraq.<sup>315</sup>

**Havintka** (Latitude: 37°2'23" N, Longitude: 43°27'43" E)

Little is known of Havintka (also spelled Hawintka) before the settlement of Nestorian refugees of the Lower Tiyari tribe in 1920.<sup>316</sup> In 1957 there were approximately sixty-three people in the village. Havintka was abandoned in 1961.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Nickname meaning "the blind prince," Mir Kor, originally Muhammad Pasha, was Kurdish chief of the Rawanduz region. See Harrak, "Northern Mesopotamia in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Syriac Annalistic Source," *Le Muséon: Revue D'Études Orientales*, Tome 119 – Fasc.3-4, (Louvain: 2006), 298-301.

<sup>311</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. II, 174.

<sup>312</sup> Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians in Eastern Turkey and Iran*, 63.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>314</sup> American Consulate in Tabriz to Sec. of State, 19 Oct 1961, NA/RG59/787.00/10-1961; Tabriz to Secretary of State, 25 Oct 1961, NA/RG59/787.00/10-2561; Tabriz to Sec. of State, 1 Nov 1961, NA/RG59/787.00/10-161.

<sup>315</sup> Rubin, "Abd al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, Resistance and Revolt, 1958-63," 369-370.

<sup>316</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>317</sup> C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

### ‘Aqra, Nahla, and Lower Barwar Region

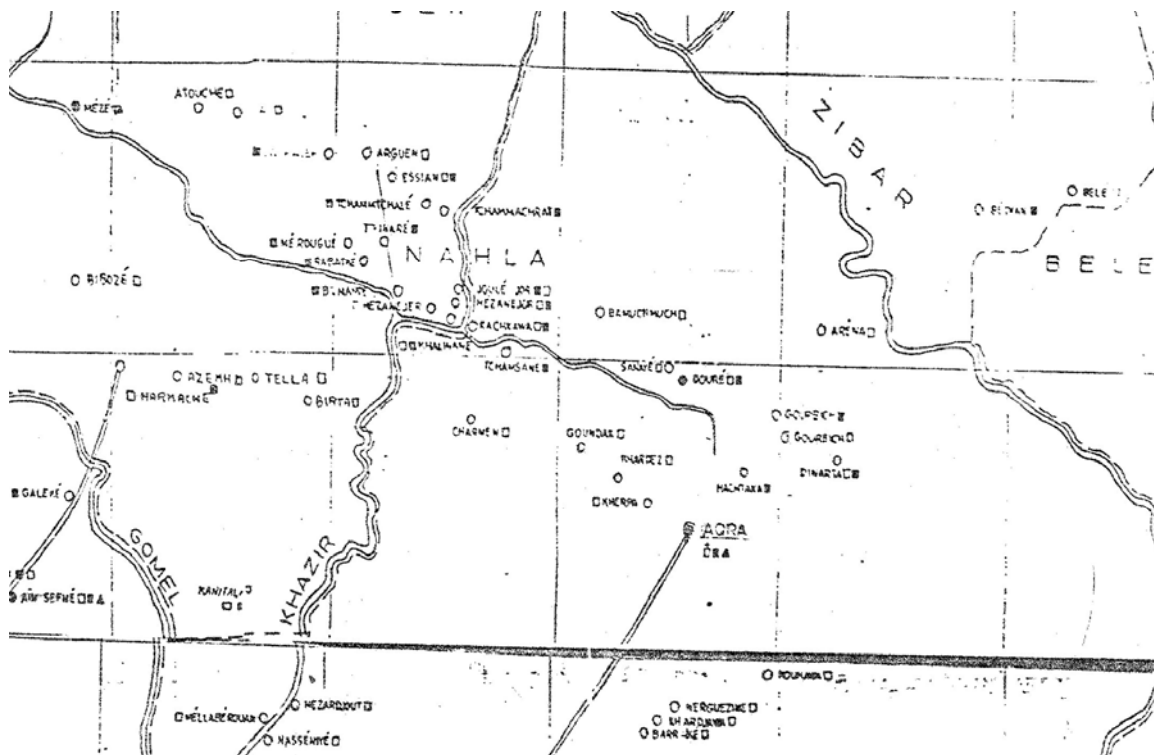


Figure 4 Omez map showing ‘Aqra and Nahla regions.

‘Aqra (Latitude: 36°45’33” N, Longitude: 43°53’38” E)

‘Aqra’s etymology may trace to the Aramaic meaning, “root,” perhaps, in the case of the city, as the root or foot of the mountain; the city is mentioned in Neo-Assyrian sources as Kurbail.<sup>318</sup> Many of its original inhabitants were Assyrian Christians and Jews. Its people were known artisans as weavers and jewelers. Prior to the fourteenth century, the region was part of the diocese of Margā and under the jurisdiction of the Church of the East’s metropolitan see of Adiabene.<sup>319</sup> Wilmshurst notes that “most villages in the ‘Aqra region were traditionalist

<sup>318</sup> Simo Parpola and Michael Porter, *The Helsinki Atlas of the Near East in the Neo-Assyrian Period* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Corpus Text Project, 2001), 19.

<sup>319</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 225-235.

[Nestorian] at the beginning of the nineteenth century.”<sup>320</sup> Dominican protheletyzing during the mid-1800s caused a drastic decline in the Nestorian community and a surge among Catholic converts. By 1913 the Chaldean Church in the ‘Aqra district consisted of nineteen villages, ten churches, sixteen priests, and approximately 2,390 people.<sup>321</sup> The town itself contained at least 250 Chaldean families with two priests, a church, and a school. The churches of Mart Maryam and Mar Gewargis illustrated the combined Chaldean, Jacobite, Nestorian character of the region. Persons of Jewish faith left Iraq between 1948 and 1949, whereas the Christians began their exodus after 1961 as a result of the pressure against them by the Iraqi authorities and irregular Kurdish forces. ‘Aqra’s diocese closed after its population had left the town. Nearby are the remnants of the Mar Quryaqos Monastery, overlooking the Assyrian village of Birta, which is located twenty kilometers from ‘Aqra. In the period of the timeline covered by this research, most of the families of ‘Aqra became internally or externally displaced.

### **Ba-Mishmish**

Also known as Beth Shimsha or “House of the Sun,” this village is located in the Nahla region northwest of Dawrīye. It is known from a book of hymns and benedictions copied there by a priest named Bahrīn around 1741.<sup>322</sup> In 1850 it

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 104 & 152.

<sup>321</sup> Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 362. Wilmshurst estimates are based on numbers extracted from the work of Joseph Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” *Annuaire Pontifical Catholique* 1914 (Paris, 1913), 499 and others.

<sup>322</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 305-306.

was home to fifteen Assyrian families and one active church.<sup>323</sup> Following the increase in Catholic missions in the region, in 1913 there were 150 converts to Catholicism (Chaldeans) with a church and chapel.<sup>324</sup> By 1918 there were forty-nine Assyrians (twelve households) left in total, with a Kurdish majority. The last Assyrians left the village in 1961 during Kurdish and Iraqi government fighting, and since that time, the church of Mart Maryam and the chapel to Mar Youḥannan have remained in a state of ruin. The village was also home to a shrine to Assyrian Saint Mar Yawsep.<sup>325</sup>

### **Barāk**

Barāk, also spelled Barrāke, located southwest of Kharjawa and known for its tobacco, was once settled by Assyrians. Following attacks on the village in 1961, which saw the destruction of the church of Mart Maryam, its Assyrian inhabitants fled, and Kurds subsequently resettled it.<sup>326</sup>

### **Dawrīye**

Dawrīye, also referred to as Dūre, has long been an Assyrian settlement in the Nahla or Nahla d’Malka region of ‘Aqra. Early on, Thomas of Margā mentions it in his section concerning Youḥannann of Dēlūm,<sup>327</sup> who worked as keeper of a monastery situated in the village.<sup>328</sup> In 1913 it was home to fifty Chaldeans, with

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<sup>323</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. II, 392.

<sup>324</sup> Joseph Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 499. Tfinkdji fails to mention the chapel in his research notes.

<sup>325</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>326</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 269.

<sup>327</sup> Mentioned also in the study by Hoffmann in *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer*, (Leipzig: 1880, reprinted Kraus: 1966), 207.

<sup>328</sup> E.A. Wallis Budge, *Thomas of Marga, Book of Governors*, Vol. II (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1893), 226.

a priest serving one church.<sup>329</sup> By 1918 there were only two families (eleven people) left in the village. In 1922, Nestorian refugees from Lower Tiyyari resettled Dawrīye, and by 1957 the village population totaled 134. Zebari Kurdish irregulars employed by the government surrounded the village in 1961 and besieged it for three months. Four villagers were killed, including Yacoub and Ishaq Yalda, and Khoshaba Kako, as well as a fourteen-year-old girl. Those thirty-five families who survived fled to Mosul and ‘Aqra following the siege and killings.<sup>330</sup> The church of Mart Shmuni, in the center of the upper part of the old village, was damaged.<sup>331</sup> Not much is known of the village following the destruction visited upon it in the early 1960s.

### **Dinārta**

According to a League of Nations report, in 1933 Dinārta, or Dinārta d’Nahla, was home to 113 Assyrians.<sup>332</sup> The village was mixed Assyrian-Kurdish before its Assyrian inhabitants finally abandoned it. In 1961 the remaining Assyrians fled, never to return, following attacks from both pro-government militia and neighboring tribes.<sup>333</sup>

### **Dodi Masih**

Dodi Masih retains the name of the alleged owner of the village lands, Masih Agha. It is also referred to as Upper Dodi or by its ancient name, Beth Nura (perhaps Beth Nuhra). In 1913 there were eighty Assyrians in the village, but by

<sup>329</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 499.

<sup>330</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 12.

<sup>331</sup> Fredrick Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*, 211.

<sup>332</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 9.

<sup>333</sup> C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interviews, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada



1918 their number had decreased to only twenty-one (three families), due to conflicts with the Herki tribe of the Kurdish origin.<sup>334</sup> In 1957 the Assyrian population numbered seventy-three. The village was forcibly abandoned in 1961, and its church Mar Gewargis destroyed.<sup>335</sup>

### **Girbish**

Girbish (spelled also as Garbesh and Garbish), an old settlement, was divided into upper and lower districts. Just prior to World War I, Girbish had a mostly Catholic (Chaldean) makeup, alongside a Nestorian contingent. In 1922 it was settled by Nestorians from Lower Tiyari.<sup>336</sup> By 1957 the village population totaled 374, with 182 in Upper Girbish and 192 in Lower Girbish. In 1961 Zebari Kurdish irregulars surrounded and besieged the village for months. At this time, the 210 families were forced to flee their approximately seventy-five houses, which were in turn settled by the very same besieging Zebaris. The church of Mart Shmuni (rebuilt in 1949 over its older ruins) was also left in disrepair.<sup>337</sup>

### **Khardis** (Latitude: 36°47'13" N, Longitude: 43°49'29" E)

Khardis, or Khardas, is mentioned in a 1698 Syriac manuscript that attests to its continued settlement and importance. A copy of the *Hudra*<sup>338</sup> was penned in the village not long after in 1715.<sup>339</sup> In linear order, from northwest to southeast of Khinnis/Bavian, the village lies fifth following Sharmin, Shush, Nerem, and Sheikhi, and is followed by Resha and finally Kherpa.<sup>340</sup> In 1913 it was home to

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<sup>334</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>335</sup> C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interviews, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Major liturgical work used by the Church of the East.

<sup>339</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 251.

<sup>340</sup> Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer*, 223-224.

120 Catholics, served by a priest and a single chapel.<sup>341</sup> By 1918 the Assyrian population of Khardis had decreased to fifty-six people (ten families). Khardis suffered damage, as did the local churches dedicated to Mart Maryam and another to Mart Shmuni. Its population fled when it was attacked by Kurdish forces in 1961.<sup>342</sup> Villagers have also mentioned a monastery built inside a cavern in the valley behind the village.<sup>343</sup>

**Kharjawa** (Latitude: 37°5'20" N, Longitude: 43°22'22" E)

In 1918 there were thirty households (142 people) in the village of Kharjawa (Ḥarġāwa), with a mud-brick church dedicated to Mar Youḥannan (Saint John the Baptist). This church was rebuilt with stone in 1952. There was also a shrine to Mar Pius. Though Wilmshurst believes the village to have a Chaldean contingent at the end of the nineteenth century, Tfinkdji does not mention it in his 1913 study.<sup>344</sup> Wilmshurst does however mention yet another church dedicated to Mar Yawsep.<sup>345</sup> Kharjawa's entire Assyrian population was forced to flee during the infighting in 1961.

**Khelafta** (Latitude: 37°06'47" N, Longitude: 42°46'42" E)

Khelafta, also Khaleptha or Beth Ḥlāpe, is mentioned in Thomas of Margā's *Book of Governors* and was located in the Sapsāpā district, just west of the 'Aqra region.<sup>346</sup> It is mentioned as being attacked by a certain 'Amran bar-Muḥammad hailing from Bebōze, who also laid waste to Birta, Shush, Kherpa, and other

<sup>341</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 499.

<sup>342</sup> C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada and AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>343</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>344</sup> Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 158-161.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>346</sup> Budge, *Thomas of Margā, Book of Governors*, Vol. II, 296-297.

villages in the Shapshapa region.<sup>347</sup> A few miles south of Khelafta are the ruins of the ancient monastery of Rabban Bar ‘Edta. The village was destroyed in 1961 and resettled by its attackers.<sup>348</sup>

**Kherpa** (Latitude: 36°46’07’’ N, Longitude: 43°52’08’’ E)

Kherpa, also written Herpā and Kharpa, was once an Assyrian settlement and has an archaeological mound referred to as *tella d’malka*, “the king’s hill.” In 1868 it was attacked by Zebari Kurdish irregulars, and at the time it had four priests.<sup>349</sup> In 1913, according to Tfinkdji, the settlement was home to two hundred Catholics, with a priest, church, and school, but by 1918 its population had decreased to 114 people (twenty-one families).<sup>350</sup> The village was abandoned in 1961 and seized by Zebari Kurd irregulars employed by the government.<sup>351</sup> The church of Mart Maryam (restored in 1952) was damaged, and the chapel of Mar Youḥannan, built around a cave shrine in 1918, suffered with the destruction of the village.

**Nahawa** (Latitude: 36°42’02’’ N, Longitude: 43°58’26’’ E)

Located in the ‘Aqra region and sub-district of Girdasin, Nahawa (also Nūhāwā or Nūwābā) is an important Assyrian settlement. Wilmshurst mentions Nahawa as the location where three manuscripts were copied during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>352</sup> In 1913 Nahawa was home to 150 Chaldean residents, with one priest serving one church.<sup>353</sup> Many had originated in the Urmia region of Iran and immigrated in the late eighteenth century. The church of Mart Maryam and a

<sup>347</sup> Ibid, 450-452.

<sup>348</sup> C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interviews, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada and AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>349</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 249-250.

<sup>350</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 499.

<sup>351</sup> C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada and AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>352</sup> Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 161. The manuscripts can be found in MSS ‘Aqra (Voste) 17 and ‘Aqra (Habbi) 53 and 91.

<sup>353</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 499.

shrine to Mar Pius were severely damaged during the 1961–1963 period, when the entire village population was forced into other regions of Iraq.<sup>354</sup>

**Nerem** (Latitude: 37°2'7" N, Longitude: 43°17'18" E)

Nerem, or Nerem d-Ra'awatha, called Badger Gundik or Gündük (Kurdish for “village”), was an Assyrian village of great importance as the location of a Church of the East bishopric in the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, Bishop Mar Awrahem (Awraha) had originally been of the Chaldean religious affiliation, but reportedly returned to Nestorianism (Church of the East) around that time.<sup>355</sup> In 1850 Nerem was home to twelve Nestorian families served by a priest and one church.<sup>356</sup> By 1913 there were over one hundred Chaldeans, with a single priest and church.<sup>357</sup> The number who remained faithful to the Mar Shem‘on patriarchal line of the Church of the East at that time remains unknown. By 1918 the Assyrian population of Nerem had decreased to sixty-six people (fourteen families), who made up about half the population of the village, along with Kurds and a small number of adherents of Judaism with their own synagogue. These Jews left during the expulsion of 1949 to 1951, and the Christians were forced out of Nerem in 1961 by government militia forces.<sup>358</sup> The ancient monastery of Mar ‘Abdisho‘ is located less than one mile northwest of Nerem in the direction of Shush. Though the monastery’s original date of construction is unknown, it is mentioned in a Syriac manuscript dating to 1610. The monastery, with grottos

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<sup>354</sup> K.S. (Düre), D.T. (Blejanke), Z.Y. (Annünē), Y.D. (Annünē), Y.G. (Bebede), Interviews, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>355</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 254.

<sup>356</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 392.

<sup>357</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 499.

<sup>358</sup> C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada and AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

dedicated to Ambusk and Mar Youḥannan, was partially destroyed and fell into ruin following the opposition movement and civil wars from 1961 to 1963. The grotto of Mar Youḥannan (Gippa d'Mar Youḥannan) is famed for possessing an ancient wall-relief. As Badger recounts:

To the left of the cave we discovered the object of our search, viz. a rock tablet bearing on its surface the representation of a man in the act of spearing a wild sheep or ibex, and beneath this a procession of six figures standing in various attitudes. The style is not unlike that of the sculptures dug up at Nimrod, but the costume is different, and may be found to belong to a distinct age and people.<sup>359</sup>

According to villagers, the early monastery of Mar Quprios is also located in the vicinity, which is likely the case, since a monk by the name Cyprian, disciple of Narsai, is extensively mentioned by Thomas of Margā as living in the region and performing various deeds of note.<sup>360</sup>

#### **Ras al-‘Ain** (Latitude: 36°46'34" N, Longitude: 43°50'59" E)

Ras al-‘Ain was known as Rēš-ēni during the Neo-Assyrian period and as Resh ‘Aina or Resha in Syriac sources.<sup>361</sup> The village, situated close to Khelafta, is mentioned in Thomas of Margā's *Book of Governors*. In 1865 there were four households in the village, which had been converted to Catholicism through Dominican persuasion. In 1918 it was home to twenty-three Assyrians (five families). Though Fiey mentions the lack of a Christian population from 1945 to 1955, some families resided in the area and regularly attempted to rebuild their property until 1961, when those inhabitants were forcibly expelled most likely by pro-government militia.

<sup>359</sup> According to AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004* it may be of interest to mention the relief was dynamited in the past 5 years by treasure hunters. Also mentioned in Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 390. See also Wahbi, "The Rock Sculptures in Gunduk Cave", *Sumer*, IV (1948).

<sup>360</sup> Budge, *Thomas of Marga, Book of Governors*, Vol. II, 591-622.

<sup>361</sup> Parpola, *The Helsinki Atlas of the Near East in the Neo-Assyrian Period*. 15.

**Safra Zor** (Latitude: 36°59'27" N, Longitude: 43°54'15" E)

Safra Zor, or Sifra, was home to thirty-five Assyrians in 1933.<sup>362</sup> Its population was forced to flee in 1961 during the civil war.<sup>363</sup>

**Sharmin** (Latitude: 36°48'07" N, Longitude: 43°43'38" E)

Sharmin, or Shalmath, is mentioned extensively by Thomas of Margā since the eighth century, and once housed a thirteenth-century manuscript at one of its three churches.<sup>364</sup> At one time it was home to nearly one thousand Assyrians. In 1850 Badger counted thirteen Nestorian families, served by two priests, and in 1913 there were 250 villagers with a priest and a school.<sup>365</sup> It is unknown how many of Sharmin's inhabitants remained faithful to the Church of the East (Nestorian) at that time. By 1918 only sixteen Assyrian families (sixty-two people) were left in Sharmin, but their numbers were replenished by refugees from Lower Tiyari in the 1920s. In 1961 (probably just prior to the armed resistance), Fiey mentions ninety-six Chaldeans and a few Kurdish families, with a Christian village chief. The last Assyrians were forced out of Sharmin in the following year by Zebari Kurds who resettled the village. The church of Mar Aḥḥa survived for at least a few years, as Fiey describes it as relatively intact.<sup>366</sup> Fiey briefly mentioned two "other" churches and suggested that the ruins of one were visible during his research and that the second became the village mosque following the events of

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<sup>362</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>363</sup> C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interviews, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada and AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>364</sup> Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 160.

<sup>365</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 499 and Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 262.

<sup>366</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 262.

1961.<sup>367</sup> Mar Sawa (previously unnamed) and a second yet unknown church were no longer visible structures.<sup>368</sup>

**Shush** (Latitude: 36°48'09" N, Longitude: 43°45'36" E)

Shush, also known as Shushan and Bā Šōš, is mentioned extensively by Fiey in *Assyrie Chrétienne*. Believed to have been continuously inhabited from at least 720 onward, Shush was the site of a school built by Rabban Babai.<sup>369</sup> In 1850 it was home to three Christian families and more than two hundred Aramaic-speaking Jewish families.<sup>370</sup> Fiey also mentions that, circa 1861, the then-owners of much of the valley were the family of ‘Aḥmed Mšihāyā or Aḥmed the Christian, an indication of the possible forced conversion of many Christians of Shush to Islam.<sup>371</sup> The Assyrian Christian population, however, did increase over the decades. The fortified castle of Shush was used as a protective fortress in 1914 during the period of massacres against the Assyrians, Greeks, and others in the fading Ottoman Empire. The Jews of the settlement fled between 1949 and 1951 during their exodus from Iraq, and then it was abandoned by its Christian inhabitants in 1961 when attacked by pro-government militia.<sup>372</sup>

**Sian** (Latitude: 36°50'11" N, Longitude: 43°52'11" E)

Sian, is also known as Sanāyā or Sanāyā d’Nahlā. In 1913 lower Sanāyā had approximately one hundred Chaldeans, with one church served by a priest.<sup>373</sup> By

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid, 263.

<sup>368</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>369</sup> Budge, *Thomas of Marga, Book of Governors*, Vol. II, 296.

<sup>370</sup> Fiey believes Badger to have exaggerated the Jewish population greatly which is highly probable. See Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 259, and Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 389.

<sup>371</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 258.

<sup>372</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>373</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 499.

1918 there were only thirty-nine people (four households) left in Lower Sanāyā. Both Upper and Lower Sanāyā were originally inhabited by Assyrians, but it is unclear when the majority fled or were killed. The last surviving Assyrians fled the village in 1961. The churches of Mar Gewargis and the fifth-century church of Mar Zaya were left in ruins.<sup>374</sup>

### **Arbil Region**

**Batase** (Latitude: 36°33'47" N, Longitude: 44°19'60" E)

The sister village of Harīr, Batase was resettled by Nestorians mostly from the Nochiya region after World War I. Prior to its destruction, there were thirty Assyrian households in Batase, with the ancient church of Mar Stephanos as their religious center. Though not built by its then-resident Assyrians, the old Nestorian church (Church of the East) is testament to previous Assyrian presence in the region. Its Assyrian villagers were attacked and forced out in 1963 by pro-government Kurdish forces who then resettled the area.<sup>375</sup> Many Assyrians fled to the major cities or Iran during this time, but none returned.

### **Darbandoke**

Most of the Christian inhabitants of Darbandoke (in Kurdish, “enclosed place”) are of the Nochiya tribe of Nestorian origin, though some Christians of other regions dwelled there as well alongside a Kurdish population. The village is the birthplace of the current patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, Mar Dinkha IV, born in September 1935. It is also the birthplace of physicist and former

<sup>374</sup> K.S. (Dūre), D.T. (Blejanke), Z.Y. (Annūnē), Y.D. (Annūnē), Y.G. (Bebede), Interviews, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>375</sup> C.C. (Darbandoke), Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 42.



secretary general of the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) Emanuel Kamber, PhD. According to most interviewees, most Assyrians lived in relative peace in the region prior to the uprising in the early 1960s. In 1963, the entire village's Assyrian population either fled or was killed. Of those killed, five names are known: Shamoun, Hajji, Qusha, Yoab, and Iktu, who was killed in a government air raid.<sup>376</sup> Approximately fifteen Assyrian households and the church of Mar Quryaqos were annihilated in 1963. All the Assyrians who survived fled the region never to return. The Assyrian quarter of the village was resettled by pro-government Kurds.<sup>377</sup>

### **Diyana** (Latitude: 36°39'39" N, Longitude: 44°33'1" E)

Diyana was built by Nestorian-Assyrian levy officers and their families under the British administration. Prior to its destruction in 1963, Diyana contained over 125 Assyrian households and the following churches: Mar Quryaqos, two churches sacred to Mar Gewargis, and two older churches, Mart Maryam and Mar Stephanos.<sup>378</sup> Its entire Assyrian population fled in 1963 while air and ground forces attacked the region. Though some Assyrians returned, their homecoming was short-lived, as the village was attacked again in 1974, when its remaining Assyrians inhabitants fled.<sup>379</sup>

### **Hanare**

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<sup>376</sup> B.B., (Harīr), Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> P.W. (Diyana), Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>379</sup> Though Diyana was destroyed again in 1974, very little information could be found concerning that period, making its inclusion in this chapter more proper.

Hanare, or Henare, was home to twelve Assyrian households prior to its destruction in 1963. The village and its Assyrian inhabitants encountered the same fate as those of Batase, Harīr, Darbandoke, Diyana, and Kalate.<sup>380</sup>

**Harīr** (Latitude: 36°33'16" N, Longitude: 44°21'14" E)

Harir village was rebuilt by Nestorians from Hakkāri following World War I. Included in the building process was the church of Mar Yohanna. Prior to its destruction in 1963, the total number of Assyrian households numbered above ninety.<sup>381</sup> Little else is known of the village, although according to a report from Kurdish Center for Human Rights on February 18, 2006, the Kurdistan Regional Government minister of human rights discussed the uncovering of a mass grave in which some thirty-seven were identified as Assyrians originally from the village of Harīr.<sup>382</sup>

**Hawdian** (Latitude: 36°41'51" N, Longitude: 44°28'28" E)

Hawdian, or Havdian, had been settled by Assyrians for many years. The village is famous for its immediate proximity to the Shanidar Cave in northeastern Iraq. Between 1957 and 1961 Ralph Solecki and a team from Columbia University excavated the site, unearthing the first adult Neanderthal skeletons in Iraq; the remains were dated between 80,000 and 60,000 years BP. Also referred to as Zawi Chemi Shanidar, or to Assyrians as Gippa d'Hawdian (the cave of

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<sup>380</sup> P.W., C.C., I.Y., and B.B., Interviews, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 42.

<sup>381</sup> B.B. (Harīr), Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>382</sup> Assyrian International News Agency (AINA), *Kurdish Minister Has No Objection to Assyrian Christian Administrative Area*, posted 2-26-2006, Accessed 2008-02-22 12:06:09, <http://www.aina.org/news/20060225231434.htm>

Hawdian), the cave was mentioned extensively by the British road engineer A. M. Hamilton in the early 1930s. Hamilton questioned an Assyrian officer, Yacu Ismail, about what he knew of the cave's history. The Assyrian replied:

You have heard little of what is said to be in the Baradost cave, sir, but evidently you have not heard of the mill that grinds flour for ever and never stops, yet with no man or woman to feed it; you have not heard of the fire that burns eternally, nor of the secret vault that holds the treasure of the ancient kings of Assyria, looted from enemies when ours was the mightiest nation on earth, thousands of years ago, when men in Europe and in England were mere savages in the forests. I am a descendent of those ancient kings! The remnant of our nation that survived the war is now wandering homeless in Iraq. Some of us serve you as British soldiers. Yet once all these lands were ours, as the carvings at Batas, at Amadiyah and Nineveh must prove to you.<sup>383</sup>

Of the findings from the excavations, the various "Christian ware" ceramics, along with a metal medallion from Constantinople dated AD 500 and a shallow stone-cut pool carved (most probably) by Christian monks, speak to the history of a continuous Christian settlement. The name Shanidar may partially reflect the Aramaic-Syriac term *deyra* (monastery), which would lend further evidence to the site as a Christian settlement.<sup>384</sup> The church of Mar Oraha (Abraham) in Hawdian was destroyed along with the rest of the village and its twenty Assyrian households in 1963 by pro-government Kurdish militia.<sup>385</sup>

### **Kalate**

The village was home to ten Assyrian households prior to its destruction in 1963 by pro-government Kurdish forces. The village's Assyrian inhabitants were forced to flee during the infighting. Though none returned, their homes were confiscated and resettled by pro-government militia.<sup>386</sup> No major cultural or religious structures are mentioned concerning Kalate.

<sup>383</sup> Hamilton, *Road Through Kurdistan*, 158-159.

<sup>384</sup> Ralph Solecki, *Shanidar: The First Flower People* (NY: Knopf, 1971), 73-75.

<sup>385</sup> P.W., C.C., I.Y., and, B.B., Interviews, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

## Dohuk Region

### Cham-Kare

Little is known of Cham-Kare's early settlement other than the 1922 settlement of Nestorians from Lower Tiyyari. In 1933 the villagers moved to another nearby Assyrian village, Gund Kosa, where they repelled various attacks by Baqr Sidqi and the Iraqi army. Most of the remaining villagers fled or were killed around 1961.<sup>387</sup>

### Kora-Dere (Latitude: 36°52'14" N, Longitude: 43°10'43" E)

Though destroyed in 1961, the etymology of the Kora-Dere, which contains the Aramaic-Syriac term *deyra*, suggests it to be the location of a monastery complex.<sup>388</sup>

### Mangesh (town) (Latitude: 37°02'11" N, Longitude: 43°05'36" E)

Mangesh has been the home of famous Assyrian figures since the 1950s, such as Francis Yousif Shabo (of the Assyrian Democratic Movement) and Lazar Mikhael (of the ICP), who were both assassinated in 1993. In 1850 there were 150 families, served by three priests. In 1913 there were eleven hundred Chaldeans, with four priests serving one church and a school.<sup>389</sup> By 1920 the number of households had risen to 230 and in 1947 the population numbered 1,195. In 1961 there were six hundred families in Mangesh, but many left due to the attacks on the village by both Barzani-led peshmerga and Iraqi government infighting, so that

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>389</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

by 1965 the population had shrunk to 959 people. In 1970 there were 1,390 people in Mangesh.<sup>390</sup> The town's religious structures include a church dedicated to Mar Gewargis, which includes a manuscript library, and a shrine to Mart Shmuni. It is worth noting that from 1950 to 1997 (when six young men were killed), over forty individuals from Mangesh have been assassinated, including the mayor Rayis Hanna in the late 1950s.

**Masike** (Latitude: 36°58'48" N, Longitude: 42°18'04" E)

Masike was an Assyrian village settled in 1920 by refugees from Baz in the Hakkâri Mountains. In 1957 its population totaled 105, but it was abandoned in 1961 when its inhabitants faced an onslaught from government forces.<sup>391</sup>

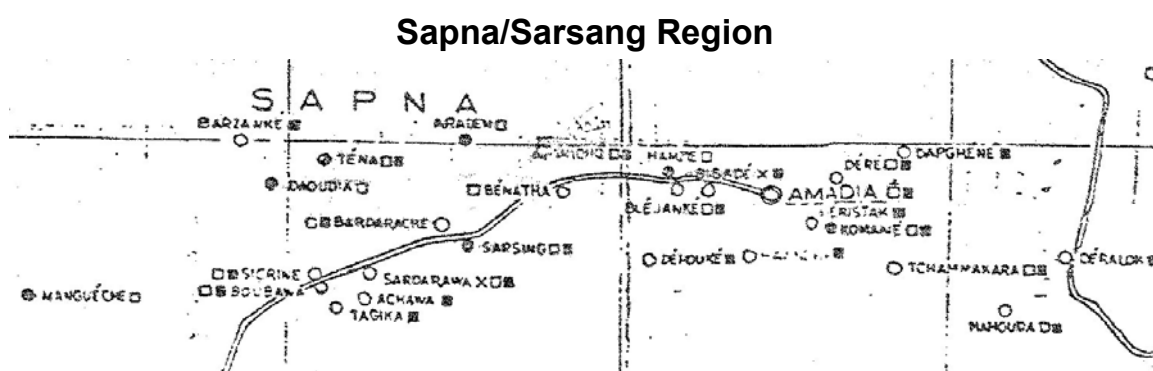


Figure 5 Omez map showing villages in the Sapna/Sarsang region

**Ashawa** (Latitude: 37°01'31" N, Longitude: 43°17'23" E)

Though it has historical Assyrian ties, Ashawa, located in the Sarsang sub-district, was settled most recently by Nestorian refugees from Hakkâri in the 1920s.<sup>392</sup>

According to the 1957 census its population stood at 619 Assyrians. Though taken

<sup>390</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 22.

<sup>391</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 3.

<sup>392</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

and resettled by pro-government Kurdish irregulars during the uprising in 1961, Ashawa was later bulldozed by the Ba'ath regime, and a presidential palace was erected on the former Assyrian lands.<sup>393</sup>

**Badarrash** (Latitude: 37°2'43" N, Longitude: 43°20'1" E)

Badarrash is located about one mile north of Sarsang. It was settled by Nestorian and Chaldean refugees of the Baz tribe in the 1920s. Mar Gewargis Chaldean Church built in 1925, suffered ruination during the village raiding in 1961, which also destroyed all the farms and apple orchards. Adherents of both the Church of the East (Nestorian Church) and the Chaldean Church occupied the village until many fled under threat during the civil war. Badarrash was home to thirty households in 1961.<sup>394</sup> Many returned to rebuild throughout the years, despite continued threats.

**Sarsang** (Latitude: 36°02'07" N, Longitude: 43°20'56" E)

The city of Sarsang (also spelled Sarseng and Sarsank) was most recently settled by one hundred families (forty households) of Nestorian refugees from the Tiyyari tribe in 1922.<sup>395</sup> In 1933 the population shrank to about 150. A church dedicated to Mar Mattay was built in 1955 for the Christians in Sarsang. It is also a popular tourist destination for people from throughout Iraq. In 1961 the town numbered 150 families (eighty households), totaling seven hundred people.<sup>396</sup> Most of the Assyrian lands began to be confiscated in 1972 and 1973 by pro-Barzani Kurdish

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<sup>393</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*, Eshoo, Majed, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 11.

<sup>394</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 9, D.T. (Blejanke), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>395</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>396</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 8.

villagers from Upper Arāden and Kani-Chinarke.<sup>397</sup> Many Assyrians fled after threats and attacks during that period.

### Şawura

Şawura (sometimes Şawra) was divided into upper and lower districts. It is the well-known site of the school of religious figure Babai, and served the region and Eastern Christianity for many years, producing scholars in theology and philosophy.<sup>398</sup> It was settled by Nestorians of Upper Tiyari from the village of Rumtha in the 1920s. The then *mukhtar* (mayor) of the village was Mame Beth Semano.<sup>399</sup> Following the massacre at Simele in 1933, many villagers of Şawura fled or were looted or killed.<sup>400</sup> In one case, over twenty Assyrians were killed in the aftermath of the Simele incident.<sup>401</sup> Şawura's population was forced out in 1961 and fled elsewhere.<sup>402</sup>

### Ṭlanīthā

Though sometimes mentioned as Dewike, Ṭlanīthā may be based on the Aramaic word for “shadow” or “shade.” In 1850, Badger, who wrote the settlement name as Ṭalneetha, recorded six families, a priest, and a church. Ṭlanitha was within the Nestorian diocese of Mar Abraham of Gündük (Nerem), in the mountains south of Jebel Gara.<sup>403</sup> The village, along with the churches of Mart Shmuni and Mar

<sup>397</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>398</sup> Budge, *Thomas of Marga, Book of Governors*, Vol. II, 633.

<sup>399</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>400</sup> For a full account of the events which occurred at Şawura see details as recounted by Shabo ‘Aziz d’Baz in ‘Abdyešu‘Barzana’s *Šinnē d’ ‘asqūtā: Qrābā d’Dayrabūn wa Gunhā d’Simele*, 232-238.

<sup>401</sup> Stafford, “Iraq and the Problem of the Assyrians”, 176.

<sup>402</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 14.

<sup>403</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 392. Gara is used in *Sureth* usually for roof as an extended meaning from the Aramaic/Syriac root GRA which has the connotation to leak or trickle down.

Quryaqos, were left in ruins after the rebellion of 1961 when Zebari tribesmen ransacked it.<sup>404</sup>

**Tazhikka** (Latitude: 37°01'20" N, Longitude: 43°16'54" E)

Tazhika was resettled by refugees from Hakkâri in the 1920s. Its population numbered 123 in 1957 and its villagers abandoned it under threat to their life in 1961.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> K.S. (Dûre), D.T. (Blejanke), Z.Y. (Annûnê), Y.D. (Annûnê), Y.G. (Bebede), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>405</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 11.



## Nineveh Region

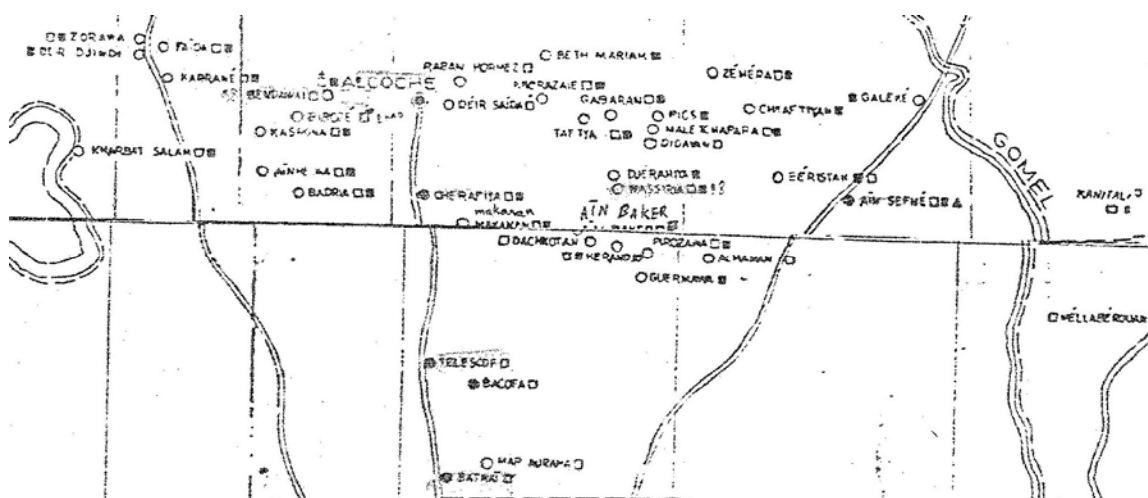


Figure 6 Omez map showing the Nineveh region.

**Alqosh** (Latitude: 36°44'07'' N, Longitude: 43°05'47'' E)

The town of Alqosh is an ancient Assyrian settlement located thirty to forty kilometers north of Mosul, in the Qardu mountain range. The etymology of Alqosh is largely contested. Theories include tracings to the Turkish *al*, “scarlet” and *kuş*, “bird” and to the Akkadian *elu*, “god” and *qushtu*, “bow.” The great monastery of Rabban Hormizd was founded here in the sixth or seventh century and became the patriarchal see for the Church of the East (Nestorians). Referred to by residents as *yimma d’mathwatha* (matron of villages), Alqosh, as a Christian hub, witnessed recurrent maltreatment over the centuries. In 1743, Alqosh was pillaged by the Persian armies of Nādr Shāh.<sup>406</sup> Alqosh suffered numerous attacks during the nineteenth century, including in 1828 and 1832 by Mira Kora, who according to a Syriac colophon, “killed 172 local men, not counting women,

<sup>406</sup> Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 263.

children and foreigners, and pillaged it.”<sup>407</sup> The town was attacked again in 1840 and 1842 by Isma‘il Pasha, who also assaulted the Rabban Hormizd monastery.<sup>408</sup>

Following the massacres of Bedr Khan Beg between 1843 and 1846, many Nestorians took refuge in Alqosh, still the see of one of the patriarchal lines of the Church of the East. It was at this time that many were coerced into becoming Chaldeans (Catholic) by the Dominicans, who aided only those willing to accept the supremacy of the pope.<sup>409</sup>

According to Tfinkdji, approximately seven thousand people of the Chaldean faith lived in Alqosh with six priests, three churches, and two schools in 1913.<sup>410</sup> In 1937, Fr. Estefan Kaččo (later bishop) conducted a census of the town and recorded the population at 8,475. In 1950, Fr. Raphael Bidawid (later patriarch) conducted another census, at the request of Bishop Estefan Kaččo, and reported the population at 9,500. In 1961, Giwargis ‘Awwad put the population at 7,000. Due to its pro-communist sympathies, Alqosh was attacked by pro-government Kurdish fursan in 1961. Alqosh suffered attacks again in 1969.<sup>411</sup>

## **Bāsifre**

Bāsifre, also written Beth Sāpre, possibly meaning “place of books or scribes,” is located east of Mosul, just southeast of Birta at the foot of mountainous country once resplendent with “gardens and vineyards.”<sup>412</sup> It is mentioned in Syriac manuscripts in 1685 as having a sizeable community and three priests. According

<sup>407</sup> Harrak, “Northern Mesopotamia in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Syriac Annalistic Source,” 301.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid, 302.

<sup>409</sup> Perkins, *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia Among the Nestorian Christians*, 22-30.

<sup>410</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 485.

<sup>411</sup> Hirmis Aboona, Interview, October 2007, Mississauga, Canada

<sup>412</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 291.

to Fiey, the inhabitants have also found traces of a large castle situated just in front of the church of Mar Youḥannan, which suffered during the battles of 1961.<sup>413</sup> Fiey also records that just north of Beth Sāpre lies a village named Kalwaka, which may contain the ruins of a church dedicated to Mar Abdisho'.<sup>414</sup> In 1913 there were thirty individuals in the village.<sup>415</sup> Little is known about the Assyrians of the village following the armed autonomist movement from 1961 to 1963.

### **Bedul**

Bedul, or Be-Dole, may derive from the Aramaic meaning, “place of buckets.” Mentioned by Badger, Bedul is located in the Mezuriyeh district close to Meze and Deze, behind the Yezidi religious center of Sheikh ‘Adi. In 1850 it was home to twenty Chaldean families, with a church.<sup>416</sup> The last Assyrians were forced to flee the village during the attacks from 1961 to 1963.<sup>417</sup>

### **Kanifalla** (Latitude: 36°45'15" N, Longitude: 43°30'26" E)

Kanifalla is mentioned as the home of Syriac manuscripts copied in 1713 and 1723. The village name finds its etymology in Kurdish as *kani*, “spring” or “source” and *fallah*,<sup>418</sup> “Christian(s).” Famous copyist and writer David d’Barzane mentioned the hardships endured by his family and other villagers during the period just prior to 1854, which he attributed to the injustices of the

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 499.

<sup>416</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>417</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 14 mentions 1961 whereas the FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 42 mentions 1963.

<sup>418</sup> *Fallah* is generally used in Kurdish to refer to Assyrian Christians even in the Tur Abdin which would speak to its general usage in the Kurmanji dialect. The term is most likely originally a borrowing from Arabic *fallah* denoting “worker” or “peasant.”

Zebari tribesmen.<sup>419</sup> In 1913 there were 120 inhabitants in the village, with a priest.<sup>420</sup> They were later joined by Nestorian refugees from Lower Tiyari. Kanifalla's Assyrian residents were forced to flee the pro-government retribution, which became most evident after 1961 and 1962. The old church of Mar Akha, which was utilized by both Nestorian and Chaldean villagers, was almost completely destroyed; the village was resettled by Iraqi government militia (*fursan*).<sup>421</sup>

### **Malla-Birwan**

Prior to the First World War, Malla-Birwan was served by a single priest, with a school, and was inhabited by 120 families.<sup>422</sup> At that time, there were also four Muslim and five Jewish households. Between 1920 and 1933, thirty-five Nestorians from Jilu in Hakkâri were settled in Malla-Birwan.<sup>423</sup> The old village's church, dedicated to Mar Sawa, was ruined in 1963, and most of its population forced to flee as it was resettled by pro-government militia.<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 293-294.

<sup>420</sup> Tfinkdji. "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>421</sup> K.S. (Düre), Y.D. (Annünē), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada. *Fursan Salahaddin* or the Knights of Saladin referred to Kurdish mercenary groups. For further information see Ishow, Habib, *Structures Sociales et Politiques de l'Irak Contemporain: Pourquoi un État en Crise?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 89.

<sup>422</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 499.

<sup>423</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 9.

<sup>424</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

## Zakho Region

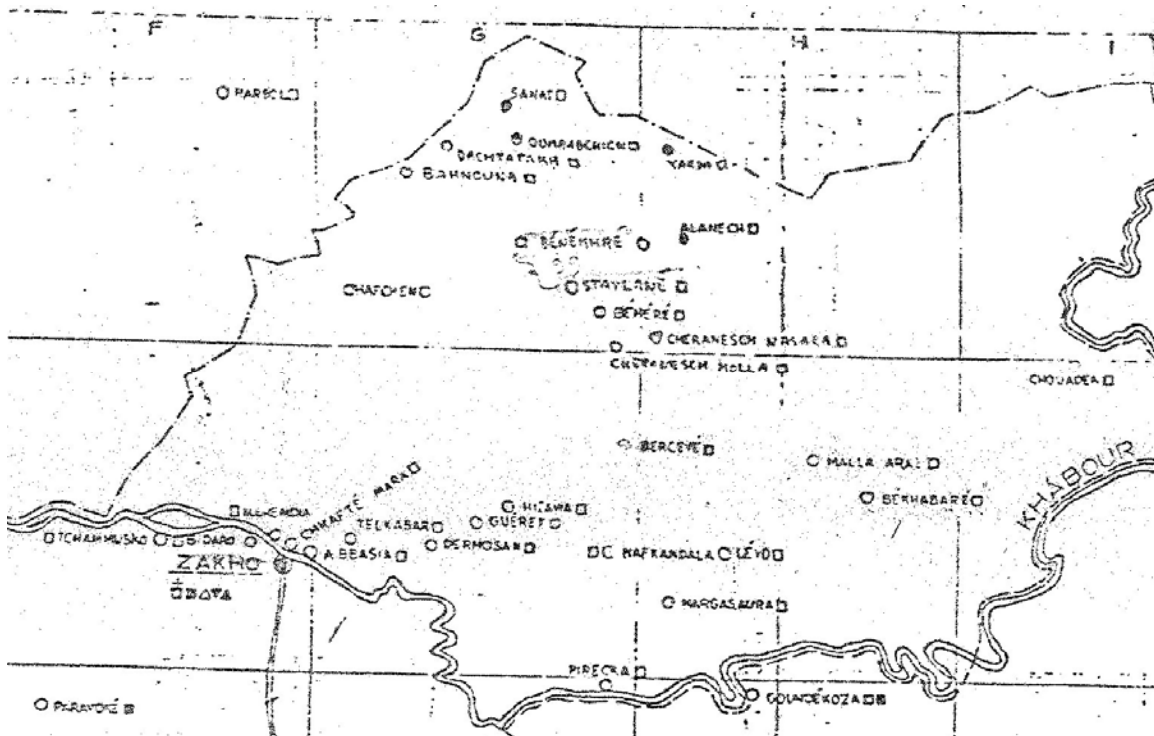


Figure 7 Omez map showing the Zakho region.

**Billān** (Latitude: 36°50'13" N, Longitude: 43°26'28" E)

Billān, also known as Billa, is mentioned in Syriac manuscripts as early as the ninth century and again in 1656.<sup>425</sup> In 1913 Tfinkdji tallied three hundred Chaldean (Catholic) converts, one priest serving the village church, and a school located in the Zakho diocese.<sup>426</sup> The last Assyrians were forced to abandon the village in 1963.<sup>427</sup> The church of Mar Sawa was destroyed along with the shrine of Mart Shmuni. There was also an ancient monastery dedicated to Mar Gregorius (Gregory) in a valley north of the village, which retains the place name Gali Dera, “the valley of the monastery.” E. A. Wallis Budge mentions a

<sup>425</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 289.

<sup>426</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 520.

<sup>427</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 42.

shared connection with the village of Tilla. Though it is tempting to assume an association between Billa and Bar Bellī, mentioned by Wilhmshurst, this is probably not the case.<sup>428</sup>

**Dar Hozan** (Latitude: 37°10'13" N, Longitude: 42°45'6" E)

Though the 1957 census numbered Dar Hozan's Assyrian population at 244, the majority fled in 1961.<sup>429</sup> Some may have returned in an attempt to resettle the region but no specifics are known.

**Marzi-Khabur**

Marzi-Khabur is located in the sub-district of Rizgari. Little is known about the village, except that its Assyrian villagers fled under duress from 1961 to 1963.<sup>430</sup>

**Prakh** (Latitude: 37°16'30" N, Longitude: 42°47'16" E)

According to the 1957 census, Prakh's population totaled 139, but its Assyrian inhabitants were forced to leave in 1961.<sup>431</sup>

### **Şoriya Massacre of 1969**

Much of what was known about the Şoriya massacre is nebulous at best. Accounts by human rights NGOs that reference it are vague, with no real original source material (oral accounts) used. Fortunately, Michael Tucker presents some groundwork in *Hell is Over*, in his interview with massacre survivors Adam and Noah Yonan.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Wilhmshurst, 155.

<sup>429</sup> K.S. (Düre), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>430</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> Michael Tucker, *Hell is Over* (CT: Lyons Press, 2004). The accuracy of the language used by Tucker is problematic and reflects modern KDP and KRG Kurdification processes whereby referring to these people as Kurdish Chaldean Catholics is similar to the previous trend of Arabization. Also as a further note, the Yonan family originally hails from Harbol, an Assyrian village in the Bohtan region of Turkey. It is almost entirely (religiously) made up of members of the Chaldean religious community who are referred to and refer to themselves in French as Assyro-Chaldean.

The Assyrian village of Şoriya is located on the banks of the Tigris and is administratively assigned to the district of Al Assi (Bateel).<sup>433</sup> According to the 1957 census, Şoriya had a population of 102 people, and in 1969, the village had forty families.<sup>434</sup> According to most individual accounts, at approximately 9:30 a.m. on Sunday morning, September 16, 1969, the village witnessed a massacre at the hands of Lieutenant Abdul Karim al-Jahayshee from Mosul when a pêşmerge-planted mine detonated under a military car four kilometers away from the village. It may be possible to conclude the Iraqi government intended to find guerillas hidden within the village. A second possible rationale behind the attack and massacre follows the trend of targeting Assyrians equally with the Kurds (as non-Arabs) during a retaliatory governmental campaign in the late 1960s.

Though the precise motivation behind the massacre of Şoriya remains unknown, the results are certain. The callous measures taken by the Iraqi army left forty-three dead, including Ḥannā, the local priest, and twenty-two wounded.<sup>435</sup> As for the actual events of the massacre, the Yonans' story lays bare the vivid events. As Noah Yonan recounts,

I was ten years old and I fell on the ground. A woman fell over me and her blood covered me. Other children, too, were covered in blood and thought dead. At the same time, the Iraqi Army soldiers in our village began spreading out, shooting into houses and burning the houses.<sup>436</sup>

He continues:

While we were running, wounded people escaping with us died of their gunshot wounds, bleeding to death. We were all running to the village of Bakhlogia, four kilometers away, to hide. We got to Bakhlogia, but the villagers couldn't give us refuge; it was too dangerous. So, we ran to another Christian village, Avzarook.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> See map figure

<sup>434</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 19.

<sup>435</sup> Though the following table is mostly based on Eshoo's *article "The Fate of Assyrian Villages,"* the original work states 38 victims as opposed to the 50 listed on the table below (47 plus 3 mentioned infants).

<sup>436</sup> Tucker, *Hell is Over*, 104.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.* This probably refers to Avzerok (Avzarook, Avzarog) Shanno to the north passing Baghluje (Bakhlogia), rather than Avzerok Khamo which lies twice the distance to the south of Şoriya. Avzerok Shanno was later destroyed in 1975.

This slaughter at Şoriya was an echo of Simele: from the government and military announcements forbidding hospitals and medical facilities in the Mosul and Dohuk regions from giving aid to survivors, to the promotion of Abdul Karim al-Jahayshee.<sup>438</sup>

The praise over the slaughter, so reminiscent of Simele, and the honors presented Bakr Sidqi, proved these Assyrians or nonentities, were at the mercy of violent nationalist regime not unlike its colonial predecessor.

**Table 2 List of People Killed in the Şoriya Massacre on September 16, 1969**

	Name	Sex	Age	Comments
1	Khamo Marogeh Shimun (mayor)	M		Shot immediately by Abdul Karim Jahayshee
2	Kathryn Sargis Shimun (wife)	F		
3	Laila Khamo Shimun	F		Almost succeeded in killing Jahayshee
4	Mansour Ishaq	M		
5	Kathryn Shimun Ishaq (wife)	F		Along with three-month-old child
6	Misso Marogeh Shimun	F		
7	Hermiz Marogeh Shimun	M		
8	Goro Hermiz Shimun (wife)	F		
9	Antar Hermiz Shimun	M	5	
10	Othman Suleiman	M		
11	Amina Rajab Suleiman (wife)	F		Along with child
12	Nahida Othman Suleiman	F		
13	Sabiha Othman Suleiman	F		
14	Meho Hasan	M		
15	Miran Meho Hasan	F		
16	Ghariba Meho Hasan	F		
17	Mounir Yousif	M		
18	Firman Mounir Yousif	F		
19	Talan Mounir Yousif	F		
20	Eilo Youkhana	M		
21	Yaço Eilo Youkhana	M		
22	Yalda Rasho	M		
23	Basima Yalda Rasho	F		
24	Giwargis Qoryakus	M		
25	Naji Giwargis Qoryakus	F		
26	Shabo Bazna	M		

<sup>438</sup> Tucker, *Hell is Over*, 106.



**Table 2 List of People Killed in the Şoriya Massacre on September 16, 1969**

	Name	Sex	Age	Comments
27	Shoneh Bazna (wife)	F		Along with baby girl who died at hospital
28	Samir Bazna	M		
29	Shawel Bazna	M		
30	Boutros Toma	M		
31	Yono Sliwa Toma (wife)	F		
32	(child) Toma	F	5	
33	(child) Toma	M	6	
34	Alo Yousif	M		
35	Shirin Samo Yousif	F		
36	Amina Alo Yousif	F	7	
37	Oraha Khamo	M		
38	Warina Oraha Khamo	F	5	
39	Rasho Warda	M		
40	Asmar Elias Warda (wife)	F		
41	Reverend Hannā	M		Village priest
42	Guiliana Markus	M		
43	Husni	M		Driver from Zakho
44	Berro Husein	M		
45	Qamar Rasheed Husein (wife)	F		
46	Nadira Berro Husein	F		
47	Halima Husein (mother)	F		

\* Unfortunately, the ages and dates of birth for most of the victims are unknown.

\* This table is based on one created by Majed Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 19.

### ***Alliances: Friends, Foes, and Benefactors***

The years following in showed just how fragile alliances were and even more so, what were the real reasons for support. After the overthrow of the Qassim regime in 1963, President Abdel Salam ‘Aref allied himself with Nasser-led Egypt. This saw the Shah of Iran begin a campaign to weaken Iraq internally by aiding the Kurds in their battle against the state. Also in an attempt to weaken Arab expansion, the Meir Amit–led Israeli Mossad supported the Kurds in 1964. At that time, defense minister Shimon Peres met with Kumran Ali Bedr-Khan (of the Bedr-Khan family of the Bohtan), who spied for

the Israelis in the 1940s and 1950s, and began discussions that led to “the first training course for pêşmerge officers” for three months starting in August 1965.<sup>439</sup>

With such support for the Kurdish autonomist resistance, many Assyrians (particularly those Nestorians formerly of Hakkâri) further aligned themselves with the Kurdish parties. Debates on whether the Assyrians fought *for* the Kurdish cause or *alongside* the Kurds for their own freedom yield shaky distinctions. Moreover, most scholarship states prematurely that the Assyrians fought *for* the “Kurdish cause,” and the Assyrian fighter Margaret George of Dûre village in Barwar is often cited as a pêşmerge fighter.<sup>440</sup>

Here we must distinguish and illuminate Assyrian involvement alongside the autonomist armed resistance of the Kurds. Indeed, it is certain that many Assyrian leaders were invited to attend the same council as other Kurdish leaders led by Barzani in the 1960s. Evidently some, like Franso Hariri, Muşafa Barzani’s chief bodyguard, worked unabashedly for the Barzani’s [tribal] cause, and by extension the Kurdish cause; though Hariri was an ethnic Assyrian, he had been a major personage in the Barzani household for years. Furthermore, many Assyrians waged war alongside Kurdish pêşmerge in Assyrian-led and -soldiered battalions. Some Assyrians directed their own battalions, which contained as many as two thousand Assyrian fighters.<sup>441</sup>

The Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) was created and held its first congress in Pau, France, on April 10, 1968 to devise a more cohesive Assyrian front. Of special

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<sup>439</sup> Black and Morris, *Israel’s Secret Wars*, 184.

<sup>440</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 310. George was later suspiciously killed in her sleep in 1966. See McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 381. Though some reference her being killed in 1969.

<sup>441</sup> Brentjes, *The Armenians, Assyrians, and Kurds*, 65-66.

interest here is the formation of the AUA from among various cultural groups, including the Assyrian Youth and Cultural Society in Iran during a time of Ba‘thification in Iraq.

It was hoped that the AUA would become a voice for the unrepresented Assyrians in the Middle East, and especially Iraq. To that end, Kheith Kheith Allap II dissolved in early 1966. It was apparent that the Assyrians of Iraq would need external Assyrian representation in order to survive and accost their grievances:

In 1968 the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) was created: a world-wide organization seeking to spread, uphold and enhance the Assyrian name in the world, to secure the human rights of the Assyrian people in their homeland and to attain an autonomous state in the Assyrian ancestral homeland.<sup>442</sup>

On July 17, 1968, the Ba’th overthrew Abdel Rahman ‘Aref’s regime in a coup, and the new Ba‘thist regime took control under Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. At that time, Saddam Hussein became deputy chairman of the new Revolutionary Command Council. As if in answer to growing fears about the new government’s policies toward non-Arabs and non-Muslim minorities—especially one as highly defiant and historically bold as the Assyrians—the Ba‘th-run Iraqi government orchestrated the capture and subsequent imprisonment and torture of members of the Assyrian Charity Society that year.<sup>443</sup>

The late 1960s saw an increase in fighting between the Iraqi government and those Kurds and Assyrians acting as agents of resistance. On May 29, 1969, talks between the US government and Assyrian and Kurdish representatives took place in Washington, D.C. There, the Assyrians and Kurds, working in tandem, hoped to garner American military and/or monetary support for their opposition struggle. One Assyrian representative stated the following:

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<sup>442</sup> Unrepresented Nations and People Organization, member profile, [http://www.unpo.org/member\\_profile.php?id=8](http://www.unpo.org/member_profile.php?id=8)

<sup>443</sup> Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*, 215.

Mr. Andrews said that the Assyrians are fighting the Iraqis alongside the Kurds. There is apparently complete confidence between the Kurds and the Assyrians and some integration of their fighting forces.<sup>444</sup>

Included as part of the previously classified documents from the meeting was a letter sent by Muşafa Barzani himself addressing US Secretary of State William Rogers. The letter outlines the joint Kurdish and Assyrian resistance during the 1960s. Furthermore, the letter by Barzani illustrates the Assyrians as significant actors during the autonomist armed resistance in the 1960s, contrary to most scholarship, which categorically ignores Assyrian participation. According to Barzani:

In addition to the threat which this war has aimed at the existence and legitimate aspirations of our people, Kurds and Assyrians, it has brought disaster and affliction upon all its victims, deprived the people of Kurdistan, particularly the Assyrians and the Kurds, of education and health [needs], and rendered tens of thousands of them refugees.<sup>445</sup>

It is likely that Assyrian involvement in the armed resistance would guarantee future government-sponsored atrocities in the continuing years of the nation-building process. Following that logic, it is not surprising that in the same year of the US-Assyrian-Kurdish meetings, the Assyrian villagers of Şoriya were targeted by the Iraqi government in the massacre of September 16, 1969.

## **Summary**

The birth of the Iraqi republic and its subsequent dealings with its minorities would spark the initial upheaval and elimination of the Assyrians as a distinct ethnic community from their ancestral lands. It has become apparent that the Kurdish autonomist armed resistance was not solely Kurdish-based, but included a significant

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<sup>444</sup> US Department of State, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 29 May 1969, Accessed 22 April 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e4/65194.htm>, 2 of 6. See also Document concerning Assyrian and Kurdish and Iraqi relations from US Department of State, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 13 June 1969, Accessed 22 April 2008, 3 of 3. Originals included in Annexes figures 27-35.

<sup>445</sup> US Department of State, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 29 May 1969, Accessed 22 April 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e4/65194.htm>, 5 of 6.

portion of Assyrian political leaders and armed soldiers. Yet, due to ecclesiastical cleavages and an increasingly ingrained Arabization, the Assyrians, like the Kurds, were not united in the movement for autonomy; it is even incorrect to assume that the entire Assyrian people were engaged in the resistance. Moreover, the designations of the 1960s events between a faction of the Kurds, Assyrians, and others, and the Iraq regime, as the “Kurdish Uprising,” “Kurdish Rebellion,” or “Iraqi-Kurdish War,” or even as my designation, the “Kurdish armed autonomist resistance,” are all partially inaccurate.<sup>446</sup> The resistance included Assyrians whom Barzani himself acknowledged in the late 1960s within numerous documents to the United States government, stating, “in addition to the threat which this war has aimed at the existence and legitimate aspirations of our people, both Kurds and Assyrians ...”<sup>447</sup> Furthermore, since many Assyrians remained neutral during this period, assuming all Assyrians acted as a unified whole is incorrect. The same must be said for the Kurds.

The year 1960 also witnessed a minor insurrection by the sheikh of the Surchi Kurdish tribe near Rawanduz in reaction to the Iraqi Agrarian Reform Law, which was interestingly quelled by local police, the Communist Party, and a contingent of Barzani followers.<sup>448</sup> This event illustrates the ever-changing loyalties and divisions within the autonomist movement itself. Monolithic rubrics concerned with ethnic-based alliances and enemies do not allow for a clear interpretation of Assyrian-Kurdish relations during the 1960s, although Assyrian distrust of Kurds and Kurdish distrust of Assyrians had not

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<sup>446</sup> See Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958*, 81.

<sup>447</sup> Refer to Figure 31 of Annexes - USDOS, Memorandum of Conversation, 29 May 1969, Accessed 22 April 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e4/65194.htm>. First part of Mustafa Barzani’s letter. 5 of 6.

<sup>448</sup> Ismail Al-Arif, *Iraq Reborn: A Firsthand Account of the July 1958 Revolution and After* (NY: Vantage Press, 1982), 86.

disappeared. These tense relations were exploited by the Iraqi regime and other interested parties during this trying period.

Furthermore, it is quite evident that the Kurds were likewise divided in their internal loyalties, and the constant struggles between the Surchi, Herki, Barzani, Bradost, Lolani, and Zebari tribes attest to that. Thanks to long-standing tribal feuds, the Iraqi government was able to coax the Bradost and Zebaris to fight on behalf of the government forces. Known disdainfully as *jahsh* (little donkeys), *chatta* (militia), or *fursan* (knights [of Saladin]) among the resistance forces, these fighters were despised for their pro-government actions.<sup>449</sup> Over ninety-eight Kurdish chiefs were considered as Iraqi loyalists during this period.<sup>450</sup> These pro-government forces were initially indoctrinated to fight against their Kurdish kin by seeing them as “traitors” of Islam.<sup>451</sup> Yet despite this, on many occasions, as illustrated by the demographic shift following this period and through first-hand accounts, the pro-government tribes targeted Assyrian villages more often than villages of Kurdish tribes. It is evident that the pro-government militia operated most frequently against the Assyrians rather than the more numerous Kurds.<sup>452</sup>

Yet despite such internal divisions among both Assyrians and Kurds, the pro-government Zebari and Bradost Kurds managed to appropriate what the Assyrians lost demographically, which prevented the only other major ethnic group, the Arabs, from

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<sup>449</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 28. For a good discussion on pro-government Kurdish forces, see McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 354-356.

<sup>450</sup> Refer to list and photographs from Na‘aman Maher Al Kan‘ani, *Doh ‘alla Shimāl al ‘Irāq [A Light in Northern Iraq]* (Baghdad: 1965), 26-110.

<sup>451</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 29.

<sup>452</sup> O'Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt*, 90.

settling in the region.<sup>453</sup> As many Assyrian interviewees suggested, some Kurds who sided with the Iraqi regime against the armed resistance were “chatta by day but pêşmerge by night.”<sup>454</sup>

The fleeing Assyrians were forced to more urban areas such as Dohuk, Mosul, and Baghdad. In fact, both the villages sympathetic to the resistance and those that wished to remain neutral were equally affected and targeted by opposing troops. The Assyrian region of ‘Amēdīyāh, which preferred to remain neutral, was later razed by Zebari Kurds and not returned to the Assyrians after the resistance soldiers retook control. Despite ardent Assyrian protests, the Barzani administration took over the town in December 1961 under the command of Muştafa Barzani, who “had little time for his temporary Assyrian allies.”<sup>455</sup>

Thus the Assyrians suffered two-fold: as people subject to genocidal attacks along with the Kurds during the 1960s, and in being neglected by historical scholarship, which had ignored the Assyrian plight since 1933. Kurdish attempts to garner international recognition of the Iraqi government military actions against the autonomist resistance of 1961 to 1963 were heard only by the Soviets and the socialist state of Mongolia.<sup>456</sup> The petition by these countries to the United Nations was dismissed, as the state of Iraq had again been acquitted of any crimes. This dismissal of the claims of genocide against the

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<sup>453</sup> This large-scale change in demography would continue to effect regional policy and would become specifically apparent during the creation of the Iraqi Kurdistan region following the establishment of the no-fly zone in 1991 and continuing with the internal Iraqi politics following the US invasion in 2003.

<sup>454</sup> K.S. (Düre), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada, D.T. (Blejanke), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada. See also Baghdad to State, “Kurdish Rebel Activity in Dohuk Area,” 28 Dec. 1961, NA/RG59/787.00/12-2861. According to the report, the “‘Kurdish mercenaries’ employed by the government have deserted and joined with the rebels.”

<sup>455</sup> O’Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt: 1961-1970*, 81.

<sup>456</sup> UN Economic and Social Council report, 36<sup>th</sup> session, 11 July 1963, 109

Kurds and general neglect of Assyrians and are imbedded in the refusal of other states (as bastions of political power) to assign blame to the Iraq regime for the Simele massacres.

**Table 3 Assyrian Village Summary 1960s**

Name	Province	District	Alt Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Comments
Darbandoke	Arbil	Harîr			1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Hanare	Arbil	Harîr	Henare			Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Hawdian	Arbil	Rowanduz	Havdian		1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Kalate	Arbil	Harîr				Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Diyana	Arbil	Harîr	Diana		5	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Batase	Arbil	Harîr			1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Harîr	Arbil	Harîr			1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Kharab-Kulk	Dohuk	Simele	Harbai(?)		1	
Kanifalla	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Kani Fala		1	
Sedar	Dohuk	'Aqra				
'Amēdīyāh (city)	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh		1	2	Mass exodus
Badarrash	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Beth Darrash, Beth Durashe		1	
Marzi-Khabur	Dohuk	Zakho				
Bekozanke	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Beth Kozanke			Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Dar Hozan	Dohuk	Zakho				
Dinārta	Dohuk	'Aqra	Dinārta d'Nahla			Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Tazhikka	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh				
Ashawa	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh			1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Sharmin	Dohuk	'Aqra	Shalmath		3	
Khelafta	Dohuk	'Aqra	Khaleptha, Beth Hlāpe		1	
Nerem d-Ra'awatha	Dohuk	'Aqra	Gundik, Gündük		2	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Belembase	Dohuk	'Aqra				
Kora-Dere	Dohuk	Dohuk				
Şawura	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Şawra			
Cham Chali	Dohuk	'Aqra				



Name	Province	District	Alt Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Comments
Cham Kare	Dohuk	Dohuk				
Kalilane	Dohuk	'Aqra	Khalilani			
Prakh	Dohuk	Zakho				
Nergezwe	Dohuk	'Aqra				Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Bāsifre	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Be Sāpre, Beth Sāpre			
Kharjawa	Dohuk	'Aqra	Ḥarġāwa			Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Hasaniye	Dohuk	'Aqra				
Ṭlanīthā	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Talaneetha, Dewike		2	
Malta	Dohuk	Dohuk	Ma'althaye, Maltai		2	
Kherpa	Dohuk	'Aqra	Ḥerpā, Kherpa d'Malka		2	Attacked and resettled By pro-government militia
Dodi Masih	Dohuk	'Aqra	Beth Nura, Beth Nuhra		1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Ras al-'Ain	Dohuk	'Aqra	Resh 'Aina, Beth 'Ainatha		1	
Dawriye	Dohuk	'Aqra	Dūre, Deviry		1	Besieged 3 months, 35 (fam) survivors
Kashkawa	Dohuk	'Aqra			1	100 families displaced
Tirwanish	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Der Wanis		1	"Border clearings"
Khardis	Dohuk	'Aqra	Khardes, Khardez		2	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Bebede	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Be Bede, Beth Bede		2	Razed 1961 by Zebari Kurds; resettled by same tribe, 1987–88; 75 families displaced
Betnare	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Benarink, Be Naring			Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Bahnona	Dohuk	Zakho				30 families displaced
Ṣoriya	Dohuk	Simele		1	1	40 families before 1969 massacre
Ishkavdal	Dohuk	Simele	Shkafdal	1		20 families displaced
Rekan	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh				
Garbesh	Dohuk	'Aqra	Girbish, upper & lower		1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Sarsang (city)	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh			2	
Birmawa	Dohuk	'Aqra	Birmava			Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Dohuke	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Dahoki, Dohoke		1	
Essān	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Ṣiyān		2	

Name	Province	District	Alt Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Comments
Argen	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Ergin, Hargin, Argin		4	
Blejanke	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Blejane		1	28 families displaced, 1987
Hayyis	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Hayis		2	Site of napalm attack, 1968; 50 families displaced Anfal
Baz	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Bas		2	20 families displaced 1988
Barzanke	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh				Resettled by Kurds
Lish	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Lich			
Mangesh (town)	Dohuk	Dohuk			2	
Shush	Dohuk	'Aqra	Shush, Shushan, Bā Šōš		1	
'Aqra (City)	Dohuk	'Aqra	'Aqra		2	Mass exodus of Assyrians beginning in 1961
Havintka	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Hawintka			Resettled by Zebari Kurds
Ba-Mishmish	Dohuk	'Aqra	Beth Shimsha		2	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Sian	Dohuk	'Aqra	Sanāyā, Sanāyā d’Nahlā		2	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Barak	Dohuk	'Aqra	Barrake		1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Nahawa	Dohuk	'Aqra	Nūhāwā, Nūwābā		2	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Arāden	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh		2	4	Razed 1961, 1987-88; 220 families displaced
Hazarjot	Dohuk	'Aqra			1	
Meze	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			2	
Masike	Dohuk	Dohuk				
Malla-Birwan	Dohuk	Sheikhan			1	
Bedul	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Be Dole		1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Birta	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Birta, Bire		1	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Billa	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Billān, Bellan		3	Attacked and resettled by pro-government militia
Komāne	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Kowane	1	5	
Safra Zor	Dohuk	'Aqra				
Gera Sor	Dohuk	'Aqra	Sifra			
Alqosh	Ninewa	Tel Keif			numerous	Attacked numerous times

Over sixty-eight towns and villages were destroyed, and/or forcibly abandoned by their Assyrian inhabitants, as were over seventy-six religious structures and other material items of cultural significance in the years 1961 to 1963. Furthermore, large numbers of formerly independent villagers forced to survive in unfamiliar urban settings were influenced by an underlying Arabization and Ba‘thification. This urban assimilation would be a side effect of the Assyrians’ attempt to survive both economically and socially, and would later help solidify their indoctrination to Arabism. In some cases of urbanization, however, an unforeseen consequence occurred that fostered a desire for intellectual attainment and Assyrian ethno-cultural consciousness.

## Chapter 5: Enduring Discord: Political Machinations and Border Clearings

Perhaps the most significant moral characteristic of a nation is its hypocrisy.

—Reinhold Niebuhr

### ***Attempts at Reconciliation***

In March 1970, the Iraqi government and the Kurdish parties agreed on a peace accord that would grant the Kurds some semblance of autonomy and end the ongoing armed autonomist movement. The accord recognized Kurdish as an official language and amended the constitution to state: “The Iraqi people are made up of two nationalities, the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality.” The Assyrians had been left out of the political meetings, as the events from 1961 to 1963 had decimated their northern villages. Despite this fact, the Iraqi government was still wary of Assyrian-Kurdish relations—so much so, that on April 24, 1970, Mar Eshai Sham’un, exiled patriarch of the Church of the East, was personally invited to meet the Iraqi president in Baghdad in a bid by the government to solicit Assyrian aid against further Kurdish rebellion. The Iraqis had begun to play both sides against the middle.

The Iraqi government had no intention of “protecting Assyrian rights,” the catch phrase used to attract the patriarch, but rather used this invitation to the exiled church leader to garner ecclesiastic support and to attempt to exert control over a portion of the Assyrian population by playing to its religious leaders. The regime’s proposal concerned fashioning an Assyrian police force (reminiscent of the levies) in order to buffer all Kurdish advances. Of those in attendance with the patriarch were members of the Assyrian Universal Alliance delegation, led by Sam Andrews, Odisho Jindo, Mikhael

Rasho, and the chief of the Upper Tiyari tribe, Malik Yako d'Malik Ismael.<sup>457</sup> Suspicious of its intentions, the Assyrian delegation immediately declined the Iraqi government's proposal.

### ***Governmental Policies: The Unmentioned Effect on the Assyrians***

Such reconciliation attempts continued for a year while relations between the Kurds and the Iraqi government deteriorated. In 1971 Muṣṭafa Barzani began appealing in earnest to the US for aid. Because of such events, the Assyrians saw an opportunity to emerge: when Baghdad granted the Kurds the option of autonomy in Arbil and Sulaymaniya, the Assyrians attempted to petition for an autonomous region in Dohuk province. The so-called Assyrian Committee (made up of Assyrians from various church denominations) began petitioning the Iraqi government through Malik Yako d'Malik Ismael.<sup>458</sup> Perhaps as a result of the failure of the initial Iraqi-Assyrian talks in 1970, on April 16, 1972, Baghdad offered "Syriac-speaking nationals" limited cultural rights through decree 251, as follows:

- (a) The Syriac language shall be the teaching language in all primary schools whose majority of pupils are from speakers in such language, and teaching of Arabic language shall be compulsory in such schools.
- (b) Syriac language shall be taught in intermediate and secondary schools whose majority of pupils are from speakers in such language, and Arabic language shall be the teaching language in such schools.
- (c) Syriac language shall be taught in the College of Arts at the University of Baghdad as one of the old languages.
- (d) Special programmes in Syriac language shall be set up at the Broadcasting Service of the Republic of Iraq and at Kirkuk and Nineveh TV stations.
- (e) To issue a Syriac-language monthly magazine by the Ministry of Information.
- (f) To establish a society for Syriac speaking writers, and ensure their representation in literary and cultural societies and the country.

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<sup>457</sup> Ashor Giwargis, "Until When? The Assyrian Ethnicity Persecuted and Marginalized in its own Homeland," *An-nahar*, Lebanon, 1 October 2002, translated into English - *Zinda Magazine*, <http://www.zindamagazine.com/html/archives/2002/9.30.02/index.php>.

<sup>458</sup> Petrosian, "Assyrians in Iraq", 134.

- (g) To help Syriac-speaking writers and translators morally and materially by printing and publishing their cultural and literary works.
- (h) To enable Syriac-speaking nationals to open cultural and artistic clubs and formulate artistic and theatrical groups for reviving and evolving their legacy and popular arts.

–Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr  
Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council<sup>459</sup>

Despite this token decree, the regime evidently had ulterior plans. Immediately following a surge in Assyrian cultural activities, the Ba‘thist regime once again began a policy of suppression.<sup>460</sup> Though the 1972 decree gave Assyrians a one-hour radio time in their native language, the program was quickly usurped by Ba‘thists and used for pro-party propaganda. And Assyrians deemed non-compliant or in opposition to the party’s ideological views were promptly removed from the party.<sup>461</sup> A cultural-linguistic association, the Syriac League, was also created and with it the publication of a literary and poetry journal entitled *Qala Suryaya*.<sup>462</sup> However, Ba‘thist supporters eventually infiltrated the association and politicized the group’s academic and cultural activities. The decree took over all the private or parochial schools, including the Al-Taqqaddum (Qasha Khando) School, decimating all Assyrian efforts at promoting their cultural legacy.<sup>463</sup>

Assyrians saw this decree as an attempt to pacify their activities. As head of the Assyrian Committee, respected former levy commander and head of the Tiyari tribe

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<sup>459</sup> Iraq Ministry of Information, “Granting The Cultural Rights to the Turkman and Syriac-Speaking Nationals,” Information Series 58, Depository number for national library – Baghdad (774), (Baghdad: Al-Hurriya, 1974), 11-12. The formation of the Syriac Academy is dealt with on pages 21-30.

<sup>460</sup> FIDH and AIJ, 17.

<sup>461</sup> Y.C., Interview, 1 September 2006, Chicago, Illinois

<sup>462</sup> *Qala Suryaya*, Baghdad, August, 1975

<sup>463</sup> Y.C., Interview, 1 September 2006, Chicago, Illinois

Malik Yako delivered the Assyrian National Petition (arguments discussing the creation of an autonomous region for Assyrians) to the Iraqi government in 1973.<sup>464</sup>

Meanwhile, the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) had been increasing its international monetary support. Such aid from foreign allies to the Kurds made many of the already frustrated Assyrians more likely to form a closer relationship with Barzani and his troops. This was seen more unmistakably during the summer of 1972, when both Iran and Israel increased monetary support to Kurds in Iraq. Furthermore, the United States, under the instructions of President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, funneled over \$16 million in CIA funds to the Kurds from 1972 to 1975.<sup>465</sup> Much of this increase in aid followed the Iraqi-Soviet friendship treaty, signed in April 1972, which also saw the Iraqi government's slight change in policy regarding a previously "treasonous" ICP.

The United States, vying for control over the region, regularly supported parties in opposition to Soviet control, and vice versa. Thus the age-old struggle of foreign colonial powers over the Middle East would continue, but the previous positions of the French and British would now be usurped by the Soviet Union and the United States, both constantly competing for control and authority over Iraq, using pawns from within the region.

## **A Resumption of Ethnic Cleansing**

Regional players began to assert influence over Iraq. This was unmistakable following the Algiers Agreement,<sup>466</sup> when Iran's support for the Kurds had only on the

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<sup>464</sup> Petrosian, "Assyrians in Iraq", 134. See Annexes for US government document attestations.

<sup>465</sup> Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 328.

<sup>466</sup> An accord between Iraq and Iran in 1975 created in order to settle border disputes.

surface begun to diminish—the involvement of Iran’s secret service, SAVAK, continued, however. In addition, Israel persuaded Barzani to begin a new offensive against the Iraqi army in 1973—some sources believe, to keep the Kurds occupied and unable to support the Syrian army on the Golan front.<sup>467</sup>

In March 1974 the Iraqi government completed a draft of an autonomy agreement and allotted two weeks for a KDP response. The organization rejected the agreement, which would have left the oil fields of Kirkuk under Iraqi government control. Some experts have speculated that a solution to the Kurdish question in Iraq was greatly imperiled by “the increased Iranian-US-Israeli support for Barzani.”<sup>468</sup> Certainly, Israel’s Mossad continued close relations and further collaborated on issues concerning Iraqi Kurds until 1974 to 1975, at which time fighting resumed between the Barzani Kurds and the Iraqi government, causing internal fighting and forced demographic displacement, especially in the Zakho region.

As a possible deterrent to potential Assyrian involvement in this renewed rebellion, the Ba‘th regime took various measures to ensure Assyrian neutrality as well as to pacify a growing anti-government sentiment among Shiites in the south. The regime feared a fight on two fronts and was determined to eliminate any further threats. The government therefore nationalized all schools in Iraq, including Muslim schools in the south and all Christian parochial schools, effectively making decree 251 (granting “Syriac-speaking nationals” limited cultural rights) obsolete.<sup>469</sup> Most foreigners were deported, and priests and nuns were forced to swear an oath of allegiance to the Ba‘th

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<sup>467</sup> Black and Morris, *Israel’s Secret Wars*, 329.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>469</sup> Ray Mouawad, “Syria and Iraq – Repression: Disappearing Christians of the Middle East,” *The Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2001 (<http://www.meforum.org/17/syria-and-iraq-repression>)



regime. This was a strong attempt by the Iraqi government to control its Shiite population and to further deter the Assyrian minority from joining the Kurdish rebellion.

As recounted earlier, after the March 1975 Algiers Agreement, Iraq accepted Iran's territorial demands, and in return Iran ceased support for the Kurds, effectively ending the Kurdish rebellion. During this time of uncertainty and defeat for Barzani's leadership of the KDP, in June 1975 former leading member of the KDP politburo Jalal Talabani along with some Marxist and socialist-leaning Kurds, formed the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) while in Damascus.<sup>470</sup> Future years would witness great friction between the newly formed progressive PUK and the predominantly tribal Barzani-led KDP. As a consequence, serious fighting erupted between KDP and PUK militia, which affected not only Kurds but those Assyrians caught in the crossfire.

After the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and further instability in the northern region, the KDP revived its alliance with Tehran. The regime in Baghdad took that opportunity to begin a new concentrated effort to eliminate dissident elements (especially those seen as working for the Iranian state), which would usher in the destruction of nearly the entire territory inhabited by Assyrians, namely 'Amēdīyāh, including Barwari Bala and the Nerwa and Rekan regions, in 1977 and 1978. This thirty-kilometer prohibited zone stretched along the Turkey-Iraq and Iran-Iraq borders.

The ethnic cleansing of Assyrians from their ancestral homeland and continued policies of cultural genocide are fundamental components of the identity deconstruction the Assyrians faced in Iraq. This continued demographic shifting produced two significant byproducts detrimental to the Assyrians: Their initial relocation to Arab-

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<sup>470</sup> Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2003), 80.

dominated cities in southern Iraq severed the “natural tie between the people and their land.”<sup>471</sup> And further, the “legal” confiscation of their land indicated that any future settlement could just as simply be repossessed by government officials.

### **Otherizing Assyrians: The Consequences of Urbanization and Arabization**

To the early “Iraqi” populace, the Assyrians were portrayed as foreign people. The father of Arab nationalist history, George Antonius, suitably describes the early Iraqi [Arab] attitude toward the Assyrians:

... they are to the majority of ‘Iraqis an alien race with an alien religion, bound to ‘Iraq by no strong ties of patriotism or loyalty and having originally no claim to the special consideration of the ‘Iraqi Government.<sup>472</sup>

This ideology, taken a step further, gave the atrocities at Simele a facade of inevitability and necessity (though Antonius himself never goes so far, and in fact condemns the violence and atrocities that occurred at Simele.) Such notions are prevalent in the anti-indigenous literature of colonial states. This otherization, in essence a form of dehumanization, is echoed in L. Frank Baum’s comments concerning the Lakota people in the United States in the 1890s:

The pioneer has before declared that our safety depends upon the total extermination of the Indians. Having wronged them for centuries, we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth.... Otherwise, we may expect future years to be as full of trouble with the redskins as those have been in the past.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East*, 190.

<sup>472</sup> George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (NY: Lippincott Company, 1939), 365. Despite this “alienizing” comment, Antonius did condemn the actual violence. See also Colonial Office No. 58, *Special Report by His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Progress of ‘Iraq During the Period 1920-1931*, (London: 1931), 266.

<sup>473</sup> Barbara Chiarello, “Deflected Missives: Zitkala- a’s Resistance and Its (Un)Containment,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 17.3 (2005), 9 based on the 3 January 1891 *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*. See also Eduardo Del Rio, *Misanthropology: A Florilegium of Bahumbuggerly* (Don Lazaro Translations, 2003), 161.

Like Antonius's statement, whether aptly a reflection of the author's sentiments or a reflection of the general attitude of the masses, Baum's words were received in a similar light. Though the intent with which Baum employed these attitudes is highly contested,<sup>474</sup> Barbara Chiarello asserts that this white American nationalist ideology was unmistakably reflected by (and in many cases developed by) American authorities, including President Theodore Roosevelt, who stated,

All men of sane and wholesome thought must dismiss with impatient contempt the plea that these continents should be reserved for the use of scattered savage tribes, whose life was but a few degrees less meaningless, squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they held joint ownership.... The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under a debt to him. American and Indian, Boer and Zulu ... in each case the victor ... has laid deep the foundations for the future greatness of a mighty people.<sup>475</sup>

The misconstructions of an "alien race" or "alien religion" and of a "savage" also dominate British commentaries concerning the "forty thousand" Nestorians formerly of the Hakkâri region living in Iraq following World War I.<sup>476</sup> The arbitrary borders created by the Western powers promoted this "alienness," despite thousands of years of Assyrian culture, and Christian religion in the newly created Iraq—a Christianity built by the same ethnic Assyrians as those living in the Hakkâri farther north. The promotion and propagation of such negative or biased material concerning the Assyrians can be credited to British- and Arab-controlled media outlets, which normalized ethnic and religious enmity. These normalized hatreds influenced socio-economic standing and developed

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<sup>474</sup> Some scholars remind critics of Baum to remember the intrinsic sarcasm and mockery in much of his writing.

<sup>475</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 218. Also quoted in Chiarello, "Deflected Missives: Zitkala's Resistance and Its (Un)Containment," (2005), 10.

<sup>476</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 267. This is also true of Winston Churchill's conception of the Kurds when he stated in 1919, "I am strongly in favor of using poisoned gas against uncivilized tribes" something he desired to do once again against the Germans in 1944.

into an everyday deprecating vernacular, referring to the Assyrians as *fellehi* (in Arabic, “farmer” or “peasant”), even by their urbanized brethren.

During the 1970s, the Iraqi government began a campaign of slowly eradicating or amalgamating the Assyrian identity through specific policies. Perhaps a prime example of this is the 1977 census, which omitted the category *Assyrian* from its records. This trend, coupled with an attempt at continuous Arabization policies, both subtle and overt, began to affect the whole of Iraq.<sup>477</sup>

The development and propagation of Iraqi nationalism (as a segment of Arab nationalism) and Pan-Arabism had a lasting impact on the non-Arab minorities in Iraq.<sup>478</sup> Though Arab nationalism was intrinsically embedded within Iraqi nationalism, the two did differ in some respects, especially depending upon the reigning power. Whereas Qassim’s regime used ancient Mesopotamian iconography, the Ba’th party furthered this process by combining it with Arab symbolism making the two virtually inseparable.<sup>479</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar stirs in me everything relating to pre-Islamic ancient history. And what is most important to me about Nebuchadnezzar is the link between the Arabs’ abilities and the liberation of Palestine. Nebuchadnezzar was, after all, an Arab from Iraq, albeit ancient Iraq.<sup>480</sup>

This ideology, though not problematic in and of itself, when imbedded into Iraqi educational patterns becomes indoctrination. This combination swallowed an Assyrian nationalism, which became frailer with each new government policy directed toward

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<sup>477</sup> The importance of the census for imagining and unimagining identities is discussed in detail by Benedict Anderson. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 164-170.

<sup>478</sup> The case of Iraqi Jews is difficult as the community outside of northern Iraq was predominantly Arabized. See Batatu, *The Old Social Classes & The Revolutionary Movements In Iraq* (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 258. Unfortunately, Batatu refers to the Jews in the entirety of Iraq. Most Aramaic-speaking members of the Jewish religious community living in the northern regions intermarried regularly with Christians and had mostly identical language, customs, and traditions to those other Assyrians of the region.

<sup>479</sup> Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: The Militarist Origins of Tyranny*, 160.

<sup>480</sup> Fuad Matar, *Saddam Hussein: A Biographical and Ideological Account of His Leadership Style and Crisis Management* (London: Highlight Publications, 1990), 235.

education and social status, and with each demographic shift, starting with the disparity left following the Simele genocidal massacres.

The trend of Arabization is perhaps succinctly illuminated by Batatu in his descriptions of nationality (“nation”), based on the various data tables throughout his exhaustive study on Iraq. As Arabization spread rapidly through the urban populace, especially among the elite, most metropolitan Christians, including most urban Nestorians, Chaldeans, Syrian Orthodox, and Syrian Catholic religious communities, diffidently accepted the “Arab” appellation for various reasons involving socio-economic and political survival. Those who did not were treated accordingly:

Abd Salam and Abu Sargon [of the Syrian Catholic community] were arrested and tortured for identifying themselves as ‘Assyrian’ [Ashuri] in the 1977 Iraqi census.<sup>481</sup>

Though almost certainly out of necessity and fear, as illustrated by the harsh government reaction above, in some cases later generations of Assyrians came to enjoy socio-economic benefit or profit and were further swept along within the rising tide of Iraqi-Arab nationalism, fostered initially by print media and later audio and visual media controlled by the Arabist Ba‘th party.<sup>482</sup> These socioeconomic changes would further the governmental process of cultural genocide.

To say the ideologies of Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism in Iraq were standard is shows only part of the picture. Early on, some radical writers demanded identification of pre-Arab, pre-Islamic civilizations with Iraq and as part of its Arab heritage. Others, such as ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, president of Iraq in the mid-1960s, saw such early civilizations as part of the history and land of Iraq, but certainly not part of the modern

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<sup>481</sup> Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, *North Iraq Human Rights Field Mission*, 2006  
<http://www.iraqdemocracyproject.org/pdf/Northern%20Iraq%20Human%20Rights%20Field%20Mission.pdf> (Accessed 20 September 2008)

<sup>482</sup> See Batatu, *The Old Social Classes & The Revolutionary Movements In Iraq*, 40 & 700, and Annexes Tables A-27 – A-29 (references to “Arabized Assyrians” and “Arabized Chaldeans”).

Iraqi Arab identity. The greatest attempt to identify the pre-Islamic Mesopotamian cultures with modern Iraqi Arab identity was done mostly by the regime itself, and more extensively during the Iran-Iraq war, most likely to garner greater solidarity.<sup>483</sup> Arab nationalism and Arabization used subtle ideas inserted in the educational system to influence a populace that was both ethnically and culturally diverse.<sup>484</sup> This occurred quite early in the formation of the Middle East:

This was done in the 1920s by postulating Arabia as the cradle of all the Semites who had migrated over the centuries and paved the way for the latest wave of Arab immigration, or by co-opting all pre-Islamic cultures of the Near East into an evolving Arab identity.<sup>485</sup>

Thus the “Semitic” Assyrian cultural identity (including from the ancient and Syriac Christian eras) was appropriated as part of a greater Arab identity, which defined Iraqi Arab nationalism. Since various Arab intellectuals spoke of conflicting views concerning this appropriation, the Arabism of the later government, an assimilatory Arabism, won out over all others despite attempts to contain it. Under Qassim, secular left-leaning Iraqi nationalism allowed for the inclusion of various cultures as Iraqi, but not as Arab.

## **Consequences of Non-Compliance**

The pressures experienced by less compliant members of the Assyrian community would manifest strongly. The following persons will serve as cases in point of the suffering visited upon Assyrian individuals by the Iraqi government. In many cases the

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<sup>483</sup> Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History, and Ideology in the Formation of Ba‘thist Iraq, 1968-89* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 28.

<sup>484</sup> The forced indivisibility of Iraqi identity under the Ba‘th party as seen in the slogan *l’Umma ‘Arabiyya Wāḥida, wḍāt Risāla Khālida*, “One Arab People, with an Immortal Mission.”

<sup>485</sup> Youssef Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History – Nation and State in the Arab World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 25.

reason for their detention ranged from refusal to join the ruling Ba‘th party to performing Assyrian patriotic songs and poetry:

### Y. C.

It was Wednesday, January 5, 1977, in the evening. As always (almost every day) I left home on my way to the Assyrian Cultural Club. I got to the main street and stood on the sidewalk. The next day I woke up in the trauma hospital with my brother and a friend by my side. I asked where I was and they told me that a pick-up truck hit me and I was in the hospital. Because I was sedated I went back to sleep. Because I didn't remember anything about the accident, I thought it was really a normal car accident. My brother told me that the truck hit me into a steel electric pole and the lights went off. He went out to see what happened and he saw me and the driver. He caught the driver until the police came and took him. A couple days later, an old man and an officer, in air force uniform, came to visit me. The old man was in tears. He said that he was the father of the driver who hit me. He asked me to drop the charges against him in order to be released from jail. I said not so fast. The officer said that he was the brother of the boy. Three days later the officer came alone and said, "Do you remember me? I'm the cousin of the driver. I came to ask you what is your decision regarding the charges against my cousin." Although I was in bad shape and in pain, I remembered that he previously said that he was the driver's brother. So I felt something fishy in this case. I told him, "I haven't made a decision, yet."

A couple days after that, the officer came to me again and said, "Listen Y., I am a friend of the family and if you want to get out of this hospital, you better sign these papers to drop the charges." I immediately said, "Give me the pen," and I signed the papers. There was a small biscuit factory next to our house and on the main street. A while after the accident, the officer said to my father, "I will tell you something, but you have to swear on the Bible and on the lives of your children that you not tell a soul, including Y." My father swore. The man said that the factory was closed but he was in it, and he saw the pick-up truck idling on the side street. "As soon as he saw Y the truck moved and hit your son." My father never talked about that, but he decided to leave Iraq like many others were doing. I didn't understand because he was always against leaving Iraq. After I left Iraq, my father told the story to my nephew on the day he was leaving Iraq. At that time, the Ba‘th party was ruling, but the president was Ahmad Hassan Al-Bakr and Saddam Hussain was the vice president. It was known by Iraqis that opponents were killed in accidents or would disappear mysteriously, including the son of President Al-Bakr, who was a candidate to replace him.<sup>486</sup>

### Sami Yako

On October 19, 1978 the Iraqi government ordered the imprisonment of five Assyrian singers, songwriters, and artists. Their imprisonment lasted until November 10, 1978. The artists were reportedly tortured during their detainment. Among them were Mr. David

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<sup>486</sup> Interview, Y.C. (Darbandoke-Baghdad), 1 September 2006, Chicago, Illinois (includes follow-up email correspondence). See also Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*, 233, for similar situations which occurred during the 1980s.

Esha, Mr. Sami Yako, and Mr. Albert Oscar Baba.<sup>487</sup> Of the specific accounts, playwright and actor Sami Yako's simple refusal to join the Ba'ath party led to his imprisonment and subsequent torture. Yako was held between the 1st and 23rd November 1978 in solitary confinement, a cell measuring approximately one by two meters. Until the time of his release, the Assyrian dramatic actor was subject to mental and physical torment, including regular beatings with various instruments, electric shocks, and mental torment. Fleeing to Kuwait after his release, Yako left for England, where he was admitted as a political refugee:

I didn't leave Iraq because I wanted to. We left because I was put in prison and badly tortured for a month for singing an Assyrian nationalistic song at a party. Just before I was released, one of the Ba'ath officers in charge told me that he would be expecting weekly communication from me detailing the nationalistic activities of our community—in particular those who were meeting in the Assyrian Culture Club (Nadi Al Thaqafi).<sup>488</sup>

The policies of fear and otherization reverberated on a greater scale as Assyrians witnessed the physical destruction of their towns and villages. The impact of such policies of terror further contributed to the subversion of Assyrians as a non-entity within the Iraqi polity.

## ***Physical Impact on Villages and Towns***

### **1974–1976 Campaign**

In 1974, the Kurdish movement was renewed, and Barzani now had the backing of Israel, the United States, and Iran.<sup>489</sup> This backing, probably due to Barzani's anti-communist tendencies and the Ba'ath regime's kinder treatment of the communist party in

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<sup>487</sup> *Amnesty International Report 1979* (Amnesty International Publications: London, 1979), 158, and Aprim, *Assyrians*, 232.

<sup>488</sup> Tony Kasim, "An Interview with Sami Yako," *Nineveh Magazine*, Vol. 30, No.s 1-2 (Berkeley: Assyrian Foundation of America, 2007), 23.

<sup>489</sup> George Black, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (NY: Human Rights Watch, 1993), 6.



Iraq at the time, allowed those Kurds involved in the struggle to once again take up arms against the government. This support, especially from Iran, ceased immediately in 1975 following the signing of the Algiers Agreement between Iran and Iraq, with the settling of border disputes and the beginning of what became known in Iraq as the “border clearings.”

### Barwari Bala Sub-District

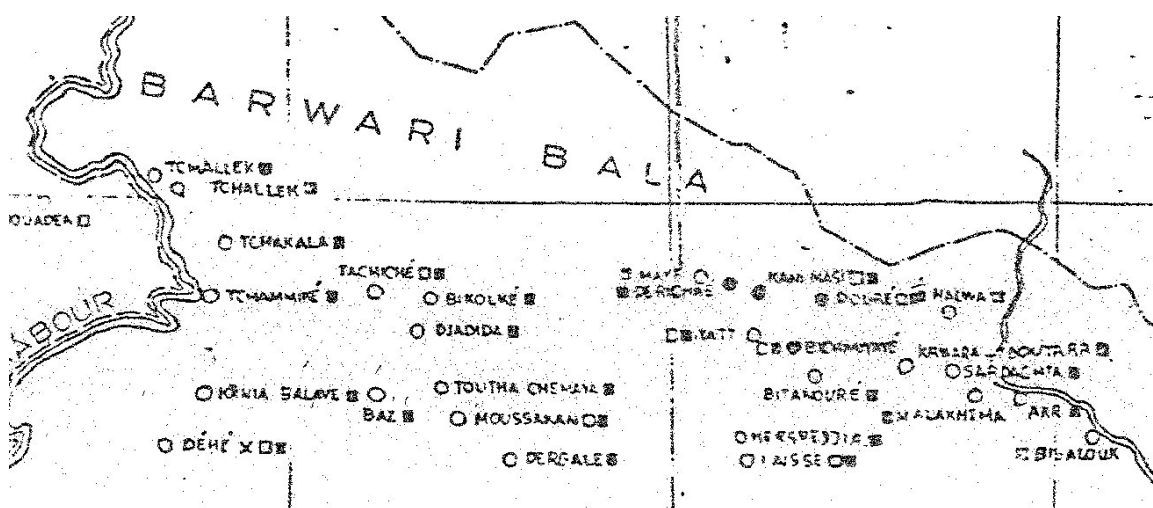


Figure 8 Omez map showing the Barwai Bala region.

The Barwari Bala region of northern Iraq contains approximately seventy-seven villages. Of these, thirty-five are entirely inhabited by Assyrians. The region is largely mountainous, and many villages remained inaccessible by car until recently. The region is bordered by Turkey to the north and the Sapna valley to the south, and rests between the Greater Zab to the west and the Khabur River to the east.<sup>490</sup>

This remoteness allowed the people of the region to retain a sense of identity and lifestyle quite different from those Assyrians of urban centers. Furthermore, the Barwar region is an ancient Nestorian enclave, and its continuous habitation and familial

<sup>490</sup> S.A. (Düre), Interview, 2 July 2007, Toronto, Canada

relations with Assyrian villages in today's Turkey speaks to both the historic continuum and the artificiality of the modern border. The border clearings would devastate almost every Assyrian village in the region, along with their symbols cultural heritage, including monuments, reliefs, and religious edifices, some over a millennium old.

**Bazif** (Latitude: 37°13'0'' N, Longitude: 43°8'60'' E)

Bazif (also spelled Ba Zive, Ba Zibbe, and Ba Dibbe) may derive from the Assyrian-Aramaic "place of bears," bears being an animal common in the Barwari Mountains. The village was first abandoned in 1942 due to pressure from local populations. This period resulted in the murder of four villagers during attacks on the village.<sup>491</sup> Bazif was then destroyed and confiscated in 1976 by pro-government forces, who resettled the region.<sup>492</sup>

### Simele District

**Avzerok Khammo** (Latitude: 37°1'11'' N, Longitude: 42°30'33'' E)

Avzerok (Avzerog) Khammo, also known as Lower Avzerok, was almost entirely Armenian. The village's name is etymologically Kurdish, meaning "yellow water." According to the 1957 census, it had 176 inhabitants. Many of these Armenians arrived as refugees from Turkey during World War I. The village was destroyed in 1975 along with its sister village, Upper Avzerok (Shano), and its fifty families were displaced.<sup>493</sup> The government allotted the village lands to Arab tribes during the Arabization period of the 1970s. The village was originally said to contain one church dedicated to St. Vartan and one school.

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<sup>491</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>492</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 42.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid, 41.

**Avzerok Shano** (Latitude: 37°1'11'' N, Longitude: 42°30'33'' E)

Avzerok (Avzerog) Shano, also known as Upper Avzerok, was entirely inhabited by Assyrians. During the government-sponsored destruction of many villages in 1975, its population numbered sixty families.<sup>494</sup> The old church of Mar Gewargis, also known as Mar Mansour, was targeted during the military operations. The government resettled the village with an entirely Arab population.

### **Bajidda-Barave**

Bajidda-Barave is located in the Slevani sub-district of Simele. The village had both an Assyrian and Kurdish population and a school within village grounds. According to the census, its Assyrian inhabitants numbered 199 in 1957. In 1975 the village was attacked, and many houses were destroyed. Some of its remaining thirty Assyrian families were forced to flee.<sup>495</sup> In 1976 the demography changed as the regime settled several Arab families in the village.<sup>496</sup>

### **Bajidda-Kandal**

In 1957 the Bajidda-Kandal Assyrian population numbered 127 persons. The village was destroyed in 1975 along with its sister village, Bajidda-Barave.

### **Hawresk**

Hawresk contained an Assyrian population with a tiny Armenian segment for many years during the twentieth century. By 1957 its population included 238 Assyrians. Prior to its destruction in 1975, Hawresk was home to ten families.<sup>497</sup>

It was known as the village of Leon Pasha al Armani, who had accompanied the

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>497</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

Assyrian leader (Agha) Petros Eliya in his battles with Turkish forces during World War I.<sup>498</sup>

**Ishkavdal** (Latitude: 36°55'22'' N, Longitude: 42°30'59'' E)

Ishkavdal (mentioned in *Assyrie Chrétienne* as Škafdalé) faced destruction on numerous occasions, namely in 1961 and again in 1975, when the village's twenty remaining families were displaced.<sup>499</sup> J. M. Fiey mentions the hamlet briefly as seeing the return of some Christian families, most likely following a cease fire.<sup>500</sup> Prior to its annihilation in 1975, the village was also the site of a local school.<sup>501</sup>

**Karrana**

Karrana was settled by Nestorian refugees of the Baz tribe of Hakkâri in 1920. It was first razed during the Simele genocide in 1933. Later, 110 people returned to rebuild the village.<sup>502</sup> Karrana was destroyed again in 1976, and its Assyrian population displaced.

**Mavan**

In recent history, Mavan (or Mawana) was settled by Nestorians from the Tkhuma region and Rumta in Upper Tiyari, in 1920.<sup>503</sup> Its inhabitants fled to Syria after the 1933 massacres, and the village was again settled by other Assyrian families. In 1957 its population totaled sixty-one inhabitants. By 1975, the remaining ten families who managed to survive the various conflicts in the region were forced to

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<sup>498</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 21.

<sup>499</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004* and Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 21.

<sup>500</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 695.

<sup>501</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>502</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure IV, 11.

<sup>503</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

flee their village. Some returned following the government-sponsored destruction only to be forcibly removed again in 1984.<sup>504</sup>

### **Nāṣerīyā**

Nāṣerīyā is located in the district of Simele and is mentioned briefly by Fiey in his study as having three Chaldean households and an ancient church dedicated to Mar ‘Abdisho’, most likely the same monk who had given his name to the monastery of Nerem.<sup>505</sup> The village was looted and destroyed during the Simele massacres, when it contained forty-one people in eighteen houses.<sup>506</sup> Nāṣerīyā met with a similar fate as that of its surrounding villages from 1974 to 1975.

### **Qarawilla** (Latitude: 37°2’60’’ N, Longitude: 44°38’60’’ E)

Qarawilla, or Qarawola, lies on the Khabur River on the Turkish border. In 1957, 334 individuals dwelled in this village. The previous regime destroyed it in 1975 and displaced its one hundred families, destroying their seventy homes and the church of Mart Maryam. The village was resettled by Yezidis, who were displaced to that area by the Iraqi regime.

### **Reqawa**

Reqawa, or Rekawa, was most recently settled in 1920 by Nestorian refugees from Baz, Nochiya, and Mar Bishu in Hakkâri. Most of these settlers fled yet again to the Khabur basin in Syria after the 1933 massacres. Those who remained were finally forced out from 1974 to 1976 during an increase in government

<sup>504</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>505</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 550.

<sup>506</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure IV, 11.

military activity and external threats. The village was immediately resettled by Kurdish militia and their families.<sup>507</sup>

## **Al-Sheikhan District**

### **Bendawaye**

Bendawaye, or Beth Handawaya, in the Mosul region is a small village three to four miles west of Alqosh. The village is close to an Assyrian bas-relief known as Šero Malakta, which is also the site of many monastic grottos.<sup>508</sup> In 1913 this village contained one hundred Chaldeans, with one priest serving one chapel.<sup>509</sup> During the Simele genocide in 1933, 124 people dwelled in the village, in thirty-six houses.<sup>510</sup> The church of Mar Gewargis once contained a New Testament, written circa 1772. Arabs were resettled in the village in 1976.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>508</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1963), 551.

<sup>509</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 485.

<sup>510</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure IV, 11.

<sup>511</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 42.

## Zakho Region

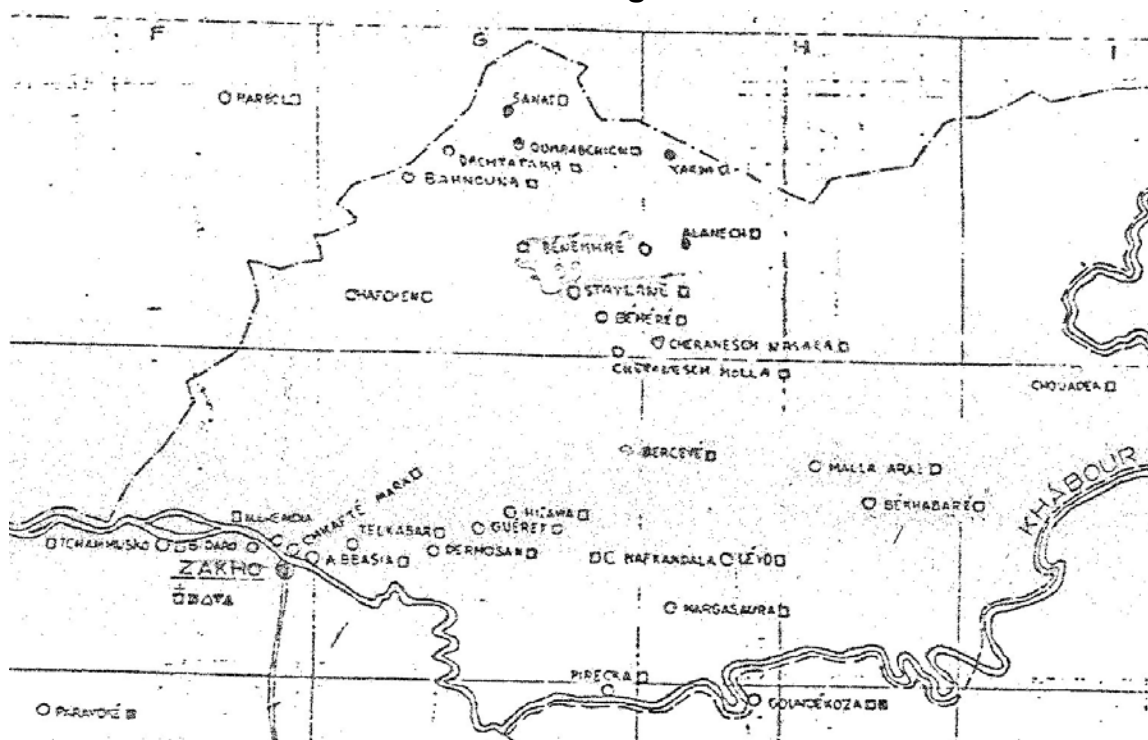


Figure 9 Omez map showing the Zakho region.

**Alanish** (Latitude: 37°17'30'' N, Longitude: 42°52'18'' E)

Alanish, sometimes Alanash, is located in the Zakho region, in the sub-district of Sindi. In 1913 it was home to seventy Catholics, with a priest, a single church, and small chapel.<sup>512</sup> In 1957 the population rose to 264 inhabitants. In 1975 government forces targeted the village during the infighting between forces loyal to Barzani and those loyal to the government of Iraq. Alanish's ancient church, Mar Adde, and school were destroyed at this time. Its forty families who escaped were never able to return.<sup>513</sup>

**Avkani** (Latitude: 37°10'52'' N, Longitude: 42°55'21'' E)

<sup>512</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 520.

<sup>513</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

Avkani's (also spelled Avgni and Avgani) name is Kurdish, meaning "spring water." The village was destroyed in 1976 during the border clearings, and its Assyrian inhabitants displaced.

**Bahnona** (Latitude: 37°18'40'' N, Longitude: 42°43'18'' E)

Bahnona is located close to Alanish in the Sindi sub-district of Zakho. Both Jews and Christians lived in the village until the expulsion of Jews from Iraq in 1948. It was home to 111 inhabitants at the time of the 1957 census. In 1975 the village was destroyed, and its thirty families displaced.<sup>514</sup>

**Bajuwa**

Bajuwa was mostly settled by Assyrians from the village of Yarda in the Zakho region.<sup>515</sup> In 1957 its population numbered seventy-nine people, and in 1976, when the village was finally eliminated, it was home to five families.

**Bakhluja**

The village of Bakhluja (or Bachloudja, according to the 1961 Dominican map) is located east of Şoriya and southwest of Zakho, bypassing Avzerok Shanno. In 1957 its population numbered 209 inhabitants, and 1975 it was home to eight families.<sup>516</sup> In 1976 Arabs were settled in the village as part of the government's ethnic cleansing campaign of northern Iraq.

**Bedār** (Latitude: 37°8'54'' N, Longitude: 42°39'20'' E)

The village of Bedār, possibly Aramaic for "place of battle" or "place of the sheepfold," is well known for being the birthplace of famous Syriac scholar Fr.

<sup>514</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 17.

<sup>515</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>516</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.



Paulos Bedari.<sup>517</sup> The village is located approximately sixty-three miles north of Mosul in the Zakho region. In 1850 Badger noted fourteen families and one church within the Catholic diocese of the Jezirah.<sup>518</sup> In 1913 its inhabitants numbered four hundred Catholic villagers, with a priest, church, and school.<sup>519</sup> By 1957 the population of Bedār had grown to 508, and in 1961 it reached 868 (ninety-five families). Just before its demolition in 1975 by the Iraqi regime, there were 130 Assyrian families in Bedār.<sup>520</sup> The old church of the Virgin Mary also suffered ruin during this period.

### **Benakhre**

Approximately ten Assyrian families dwelled in the village of Benakhre in the Zakho region prior to its destruction in 1975, during the government-sponsored military offensives in the region.<sup>521</sup>

### **Dashtnakh** (Latitude: 37°19'36'' N, Longitude: 42°44'19'' E)

The meaning of Dashtnakh (also spelled Dasht-Nakh and Dashtatak), similar to Esnakh, stems from *dashta d'Nakh*, or the “field of Noah,” following the story that pieces of a ship were found in the region that were later connected to the biblical flood narrative. Such naming of villages is prevalent not only in Iraq, but also in Turkey along the Jebel Cudi range. Dashtnakh was settled by Assyrians from nearby Esnakh (Sanaat), three miles to the east, and was destroyed during

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<sup>517</sup> Father Paulos Bedari was also a strong advocate of the anti-government movement of the early 1960s. See photograph in Ismet Cheriff Vanly, *The Revolution of Iraki Kurdistan: Part 1 September 1961 to December 1963* (Committee for the Defense of the Kurdish People's Rights, April 1965), 27.

<sup>518</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 175.

<sup>519</sup> Tfinkdji, “L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui,” 520.

<sup>520</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

the border clearings in 1975. Prior to that, it was home to fifteen Assyrian families.<sup>522</sup>

**Deirabūn** (Latitude: 37°5'8'' N, Longitude: 42°25'41'' E)

Deirabūn, meaning “monastery of our Father,” is situated close to Feshkhābur on the Iraqi border. The village became infamous during the ethnic cleansing of the Assyrians in 1933. According to the 1957 census it had a population of 657 inhabitants. In 1976 Arabs forcibly resettled Deirabun, along with neighboring Feshkhābur, three miles to the west. Though the village was predominantly Christian Assyrian, the Arabization tactics of the regime transferred some Arabized Yezidi families into the region during that same year.<sup>523</sup>

**Derashīsh** (Latitude: 37°19'36'' N, Longitude: 42°47'58'' E)

Derashīsh, also known as ‘Ūmra and ‘Ūmra Shghisha, originally a Nestorian enclave, is mentioned by Tfinkdji in 1913 as home to two hundred Chaldean converts with a single church.<sup>524</sup> By 1957 the population had increased to 361 people. The population decreased drastically in the years of the armed autonomist movement from 1961 to 1963. By 1975, at the time of its destruction, the village was home to fifty families, with a school and the ancient church of Mar Ephrem.<sup>525</sup>

**Feshkhābur** (Latitude: 37°4'5'' N, Longitude: 42°22'42'' E)

In the valley west of Zakho, Feshkhābur (also spelled Pešabūr) is located along the Tigris River on the Iraqi border with Syria and Turkey, approximately thirty

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>524</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 520.

<sup>525</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

miles south of Jezirah. The village's name may derive from the Kurdish meaning "against the Khabur River." During Badger's journey to the region, he mentions the village as part of the Jezirah diocese of the Chaldean Church. At that time (1850), Badger counted sixty families served by two priests and one active church.<sup>526</sup> By 1913 Tfinkdji reported thirteen hundred Catholic families in the town, with two priests serving one church and a school.<sup>527</sup> During World War I, Feshkhābur was attacked on July 11, 1915 by the sons of Mohammed Agha Atroshi.<sup>528</sup> On July 15, 1915, according to French Dominican missionary Fr. Jacques Rhétoré, nine hundred people were killed when the Miran tribe sacked the town.<sup>529</sup> Feshkhābur witnessed the passage of Malik Yako Ishmael and his group of the Tigris River to Syria during the 1933 uprising. According to the 1957 census, Feshkhābur had a population of 899 residents. It contained 175 homes, and 150 families were living in the village after the remainder had fled in the aftermath of the 1961 uprising. In 1963 the Syrian army entered the village, and Kurdish mercenaries, fursan, burned down the village, led by Farhat Haji Agha al-Kurdi of the Sindi tribe. In 1974, as a result of the renewed tensions, its inhabitants fled to Syria, crossing the Tigris River, and remained there for six months. They returned to rebuild the village a year later. However, in 1976 the village was evacuated and its Assyrian inhabitants forced to leave due to its highly important military location at the Turkey-Syria border. Immediately following this incident, Arab families from Mosul were resettled in the region by

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<sup>526</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, vol I, 175.

<sup>527</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 505.

<sup>528</sup> Gaunt, et al., *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 244.

<sup>529</sup> Jacques Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes: Souvenirs de la guerre sainte proclamée par les Turcs contre les chrétiens en 1915* (Paris: Cerf, 2005), 321.

the Iraqi regime. The village's cultural and religious structures suffered during the civil war and during the relocation and destruction, including the fourteenth-century church of Mart Maryam. The church of Mar Gewargis was built in 1964 after the civil war.

**Istablan** (Latitude: 37°13'60'' N, Longitude: 42°47'60'' E)

Istablan, or Stablan, was an Assyrian-Kurdish village for many years. The village had a population of just five Assyrian families in 1961, which increased to twenty families in 1975.<sup>530</sup> Following the destruction of numerous border villages in the Zakho region in 1974 to 1975, the village was destroyed, and its church of Mar Addai was left severely damaged.

**Sanaat** (Latitude: 37°21'10'' N, Longitude: 42°47'9'' E)

Esnakh, as Sanaat is referred to in the native Aramaic of the region, probably finds its meaning in the phrase "wall of Noah" (as it sits on the mountainside), in reference to the biblical legends of Noah's Ark found throughout the region. In 1913 it was home to six hundred Chaldeans (150 families), with a priest, church, and school.<sup>531</sup> In 1957 the population totaled 585, and prior to its destruction in 1975 by the Ba'ath regime, it was home to 120 families with a school.<sup>532</sup> The ancient churches of Mart Maryam and Mar Sahdona were also destroyed. Due to its proximity to the border with Turkey, locals of Sanaat would regularly visit villages of the Bohtan region and would regularly marry villagers of Harbol village. This borderless image of the region was commonplace to Assyrians before the Western colonial division of the modern Middle East, showing that

<sup>530</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>531</sup> Tfinkdji "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 520.

<sup>532</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

current borders are not reflective of the continuous Assyrian settlements of northern Mesopotamia and Anatolia.<sup>533</sup>

### **Shuwadin**

Shuwadin, or Shudin, is located approximately three and half miles west of Bazif. Approximately 120 inhabitants dwelled in Shudin in 1957. During the renewed internal strife, especially between Kurdish factions and the Iraq regime, Shudin was destroyed in 1975, and thirty-five families forced to flee.<sup>534</sup>

### **Yarda**

Yarda, Aramaic for “well” or “tank,” is located in the Zakho region, in the sub-district of Sindi. In 1913 it was home to 250 Chaldeans, with a priest and two churches.<sup>535</sup> In 1957 the population totaled 280, and prior to its destruction in 1975 by the Ba‘th regime, it was home to sixty families with a school.<sup>536</sup> The ancient church of Mar Addai was destroyed along with the village.

## **1977–1978 Campaign**

As reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW), under the terms of the 1975 Algiers Agreement, Iraq began to clear a *cordon sanitaire* along its northern borders, in particular with Iran. HRW further reported, based on correspondence, that initially a five-kilometer corridor was created, and that it later expanded to ten, then fifteen, and eventually thirty

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<sup>533</sup> See Ephrem-Isa Yousif, *Parfums d'enfance a Sanate*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993) for a comprehensive look at the village.

<sup>534</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>535</sup> Tfinkdji, “L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui,” 520.

<sup>536</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

kilometers.<sup>537</sup> Families were told they were to be removed from the region. As they left with few belongings to collective towns farther south, their villages and churches were dynamited and bulldozed.<sup>538</sup> According to the Ba’th’s own sources, some twenty-eight thousand families were removed from their villages in two months.<sup>539</sup> Initially, this “corridor” was fashioned in hopes of preventing further Iranian support to the Kurdish movement in Iraq. The question is why regions such as Barwar, along the Turkish border and heavily Assyrian, were targeted.

### Barwari Bala Sub-District

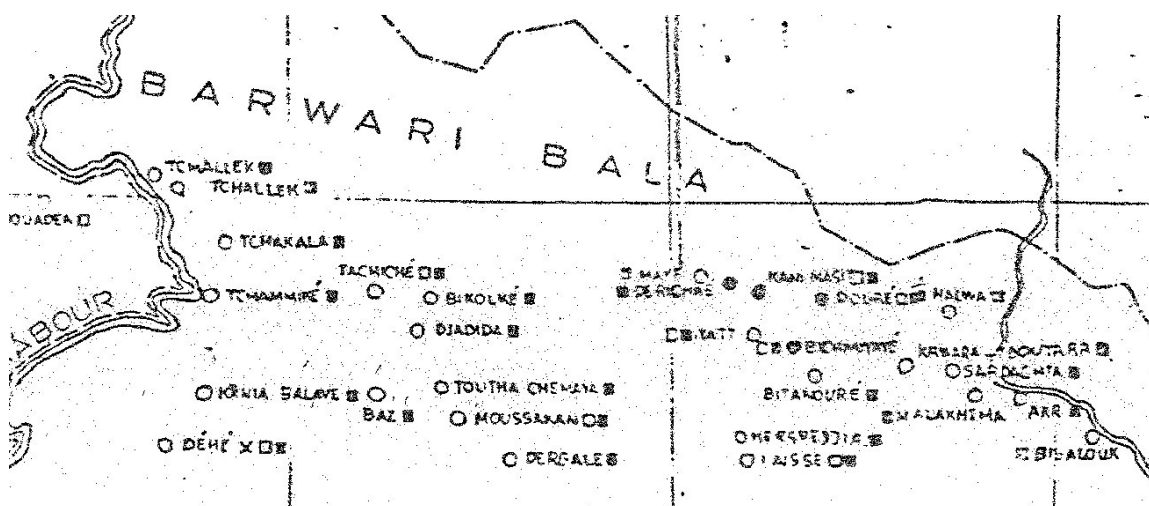


Figure 10 Omez map showing the Barwari Bala region

**Betannūrē** (Latitude: 37°12'3'' N, Longitude: 43°28'6'' E)

Betannūrē (also spelled Be-Tannūrē and Beth Tannūrē), meaning “place of stone ovens,” is an ancient Assyrian stronghold containing the ruins of an old fortress.<sup>540</sup> Mentioned as a religiously Jewish village by Badger during his travels

<sup>537</sup> George Black, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (NY: Human Rights Watch, 1993), 37. Footnote 29 mentions Resool's work again. It is evident that HRW is dependent on Resool's work for most of their information concerning the Anfal Campaign and the 1978 border clearings.

<sup>538</sup> S.A. (Düre), Interview, 2 July 2007, Toronto, Canada

<sup>539</sup> *Al-Thawra*, 18 September 1978

<sup>540</sup> K.S. (Düre), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

in the mid-nineteenth century, Betannūrē is located in the Barwar region east of Hayis on the Bedu rivulet.<sup>541</sup> Prior to 1949, when the Jews were forced out of the country, it was home to fifteen Jewish families. The village still contains the remains of an ancient fort and a tenth-century synagogue.<sup>542</sup> Many Nestorian families had lived alongside their Jewish counterparts, and remained after 1949. In 1957 its population totaled twenty-five, and in 1961 there were fifteen families (five households) in the village. Prior to being destroyed in 1978 by pro-government militia, it was home to twenty-four families.<sup>543</sup>

**Beshmīyaye** (Latitude: 37°12'10'' N, Longitude: 43°27'49'' E)

In 1850 Beshmīyaye (Beth Shmīyaye) was home to six Nestorian families, served by a priest, with one functioning church and a shrine dedicated to Mar Ephrem, *d'aqrwe*, known for protecting inhabitants from “scorpions.”<sup>544</sup> During World War I, Beshmīyaye suffered significantly, with half its population killed as a result of the fighting and massacres.<sup>545</sup> In 1957 the village population had reached 163. In 1961 there were sixty families in approximately thirty houses in the village. By 1978 fifty families dwelled in Be-Shmīyaye before they were forcibly expelled during the border-clearing urbanization policy of the Ba‘th regime.<sup>546</sup>

**Bequlke** (Latitude: 37°13'7'' N, Longitude: 43°16'57'' E)

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<sup>541</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 380-381.

<sup>542</sup> Eshoo, Majed, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 4 and K.S. (Düre), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>543</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>544</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>545</sup> William Walker Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan* (NY : American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1916), 54.

<sup>546</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

In 1850 Bequalke was home to five Nestorian families.<sup>547</sup> In 1957 its residents numbered seventy-four, including a few Kurdish families. The village was almost emptied of its inhabitants during the 1960s uprising, but some residents remained. In 1978 the village was home to eight Assyrian families, who were forcibly deported by the government as it was marked for demolition. Bequalke's school and church of Mar Abraham were also destroyed during the process.<sup>548</sup>

### **Butara**

Butara, or Botara, has long been an inhabited village in the Barwari region. In 1957 its population totaled forty-three, and in 1961 there were twelve Assyrian families (six households) in the village, as well as a small number of Kurds. Prior to being destroyed along with the church of Mar Gewargis in 1978 by the Ba'ath regime, it was home to eight Assyrian families.<sup>549</sup>

### **Challik** (Latitude: 37°15'1'' N, Longitude: 43°11'2'' E)

Challik (also Tchallek, or Tcalluk, as referred to by Badger) is divided into upper and lower districts and is located near Tashish in the western part of the Barwar region. In 1850 it was home to forty families, with the church of Mar Mushe, served by a priest.<sup>550</sup> Most of Challik's residents fled to Urmia for safety during 1915 and 1916, though half of its population perished due to wounds and exposure.<sup>551</sup> By 1933 there were approximately 210 inhabitants living in the village. In 1957 its population totaled 519. In 1961 there were four hundred families (two hundred households) in the village, and prior to its destruction in

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<sup>547</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>548</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>549</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>550</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 394.

<sup>551</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.



1978, around one hundred families still dwelled in the village with a school.<sup>552</sup>

The church of Mar Mushe (first built in 1100 and restored in 1860) suffered heavy damage during the campaigns and was mostly destroyed.

### **Cham Dostina**

In 1961 there were three families dwelling in Cham Dostina at the onset of the civil war. Though the village was affected during this period, little detailed information remains. Just prior to its destruction in 1978 by the border clearings, it was home to five families.<sup>553</sup>

**Chaqala Lower** (Latitude: 37°13'23'' N, Longitude: 43°11'36'' E)

**Chaqala Upper** (Latitude: 37°13'51'' N, Longitude: 43°11'28'' E)

Located east of Tashish, Chaqala (or Jaqala) is divided into an upper and lower district. In 1957 the combined population of Upper and Lower Chaqala totaled 103 individuals, and prior to its destruction in 1978 during the border clearings, Upper Chaqala was home to thirty-five families and Lower Chaqala, twenty families.<sup>554</sup> Following the village's destruction, most of its inhabitants fled the region to Turkey, Iran, and other regions of Iraq.

**Dūre** (Latitude: 37°13'24'' N, Longitude: 43°28'7'' E)

The village of Dūre lies along the border of Iraq and Turkey, not far from the Lower Tyari villages of Līzān and Zerni, with whom there are many ancestral ties. The region has many ancient sites including the remains of a fortress on the western mountain said to date to an earlier Assyrian period, which gives some insight into its probable etymology. The village name may be Akkadian *dūrum*,

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<sup>552</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 7 and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>553</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

meaning “fortress.” As early as Badger’s mid-nineteenth-century trips to the region, there had been longstanding animosity between the Assyrians and Kurds, which was voiced by the Barwar region’s then bishop, Yeshu‘yab. The region had already been emptied of one-half its Nestorian population in the 1850s.<sup>555</sup> It was quite apparent that the Dominican missions had caused a negative situation, even in these remote regions, as Bishop Yeshu‘yab mentioned to English missionary Rev. F. N. Hezeall. Thus this period saw a host of new religious problems brought in by the French-led Catholic church missions on the one hand, and the English-led Protestant missions on the other. The internal divisions that these interventions fostered would become unfavorable for the Assyrians internally, and create external conflicts with Kurds and others.<sup>556</sup>

The Nestorian bishop Mar Youalah (Yab-Alaha) occupied his episcopal see in Dūre until the 1970s; the last bishop to carry the name *Youalah* was poisoned in 1972. In 1850 Dūre was home to twenty Assyrian families served by four priests.<sup>557</sup> Thirteen bishops sat on the episcopal see of Dūre in recent history, making the village a significant religious center of Eastern Christianity. During World War I, Dūre was home to about two hundred inhabitants. During the war, thirty of its residents were either killed or carried off (specifically women and children), and ninety died in the vicinity of Urmia.<sup>558</sup> By 1957 the village population totaled 296.

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<sup>555</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 381.

<sup>556</sup> Margoliouth & Heazell, *Kurds and Christians* (London: Wells Gardner, 1913), 151-152. Such ‘Western’ work was as destructive of an integrated Assyrian identity and progress as governmental policies in the later Iraqi state.

<sup>557</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>558</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

Dūre has long been an important site as both a religious and secular location for Assyrians. Due to its strategic importance, the village faced the brunt of a napalm attack in 1968, along with other Assyrian villages of the Barwar region. Prior to its demolition on August 8, 1978, one hundred Assyrian families (seventy-five households) dwelled in Dūre.<sup>559</sup> The village also had a school and two ancient churches: Mar Gewargis (first built in 909) and the fourth-century monastery of Mar Qayyoma, known also as the burial place of nine bishops of the Church of the East. Some of the manuscripts of the church have been preserved, including “The usefulness of Aristotle’s writings,” dated to 1224, which speaks to the long cultural and intellectual history of the region.<sup>560</sup> Two shrines to Mart Maryam and Mar Pius, and four cemeteries were situated within the village.

The churches, along with all the houses, were first dynamited and then bulldozed by the Iraq regime during the border clearings of the late 1970s. Simultaneously, the entirety of the village’s farms and apple orchards were burned.<sup>561</sup> This was the same fate faced by all the Assyrian villages of the Barwari Bala district between 1960 and the Anfal campaign. In some cases, villages faced destruction numerous times during that thirty-year span. Dūre is also home to the *gippa d-miyya*, “cave of water,” which is said to contain ancient wall paintings, and the *gippa d-dermana*, “cave of medicinal compounds,” named for its concentration of potassium nitrate and what is probably sulfur, both key

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<sup>559</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>560</sup> Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians in Eastern Turkey and Iran*, 65.

<sup>561</sup> Amir Odisho, “Dūrī,” *al-Fikr al-Masihi*, July-Sept, no 317-318 (Baghdad: Dominican Fathers, 1996), 24-25.

components in the production of gunpowder.<sup>562</sup> Though some villagers were offered recompense for their homes after their removal from the region, it was a paltry sum in comparison with the destruction. Many of the families were sent to the collective town (*mujamma'*) or resettlement camp of Baṭufa, further evidence of the ethnic cleansing campaign.<sup>563</sup> The village was also the birthplace of the first personage to be killed during the 1961 armed resistance movement, Ethniel Shleimon.<sup>564</sup>

### **Hawsarek**

Hawsarek, or Avsarke, in the vicinity of Annūnē (Kani Masi) and was destroyed by the Ba'ṭh government during the 1977–1978 border clearings.

### **Helwā** (Latitude: 37°13'0'' N, Longitude: 43°31'0'' E)

In 1850 Helwā (also Halwā or Helwā Naṣara) was home to seven Nestorian families, with a church served by a priest.<sup>565</sup> By the census of 1957, its population numbered 194 people. At the time of the armed autonomist movement of 1961 to 1963, researcher Majed Eshoo reported forty families in the village.<sup>566</sup> These residents suffered tremendously, causing some inhabitants to flee the region. Before its elimination by the Ba'ṭh regime in 1978, Helwā was home to the old church of Mar Yonan (razed by the authorities), and its sixty families were forcibly relocated to urban areas during the government's ethnic cleansing campaign.<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> K.S. (Düre), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> See Annexes figure 36.

<sup>565</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>566</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 6.

<sup>567</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

**Iqri** (Latitude: 37°11'19'' N, Longitude: 43°33'58'' E)

Iqri (sometimes Kiri) has been an important Nestorian village for many years, and was the seat of Bishop Mar Yonan of Barwar (1820–1906). Some of the village's residents assert that their families originated in the Arbil region but fled during a wave of persecution in the twelfth or thirteenth century. Local legend traces the etymology of the name to a modern Assyrian word for “turtle,” found in abundance in the Zab River. A second etymology sees the village name derived from the Assyrian-Aramaic word *qaretha* or *qara*, for “gourd,” as the village was shaped as such. In 1850 Iqri was home to twenty Assyrian families served by a priest, and one functioning church, according to Badger.<sup>568</sup> Iqri suffered considerably during World War I, in 1915 to 1916. During that period, most of its inhabitants were massacred or carried off by marauders.<sup>569</sup> In 1961 the village was home to forty Assyrian families (twenty-five households). Preceding its demolition in 1978, thirty-five Assyrian families still called Iqri home.<sup>570</sup> The ancient churches of Mart Maryam and Mar Yonan were both bulldozed during the government attempts to ethnically cleanse the Assyrians of this rural district.

**Iyyat** (Latitude: 37°12'29'' N, Longitude: 43°28'7'' E)

In 1850 Iyyat, or Yate, was home to five families, served by a priest and a church.<sup>571</sup> Half of Iyyat's population was murdered during 1915 and 1916, amidst the skirmishes of World War I.<sup>572</sup> By 1957 its population numbered 169. In 1961

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<sup>568</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>569</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

<sup>570</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>571</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>572</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

there were thirty-five families (twenty households) in Iyyat.<sup>573</sup> During the border clearings in 1978, approximately forty families were residing in Iyyat at the time of its destruction.<sup>574</sup> Its entire population was forcibly uprooted and resettled in urban centers.<sup>575</sup> The church of Mar Gewargis, built in 920, was destroyed along with all the village's dwellings.<sup>576</sup>

**Khwara** (Latitude: 37°12'34'' N, Longitude: 43°32'14'' E)

According to the 1957 census, Khwara's population totaled ninety-two, and in 1961 the village had ten households.<sup>577</sup> Prior to being destroyed in 1978, it was home to sixteen Assyrian families of the Nestorian or Church of the East religious community.<sup>578</sup>

**Maghribiya**

In 1957 Maghribiya's population numbered approximately eighteen Nestorians. According to Majed Eshoo's research, in 1961 only five families dwelled there. The village suffered during the internal fighting from 1961 to 1963 but, some Assyrian villagers managed to remain. Approximately eight families resided in the village when it was finally eliminated by the government border-clearing campaign in 1978.<sup>579</sup>

**Māyē**

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<sup>573</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 7.

<sup>574</sup> FIDH & AIJ, 40.

<sup>575</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 7.

<sup>576</sup> Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*, 212. See also Annexes photo figure 39.

<sup>577</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 5.

<sup>578</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

In 1850 Māyē, or Māyē Naṣara, probably Assyrian-Aramaic for “the waters,” contained fifteen Nestorian families.<sup>580</sup> By 1915, in the midst of World War I, eyewitness Rev. Shlemon reported that of Māyē’s 140 residents, ninety had been killed, with fifty managing to flee toward the Assyrian region of Urmia in Iran.<sup>581</sup> By the census count of 1957, the village population was slowly recovering from its losses, and tallied eighty residents, an indication of its inhabitants’ continued persecution. By 1961 there were thirty Assyrian families (fifteen households) in Māyē. The churches of Mar Quryaqos and Mart Maryam were destroyed in 1978, and Māyē’s remaining thirty-five families forcibly moved to urban centers.<sup>582</sup>

**Malākhta** (Latitude: 37°11’08’’ N, Longitude: 43°32’35’’ E)

Malākhta is an old Assyrian settlement, famous for its numerous salt deposits, which mark the etymology of the village name, “the salty one.” In 1850 it was home to five families.<sup>583</sup> Like Iqri, Malākhta suffered during World War I, seeing most of its inhabitants massacred or taken by Kurdish tribes during the fighting.<sup>584</sup> In 1957 its population totaled twenty-eight. In 1961 there were five households in the village, and prior to being destroyed in 1978 it was home to fifteen Nestorian families.<sup>585</sup> The village was bulldozed and its ancient church of Mar Khananiya was dynamited in 1978.

**Sardāshte** (Latitude: 37°12’0’’ N, Longitude: 43°31’60’’ E)

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<sup>580</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>581</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

<sup>582</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>583</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>584</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

<sup>585</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

Sardāshte accepted an influx of refugees from Lower Tiyari following World War I. The birthplace of famous bounty hunter Gewargis N'Belatha Benasimo, the village is also home to the old church of Mar Youḥannan. According to the 1957 census report, 250 individuals lived in Sardāshte. Approximately forty families resided in the village prior to the resistance movement. In 1961 Abdul-Wahid Hajji Malo, a tribal leader loyal to Mullah Muṣṭafa Barzani, massacred thirty-two of the village's men, including the priest, during the Kurdish armed autonomist movement.<sup>586</sup> Its ninety families were displaced following the border clearings and ethnic cleansing of the region.<sup>587</sup>

**Tirwanish** (Latitude: 37°12'0'' N, Longitude: 43°28'60'' E)

Tirwanish, or Der Wanis, is named after a monastery dedicated to Mar Iwanus, and also hosted six other monasteries or churches.<sup>588</sup> Its land title belongs to Malik Khoshaba Yosip of Lower Tiyari and to the brothers Khammo and Sliwo Be-Zizo.<sup>589</sup> Since the displacement of the late 1970s, its Assyrian population has been discouraged from returning.

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<sup>586</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 4. K.S. (Düre), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>587</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>588</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>589</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 7.



### Nerwa Rekan Region

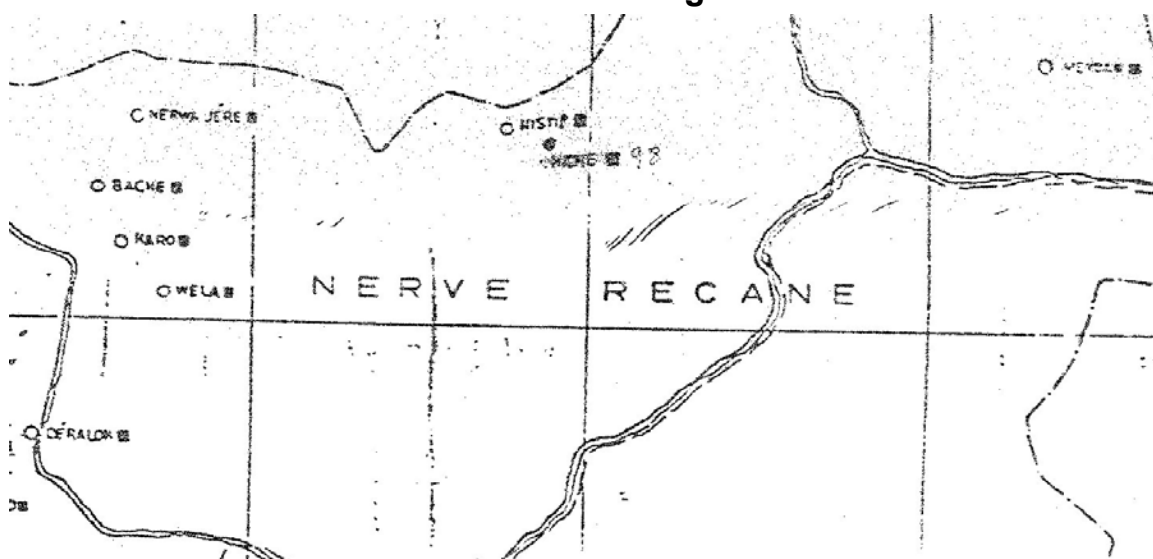


Figure 11 Omez map showing the Nerwa and Rekan region.

**Hish** (Latitude: 37°12'11" N, Longitude: 43°53'54" E)

Hish, or Heesh, is located on the border with Turkey, in the Nerwa Rekan region. In 1850, ten Nestorian families, served by a priest, lived in Hish, and in 1957 the population numbered 286 individuals.<sup>590</sup> By 1961 there were eighty families (twenty-two households), and prior to the final evacuation of the village by the Ba'ath regime in 1978, there were one hundred families with a school.<sup>591</sup> The churches of Mar Bacchus, Mar Abraham and Mar Khnana still lie in ruins.

#### Istip

Istip, or Histip, is located on the border with Turkey, in the Rekan region. In 1850, twenty-five Nestorian families, with a priest, lived there. In 1961 there were forty-seven families (twenty-four households). Prior to the final evacuation of the village in 1978, there were thirty-five families with a church to Mart Shmuni.<sup>592</sup>

#### Meydan

<sup>590</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. I, 397.

<sup>591</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 24 and AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>592</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

Meydan, or Maydan, has long been an Assyrian village, and is located on the border with Turkey, seven hours' walking distance from the nearest road.<sup>593</sup> In 1957, according to the government census, thirty-one individuals lived in the village. By 1961, there were nine Assyrian families (four households).<sup>594</sup> During the border clearings of 1978, which affected the entire Assyrian-populated regions of Nerwa and Rekan, there were twenty-five families living in Maydan.<sup>595</sup> The church of Mar Gewargis was destroyed along with the village in the same year.<sup>596</sup>

### **Assassinations and Kidnapped Officials**

The 1970s was the defining decade for the elimination of heads of Christian religious institutions in Iraq. Bishop Mar Youalah of Dūre, Barwar, was poisoned in 1972, and not long after, fellow clergyman Archbishop Quryaqos Mushe of 'Amēdiyāh was also assassinated by poisoning in 1972 or 1973.<sup>597</sup> Any indication of who murdered the bishops is still speculative. Most theories support Iraqi government responsibility for the poisoning, due to the two bishops' Assyrian-nationalist stance. This idea is coupled with speculation of possible KDP involvement. Interestingly, poisoning was a common method of assassination utilized by the Iraqi regime, thus most scenarios point in that direction.

Not long after the elimination of the two bishops, Mar Eshai Sham'un, patriarch of the Church of the East, was assassinated in San Jose, California, on November 6, 1975

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<sup>593</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>594</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 25.

<sup>595</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>596</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>597</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 58.

by Dawood Malik Ismael.<sup>598</sup> This blow to the Church of the East (Nestorian), already in exile, left a deep impression on this community throughout the diaspora, as fears grew concerning the Iraqi state’s political reach.

## Summary

Following the large-scale upheavals in Iraq during the 1970s, the Assyrian demographics of the country were completely altered. The culmination of the continuous displacement and eradication of ancestral villages and rural communities by government decree, followed by the creation of processing facilities, which became known as *mujamma’āt*, or “collective towns,” generated a second wave of demographic shifting and urbanization since the 1960s. This second wave originated in a far more ideologically “Arab” Iraq, which had developed through a close connection with and in tutorship from the great powers of the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States and Soviet Union waged a war of influence over Iraq, and each power’s funding depended on which Iraqi faction could best stem the tide of growing US or Soviet influence.

The 1970s saw the second of three major upheavals, best described as a campaign of ethnic cleansing and cultural genocide of the Assyrians in all its forms. What remains significant about the 1970s, especially in the case of the border-clearing campaigns, is the disappearance of the last vestiges of rural Assyrian life and culture.

**Table 4 Assyrian Village Summary 1970s**

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
Dohuke	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Dahoki, Dohoke		1	1933, 1962, 1977, 1988	60 families displaced 1988
Reqawa	Dohuk	Simele	Rekawa			1933,	

<sup>598</sup> See the “Public Records of The Trial Proceedings of The Assassination of His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII,” *The Public Records, Superior Court of the State of California* (1975). It is unknown whether or not the Iraqi government hand a hand in the Patriarch’s death.

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
						1974–76	
Mavan	Dohuk	Simele	Mawana			1933, 1975	10 families displaced, removed for government poultry project
Karrana	Dohuk	Simele				1933, 1976	Many fled to Syria in 1933 during Simele massacre
Dosteka	Dohuk	Simele				1933, 1976	Pillaged and destroyed in 1933 during Simele massacre
Muqble	Dohuk	Simele	Moqoble			1933, 1976	Mostly Yazidi by 1976
'Ain Helwa	Ninewa	Tel Keif				1933, 1976	
Badriya	Dohuk	Sheikhan				1933, 1976	Destroyed during Simele massacre; later Arabized by regime
Salahiya	Dohuk	Simele				1933, 1976	Pillaged and destroyed in 1933 during Simele massacre
Challik	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh	Challik Nasara		2	1933, 1978	Border clearings, 100 families displaced in 1978
Deralok	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh	Deira d'Luqa		4	1933, 1978, 1987–88	1978 and Anfal, used as collective town
Bazif	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh	Ba Zibe, Ba Zive, Ba Dibbe			1942, 1976	
Komāne	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh	Kowane	1	5	1961, 1965, 1977, 1987–88	Became collective town in 1977
Hazarjot	Dohuk	'Aqra			1	1961, 1972, 1988	
Sarsang (city)	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh			2	1961, 1972–73	1972–73, Barzani and government confiscate land
Ishkavdal	Dohuk	Simele	Shkafdal	1		1961, 1975	20 families displaced
Bahnona	Dohuk	Zakho				1961, 1975	30 families displaced
Tirwanish	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh	Der Wanis		1	1961, 1977–78	Mostly Kurdish by 1960s; border clearings
Rekan	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh				1963, 1978	Civil war, border clearings

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
Lish	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh	Lich			1963,1978	Affected by civil war and border clearings
S*oriya	Dohuk	Simele		1	1	1969, 1975–76	40 families before 1969 massacre
Bajidda-Kandal	Dohuk	Simele				1975	
Benakhre	Dohuk	Zakho	Beth Nakhre			1975	10 families displaced
Dashtnakh	Dohuk	Zakho	Dashta d'Nakh, Dashtatak			1975	15 families displaced
Shkaft-Mara	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Sharkaf, Sarkafe			1975	30 families displaced
Avzerok Khammo	Dohuk	Simele	Lower Avzerog		1	1975	50 families, mostly Armenian
Istablan	Dohuk	Zakho	Stablan		1	1975	20 families displaced
Dehere	Dohuk	Zakho	Behere			1975	15 families displaced
Shuwadin	Dohuk	Zakho	Shudin			1975	35 families displaced
Bakhluja	Dohuk	Simele	Bachludja			1975	8 families displaced
Sanaat	Dohuk	Zakho	Esnakh		2	1975	120 families displaced
Alanish	Dohuk	Zakho	Alanash		1	1975	40 families displaced
Yarda	Dohuk	Zakho			2	1975	60 families displaced
Hawresk	Dohuk	Simele	Hawreski			1975	10 families displaced
Avzerok Shanno	Dohuk	Simele	Upper Avzerog		2	1975	60 families displaced
Behere	Dohuk	Zakho				1975	
Bedār	Dohuk	Zakho	Beth Dara		1	1975	130 families displaced
Bajidda-Barave	Dohuk	Simele				1975, 1976	30 families displaced in 1975; Arabized 1976
Derashīsh	Dohuk	Zakho	'Umra, Ūmra Shghisha			1975–76	50 families; resettled by Kurds
Qarawilla	Dohuk	Zakho	Qarawola		1	1975–76	100 families, 70 homes before being destroyed
Kandale	Ninewa	'Ain Sifni				1976	Yezidi
Deirabūn	Dohuk	Zakho	Deir Abuna		1	1976	Destroyed; resettled by Mosul Arabs and

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
							Yezidis by government order
Feshkhābur	Dohuk	Zakho	Pešabūr, Pesh Khabur		2	1976	Destroyed; resettled by Mosul Arabs and Yezidis by government order
Baqasri	Ninewa	Al Shikhan				1976	50 families displaced
Greapan	Dohuk	Ninawa	Girēpān			1976	
Qasrune	Ninawa	Tel Keif				1976	
Mahara	Ninewa	'Ain Sifni				1976	
Mahmouda	Ninewa	'Ain Sifni				1976	Predominantly Yezidi families
Bendawaye	Ninewa	Tel Keif	Beth Handawaya			1976	Arabized by regime
Zuinke	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh				1976	
Mam Rachan	Ninewa	'Ain Sifni				1976	Yezidi
Kaftumardina	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh				1976	
Jamboor	Ninawa	Tel Keif	Janbur			1976	
Ummairi	Ninawa	Tel Keif				1976	
Beristeke	Ninewa	Al Shikhan	Beristek			1976	
Bajuwa	Dohuk	Zakho				1976	5 families displaced
Derke	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh	Derka			1976	
Slevani	Dohuk	Simele	Slewani			1976	
Khoshaba	Ninewa	Tel Keif	Khochaba			1976	Arabized by regime
Mahate	Ninewa	'Ain Sifni				1976	Predominantly Yezidi families
Nāšeriyā	Ninawa	Tel Keif				1976	
Khercheniya	Ninewa	Tel Keif	Khershinya			1976	
Gerqawa	Dohuk	Simele	Gerkawa			1976	
Avkani	Dohuk	Zakho	Avgni, Avgani			1976 or 1978	
Bebōze	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Beth Bōzi			1976, 1987	
Mar Yaqob	Dohuk	Simele	Mar Yaco, Mar Ya'aqub, Qashafir	1	2	1976, 1988	Destroyed ancient monastery of the same name; 20 families displaced
Bersive	Dohuk	Zakho	Birsivi, Beth Sawe		2	1976, 1988	Transformed into military camp and collective town
Nerwa (lower)	Dohuk	'Amēdiyāh	Nerwa Khtetha,		1	1976, 1988	60 families displaced, 1988

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
			Lower Nerwa				
Birka	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh				1977	Border clearings, 35 families displaced
Wela	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Welah		2	1977, 1988	Border clearings; Anfal, 20 families displaced
Hawsarek	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Avsarke			1977–78	Border clearings
Qārō	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Qarou, Karou		2	1977–78, 1988	Border clearings; Anfal, 50 families displaced
Bāsh	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh		1	2	1977–78, 1988	Border clearings, 50 families displaced
Malākhta	Dohuk	Amēdīyāh			1	1978	Border clearings, 15 families displaced
Sardāshte	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			1	1978	Border clearings, 90 families displaced
Beshmīyaye	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Bishmiaye, Beth Shmayaye		2	1978	Border clearings, 50 families displaced
Betannūrē	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Beth Tannūrē		1	1978	Border clearings, 24 families displaced
Māyē	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Māyē Nasara		2	1978	Border clearings, 35 families displaced
Cham Dostina	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			1	1978	Border clearings, 5 families displaced
Istip	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Histip		1	1978	Border clearings, 35 families displaced
Spe	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh				1978	Border clearings
Chaqala (lower)	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Chaqala Khtetha	1		1978	Border clearings, 20 families displaced
Chaqala (upper)	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Chaqala Letha			1978	Border clearings, 35 families displaced
Bequlke	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Beth Qulke	1	1	1978	Border clearings, 8 families displaced
Butara	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Botara		1	1978	Border clearings, 8 families displaced
Khwara	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			1	1978	Border clearings, 16 families displaced
Maghribiya	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			1	1978	Border clearings, 8 families displaced
Helwā	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Halwā, Helwā Nasara		1	1978	Border clearings, 60 families displaced
Meydan	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Maydan		1	1978	25 families displaced
Alih	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh				1978	Border clearings
Hīsh	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Hiche, Heesh	1	1	1978	Border clearings, 100 families

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
							displaced
Dūre	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			4	1978	Border clearings, 100 families displaced
Iqri	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Aqri, Aqra, Keri		2	1978	Border clearings, 35 families displaced
Iyyat	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Yate, Iyat		2	1978	Border clearings, 40 families displaced
Pireka	Dohuk	Zakho				1978, 1984	90 families displaced in 1978
Tashish	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			2	1978, 1988	Destroyed during Anfal
Balūkā	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Bebālūk, Beth Bālūk		1	1978, 1988	15 families displaced, site of chemical attack

Rural modes of living were eradicated, and people were forced into urban centers that would by default carry a stronger element of Arabization. This cultural destruction showed further echoes of article 2-C of the United Nations Genocide Convention, which states: *Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.*

The 1970 Iraqi government offer to the Kurds granted significant autonomy in an Iraqi Kurdistan teeming with oil.<sup>599</sup> This contrasts starkly to the token linguistic rights offered to the Assyrians. Assyrians were imagined by the regime as Syriac-speaking Arab Christians, *Arab-Messihiyīn*. Referring to oneself as *Ashūri* became an imprisonable offense.<sup>600</sup>

Those who oppose the view that Assyrians have experienced continued and systematic eradication can only point to the April 16, 1972, decree 251 granting “Syriac-

<sup>599</sup> Samantha Power, *“A Problem From Hell” America in the Age of Genocide* (NY: Basic Books, 2002), 174.

<sup>600</sup> Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, *North Iraq Human Rights Field Mission*, 2006 <http://www.iraqdemocracyproject.org/pdf/Northern%20Iraq%20Human%20Rights%20Field%20Mission.pdf> (Accessed 20 September 2008)



speaking nationals” limited cultural rights. Interestingly, the decree came a full decade after the initial cleansing of Assyrians from their ancestral homes during the 1961–1963 armed autonomist movement by both the Iraqi state and some Kurdish factions. Furthermore, the decree itself succeeded in balancing the government-feared increase of growing Assyrian intellectualism in urban areas (a counterbalance to the loss of land, language, and culture during the urbanization process) by effectively eliminating many Assyrian schools (many of which offered language, history, and cultural classes) through government control and proclaiming all private or parochial schools as public. Sections one and two of decree 251 read,

The Syriac language shall be the teaching language in all primary schools whose majority of pupils are from speakers in such language and teaching of Arabic language shall be compulsory in such schools. Syriac language shall be taught in intermediate and secondary schools whose majority of pupils are from speakers in such language and Arabic language shall be the teaching language in such schools.<sup>601</sup>

After all schools were deemed public, Assyrians no longer comprised a majority in their own parochial schools, which affectively negated any benefit from article one or two of the decree. In addition, many years of urbanization and compulsory Arabic, coupled with socioeconomic difficulties and institutionalized prejudice, led many Assyrians to adopt a more assimilatory attitude, which became a key component in the establishment of closer relations between the more urban Chaldean, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic and Nestorian ecclesiastic communities.<sup>602</sup>

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<sup>601</sup> Iraq Ministry of Information, “Granting The Cultural Rights to the Turkman and Syriac-Speaking Nationals”, 11.

<sup>602</sup> The so-called Arab Christians of northern Iraq are a prime example of this assimilation practice. Interestingly in the case of many of these Christians their socio-economic situation was well above that of Muslims of the region, showing a discrepancy in the solely “anti-Christian” argument for the conditions faced by the Assyrians in Iraq. However those Arabized Christians who identified as *Ashūri* (“Assyrian”) were both chided by the community, and punished by the government.

The arrests of individuals accused of treason for practicing cultural traditions such as singing folkloric and national songs further contributed to the disparity Assyrians faced during the 1970s. The constant threat loomed as a considerable obstacle for any cultural advancement. In essence, the government goal to eliminate the “spirit” of the Assyrians followed an unambiguous ethnocidal path: there remains no logical military reason (if such can be argued as a defense) for destroying fifteen-hundred-year-old churches and monasteries in the Assyrian villages of northern Iraq, or for burning the apple orchards and agricultural fields of Barwar. These operations constitute acts of cultural genocide as much as the human displacement of Assyrians and Kurds from their ancestral lands. This compulsory and unchecked collective urbanization would eventually eliminate the indigenous Assyrian mode of life.<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> The “centre de regroupement” recalls a similar situation in Algeria during the War of Independence. See Keith Sutton, “Army Administrations Tensions over Algeria’s Centres de Regroupement, 1954-1962” *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26(2), (1999), 243-270.

## Chapter 6: The 1980s, Anfal, and Assyrian Targets

It is the constant fault and inseparable quality of ambition that it never looks behind it.

–Seneca

### ***Iraq-Iran War***

Following the elimination of approximately one hundred villages and their cultural history from the map of Iraq in 1978, the turn of the decade signaled yet another difficult situation for the country and her Assyrian inhabitants. On September 22, 1980, Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, went to war against Iran. In an attempt to eliminate future threats and possible rebel elements, the military drafted many Assyrian men and deployed them to the front lines. Many of these Assyrians disappeared or were killed. Most of the combatants had little desire to fight in a war for an oppressive regime, yet the war effort “involved the conscription of large numbers of Assyrian soldiers, as some forty thousand of these unwilling recruits were killed, wounded, imprisoned in Iran, or missing in action.”<sup>604</sup> Over 266 Assyrians were held as prisoners of war in Iran, some for over twenty years.<sup>605</sup> Mordechai Nisan’s appellation of this Iraqi policy as “sinister” is certainly pertinent.

It is not inconceivable that the positioning of Christians on the front lines and in difficult military situations during the Iran-Iraq war was done with malevolent purpose by the regime. Most Assyrians who survived spoke of threats against their person by their

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<sup>604</sup> Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East*, Second Edition (McFarland & Company, 2002), 191.

<sup>605</sup> For a partial list of 266 names see *The Assyrian Sentinel*, Vol. 8 No. 1-2, “Iraqi-Assyrian POW’s in Iran,” (April 1983). Much of the research data and hundreds of photographs were collected from a mission to Iran by AUA representatives Atour Golani and Afrem Rayis.

fellow Muslim combatants. In essence, it would not do for a Christian to kill a Muslim—an enemy Iranian or otherwise.<sup>606</sup>

Anthony O'Mahony argues that the Assyrians accepted military positions with personal zeal since they wished to display their “fighting prowess” for their country.<sup>607</sup> This assumption was not corroborated by any of this study’s interviews with members of the Assyrian community. In fact, the reaction was quite the opposite: rather, these Assyrians, as a Christian minority, feared a religiously motivated backlash from Iraqi soldiers for killing their Muslim brethren.

### **The Case of “Iranian-” Assyrians in Iraq**

The maltreatment of Iranian-Assyrians in Iraq included both refugees from Urmia during the Baquba Refugee Camp<sup>608</sup> crisis, who had abided in Iraq since the end of World War I, as well as those recent refugees following the 1978–1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and ousting of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi.<sup>609</sup> Oral accounts are quite similar in this regard: most families were visited briefly by an army officer, told to retain only the clothes on their person, packed into buses, and then driven to the border of Iran and forced into exile in a harsh region.<sup>610</sup> Thus in most cases, the deportees lost all of their material possessions, including homes and land. The demography of Iraq in relation to the Assyrians was thus again altered during the early 1980s.

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<sup>606</sup> Y.C. (Darbandoke-Baghdad), Interview, September 1, 2006, Chicago, Illinois

<sup>607</sup> Anthony O'Mahony, “The Chaldean Catholic Church: The Politics of Church-State Relations in Modern Iraq” *The Heythrop Journal* 45 (4), (2004), 443.

<sup>608</sup> Following the expulsion of thousands of Assyrians from Hakkâri into Urmia, Iran during WWI, many were brought from Iran to the Iraqi town of Baquba and settled in refugee camps until 1920 when they were shut down by the British authorities. The walk from Urmia to Baquba claimed the lives of thousands of Assyrians who died from sickness and exposure.

<sup>609</sup> “Iranian-Assyrians Banished From Iraq,” *The Assyrian Sentinel* (June 1980) Vol. 5 No. 2-3,

<sup>610</sup> Over 5,000 cases of such treatment had been reported. See *The Assyrian Sentinel* Vol. 5, No. 2-3 June 1980. Similar treatment was afforded many Shiite families in Iraq as well.

## ***The Calm Before the Storm***

During the early 1980s, Assyrians became an easy target for Ba‘thist scrutiny. Targeted as individuals and as groups, Assyrians became increasingly frustrated with such government policies. Their frustration garnered a strong nationalist reaction from Assyrians living outside Iraq, especially those involved in political and cultural activities. Among Assyrian political and cultural groups that most strongly supported the development of the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) was the diasporic Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA). Due to the loose ties of the ADM and AUA, many Assyrians in Iraq came under suspicion of working with foreign powers. Furthermore, the Iraqi government now employed a new level of espionage to record Assyrian activities in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere.<sup>611</sup>

Assyrians and Kurds fled Iraq during this persecution, and in many cases, escaped to Iran. For predominantly political reasons, an estimated 330 Assyrians fled to Iran in 1984 alone, in an attempt to escape oppression.

## **The Assyrian Democratic Movement**

Many Chaldean, Jacobite, and Nestorian Christians who identified themselves as Assyrians continued to face political, ethnic, and socioeconomic oppression throughout the 1980s. The decades of ethnic cleansing and cultural genocidal policies of the regime, which instilled fear and desperation in the Assyrians through urbanization (effectively Arabizing the Assyrians), had had an unforeseen consequence: an increase in the number of Assyrian young men and women in higher education. This allowed for an intellectual movement, despite the government’s attempts to eliminate possible dissident ideas

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<sup>611</sup> See Annexes figures 48-51.

fostered by an isolated tribal system still prevalent in rural areas of Iraq, especially in the northern and southern extremes. A few of these intellectual movements gained ground, allowing for an armed resistance movement during the 1960s alongside the Kurds, and the later establishment of the Assyrian Democratic Movement in 1979.<sup>612</sup>

The Assyrian Democratic Movement, or *Zowa'a Democratāyā Athorāyā* (ADM/Zowaa), was established on April 12, 1979 from among various smaller cultural-political and student groups, including *Akhunwāthē Athorāyē* (Assyrian Brothers) in 1969. Among these cultural groups, and even among church and religious groups, especially in the Mosul region, a national awakening was ignited.<sup>613</sup> Interestingly, the ideology of the ADM was heavily synthesized from an Assyrian cultural awareness that had developed much earlier in Urmia, Iran and in Harput, Turkey independently. By this period, in the development of Assyrian nationalist thought, both the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA), which existed mostly in diaspora with some members in Iran, and the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), with a stronghold in Turkey, Syria, and Europe, resolutely supported an Iraq-based Assyrian political movement. The general hope of all parties was reflected in their defense of Assyrian ethnic, political, and cultural rights within a country known for its continued violations thereof.

It is most commonly believed that the ADM launched its opposition in 1982, sending people to northern Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. As their numbers were not vast, the ADM “militia-men” were used predominantly to protect villages in light of the consistent targeting of their kin, with the 1978 destruction of the ‘Amēdīyāh region a fresh reminder. During that first year, the ADM launched its first official arm, Bahra.

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<sup>612</sup> McDowall mentions the ADM briefly in his *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 310.

<sup>613</sup> R.B. (Kirkuk), Interview, 16 January 2008, Toronto, Canada

The ADM had begun its true push into the opposition and gained the support of many Assyrians as well as the respect of the Kurdish and Communist parties, from whom they had adapted their structural basis while in exile in the northern regions of Iraq. Much of this growth led to the Iraqi regime's keen interest in any mention of Assyrian cultural and political groups, the ADM in particular. The regime's retribution was silent and swift. "The security agencies are charged to squash any organization within the ranks of the Assyrians and keep them from progressing, especially inside the cities."<sup>614</sup>

On July 14, 1984, the Hussein regime attacked ADM locations in Baghdad, arresting over 150 members of the movement. Of the 150 people arrested, twenty-two were sentenced to life imprisonment by Saddam Hussein's regime, and four were sentenced to death.<sup>615</sup> Not long after, the regime also attacked the Assyrian villages of Hejerke and Pireka, where members of the ADM died attempting to safeguard residents.

### **Villages and Persons Affected**

Jamil Matti, an ADM member, was born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1953. Matti began political work in 1976 by working in an underground Assyrian organization in Baghdad. In 1982, he joined the Assyrian Democratic Movement and became active in its labors toward recognition of Assyrian ethnic and cultural rights in Iraq. Matti played an active role in both the political and military affairs of the ADM, including various humanitarian aid missions to regions under scrutiny by the Ba'th regime. Along with fellow ADM member Sheeba Hami, he led an operation to defend the populace of Hejerke village in

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<sup>614</sup> Iraqi government document 54648 and translation. AAS # Z-10004 (See Annexes figures 48-49)

<sup>615</sup> Meghan Clyne, "Kana's Iraq," *National Review Online*, 19 May 2004, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/clyne200405191036.asp>

Simele against the Iraqi army in 1984, and was killed.<sup>616</sup> Hami was born in 1956 in the village of Babilu, in the province of Dohuk, and joined the ADM in 1983. During the operation in Hejerke village, Hami was severely wounded and later died, on December 4, 1984. Their operation reportedly saved the lives of twenty-six Assyrian civilians.<sup>617</sup>

The conditions faced by Assyrians accused of “traitorous acts” are best illustrated by the arrest and torture of eighteen members of the ADM (mostly from Baghdad and Kirkuk) who were captured during that same year. For the first seven days, the individuals were placed in tiny cells of dimensions less than 4 x 4 x 4 ft. While food was offered twice daily, the various forms of torture included beatings with wooden rods, having wrists tied at the back and being hung by the same rope while beatings occurred, and, electric shock to the genitals and other areas. Following the initial seven-day period, the detained individuals were placed together in Baghdad for six months in a cell that only allowed space for nine to sleep at one time. Thus at any given moment, a group of nine would be lying aground and nine standing. Later, the group was split into two parties of nine per cell.<sup>618</sup>

Of the physical, mental, and emotional trauma suffered by ADM members at the hands of the Ba‘th regime, perhaps the most prominent and public was the February 1985 execution of three men: Yousef Toma Zibari, Youkhana Esho Shlimon, and Youbert Benyamin. The Iraqi government itself confirmed these executions and accused the three of “having committed the crime of creating a hostile and separatist movement aimed at threatening the independence and unity of Iraq.... They transported weapons and carried

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<sup>616</sup> Assyrian Democratic Movement, (Accessed 5 July 2007), <http://www.zowaa.org/images/mar/8.htm>

<sup>617</sup> Assyrian Democratic Movement, (Accessed 5 July 2007), <http://www.zowaa.org/images/mar/10.htm>

<sup>618</sup> R.B. (Kirkuk), Interview, 16 January 2008, Toronto, Canada



out acts of sabotage.”<sup>619</sup> Many of those not executed remained in detainment for the following ten to fifteen years.

Few ADM supporters survived to tell the tale of their capture and imprisonment. One of them, R.B., was born in September 1951 in Kirkuk, and was among the eighteen individuals captured and imprisoned in 1984. After spending two years in Abu Ghraib prison, where he was subjected to regular questioning and physical and mental torture, R.B. was released and eventually fled Iraq on August 9, 1991.<sup>620</sup> (The ADM and its members would become regular targets of the Iraqi regime into the 1990s.<sup>621</sup>)

The stories mentioned above serve as an example of how the Assyrian political and cultural movements were treated in Iraq during the 1980s. Moreover, the same can be said for earlier years, with attempts at infiltration and coercion in both Kheith Keith Allap I and II and Nādi al-Thaqāfi al-Āthūrī (Assyrian Cultural Association). The case of the ADM illustrates the oppressive policies and patterns of ethnic cleansing coinciding with politicide and cultural genocide that the Assyrians faced in the 1980s. Indeed, the treatment of the ADM members in Iraq essentially mirrors that of the Syrian government’s handling of members of the Assyrian Democratic Organization (ADO) from 1960 to 1990.

Many other Assyrians, including those considered apolitical, were targeted during this period. In many cases the ruling regime found any Assyrian cultural activity suspect and exploited the fear of a growing opposition as a pretext to arrest various individuals

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<sup>619</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Iraq: Middle East Watch*, 58.

<sup>620</sup> R.B. (Kirkuk), Interview, 16 January 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>621</sup> The ADM also found itself at odds with the KDP following the establishment of the no-fly zone in 1991. See “Iraq: Human Rights Abuses in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991,” *Amnesty International Special Report*, AI Index: MDE 14/01/95, 90-96 for the story of ADM member Francis Shabo who was assassinated in May 1993 in Dohuk according to AI most probably by KDP First Liq assassins for his work on the issue of Assyrian villages in the Behdinan region.

judged a possible threat. As expected, targeting extended to intimidation and harassment of family members of suspected individuals. An Amnesty International report mentions the case of the brothers Mirza and Mardan Rasha who, were arrested in Al-Sheikhan district in July 1985 at the age of six and thirteen, respectively. The motive for arrest was the accusation that the two boys' father was a member of the peşmerge.<sup>622</sup>

Christian clergy members were also targeted for their feared charisma or political views. In 1985, priest Younan Kena of the Church of the East was assassinated by poisoned coffee in Kirkuk. Not long after, Fr. Youḥanna Abdulahad Sher was assassinated in front of a church in the town of Shaqlawa on Good Friday, April 28, 1986. Fellow cleric Archbishop Stephanos Kacho of Zakho was pursued by a military vehicle and killed in 1986, again under disturbing circumstances. These attacks led to widespread fear among Iraq's Christian community.<sup>623</sup>

### ***The Anfal Campaign and Research Problems***

The Anfal campaign in northern Iraq took place from February 23, 1988 to September 6, 1988. Edmund Ghareeb has defined it as “a campaign by Saddam Hussein's regime to eliminate the Kurds as a threat to the government once and for all.”<sup>624</sup> Ghareeb suggests that in view of the fact that the Kurds cooperated with Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, the campaign was retribution for their rebellion against the Iraqi state. Though much evidence supports this claim, other ethno-cultural and religious communities, including Assyrians, were also targeted under a general Pan-Arabist ideology and were subjected to a general Arabization campaign by the Iraqi government.

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<sup>622</sup> *Amnesty International Report 1989*, (Amnesty International Publications: London, 1989), 259.

<sup>623</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 58.

<sup>624</sup> Ghareeb, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq*, 13.

Kurdish researcher Shorsh Resool counted 3,739 villages destroyed, excluding some villages in the Mosul and Dohuk regions. In my correspondence with Dr. Resool, who served both as a peşmerge and researcher for Human Rights Watch (HRW), he related that he defined a village as “any group of houses in a particular location ... that had a name and was known to local people as a village.” Though Resool built on Iraqi documents and hundreds of interviews he conducted, I have surmised that all proceeding estimates of Kurdish village destruction, including those done by human rights groups, are based on this figure.

Many documents and figures concerning Kurds and Anfal are based on PUK statistics. The few concerning Assyrians have mostly been compiled by the ADM. Despite their attempts to remain apolitical, it is evident that in most cases, these very political (nationalist) institutions have assembled the basic research on Anfal. This is reflected in the compilation of material in the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and International Alliance for Justice (AIJ) report, “Iraq: Continuous and Silent Ethnic Cleansing; Displaced Persons in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraqi Refugees in Iran,” as well as most of the work conducted by HRW.

Another dilemma concerns the true extent of the destruction of the Anfal campaign—not unsurprisingly, concerns about appellative problems. In the Arab-controlled regions and up as far as Arbil province, Assyrians were generally referred to as Christian Arabs, which may explain the general lack of material specifically mentioning the term *Assyrians*. Such an apparent lack of distinction would allow the Arab-majority Ba‘th party to exploit the weakness of this minority group. Similarly, Assyrians living in the northern regions, in Iraqi Kurdistan and elsewhere, were generally termed *Christian*

*Kurds* by both the Iraqi regime and the Kurdish authorities, which furthered this problem.<sup>625</sup>

It is well accepted that the term *Anfal*, meaning “spoils,” is taken from the eighth *sura* of the Koran, which discusses spoils of war in the conflict of the believer versus the “unbeliever.”<sup>626</sup> The *sura* promises to “cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them.”<sup>627</sup> The Assyrians and Kurds equally fit into the Iraqi regime’s scheme for ‘military chastisement.’ Moreover, the socioeconomic, geographic, and ethnic distinctions the Iraqi regime placed on both Assyrians and Kurds—which, for the Assyrians, included religious belonging—gave the regime further excuse to ignore their [Kurds and Assyrians] basic human rights in the midst of a project in state-building homogenization during this period. Since Assyrians were in fact not acknowledged as a separate ethnic group, those in the northern region were further disregarded as part of a troublesome Kurdish element by a government wishing to create public animosity toward this “other,” this foreign element in an otherwise “homogenous” Iraq.

Kurds and Assyrians were not the only victims of the campaign. Many leftist Arab Iraqis, ICP members, and even Ba‘th members who detested the governmental initiatives and rule of the Saddam Hussein regime were targeted for their supposed conspiracy and treason. Essentially, the major motive behind the campaign was to stifle any dissident movement in Iraq. The northern region, still home to many clannish Kurds and Assyrians, was the chief target, being the primary area to which various Iraqi-

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<sup>625</sup> This may be the reason for the lack of material on the Assyrians during the Anfal as the majority of reports lump them amongst the Kurdish statistics by both eastern and western scholarship.

<sup>626</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 1.

<sup>627</sup> The Holy Qur’an 8:12, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/HolKora.html>, (Accessed 10 May 2008)

government dissidents fled in the years leading up to the Anfal operations. In the case of the Kurds, collaboration with the Iranian government during the Iran-Iraq war was tantamount to treason, as defined by most governments. Consequently, the brunt of the Hussein-led Ba‘thist anger was directed toward the Kurdish movement, which was supported both militarily and financially by foreign powers.

Many Assyrian and Kurdish villages were destroyed beginning in 1987, using various tactics, including air raids and dropping napalm. Human Rights Watch divides the stages of Anfal into eight major campaigns; the “official” military operations are categorized as follows:

First Anfal: February 23-March 19, 1988 (Halabja attacked March 16, 1988)

Second Anfal: March 22-April 1, 1988 (Qara Dagh)

Third Anfal: April 7-20, 1988 (Germian village, Qader Karam)

Fourth Anfal: May 3-8, 1988 (Lesser Zab region)

Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Anfals: May 15-August 26, 1988 (Shaqlawa and Rawanduz)

Final Anfal: August 25-September 6, 1988 (Bahdinan)<sup>628</sup>

Human Rights Watch and other NGOs have worked strongly under this division, making the distinction between the official campaign, events just prior to it, and those immediately following it, on the whole tantamount to an ongoing operation. HRW reported 150 Christian/Yezidi disappearances in seven villages during the Final Anfal, which included the regions of Sarsang, Doski, Barwar, Deralok, and Nerwa Rekan—in comparison to Kurdish numbers of 632 disappearances in thirty-six villages.<sup>629</sup> According to the HRW figures, it appears that, on average, a relatively equal number of people disappeared per village, which argues for political and military precision and preparation.

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<sup>628</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 262-264.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, 267-268.

Though some numerical estimates of Assyrian villages destroyed do exist, details such as names, regions, and cultural or religious sites affected appear to have escaped most academic work. General numbers given by human rights groups and scholarship concerning Kurds speak of over four thousand villages destroyed from 1963 to Anfal, with over two thousand destroyed specifically in the 1980s.<sup>630</sup> Whether or not these estimates include Assyrian villages is unclear.

### **Assyrian Targets**

Both the study by Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) and the previously unpublished research of the Assyrian Academic Society and the Nineveh Center for Research and Development provided abundant and specific information with regard to the Assyrians. The following is a list of demarcated villages, including historical and cultural detail, to highlight the total destruction Assyrians faced in the 1980s, and specifically during the Anfal campaign.

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<sup>630</sup> Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq*, 65-66. See also Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, xv.

## Villages

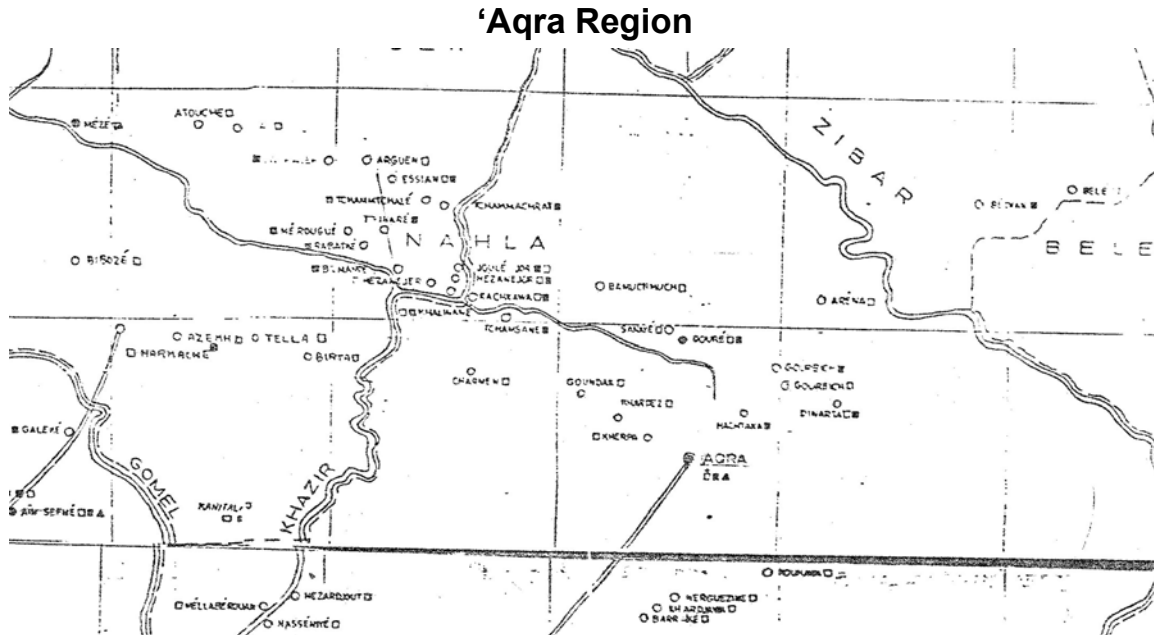


Figure 12 Omez map showing the 'Aqra region and Nahla sub-district.

## Hazarjot

The village of Hazarjot, as well as all the adjacent farming land, was purchased in 1925 to 1926 under the supervision of the Chaldean church for refugees from the village of Sat in Hakkâri. Between 1920 and 1933, Nestorians from Lower Tiyari in Hakkâri also settled in Hazarjot.<sup>631</sup> As per the 1957 census the population stood at 178 people. There were more than twenty-five families living in the village when it was exposed to burning and plundering by Zebari irregulars from 1961 to 1963.<sup>632</sup> Though the majority of its population remained, that tragedy was repeated in 1972, causing more residents to flee. Much of Hazarjot's population returned in 1975 and remained. The village was destroyed again in 1988, along

<sup>631</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>632</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 13.

with the church of Mart Maryam. Prior to the destruction of the Anfal campaign, Hazarjot was home to thirty-five families with a school.<sup>633</sup>

### **‘Aqra Region: Nahla Sub-District<sup>634</sup>**

**Argen** (Latitude: 36°55’45’’ N, Longitude: 43°37’3’’ E)

Argen, alternately Argin or Hargin (or Ergin, as referred to by Badger), is located in the mountainous region south of Jebel Gara near Ṭlanitha, Armashe, and Meze. In 1850, ten families made the village their home, with one operational church.<sup>635</sup> By 1918 there were six families who had converted to Catholicism, numbering forty-one people, and seven families who remained faithful to the Church of the East (Nestorian). In 1957 the population of Argin totaled seventy-nine. The village suffered much damage in the early 1960s, and though many of its inhabitants fled, some remained to rebuild.<sup>636</sup> The village was then eliminated in 1988. Argen is of great importance as a cultural site due to its four churches: Mar Gewargis, Mart Maryam, Mar Abraham, and Mar Quryaqos, which were all in waste during the Anfal campaign.

**Armashe** (Latitude: 36°49’60’’ N, Longitude: 43°22’60’’ E)

Armashe, also spelled Harmash, possesses an ancient Assyrian stele carved into a rock-face near it. In 1850 there were fifteen families and a church within the village, all under the Nestorian diocese of Mar Abraham of Gündük (Nerem), in

<sup>633</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>634</sup> It may be of note to mention Nahla d’Malka or ‘valley of the king’ as having a long standing and continuous Assyrian habitation. Though much of it was abandoned for years due to persecution, the resettlement of Hakkâri Assyrians was in a sense a remigration into the region.

<sup>635</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 392.

<sup>636</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 14.



the mountainous region south of Jebel Gara.<sup>637</sup> Many of its villagers originated from the Tkhuma region in Hakkâri. In 1913 there were 310 Chaldean converts with a priest serving one church.<sup>638</sup> In 1957 the village population totaled 204 (thirteen households), and before being destroyed in 1987 by the Ba‘th regime, Armashe was home to fifty-five Assyrian families with a school.<sup>639</sup> Assyrian villagers of both Armashe and Azakh were resettled in Atrush, which had been set up as a collective town.<sup>640</sup> The church of Mart Theresa suffered some damage during the Anfal period. There is also a small church to Mar Ephrem dating back to the seventh century.

**Aṭush** (Latitude: 36°50'17'' N, Longitude: 43°20'9'' E)

Aṭush’s name is said to derive from a word meaning “spring of the mulberry trees.” As early as 1850, there were eleven Nestorian families in the village, with two functioning churches.<sup>641</sup> By 1957 it was inhabited by seventy-five individuals. Prior to its destruction in 1988, there were twenty-five families in Aṭush. The churches of Mar Gewargis, Mar Abraham, Mart Maryam, and Mart Shmuni all suffered complete destruction during the Anfal campaign.

**Azakh** (Latitude: 36°50'24'' N, Longitude: 43°22'2'' E)

In 1850 Azakh, or Adekh, contained fifteen families and a church in the village that, like Armashe, Meze, and Ṭlanitha, lay in the mountains south of Jebel Gara.<sup>642</sup> By 1913 there were three hundred Chaldeans with a priest and a school,

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<sup>637</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 392.

<sup>638</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 502.

<sup>639</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>640</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 13.

<sup>641</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid*, 392.

though the number of Nestorian adherents was unclear at that time.<sup>643</sup> In 1957 the village population totaled seventy-eight individuals, and before being destroyed in 1987, Azakh was home to a total of fifty Assyrian families (twenty households).<sup>644</sup> The church of Mar Gewargis, first built in 1535, and the grotto dedicated to Mar Abraham were once part of the once-thriving town before also being bulldozed during the Anfal.

**Bebōze** (Latitude: 36°49'10'' N, Longitude: 43°24'22'' E)

Bebōze, or Beth Bōzi, is part of the region known as Shemkân. During Badger's travels in 1850, he reported ten families and one church in the predominantly Catholic village.<sup>645</sup> The village's existence is also attested to in Syriac manuscripts, as in 1888 a monk named Nicholas Nōfāl of Telkepe copied a manuscript in the village for the monastery of Rabban Hormizd.<sup>646</sup> By Tfinkdji's time in 1913, there were 120 Chaldeans with a priest.<sup>647</sup> Bebōze was first destroyed in 1976.<sup>648</sup> Again, the village was resettled and, along with the thirteenth-century church of Mart Shmuni and the seven shrines dedicated to her children, was devastated in 1987 by the Iraqi military.<sup>649</sup>

**Bilmand** (Latitude: 36°51'38'' N, Longitude: 43°40'26'' E)

The village of Bilmand was rebuilt more recently by Assyrian refugees from Lower Tiyyari in 1920 following their exodus from Hakkâri. In 1957 the village population totaled ninety-one. One of its residents, Odisho Iyut, saw his nearby

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<sup>643</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>644</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>645</sup> Badger. *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>646</sup> Wilmschurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 145.

<sup>647</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>648</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 42.

<sup>649</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

lands of Korawa village confiscated and occupied by neighboring Kurds in 1959.<sup>650</sup> There were approximately 149 Assyrians living in the village in 1977.<sup>651</sup> At the time of its destruction in 1987, Bilmand was residence to thirty-five to forty Assyrian families with a school.<sup>652</sup>

### **Cham Ashrat** (Latitude: 36°57'19'' N, Longitude: 42°30'42'' E)

Cham (also Chamme) Ashrat was settled in 1922 by Nestorian refugees from Upper Tiwari. Numbering around seventy people, most of these settlers fled to Syria and settled in the Khabur basin after fleeing the massacres at Simele and surrounding villages in 1933.<sup>653</sup> Cham Ashrat was later settled by Nestorians of Lower Tiwari, and by 1957 the village population totaled ninety-five people, approximately 25 families, living in thirteen homes.<sup>654</sup> The village was destroyed during the Anfal period in 1988, along with its one church dedicated to Mar Ephrem, and its remaining twenty-five families were displaced.<sup>655</sup>

### **Cham Chale**

Cham Chale, located in the Nahla region, was settled in 1922 by Assyrian refugees from Lower Tiwari.<sup>656</sup> As per the 1957 Iraq census, the village population numbered fifty-one inhabitants. Cham Chale was initially plundered in 1963, and its population fled following the civil war; the village was destroyed yet again in 1988 as part of the Anfal operations.<sup>657</sup>

### **Cham Rabatke**

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<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> See Annexes: Figure 54 & 57 Document B3

<sup>652</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>653</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>654</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 14.

<sup>655</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>656</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>657</sup> Though in FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41 it is only mentioned as having been destroyed in 1963.

As mentioned in the Assyrian Academic Society's "Field Mission Iraq 2004," Cham Rabatke is likely Kurdish for "river of the monks," speaking to a historic monastic community in the region. Like most villages in the Nahla or Nahla d'Malka region, Cham Rabatke was originally inhabited by an Assyrian population. Through the centuries, people left and emigrated to and from the region. It was then settled by refugees from Lower Tiyari in 1920. Following the 1933 massacres, an estimated ninety Assyrians survived in the village.<sup>658</sup> By 1977, ninety-eight Assyrians dwelled in the village.<sup>659</sup> Before being destroyed in 1987, Cham Rabatke was home to forty-five Assyrian families (thirty households).<sup>660</sup> The Assyrians of the former village were relocated to 'Aqra and left there by military and government forces to build dwellings from raw materials found in the area. Most villagers lived months in tents with no forthcoming government aid.<sup>661</sup>

**Cham Sinne** (Latitude: 36°50'24'' N, Longitude: 43°44'29'' E)

In 1922, following World War I, Nestorians from Lower Tiyari settled Cham Sinne. By 1957 the village population numbered approximately 127 inhabitants. When the village was destroyed under the Hussein-led regime in 1987, there were thirty Assyrian families in Cham Sinne.<sup>662</sup> The church of Mar Ephrem lies in ruins.

**Guhana**

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<sup>658</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>659</sup> See Annexes: Figure 54 & 57 Document B3

<sup>660</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>661</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 13.

<sup>662</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

Local Assyrians had purchased the land of Guhana in 1955 from the Iraqi government, and by 1961 there were twenty families who called the village home.<sup>663</sup> In 1986 Guhana was targeted and its thirty-five families were forced to flee.<sup>664</sup>

**Hizane Lower** (Latitude: 36°51'30'' N, Longitude: 43°41'25'' E)

**Hizane Upper** (Latitude: 36°52'26'' N, Longitude: 43°41'7'' E)

Hizane (sometimes Hizanke), in the Nahla region, was resettled by Nestorians from Lower Tiyari in 1920. In 1957 the village population numbered 254 inhabitants: 210 in Lower Hizane and forty-four in Upper Hizane. In 1961 there were forty-two households in Hizane. The village was razed and burned in 1964 and 1969 by government irregulars.<sup>665</sup> By 1977 Upper Hizane numbered twenty people and Lower Hizane, 145.<sup>666</sup> In 1987 it was home to 110 Assyrian families with a school.<sup>667</sup> The old church of Mar Gewargis (restored in the 1950s) was also destroyed by the Ba‘th regime.<sup>668</sup> Some individuals of the village who were targeted in the last fifty years include Yalda Eshoo Zadoq, Toma Enwiya Toma, Eshoo Goriel Khoshaba, and Mikhael Lazar Mikhael.<sup>669</sup>

**Kashkawa** (Latitude: 36°50'55'' N, Longitude: 43°42'21'' E)

Kashkawa was settled by Nestorians from Lower Tiyari in 1920 (along with the majority of the Nahla region). In 1933, 134 inhabitants lived in the village.<sup>670</sup> As

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<sup>663</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 12.

<sup>664</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>665</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 12.

<sup>666</sup> See Annexes: Figure 54 & 57 Document B3

<sup>667</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>668</sup> *Bahra*, No. 2, 1 April 1988

<sup>669</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 12.

<sup>670</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

per the 1957 census account, approximately 174 villagers dwelled within Kashkawa. When attacked by pro-government Kurdish irregulars in 1963, its thirty households were burned and inhabitants forced to flee, since the village was known to have significant sympathizers involved in the anti-government activities of Assyrians, Kurds, and others.<sup>671</sup> Of those men singled out for elimination were Daniel Toma, Moshe Zaia, and Youkhana Shammas, who were all eventually killed. Some of its population returned following the cease-fire on March 11, 1970, but were soon to be threatened once again.<sup>672</sup> Before being destroyed again in 1987, Kashkawa was home to one hundred Assyrian families with a school.<sup>673</sup> The church of Mart Shmuni still lies in ruins.

**Khalilani** (Latitude: 36°51'53'' N, Longitude: 43°42'25'' E)

Khalilani is an Assyrian village located in the 'Aqra region and sub-district of Nahla (or Nahla d'Malka). In more recent times, it was settled by refugees from Lower Tiyyari in 1920.<sup>674</sup> In 1957 the village population was twenty-eight; in 1977 the village numbered seventy-three.<sup>675</sup> The population increased to twenty-five Assyrian families by the time of the village's destruction in 1987 during the start of the Anfal operations.<sup>676</sup>

**Meroke** (Latitude: 36°52'52'' N, Longitude: 43°37'50'' E)

Meroke, also Merugee, most likely a corruption of Mar Awgen, or "St. Eugene," was most recently settled by Assyrian refugees from Lower Tiyyari in 1920. In

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<sup>671</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 12.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid.

<sup>673</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>674</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>675</sup> See Annexes: Figure 54 & 57 Document B3.

<sup>676</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

1957 the village contained around sixty-nine residents. Meroke was home to thirty-five Assyrian families (fifteen households) with a school just prior to being bulldozed by the military operations of 1987.<sup>677</sup>

**Meze** (Latitude: 36°56' 5'' N, Longitude: 43°23'28'' E)

Meze is located just south of the Gara Mountains in the old Church of the East diocese of Mar Abraham of Nerem. As early as 1850, at least thirty Nestorian families (seven of them converts to Catholicism) resided in Meze (“Mezi” by Badger), served by a priest.<sup>678</sup> By Tfinkdji’s arrival in 1913, the number of Chaldeans increased to one hundred individuals, including a priest.<sup>679</sup> In 1957 Meze was inhabited by 179 people, who fled in 1961. The Chaldean church of Mart Shmuni and the Nestorian church of Mart Maryam both lay in ruin following the attack by pro-government Zebari militiamen, who later squatted on its lands.<sup>680</sup> The village was reportedly attacked and destroyed again in 1987.<sup>681</sup>

### **Suse**

Suse, also Cham Suse, probably Aramaic for “horses,” is also known as Barraka d’Qaddisha. It was home to one cultural structure called *gippa d-qaddisha*, “the saint’s cave.” According to a League of Nations report concerning the settlement of the Assyrians following the 1933 massacres, two hundred people inhabited the village.<sup>682</sup> It was destroyed during the Anfal operations.

### **Zouli**

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<sup>677</sup> Ibid.

<sup>678</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 392.

<sup>679</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 502.

<sup>680</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 14.

<sup>681</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>682</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

Zouli, or Zhouli, was settled by Assyrian refugees from Lower Tiyyari in 1920, and usually divided into upper and lower regions. In 1957 the village population totaled eighty-eight. In 1977 Upper Zouli numbered thirty inhabitants and Lower Zouli, twenty-five.<sup>683</sup> Before being destroyed in 1987, Zouli was home to thirty-four families who were forced to flee to Mosul and other regions populated by Assyrians.<sup>684</sup>

### Arbil Province

**Armota** (Latitude: 36°4'1'' N, Longitude: 44°36'29'' E)

Armota, or Armūṭā or Harmota, lies just outside of Koy Sinjaq in the governorate of Arbil, a two-hour drive from Sulaymaniya. The village is a remote farming settlement and part of the Chaldean diocese of Kirkuk. Badger counted twenty-five families with a priest serving one church in 1843.<sup>685</sup> In 1913 Armota had around one hundred Catholic adherents, with a priest who served the village church.<sup>686</sup> Interestingly, ‘Ainkāwā (‘Amkābā), Armota, and Shaqlāwā were converted to Catholicism by Yohānnan Hormizd in 1779.<sup>687</sup> There was also a local school for the village children during that same year. The name *Armota* is explained in the local Aramaic dialect as meaning “land of death.” The etymology is based on a local legend of a plague that had once slain all of the villagers, or on a large battle between Christians and Moslems of the region. Another explanation would be *Ara* ‘ and *nūṭā* (with the shifting of “n” to “m”), meaning “land of oil.”

<sup>683</sup> See Annexes: Figure 54 & 57 Document B3.

<sup>684</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>685</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 175.

<sup>686</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 492.

<sup>687</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 152, and Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 168.



A fourth-century monastery, located in the mountainous region overlooking the village,<sup>688</sup> faced numerous ravages, including dynamiting during the Anfal campaign in 1988 while the village was transformed into an army camp.<sup>689</sup> Local villager Sabah Hana spent ten years in Abu Ghraib prison, and his brother was executed during this period.<sup>690</sup>

## Dohuk Province

**Deralok** (Latitude: 37°3'21'' N, Longitude: 43°38'56'' E)

Deralok, or Deira d-Luqa, “monastery or church of St. Luke,” is situated along the Upper Zab River. The town’s name derives from the ruins of a monastery dedicated to Mar Luqa located in the surrounding area. It was settled by Nestorians of the Baz tribe in 1920 following their expulsion from their villages in the Hakkâri region. Many fled to the Khabur basin in Syria after the massacres of 1933. Prior to that, 130 individuals resided in Deralok.<sup>691</sup> The regime turned Deralok into a collective town (*mujamma*<sup>692</sup>) in 1978, settling there the displaced inhabitants of villages in the Nerwa and Rekan sub-district. The people originally hail from Qārō (thirty households), Lower Nerwa (five households), and Derigni (five households), with the rest originating from Wela.<sup>693</sup> Originally, forty-five houses were built for Assyrians. A church dedicated to Mar Khnana was built in

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<sup>688</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>689</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 128.

<sup>690</sup> Marcus Stern, ‘Worlds Apart on Chaldean Crisis’, *San Diego Union Tribune*, March 12, 2003.

<sup>691</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>692</sup> Such collective towns and processing centers are not dissimilar to ideas of concentration camps or holding camps used by Germans against the Herero in Namibia in 1904, their later use during WWII, and the United States and Canadian placement of ethnic Japanese into internment camps during the very same war.

<sup>693</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

1979. During the Anfal operations, the village was once again turned into a collective town.

**Gund Kosa** (Latitude: 37°5'31'' N, Longitude: 42°56'35'' E)

Gund Kosa, probably partially derived from the Kurdish word for “village,” *gündük*, lies along the Khabour River in the Dohuk region, sub-district of Doski. The village is known for its patron saint, Abba Serapion. Of its recent history, Gund Kosa and three of its nearby villages were settled by Tiyyari tribesmen in 1922. After the events of 1933 that included the death and displacement of thousands of Assyrians and the destruction of over fifty villages, only 150 Assyrians remained in the village.<sup>694</sup> The settlers of the four villages garnered some help from neighboring Kurds of Akmal village and managed to form a small militia that repelled various attacks against the Assyrians in the region, thus saving Gund Kosa from the Doski Kurdish tribe and granting refuge to numerous Assyrians fleeing the Simele atrocities.<sup>695</sup>

The population of Spindarok,<sup>696</sup> who survived the Simele massacres, fled to and settled in Gund Kosa. Over 170 families dwelt in the village then. At the time of the 1957 Iraqi census, 136 people resided in Gund Kosa. It is the birthplace of curate Zaia Bobo Dobato of the Church of the East, who was targeted by the government, including with various assassination attempts. Dobato escaped to Urmia, and there worked tirelessly to bring the Assyrian

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<sup>694</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>695</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 22.

<sup>696</sup> The Assyrian villages destroyed during the Simele incident were mostly resettled by neighboring Kurds as was the case of Spindarok. The village was also the site of a chemical attack during the Anfal operations.

predicament to the attention of various NGOs and the international community.<sup>697</sup>

In 1988 Gund Kosa was home to eighty families with a school and church when it was targeted during the Anfal operations.<sup>698</sup> At least thirty-three villagers disappeared during the destruction of the village.<sup>699</sup>

### **Kani Balav** (Latitude: 37°10'41'' N, Longitude: 43°11'6'' E)

As early as 1850 there were twenty Assyrian families in the village, with an old church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Around 1933 the village population numbered 110 inhabitants, including a large number of newer settlers from the town of Asheetha in Turkey.<sup>700</sup> Prior to 1949, there are mentions of a tiny Jewish community in the village. In 1957 there were 190 Assyrians in Kani Balav; in 1961 there were seventy families residing in thirty-five houses.<sup>701</sup> In 1988 the village was destroyed, along with its school and church.<sup>702</sup> The villagers were then deported.<sup>703</sup>

### **Mahude**

Little is known about Mahude, which is located in the district of 'Amēdīyāh near the Assyrian village of Havintka. It was settled by Assyrian refugees of the Lower Tiyari tribe in 1920. There were approximately eight Assyrian families residing there, along with several Kurdish families, during its destruction in 1988.<sup>704</sup>

### **Malta** (Latitude: 36°51'6'' N, Longitude: 42°55'57'' E)

<sup>697</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 23.

<sup>698</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>699</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 56.

<sup>700</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>701</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 6 and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>702</sup> See Annexes figure 72 for photograph of the debris of the Virgin Mary church and its school following Anfal.

<sup>703</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>704</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

Malta, or Ma‘althaye, is located west of the Rabban Hormizd monastery of Alqosh, on the mountainous border. It is part of the Catholic diocese of ‘Amēdīyāh. Its name comes from the Syriac-Aramaic word meaning “gateway,” as it is literally the gateway to the mountainous region north of Nineveh. Above the village is a fest of four reliefs carved into the mountain by Assyrian king Sennacherib, as well as a monastic hermitage. According to Badger’s accounts, as early as 1850 there were twenty Assyrian families in Malta with one active church.<sup>705</sup> In 1957 there were thirty households (130 people), and in 1961 there were seventy families.<sup>706</sup> The village was destroyed again in 1986.<sup>707</sup> Due to its proximity to Dohuk, Malta was used as a collective town for hundreds of Kurdish families brought from villages ruined by the Iraqi regime during the Anfal campaign.<sup>708</sup> The churches of Mar Zaya and Mar Awda lie in ruins. Most of the village’s original inhabitants fled the region.

### **Dohuk Province: Barwari Bala Sub-District**

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<sup>705</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>706</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 2.

<sup>707</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid.

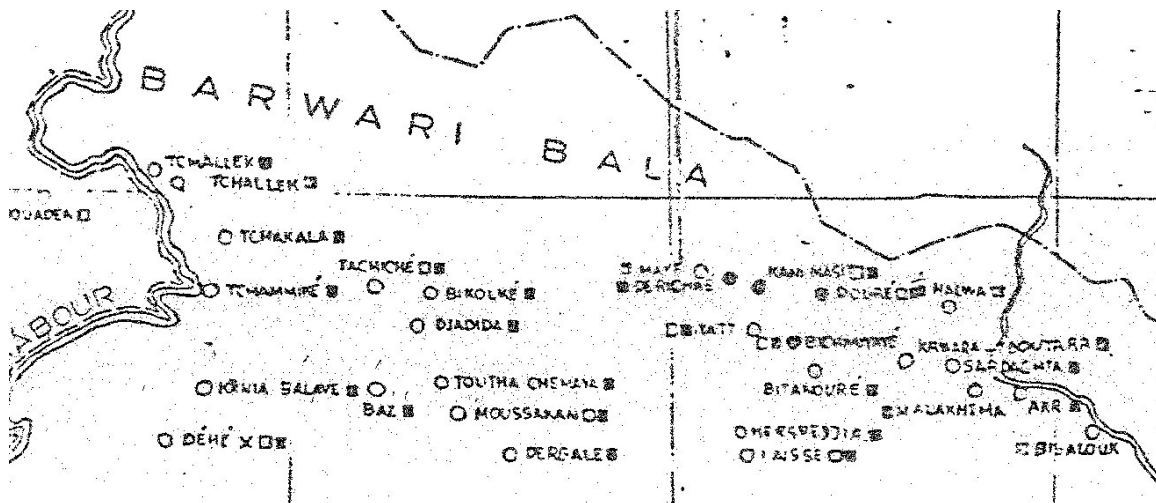


Figure 13 Omez map showing the Barwari Bala region.

**Annūnē** (Latitude: 37°13'36'' N, Longitude: 43°26'19'' E)

Annūnē, or more specifically ‘Ain Nūnē—Aramaic for “source of fish,” whose meaning is also reflected in its Kurdish name *Kani Masi*—has been the centre for Barwari-Bala sub-district since 1934. According to Badger, in 1850 twenty families still resided in the village of Annūnē, with one functioning church and a priest.<sup>709</sup> During the World War I, Annūnē had approximately 360 residents; some twenty were killed, ten women were taken, and another 120 died in the Ūrmia region during the winter of 1915–1916.<sup>710</sup>

Iskharia Gewargis was the town’s resident mukhtar 1926 to 1927, during the building of the first school in the Dohuk region. The building began at the behest of Qasha Oraha Shlimun after his return from the United States in 1924, and was completed in 1928. Classes were taught in Assyrian, English, and French. Since Arabic was not spoken by many Assyrians in the north of Iraq, it was only added to the curriculum at a later time when required by the Iraqi government.

The schoolmaster of Annūnē brought Rabi Hanna of Tel Esqof to instruct in

<sup>709</sup> Ibid, 393.

<sup>710</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

Arabic. By the mid-1930s, there were over three hundred students from the Barwari region, mostly Assyrian with the exception of four Kurdish students and two teachers, Qasha Dawid Toma and Gewargis Bikko.<sup>711</sup> According to the 1957 census, the village population reached approximately 420 individuals. As early as 1958, there were 612 students and twelve Assyrian teachers attending the school of Annūnē.<sup>712</sup> By 1961, during the onset of fighting in Iraq, Muṣṭafa Barzani and four hundred of his men requested permission to traverse the village toward Zakho and Syria. The village elders allowed passage only near Hayyis, rather than directly through the major Assyrian villages.<sup>713</sup> Upon returning, Barzani's numbers had swollen to over three thousand fighters, who then attacked Annūnē and killed every male above the age of fifteen, including two priests.<sup>714</sup> The Assyrians of numerous Barwari villages came to the aid of the besieged Annūnē and repelled the attack from Barzani's men, while the Iraqi government officials remained safe in the village center.<sup>715</sup>

Once again, in 1968 Annūnē suffered napalm attacks by government forces. Prior to its destruction by the Hussein government on February 27, 1988, there existed in Annūnē 180 families (between eighty-four and one hundred houses) with two schools and the two churches of Mart Shmuni and Mar Sawa.<sup>716</sup> As with the entire Barwari region of Assyrian villages, the fields were eliminated and the apple orchards, the area's greatest resource, burned indiscriminately. On

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<sup>711</sup> Y.D. (Annūnē), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>712</sup> Ibid.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid.

<sup>714</sup> Baghdad to State, "Kurdish Revolt – Continued; Government Pretends Kurds Crushed; Reports Massacres in Christian Villages," 10 Jan. 1962, NA/RG59/787.00/1-1062

<sup>715</sup> Y.D. (Annūnē), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>716</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 3 and Y.D. (Annūnē), Interview. The work of FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40, mentions a slight discrepancy of 140 houses.

one occasion, an Assyrian interviewee had been told that his house and land were to be confiscated and that he would be paid thirty dinars (approximately ninety US dollars) for each of the more than one thousand trees in his orchard. The man never received the payment.<sup>717</sup>

### **Bālūkā**

Bālūkā, also known as Bebālūk or Beth Bālūk, has long been an Assyrian village and lies near the Turkish border in the Barwar region, not accessible by most vehicles. In 1850 it was home to ten Nestorian families, served by a priest and one functioning church.<sup>718</sup> Around 1915, almost the entirety of Bālūkā's population was forcibly converted to Islam.<sup>719</sup> In the years leading up to the census of 1957, some of its surviving Christian Assyrian residents returned, and at count they numbered an estimated fifty individuals. According to Majed Eshoo's research, by 1961 there were twenty-five families (ten households) in the village and during the chaos in the region, its headman and some villagers were killed in an air raid by the Iraqi army. Prior to being destroyed from 1976 through 1978 during the border clearings, Bālūkā was home to fifteen families, who were all forcibly removed from their homes.<sup>720</sup> The old village church of Mart Maryam was destroyed during the same period. Though the village was emptied, a few families managed to return and attempt to rebuild until the Anfal operations. The air bombings took out the Bālūkā Bridge and also left any stragglers to contend with

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<sup>717</sup> Z.Y. (Annūnē), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>718</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>719</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

<sup>720</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 5.

a chemical cloud. The village was then taken over by pro-government Kurdish militia.<sup>721</sup>

**Baz (Bas)** (Latitude: 36°57'57'' N, Longitude: 43°57'58'' E)

Baz, or Bas, is located in the Barwari Bala sub-district of ‘Amēdīyāh.<sup>722</sup> In 1957 it was home to 130 Assyrian individuals, and in 1961 there were forty families (twenty households) in the village. In 1961 the village suffered attacks by both pro-government troops and Kurds loyal to Barzani and the armed autonomist movement from the neighboring village of Benaveh, which took possession of the historic church of Mar Abraham and later converted it into a mosque.<sup>723</sup> The church of Mar Youhanna survived in ruined condition until 1988, when the entire village of Baz, home to twenty Assyrian families, was destroyed.<sup>724</sup> At least five villagers of Baz went missing during the Anfal campaign.<sup>725</sup>

**Chammike**

Chammike was resettled by Assyrian refugees from Lower Tiyyari in 1920. In 1961 there were twenty families (ten households) in the village, and prior to its destruction in 1988 by the Ba‘th regime, Chammike was home to four Assyrian families (two households).<sup>726</sup> The village was abandoned due to constant pressure from neighboring tribes.

**Derishke** (Latitude: 37°13'52'' N, Longitude: 43°25'46'' E)

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<sup>721</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 187 & 264.

<sup>722</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>723</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 6-7.

<sup>724</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004* and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>725</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 7.

<sup>726</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.



Derishke Naşara, just west of ‘Ain-Nune, and its Kurdish counterpart Derishke Islam, are located in the Barwar region of Iraq. The etymology of the village name speaks to a possible monastic community in the region. This village was famous for its iron deposits, which were mined and used to forge agricultural tools and other necessary implements. In 1850 it was home to fifteen Assyrian families.<sup>727</sup> In 1915, during the massacres of World War I, only thirty of Derishke’s 130 residents survived.<sup>728</sup> By the 1957 census, the village population had again risen to 167 persons. Prior to its destruction by the Ba‘th regime in 1988, there were fifty families (thirty households) with a school.<sup>729</sup> The churches of Mar Youhanna (built in 1810) and Mar Shukh-Alaha lie in ruins. Interestingly, though the Assyrian village of Derishke was destroyed by air raids in 1988, the Derishke Islam, inhabited by Kurds, was left unharmed.<sup>730</sup>

**Hayyis** (Latitude: 37°9’33’’ N, Longitude: 43°26’22’’ E)

In 1850 Hayyis<sup>731</sup> was reported as having fifteen Nestorian families and one church.<sup>732</sup> During the First World War, Hayyis fared better than many of the Barwari villages, as only one-third of its population perished.<sup>733</sup> By the time of the Iraqi census of 1957, its population was listed at 194 individuals. In 1961 there were sixty families (thirty-five households). Hayyis was attacked once again in 1968, along with several other Assyrian villages of the region. The destruction was quite high, due to the amount of napalm dropped in the area. The village was

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<sup>727</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 392.

<sup>728</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

<sup>729</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>730</sup> Y.D. (Annūnē), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>731</sup> See Annexes figure 70 for photo of Hayyis after its destruction 1988.

<sup>732</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>733</sup> Rockwell, *The Pitiful Plight of the Assyrian Christians in Persia and Kurdistan*, 54.

not attacked in the 1977–1978 border clearings, since Hayyis, besides being quite remote, remained within the region of Barwar under pro-Barzani peşmerge control. In 1988 Hayyis, along with the Assyrian villages of Merkajiya and Musake, was the site of a chemical weapons attack. At the time of its destruction during the Anfal operations, it was home to fifty families (twelve households), with a school and the churches of Rabban Pithion and Mar Gewargis, which were leveled during the devastation.<sup>734</sup>

**Jedide** (Latitude: 37°12'31'' N, Longitude: 43°16'47'' E)

In 1850 Jedide was home to five Nestorian families.<sup>735</sup> By 1961 there were twenty-four Assyrian families accounting for the village's ten households, along with five Kurdish families.<sup>736</sup> Prior to being destroyed in 1988 by the Ba'ath regime, it was home to thirteen Assyrian families.<sup>737</sup>

**Merkajiya** (Latitude: 37°10' 22'' N, Longitude: 43°25'59'' E)

Merkajiya is located in the Barwari Bala sub-district of 'Amēdīyāh. In 1957 it was home to forty-nine individuals. As with all the Barwari villages, Merkajiya was not left unscathed by the events of the 1960s. It was the site of napalm attacks in 1968. In 1970 the headman Yukhanna Odisho Zaia was assassinated in order to intimidate the villagers into leaving. Prior to its ruination in 1988 by the Iraqi military, twenty families residing in twelve households called the village home.<sup>738</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>735</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>736</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 5.

<sup>737</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid.

Merkajiya was also the site of a known chemical attack during the Anfal offensive.<sup>739</sup>

**Musaka** (Latitude: 37°10' 35'' N, Longitude: 43°17'46'' E)

Musaka is located in the Barwari Bala sub-district of 'Amēdiyāh. In 1957 it was home to 128 villagers. Little remains of the ancient church dedicated to Mar Yosip, which was destroyed along with the school and the remainder of the village in 1988, displacing its thirty-five families.<sup>740</sup> Along with Hayyis and Merkajiya, Musaka was the site of a known chemical attack.<sup>741</sup>

**Tāshish** (Latitude: 37°13'3'' N, Longitude: 43°15'41'' E)

In 1850 Tāshish, or Tārshish, in the Barwari region was home to twenty Nestorian families served by a priest and one functioning church.<sup>742</sup> In 1957 its population totaled 163 individuals. In 1961 there were sixty families (thirty households) in the village, and prior to being attacked by the pro-regime militia during the Anfal operations, it was home to seventy families with a school.<sup>743</sup> The church of Mar Quryaqos (restored in 1850) and a shrine dedicated to Mart Shmuni were once part and parcel of the village.

**Tuthe Shemaye**

Tuthe Shemaye's etymology may be connected to an abundance of *elana d'tuthe*, or mulberry trees, in the region. It was part of *athran meetha*, "our dead land," named for the Assyrian region of Barwari Bala, which lost its tribal independence and fell under the jurisdiction of various Kurdish agha's. During G. P. Badger's

<sup>739</sup> Y.D. (Annune), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>740</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004* and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>741</sup> Y.D. (Annune), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>742</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>743</sup> Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*, 230.

wanderings in Mesopotamia in 1850, he remarked that ten Assyrian families resided in the village of Tuthe Shemaye,<sup>744</sup> and in 1957 its population totaled forty-five individuals. In 1961 there were fifteen families (six households) living in the village, as well as three Kurdish families.<sup>745</sup> Prior to its destruction in 1988 by the Ba‘th regime, it was home to ten Assyrian families and the old church of Mar Gewargis, which met with the same fate as the rest of the village structures.<sup>746</sup>

### **Dohuk Province: Zawīta Sub-District**

#### **Babilo**

Babilo was settled by Assyrian refugees from the Baz tribe in the 1920s. Around 1933, they numbered sixty-five people. In 1957 the village population numbered 111, and in 1961 there were twenty-five families (sixteen households). In 1988 Babilo was destroyed as part of the Anfal campaign and its thirty-five families were left homeless.<sup>747</sup> There is reportedly an old grotto church dedicated to Mar Yosip near Babilo.<sup>748</sup>

#### **Der-Alush**

Little is known of Der-Alush, though its name indicates that it may have been the site of a monastery. The village is located in the Dohuk region in the sub-district of Zawīta. The village was destroyed in 1987.

#### **Chavrik**

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<sup>744</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>745</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 5.

<sup>746</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004* and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>747</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

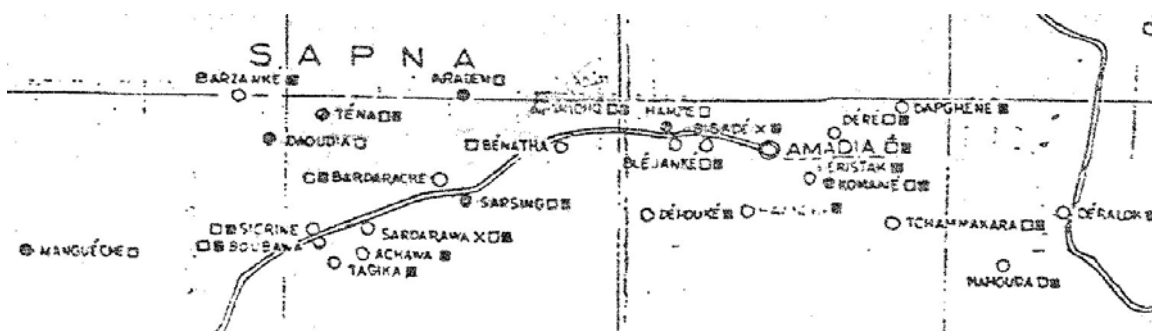
<sup>748</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

Chavrik, or Avrik, was divided into an upper and lower region, both settled by Assyrians. The village was destroyed by the Hussein regime in 1987 during the Anfal operations.

**Peda** (Latitude: 36°51'41" N, Longitude: 43°11'44" E)

Assyrians had lived in the area of Peda for many decades. Peda was destroyed by the Ba'ath regime in 1987. The population at the time of expulsion is unknown.

### Sapna/Sarsang Region



**Arāden** (Latitude: 37°6'35" N, Longitude: 43°19'3" E)

Arāden<sup>749</sup> has always been a significant Assyrian village in the Sapna region to the south of Barwari Bala. The large village is located within the ‘Amēdīyāh diocese of the Chaldean church, along with the regional villages of Mangesh, Dawodiya, Ten, and Inishke. Arāden is approximately 160 kilometers north of Mosul.<sup>750</sup> Locals believe the etymology of Arāden as being ‘ar‘a d-a‘den, or “the land of Eden.” The village sits at an altitude of over 1,140 meters above sea level.<sup>751</sup> In 1850 it was home to fifty families with a priest serving one church.<sup>752</sup>

<sup>749</sup> For a brief description of village life see Krotkoff, Georg, *A Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Kurdistan: Texts, Grammar, and Vocabulary*, (American Oriental Society: New Haven, 1982).

<sup>750</sup> Habib Ishow, “Un village irakien, «Araden» en 1961”, *Cahiers de l’Orient Contemporain*, (1966), 6-9

<sup>751</sup> Michel Chevalier, *Montagnards chrétiens du Hakkâri et du Kurdistan septentrional*, Publications du Département de Géographie de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne No. 13 (Paris: 1985), 112.

<sup>752</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

In 1913 there were approximately 650 Catholics, with two priests and two schools.<sup>753</sup> Around 1933 there were 515 Assyrians in Arāden.<sup>754</sup> The town's population in 1954 numbered 474 families, approximately five thousand people.<sup>755</sup> In 1957 Arāden's population totaled 1,049, and in 1961 there were 350 Assyrian families, around three thousand inhabitants.<sup>756</sup> Arāden is a pilgrimage center for Chaldeans and Nestorians alike. There are three ancient Chaldean churches in the village: one named for the third-century saint Mart Shmuni, a second dedicated to the fourth-century saint Sultan Mahdokht, and a third to the fourth-century saint Mar Awda. The church of Sultan Mahdokht is dedicated to a princess by the same name and her two brothers, who were baptized by Mar Awda but later martyred. When the churches were initially built is uncertain, but it is possible that one or all may be a millennium old. A more recent church was built and dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Feast days of Arāden include the May 15 *shera*<sup>757</sup> and the January 12 *dookhrana*<sup>758</sup> of Sultan Mahdokht.

Some of Arāden's major personalities included Chaldean Bishop Francis, Chaldean Bishop Toma, Rayis Hermiz Sana, and former AUA secretary general Aprim Rayis. In the 1960s the village was first bombed and then burned to the ground by seven hundred government forces; Kurdish irregulars under the leadership of Zabir Muhammad Zebari murdered at least seven villagers,

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<sup>753</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>754</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>755</sup> Aprim Rayis, "Araden – A Living Village in Garbia," *The Assyrian Star*, Vol. LV, No. 1, (Spring 2003), 32.

<sup>756</sup> Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians in Eastern Turkey and Iran*, 64.

<sup>757</sup> *Shahra* "vigil"

<sup>758</sup> "Remembrance"

including Nona Daniel.<sup>759</sup> Though Arāden was rebuilt over the years, continued targeting resulted in the assassination of the Shimshun Elisha in 1974, and the murders of Sami Goriel and Salem Dawood in 1975. Dinkha Eshaya, the village *mukhtar*, or “mayor,” was later assassinated in 1981.<sup>760</sup> The Ba‘th regime destroyed the village again in 1987, at which time an estimated 220 families resided within the village, with two schools.<sup>761</sup>

**Bebede** (Latitude: 37°5’49’’ N, Longitude: 43°27’12’’ E)

Bebede, or Beth Bede, lies at the foot of ‘Amēdīyāh and is built close to ruins of one of the most ancient Assyrian castles in the Sapna valley. The village has a waterfall called *shamshoma*. The people of Bebede, skilled in ceramics, refer to themselves as *‘aşlaye*, or “originators,” for having lived in the village for millennia, whereas many villages in the Sapna valley had been abandoned and resettled, some on numerous occasions.<sup>762</sup> Badger mentions the village as having twenty families, a church, and a priest, but also mentions the village to have been destroyed and emptied of Assyrians during his travels.<sup>763</sup> Whether the statistics given were pre- or post-destruction is unknown. According to a League of Nations report in 1933, there were approximately 250 individuals living in the village.<sup>764</sup> Bebede, which falls within the old Nestorian diocese of Mar Yeshuyau of Barwar,<sup>765</sup> also became the headquarters for Patriarch Mar Eshai Sham‘un

<sup>759</sup> Notes from the Rayis Family personal collection. See also Ishow, “Un village irakien, «Araden» en 1961”, *Cahiers de l’Orient Contemporain*, (1966), 6.

<sup>760</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 9.

<sup>761</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>762</sup> Y.G. (Bebede), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>763</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>764</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>765</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

following the migration from his original home in Quchanis (Hakkâri) until 1933, when he was exiled with his family to Cyprus.

In 1957 the inhabitants of Bebde numbered 480, and in 1961 there were one hundred Assyrian families.<sup>766</sup> The village was razed in 1961 by mercenaries under the leadership of Muhammad Zebari.<sup>767</sup> Some Assyrians returned in 1963 and consecutive years, but constant struggles with neighboring Kurds (mostly from Arāden Islam, Upper Arāden) left little room for stability and development. In 1987 Bebede was destroyed, along with its school and the sixth-century church of Mart Shmuni, and its seventy-five families were displaced.<sup>768</sup> Bebede's famous personalities included Toma Yosip Toma, chairman of the city council of 'Amēdīyāh in 1914 and during World War I. According to Majed Eshoo, Toma was executed in Mosul by Ottoman authorities, along with his companion Petto Rayis from Arāden.<sup>769</sup> The village was also prominent for its school, which was established in 1908 by the English missionary Rev. William Wigram. Unfortunately, the school was destroyed by the Ba'ath regime in 1988 and its foundation materials were appropriated for building an army barracks.<sup>770</sup>

**Benāta** (Latitude: 37°4'45'' N, Longitude: 43°22'32'' E)

Benāta (also spelled Beth 'Ainātha), or "place of sources," gets its Aramaic name from the variety of water springs in the vicinity. The *Book of Governors* describes the ninth-century village as being mentioned in a vision of Maran-'Ammeh.<sup>771</sup> In

<sup>766</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 10.

<sup>767</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*, Y.G. (Bebede), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>768</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>769</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 11.

<sup>770</sup> Y.G. (Bebede), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>771</sup> Budge, *Thomas of Marga, Book of Governors*, Vol. II, 327.



1913 it was home to approximately 150 Catholics with a priest and a chapel.<sup>772</sup> Prior to 1961 there were still sixty families (thirty households) in the village. Following 1988, no Assyrians lived there.

### **Birta**

Birta (sometimes Bire), a half-hour walk from Tilla, is located in the western part of the old Church of the East ecclesiastical region of Margā.<sup>773</sup> Birta's name derives from the Akkadian word *birtu*, "fortress," and is the location of a burial complex belonging to an Akkadian king. This village is but one of many sites referred to as Birta, due to the ruins of a fortress in close proximity. In 1913 sixty people lived in the village.<sup>774</sup> While under attack during the armed resistance movement in 1961, Birta's people abandoned the village, which was later settled by Iraqi government irregulars from the Zebari tribe.<sup>775</sup> The ancient monastery of Mar Gewargis and the fifth-century hermitages around the village had been continuously damaged by military and paramilitary activity and fell into further disrepair after 1961.<sup>776</sup>

### **Blejanke** (Latitude: 37°6'0'' N, Longitude: 43°12'0'' E)

Blejanke (also Blejane), which lies within the Sapna region, is well known among Assyrians as the home of Yousif Toma Hermiz Zebari and Rafael Nanno, members of the Assyrian Democratic Movement who were later killed by the Iraqi regime. Of its recent history, Nestorians of the Tkhuma region in Hakkâri

<sup>772</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>773</sup> The center of Nestorian (Church of the East) Christianity from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> century including much of north Iraq from Zakho to Nerem.

<sup>774</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>775</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 14.

<sup>776</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

settled Blejanke in the nineteenth century; in 1850 it was home to eight Nestorian families, with a church dedicated to Mar Gewargis.<sup>777</sup> The villagers at present came originally from Erdel (in the Arbel province), which in 1850 also had a church, a priest, and fourteen families<sup>778</sup> before they were evacuated by Agha Petros when he sacked the nearby Kurdish stronghold of Barzan during World War I. In 1957 Blejanke had 238 inhabitants. When the village was attacked in 1961, there were approximately thirty houses.<sup>779</sup> During the initial raid on the village that year, two villagers were injured and three killed; the remaining Assyrians fled to Sarsang. During this time, the government forces also fired various rounds of ammunition at the nearby monasteries of Mar Qardagh and Mar ‘Abdyeshu’, causing large-scale damage.<sup>780</sup> Though some Assyrians returned to the village, it was destroyed again in 1987 by the Ba‘th regime, specifically for being the known home of several prominent Assyrian-nationalist leaders; its twenty-eight families were then displaced.<sup>781</sup>

**Bubawa** (Latitude: 37°2’5’’ N, Longitude: 43°16’45’’ E)

Bubawa, also spelled Bibava, was settled by the inhabitants of Daragale (located between Hayyis and Musake), who were forced to flee their village in Barwari-Bala in 1950. At the time of the 1957 Iraqi census, eighty-five Assyrians resided in the village. Daragale was home to thirty-two Assyrian families (twelve

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<sup>777</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393. Badger does not mention a church in Blejanke.

<sup>778</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 392.

<sup>779</sup> D.T. (Blejanke), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>780</sup> Ibid.

<sup>781</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004* and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

households) in 1987, when the Iraqi military destroyed it in order to build an artificial lake.<sup>782</sup>

**Dawodiya** (Latitude: 37°5'27'' N, Longitude: 43°13'18'' E)

Dawodiya, or Dawudiya, lies to the far west in the Sapna valley region. It has always been an Assyrian village and is built on an archaeological mound dating to the fifth century BC. The name of the village is said to derive from a monastery dedicated to Mar Daudo, located an hour north of the present village on the Hasn Birka road.<sup>783</sup> In 1840, an unknown military leader built a military barracks in the town.<sup>784</sup> In 1850 thirty Chaldean families called Dawodiya home.<sup>785</sup> By 1913 the Chaldean population was at three hundred, with a school and church served by a single priest.<sup>786</sup> According to a League of Nations report following the 1933 massacres, 275 Assyrians lived in the village.<sup>787</sup> In 1957 there were eighty households, totaling 524 people, and in 1961 there were 150 Assyrian families, in 120 households.<sup>788</sup> The village was destroyed in 1987, at which time there were eighty-two families with a school.<sup>789</sup> The church of Mar Youḥannan, originally built in the seventeenth century, was destroyed in 1987. There was also a shrine dedicated to Mart Shmuni, which was damaged during the military campaign.

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<sup>782</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40, and AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>783</sup> Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians in Eastern Turkey and Iran*, 65.

<sup>784</sup> Harrak, "Northern Mesopotamia in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Syriac Annalistic Source," 302.

<sup>785</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>786</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>787</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>788</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 8.

<sup>789</sup> FIDH & AIJ, 40.

Approximately five Assyrians from Dawodiya disappeared during the Anfal operations from August to October 1988.<sup>790</sup>

**Dehe** (Latitude: 37°8'2'' N, Longitude: 43°10'41'' E)

Located in the Dohuk region and sub-district of Sarsang, Dehe, though on the map of Omez, seems more a part of the Barwar region and is registered just southwest of Bas. As early as 1850, there were ten families in Dehe, served by a priest.<sup>791</sup> In 1920 an influx of Nestorians from the Upper Tiyari tribe settled there. At the time of the Simele massacres in 1933, there were 140 Assyrians in the village.<sup>792</sup> By 1957 there were 292 residents in Dehe; and prior to the war in 1961, there were one hundred families (twenty-two households), totaling approximately 615 people. The village, including its two schools, was destroyed in 1987, and the fifty remaining families were forced to flee.<sup>793</sup> Around the village, there are ruins of churches dedicated to Mar Gewargis and Mar Qayyoma, the latter from the tenth century. The fifth-century church of Mart Shmuni also suffered ruin during the uprooting process.<sup>794</sup>

**Dere** (Latitude: 37°5'55'' N, Longitude: 43°31'17'' E)

The village of Dere (Aramaic for “monasteries” or, more literally, “dwellings”) in the Sapna region lies quite close to its sister village, Komāne; they are often referred to as a pair, Dere w-Komāne. Its etymology most likely traces to the region as the site of the Mar ‘Abdyešu‘ and Mar Qardagh monasteries. The

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<sup>790</sup> Ibid. 56-57.

<sup>791</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>792</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>793</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>794</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

fourth-century monastery of Mar‘Abdyešu‘, at one time served by forty-two monks living in the nearby caves, was reportedly partially ruined during Badger’s initial visit in 1843; in 1850, however, Badger records that the villagers had restored it.<sup>795</sup> In 1850 Badger recorded twelve families residing there with one functioning church.<sup>796</sup> Little is known of Dere and its population for approximately one hundred years, but by the 1957 census it had grown to 323 residents. In 1961 there were one hundred families (sixty households) there, but many left the village due to the autonomist movement.<sup>797</sup> Mar ‘Abdyešu‘ was also destroyed.

In 1987, government soldiers destroyed Dere and Mar ‘Abdyešu‘ monastery for the second time in less than thirty years (after its restoration following the 1961 campaign), and its remaining seventy families were forced to flee yet again.<sup>798</sup> The majority of families who fled moved to nearby ‘Amēdīyāh, but found that also to be unsafe. After Anfal, Dutch researcher J. Sanders recalls, “I saw a new church with a white dome and a cross on top which had been bombed [a result of the Anfal]. The roof hung down to the ground.”<sup>799</sup> He further recounts, “The church itself had two naves, the first sized ten by three and one-half meters, devoted to Saint Qardagh, pupil of Mar Awdisho [‘Abdyešu‘], the one to whom the second nave, nine by four meters wide, was devoted.”<sup>800</sup>

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<sup>795</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 253.

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>797</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 10 and B. A. (Komāne), Interview, 26 July 2008, Toronto, Canada, K. D. (Komāne), Interview, 26 July 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>798</sup> ‘Abdyešu‘ Barzana, *Šinnē d’ ‘asqūtā: Qrābā d’Dayrabūn wa Gunḥā d’Simele*, 221 and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40 & 55.

<sup>799</sup> Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians in Eastern Turkey and Iran*, 63.

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

(Sanders also mentions the possible entrance to a cave-shrine or monastery in the rock face of the mountain.)

### **Derigni**

The village of Derigni (also spelled Derigne and Dirgin) also lies in the Sapna plain, three miles east of Dere. In 1850, Derigni was home to forty Nestorian families, with a single church and two priests.<sup>801</sup> In 1957 the village was home to 130 Assyrians, and prior to its final destruction in 1988, there were forty Assyrian families (thirty households) in the village, with a school.<sup>802</sup> During the Anfal campaign, the ancient church of the Virgin Mary, built in 885, sustained damage in the village destruction. At least twelve citizens from Derigni disappeared during the campaign, including a mother and her six children.<sup>803</sup>

### **Deze** (Latitude: 36°51'13'' N, Longitude: 43°15'11'' E)

Deze, or Dizze, has had a long-standing Assyrian population from the Nestorian and Chaldean churches. Located not far from the Yezidi shrine of Sheikh Adi, Deze lies in the same region as Bedul, Beboze, and Meze, all part of the Chaldean diocese of 'Amēdīyāh. In 1850 it was home to twenty families.<sup>804</sup> By 1913 there were eighty Chaldeans in the village, but the number of Nestorian adherents was unknown.<sup>805</sup> The original inhabitants fled in 1933 because of the local persecution, and the ownership of the lands passed into the hands of Kurdish landowner Ibrahim Haj-Malo Mizouri.<sup>806</sup> In 1974 Assyrians from Shuwadin (near

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<sup>801</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>802</sup> FIDH & AIJ. (January 2003), 40.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid. 56-57.

<sup>804</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>805</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>806</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 13.

Zakho) settled in Deze to work its fields. Prior to its destruction by the Ba‘th regime in 1987, there were ninety Assyrian families (thirty households) in Deze, with a school. The ancient stone church of Mar Christopher is still in ruins and its vaulted roof collapsed.<sup>807</sup>

### **Dohuke**

Following the Simele massacres, part of Dohuke’s population, of the Tkhuma tribe, fled to Syria. In the early period of 1936, thirty other Assyrian families inhabited Dohoke.<sup>808</sup> According to the 1957 census, approximately 120 people inhabited the village, and by 1961 approximately sixty families resided there.<sup>809</sup> The village was burned in 1962, but some of its population returned to rebuild in 1964. The villagers were forced to flee again in 1965, but returned yet again following the March 11, 1970, peace agreement, which briefly pacified anti-government forces. The fighting resumed in the mid- and latter 1970s, when pro-government militia attacked and destroyed the village from 1974 to 1977 and began confiscating its lands.<sup>810</sup> Some villagers managed to return, but were expelled once again during the Anfal operations in 1988, which destroyed the village yet again and saw its surviving sixty families displaced.<sup>811</sup>

### **Eṣṣān** (Latitude: 36°55’34’’ N, Longitude: 43°38’42’’ E)

Eṣṣān, or Ṣiyān, is located in the sub-district of Sarsang. Seven metropolitans once lived in Eṣṣān, with a village church dedicated to Mar Quryaqos. Another church, dedicated to Mar Zaddiqa, lies on the summit of the Gara Mountains at an

<sup>807</sup> Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*, 212.

<sup>808</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 10.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid.

<sup>811</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

elevation of over two thousand meters.<sup>812</sup> According to Badger, in 1850 Eṣṣān had forty Assyrian families and a church served by a single priest living.<sup>813</sup> By 1918 there were twelve families, numbering ninety people, who had converted to Catholicism. In 1957 the population of Eṣṣān totaled 249, and in 1961 it was destroyed for the first time.<sup>814</sup> The annihilation of the village in 1987 and 1988 included the destruction of its two churches and led to the displacement of its remaining population.

**Hamziya** (Latitude: 37°5'40'' N, Longitude: 43°25'38'' E)

Hamziya, located in the Sarsang sub-district of 'Amēdīyāh, had two churches, both dedicated to Mart Shmuni, built in the sixth century and twentieth century.<sup>815</sup> As early as 1850, six Nestorian families lived in the village,<sup>816</sup> and in 1913 its population was at two hundred, with a priest and a school.<sup>817</sup> Around 1933, there were only fifty Assyrians in the village.<sup>818</sup> In 1957 the population of Hamziya was approximately 102. Its thirty-two families fled in 1987 when their village was targeted for being the known home of dissidents, among them, Youkhana Esho Shimon Jajo, one of the founding members of the ADM, who was executed by the Iraqi regime in Abu Ghraib prison in 1985.<sup>819</sup>

## Inishke

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<sup>812</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>813</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 392.

<sup>814</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>815</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>816</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>817</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>818</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>819</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.



During G. P. Badger's travels in 1850, Inishke (also Enishke) was home to twenty families with a priest and a church.<sup>820</sup> In 1913 there were reportedly some 250 Chaldeans, with a priest serving one active church, and a school.<sup>821</sup> In 1957 Inishke's population numbered 333 people, according to the Iraqi census. By 1961 it was home to 120 Assyrian families (fifty households).<sup>822</sup> The village was not completely destroyed by the Ba'ath regime, but its lands were confiscated, and a presidential palace complex was built upon them. The five churches in the village included the new Mart Shmuni church; the old Mart Shmuni church (last restored in 1885), now in ruins; Mar Gewargis church (last restored in 1830); Mar Quryaqos monastery, which now lies in ruins; and the ruined tenth-century "Red Monastery" of Mar Yosip Busnaya on a nearby hilltop.<sup>823</sup>

**Sardarawa** (Latitude: 37°2'27'' N, Longitude: 43°14'15'' E)

Sardarawa (sometimes Sardawara) was resettled by Nestorian refugees from Hakkâri after the World War I, and according to the 1957 Iraqi census, its inhabitants numbered 99 people. Sardarawa was destroyed by the Hussien regime in 1987, along with its church. The thirty remaining families were forced to flee to Assyrian areas elsewhere in Iraq. A presidential palace was later built on the villagers' land, further solidifying its total destruction.<sup>824</sup>

**Sikrîne** (Latitude: 37°2'27'' N, Longitude: 43°16'45'' E)

In 1920 Sikrîne was settled by Assyrian refugees of the Tkhuma tribe, who then fled to Syria after the 1933 massacres. Just prior to the exodus from the village,

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<sup>820</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>821</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 502.

<sup>822</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 9.

<sup>823</sup> D.I. (Inishke), email correspondence, 10 January 2008

<sup>824</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004* and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

the population numbered approximately sixty-five people. Other Assyrians later resettled Sikrīne, and in 1957 the population was at 475. In 1987 the Ba‘th regime destroyed the village along with its school, and its thirty-seven families were displaced.<sup>825</sup>

**Ten** (Latitude: 37°5’54’’ N, Longitude: 43°14’44’’ E)

Referred to as Keni on the British topographical maps, Ten, or Tin, is a fifteen-minute drive from the monastery of Abraham, which is “now a 100 meter by 50 ruin, called ‘House of the Painters.’”<sup>826</sup> Ten has long been inhabited and contains many markers of its cultural significance. In 1850, thirty families and a priest serving one church dwelled in the village.<sup>827</sup> By 1913 the population of Ten had increased to 450 Catholics, with two priests and a school.<sup>828</sup> Following the 1933 massacres, there were two hundred Assyrians living in Ten.<sup>829</sup> In 1957 the village population totaled 362, and in 1987, when the Ba‘th regime destroyed it, there were forty-five Assyrian families dwelling in the area.<sup>830</sup> The ancient church of Mart Shmuni was also eliminated at this time. An hour’s drive from Ten, in Zawitha, west of the village of Bamarne, is the famous monastery of Mar Abraham (“Abraham the weeper”), dated to at least the tenth century, whose ruins were still visible as late as 1956.<sup>831</sup> Two Assyrians from Ten were abducted and disappeared during the Anfal operations from August to October 1988.<sup>832</sup>

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<sup>825</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>826</sup> Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians in Eastern Turkey and Iran*, 64.

<sup>827</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>828</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 502.

<sup>829</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 8.

<sup>830</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>831</sup> Sanders, *Assyrian-Chaldean Christians in Eastern Turkey and Iran*, 64.

<sup>832</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 56-57.

**Tilla** (Latitude: 36°50'10'' N, Longitude: 43°27'54'' E)

Tilla, or Tella, walking distance from Birta, is mentioned quite early in Syriac sources as the place of origin of a copy of the *Book of Superiors*, dated to 1701, and a book of hymns dated to 1720.<sup>833</sup> According to Hoffmann, Tilla was also referred to as “Tellā Bīrtā,” perhaps since both terms *Tella* and *Birta* refer to various sites with ancient lineage in the region; Tilla is one of many sites of the same name. In 1913 there were 340 Chaldeans in Tilla, with a priest serving one church and a school.<sup>834</sup> Tilla was destroyed in 1987, along with its three churches; the third-century church of Mar Išḥaq, and another dedicated to Mart Maryam, were among those eliminated. A mound dedicated to Mart Shmuni (which probably speaks to an older ancient religious site), from which Tilla’s etymology probably derives (*tella* meaning “mound or hill”), was also despoiled during the village’s destruction.

### **Nineveh (Al Shikhan) Region**

**Haruna** (Latitude: 37°2'37'' N, Longitude: 42°50'47'' E)

Haruna, located in the Sheikhan district, was destroyed by the Ba‘th regime in 1987. Little is known about the village, which was most likely home to a majority of Yezidis, with a small Christian population.<sup>835</sup>

### **Nerwa-Rekan Region**

**Bāsh** (Latitude: 36°31'0'' N, Longitude: 43°37'60'' E)

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<sup>833</sup> Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, Vol. I, 287.

<sup>834</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 502.

<sup>835</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

Bāsh has long been an Assyrian settlement and is located on the Iraq-Turkey border. In 1850 there were twelve Assyrian families with a priest.<sup>836</sup> In 1957 there were 150 individuals living in the village. By 1961 there were sixty Assyrian families (thirty-six households).<sup>837</sup> Prior to the village's initial destruction by the regime in 1977 to 1978, there were fifty families with a school. Bāsh was rebuilt in 1981 by twenty families who had returned, but was destroyed again in 1988.<sup>838</sup> The churches of Mar Zakka (seventh century) and Mar Dawūd were destroyed along with the rest of the village, and its inhabitants fled to Turkey. Over thirty-four Assyrian villagers surrendered and attempted to return to Bāsh after the announcement of a general amnesty, but they were never heard from again.<sup>839</sup>

**Nerwa (Lower)** (Latitude: 37°7'9'' N, Longitude: 43°46'15'' E)

Lower Nerwa is a five-hour walk from the nearest road, on the border with Turkey.<sup>840</sup> According to the 1957 census, 149 Assyrians lived in Lower Nerwa, and in 1961 there were thirty-two families (approximately twenty-five households).<sup>841</sup> Prior to the final evacuation of the village by the Hussein regime in 1978, there were sixty families living in Lower Nerwa.<sup>842</sup> During the border clearings, the seventh-century church of Mar Khnana was eliminated along with the village. Many families from Lower Nerwa who survived the destruction were forcibly moved to the collective town of Deralok.

**Qārō**

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<sup>836</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>837</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 24.

<sup>838</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid. 56-57.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

<sup>841</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 24.

<sup>842</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

Qārō is located on the Iraq-Turkey border in the Nerwa region. In 1850 there were ten Nestorian families with a priest.<sup>843</sup> In 1961 there were forty-two Assyrian families (eighteen households). Prior to Qārō's first destruction by the regime in 1977 to 1978, there were fifty families with a school.<sup>844</sup> In 1981 parts of the village were rebuilt by a small contingent of returnees. Unfortunately, the entire village was once again ruined in 1988, and the remaining families were forced to flee. Over thirty-five Assyrians of the village had fled and attempted to return during the general amnesty offered by the Iraqi government, but none were seen or heard from again.<sup>845</sup> Qārō's three churches—Mar Gewargis, originally built in the seventh century and last restored in 1810, Mar Quryaqos, and Mar Younan—still lie in ruins.

## **Wela**

Wela, also Welah, lies along the Turkish border in the Nerwa region. In 1850 the village had ten families, with one priest and one church.<sup>846</sup> By the 1957 census, there were fifty-nine individuals in Wela. Later, in 1961, there were sixteen families (nine households); and prior to the evacuation by the Ba'ath regime in 1977, twenty families resided in Wela.<sup>847</sup> The churches of Mart Shmuni (perhaps seventh-century) and Mart Maryam were first destroyed at this time.<sup>848</sup> The village met with devastation yet again in 1987 and 1988 during the Anfal operations.

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<sup>843</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393

<sup>844</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 24 and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 40.

<sup>845</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 56-57.

<sup>846</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>847</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 24.

<sup>848</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 55.

## Simele District

**Badaliya** (Latitude: 36°50'22'' N, Longitude: 42°44'48'' E)

Nestorian refugees from Baz settled Badaliya in 1920, but fled to Syria after the 1933 massacres, and an Arab landowner, Muhammad Beg, took over the village. In 1953, after purchasing the land from Beg, sixty Assyrian families resettled Badaliya, along with a single Kurdish family and two Arab families. By the 1957 census, its Assyrian population totaled 234. Before the last Assyrians were evacuated in 1987 to make way for a government-run poultry project, sixty Assyrian families inhabited the village with a school. Badaliya was also the birthplace of Mar Narsai, Ancient Church of the East bishop of Kirkuk.<sup>849</sup>

**Bakhitme** (Latitude: 36°48'20'' N, Longitude: 42°51'14'' E)

Bakhitme, or Beth-Khatme,<sup>850</sup> “the place of the seals” (probably in reference to a place where documents or deals were signed or agreed to), is famous for being the location of the martyrdom of Mar Daniel, to whom a church was later dedicated (rebuilt in 1984).<sup>851</sup> Of its more recent Assyrian immigrants, Nestorians from Nochiya settled Bakhitme in 1920, but fled to Syria after the massacres of August 1933. The village was again settled by eighty Assyrian families in 1956. Bakhitme was finally purchased in 1957 from the Arab Sheikhs who owned it, giving its approximately 232 residents hope for continued growth.<sup>852</sup> However, in April 1987, the village was entirely destroyed, including two schools and three

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<sup>849</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 21.

<sup>850</sup> See Annexes figures 74-75 of Bakhitme after its destruction during the Anfal operations.

<sup>851</sup> M. B. Nineveh Center for Research and Development (NCRD), Qaraqosh, Iraq, email correspondence, 2 February 2007

<sup>852</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 20 and M. B. Nineveh Center for Research and Development (NCRD), Qaraqosh, Iraq, email correspondence, 2 February 2007

churches (Mart Maryam and Mar Gewargis), and its 140 Assyrian families deported.<sup>853</sup> On June 19, 1992, a Nestorian priest from Dohuk spoke with Human Rights Watch in an interview about the April 1987 annihilation of Bakhitme:<sup>854</sup>

“I was told that they would destroy Bakhtoma because they had already destroyed most of the surrounding villages. It was around noon when I went to the church of St. George to remove the furniture, but the Iraqi army tanks and bulldozers were already beginning to roll into the village. I was the last one to pray in the church. After finishing my prayers, I removed the furniture to take it with me to Dohuk. It was a very sad day. The Iraqi soldiers and army engineers put the equivalent of one kilo of TNT at each corner of the church. After five minutes, they blew up the building and then went on to demolish every house in the village. Later they paid me compensation of 3,000 dinars. I went to the head of the Ba’ath Party in Dohuk to ask why they were destroying our villages. He replied, ‘You are Arabs, and we decide what you should do. That is all there is to it.’ I left his office then. What could I say?”<sup>855</sup>

### Gera-Gora

Gera-Gora (referred to as Kera-Gora by Eshoo) is located in the Simele sub-district of Dohuk. Some of its more recent Assyrian inhabitants hailed from Tkuma and Rumta in Upper Tiyyari and settled in the village following World War I.<sup>856</sup> After the massacres of 1933, many of the villagers fled to Syria, and the village was immediately resettled by other Assyrians from the neighboring towns. According to the census account of 1957, approximately 201 villagers dwelled in Gera-Gora. Most recently, according to information gleaned by the AAS field mission in 2004, the village was forcibly abandoned due to a poultry project in Badaliya in 1987.<sup>857</sup>

**Hejerke** (Latitude: 36°55'59'' N, Longitude: 42°52'42'' E)

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<sup>853</sup> M. B. Nineveh Center for Research and Development (NCRD), Qaraqosh, Iraq, email correspondence, 2 February 2007 and FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>854</sup> Many Assyrian towns/villages referred to by outside sources are frequently incorrectly written, and some even incorrectly placed. In this instance, Bakhitme is incorrectly referred to as “Bakhtoma.”

<sup>855</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 211.

<sup>856</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>857</sup> Ibid.

Hejerke, also Hizeerke, located just northwest of Sheze, was settled by Nestorians from Baz following World War I. In 1933 there were approximately eighty-five Assyrians in the village, and by 1957 the number had been reduced to fifty-one.<sup>858</sup> The Iraqi regime attacked the village in 1984, and later destroyed it in 1987, when Hejerke's remaining eight families were forced to flee.

**Kharab Kulk** (Latitude: 36°52'60'' N, Longitude: 42°48'25'' E)

Kharab Kulk can possibly be identified as the Ḥarbai mentioned in Syriac sources. The monastery of Mar Isaac is located nearby Ḥarbai.<sup>859</sup> Kharab Kulk was settled by Nestorians from Qochanis in Hakkâri following the genocidal killings of Christians in Asia Minor during World War I.<sup>860</sup> The village was first overrun in 1961 during the civil war, and again in 1987.

**Komāne** (Latitude: 37°4'56'' N, Longitude: 43°31'23'' E)

The sister village of Dere, Komāne (also Kowane) had been a large settlement. Its cultural and religious edifices included the church of Mar Ephrem (Sassanid period), an eighth-century monastery dedicated to Mar Quryaqos, and a perhaps fourth-century monastery to Mart Maryam. There is also an old cave-shrine or grotto dedicated to Mar Sawa in the Gara mountains<sup>861</sup> opposite Komāne. In 1850 Badger counted thirteen families in the village, with a priest and a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary that held allegiance to the Nestorian archdiocese of

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<sup>858</sup> League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva 18 January 1934, enclosure II, 9.

<sup>859</sup> Wilmschurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Church of the East*, 155.

<sup>860</sup> Royal Government of Iraq, *Correspondence Relating to Assyrian Settlement from 13th July, 1932 to 5th August, 1933*, (Baghdad, Government Press, 1933), 48.

<sup>861</sup> The Gara Mountains are also identified with the region of Dasen – 'which rising near Da'udiya in the west extends along to the Upper Zab and away to the east into Gebel Pir Hasan Beg' in E.A. Wallis Budge's rendition of the *Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Marga A.D. 840*, Vol. II, 67.



Mar Yeshu‘yab of Barwar.<sup>862</sup> By 1913 most of the village had been converted to Catholicism, and Tfinkdji counted sixty Chaldeans with a chapel to Our Lady of Light and Life;<sup>863</sup> the number of Nestorian adherents was unknown. In 1957 Komāne had 550 residents, and in 1961, about 150 families. In 1963 a primary school was built, but lamentably the village and many of its antique buildings were looted and burned down by the pro-regime Zebari Kurds, led by Zubir Muhammad Zebari in 1965.<sup>864</sup>

In 1977 the Iraqi government built one hundred new houses in and around Komāne, turning it into a refugee collective town for eighty Kurdish families and twenty Assyrian families who were forced out of their villages in the Nerwa region.<sup>865</sup> A new church dedicated to the Virgin Mary was built in 1978 for the Nestorians of Nerwa, from the village of Wela, who also had their own priest. During the Anfal period, the village was used once again as collective town.<sup>866</sup>

**Mar Yaqob** (Latitude: 36°55'48'' N, Longitude: 42°53'59'' E)

Mar Yaqob, or Mar Yaqo, is located east of Hizheerke, northwest of Sheze, and according to researcher Majed Eshoo, sits just atop a mountain referred to by Assyrians as Bakhira, or Beth Khira, loosely translated as “place of freedom.”<sup>867</sup> Mar Yaqob is referred to in Kurdish as Qashafir. During Badger’s journeys in 1850, Mar Yaqob was home to twenty-one families, with a chapel and later a

<sup>862</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 393.

<sup>863</sup> Tfinkdji, “L’Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 502.

<sup>864</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 10 and B.A. (Komāne), Interview, 26 July 2008, Toronto, Canada, K.D. (Komāne), Interview, 26 July 2008, Toronto, Canada

<sup>865</sup> B.A. (Komāne), Interview, 26 July 2008, Toronto, Canada, K.D. (Komāne), Interview, 26 July 2008, Toronto, Canada and AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>866</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq’s Crime of Genocide*, 189.

<sup>867</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 21-22.

school, served by a priest.<sup>868</sup> During Tfinkdji's travels in early 1913, he recorded 150 Chaldean villagers with a chapel and a school but no priest.<sup>869</sup> The Dominicans later built a large monastic academy in the 1920s. A monumental grove was built for Father Besson, who died during an epidemic.<sup>870</sup> Mar Yaqob was damaged first in 1976 and finally destroyed in 1988, at which time it was home to twenty Assyrian families.<sup>871</sup> The mausoleum of Father Besson was also destroyed.<sup>872</sup>

**Sheze** (Latitude: 36°54'52'' N, Longitude: 42°52'52'' E)

Sheze, or Shiyoz, is located just north of the village of Simele. Like Ma'alhayeh and Mar Yaqob, Sheze lies along the mountain range to the west of Rabban Hormizd, within the 'Amēdīyāh diocese. In 1850 twenty families lived in the village, but Badger mentions neither a functional church nor a priest.<sup>873</sup> In 1913 there were approximately 210 Chaldean villagers, with a priest serving the church of Mar Gewargis, along with a school.<sup>874</sup> In 1957 there were a total of 417 Assyrians in Shiyoz, and in 1987 the village was destroyed along with its school and church. The eighty families that remained were forced to flee to more friendly territory.<sup>875</sup> The ruins of a monastery dedicated to Mar 'Ishoyab also lie near the village.

**Surka** (Latitude: 36°48'33'' N, Longitude: 42°49'39'' E)

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<sup>868</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>869</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 520.

<sup>870</sup> Conversation with Professor Amir Harrak 10 February 2008.

<sup>871</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004* and Eshoo, Majed, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 22.

<sup>872</sup> Conversation with Professor Amir Harrak 10 February 2008.

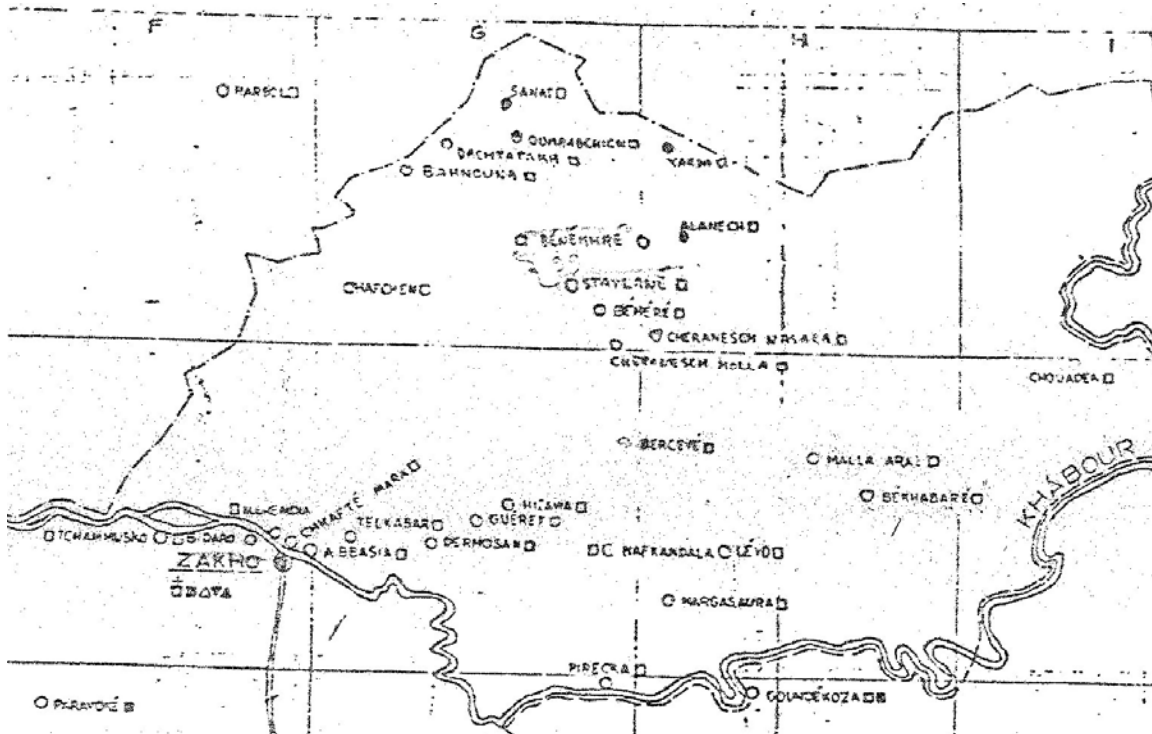
<sup>873</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>874</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 520. See Annexes figure 73 for photograph of Mar Gewargis following its destruction in 1987.

<sup>875</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

Surka was originally inhabited by both Christians and Yezidis. In 1957 the village's population totaled 196. In 1987, before its inhabitants were evacuated due to a poultry project by the Iraqi government, there were thirty families in the village, with a school.<sup>876</sup>

### Zakho Region



**Bersive** (Latitude: 37°11'35'' N, Longitude: 42°51'24'' E)

Bersive is located in the Zakho region; its name may be rooted in the Aramaic *bera d'sawa*, or “old man's well.” The village was settled by refugee families from what is now Turkey, descendants of Mamo, a priest in the fourteenth century.<sup>877</sup> In 1913 there were four hundred Chaldean residents in the village, served by a priest and a church.<sup>878</sup> In 1957 the census accounts approximated 786

<sup>876</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>877</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 16.

<sup>878</sup> Tfinkdji, “L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui,” 520.

inhabitants; in 1961 there were a total of 240 Assyrian families (220 households).<sup>879</sup> Bersive was attacked numerous times in the 1960s by passing warplanes. Some of its population fled and later returned after a lessening in the civil war. By 1975 to 1976, the Iraqi regime turned Bersive into a collective town, settling 560 Kurdish and forty Assyrian families who had been forced out of more than twenty villages along the border region with Turkey during the first border clearings in 1974 to 1975.<sup>880</sup> The Chaldean church of Mar Gewargis, dating to the twelfth century, lies in the center of the village. The church of Mar Ephrem of the Church of the East (Nestorian) was consecrated in 1970 and is located on the village outskirts.<sup>881</sup> Bersive was utilized as a collective town again in 1988.<sup>882</sup> At last count in 1990, on the eve of the Gulf War, there were only 160 Assyrian families remaining in Bersive—ninety of the Church of the East and sixty Chaldean).<sup>883</sup>

**Hizawa** (Latitude: 37°11'51'' N, Longitude: 42°57'50'' E)

The village of Hizawa is located in the Zakho region in the sub-district of Sindi. Hizawa was turned into a collective town during the Anfal period, further changing the demography.<sup>884</sup> Little is know about its original two ancient churches.

**Levo** (Latitude: 37°8'48'' N, Longitude: 42°55'31'' E)

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<sup>879</sup> Eshoo, Majed, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 16.

<sup>880</sup> Ibid.

<sup>881</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>882</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 190.

<sup>883</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>884</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 190.

The village of Levo<sup>885</sup> is located in the Zakho region. According to the 1957 census, it had a population of 616 residents (350 families, 150 homes). During the rebellion in 1961, the village was targeted by various air raid bombings. Levo continued to be targeted by raids, lootings, and bombings, by both state and non-state actors for the next twenty-seven years, until 1988.<sup>886</sup> Most physical structures suffered major damage or were destroyed completely, along with its Chaldean church dedicated to Mar Abraham. The following are a list of citizens killed during the Anfal operations at Levo: Sabriya Maroge Sliwa, Amira Odisho Khosho, and Jibrael Odisho Khosho. Another Assyrian, Saber Khayri Youkhana, disappeared.<sup>887</sup> Levo's 140 Assyrian families were displaced after the Anfal operations.

**Mala 'Arab** (Latitude: 37°11'8'' N, Longitude: 42°56'48'' E)

Mala 'Arab was resettled in 1916 by Nestorian refugees from Lower Tiyyari, but a year later they moved to Gund Kosa. In 1922 Mala 'Arab was again settled by Assyrians from the villages of the Margā region.<sup>888</sup> At the time of the 1957 census, Mala 'Arab's population totaled 237 individuals, and by 1961 there were approximately 120 families (fifty households) in the village.<sup>889</sup> The village was initially burned and razed by Zebari Kurds in 1963.<sup>890</sup> In 1970 its population returned following the March 11 ceasefire between the government and Kurdish forces, and began rebuilding the village, including a school, until 1988 during the

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<sup>885</sup> See Annexes figure 71 for photo of Mar Abraham after the destruction in 1988.

<sup>886</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 17.

<sup>887</sup> Ibid.

<sup>888</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>889</sup> Ibid.

<sup>890</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 17.

Anfal operations, when Mala ‘Arab was once again destroyed and its sixty Assyrian households dispersed.<sup>891</sup>

**Mergasūr** (Latitude: 37°4’60’’ N, Longitude: 42°28’60’’ E)

Mergasūr is located in the Zakho region and most likely finds its Aramaic etymology in the phrase “pasture of Ashur.” According to the 1957 census it was home to 186 individuals, and by 1961 there were 170 families (eighty households) in the village.<sup>892</sup> Prior to its demolition by the Iraqi government in 1988, Mergasūr was the dwelling place of sixty Assyrian households with a school.<sup>893</sup>

**Nav-Kandal** (Latitude: 37°9’3’’N, Longitude: 42°53’59’’ E)

Nav Kandal (Naf Kandal) is a remote village in the Zakho region. In 1957 it was home to 240 individuals, and in 1961 there were 150 families (approximately sixty households). The old church dedicated to Mar Yawsep served as its cultural and religious center. Just prior to its purging in 1988, Nav Kandal was home to 110 Assyrian families with a school.<sup>894</sup> The church of Mar Yawsep was destroyed along with the village dwellings in the same year. There are 250 families from Nav-Kandal elsewhere in Iraq and in the diaspora.<sup>895</sup>

**Pireka** (Latitude: 37°5’22’’ N, Longitude: 42°52’38’’ E)

Pireka is located in the Zakho region in the sub-district of Guli. According to the 1957 Iraqi census, it was home to 108 individuals. The village was initially destroyed during the border clearings in 1978, and at the time, was home to ninety

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<sup>891</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>892</sup> Eshoo, “The Fate of Assyrian Villages,” 18.

<sup>893</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>894</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

<sup>895</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

Chaldean families (approximately thirty-five households) and a school.<sup>896</sup> The village was rebuilt over the next few years, but was destroyed again in 1984.

**Sharanish** (Latitude: 37°14'26'' N, Longitude: 42°52'4'' E)

The birthplace of the Syriac scholar Alphonse Mingana, Sharanish (French spelling, Chéranésch) is possibly named after an ancient princess known as Shiranoosh. In 1913 it was home to six hundred Chaldeans, with a priest serving the two churches of Mart Shmuni and Mar Quryaqos.<sup>897</sup> In 1957 the population reached 384 individuals, and in 1961 there were eighty households when the village was destroyed and much of its lands confiscated by Zebari Kurdish irregulars.<sup>898</sup> In 1978 Sharanish was home to a total of 160 Assyrian families (two thousand people) with a school.<sup>899</sup> Some villagers returned over time and rebuilt, only to see the village targeted once again in 1987 and its remaining eighty families displaced.<sup>900</sup> The ancient churches of Mart Shmuni and Mar Quryaqos were both destroyed during the devastation.

## Individuals Targeted

Some Assyrian populated areas were targeted by the Ba'ath regime due to their proximity to what were deemed Kurdish insurgent areas. Yet the targeting of specific Assyrian community leaders speaks to a goal of eliminating explicitly Assyrian ethno-

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<sup>896</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 17.

<sup>897</sup> Tfinkdji, "L'Église chaldéenne catholique autrefois et aujourd'hui," 520.

<sup>898</sup> Eshoo, "The Fate of Assyrian Villages," 16.

<sup>899</sup> Ibid.

<sup>900</sup> FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 41.

cultural influence. Overall, over a thousand Assyrians were either abducted or disappeared under sometimes-mysterious circumstances during the Anfal period.<sup>901</sup>

Raphael Nano (Esho), born in 1946 in the village of Blejanke in the province of Dohuk, Iraq, was a leading member of the ADM. One of the group's top liaisons, Nano found his house surrounded by military personnel and was subsequently arrested in 1987 during the beginning of the Anfal campaign. He spent one year in various prisons and was hanged on January 7, 1988 in Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. His entire village [Blejanke] was destroyed as a consequence of his reportedly anti-government activities.<sup>902</sup>

As with Nano, “‘Abd Al-Massih Y” was marked for death by the Iraqi regime for reportedly working with opposition parties. ‘Abd Al-Massih was executed in August 1988 in Arbil province, and a secret police document requesting the arrest of his nine family members was circulated among government officials. In gaining information about said family members, the agents were told to “take action and do what is necessary” to ascertain the whereabouts and arrest the family members.<sup>903</sup>

Clergy were not immune to malicious attacks during this period. Curate Zaya Bobo Dobato fled to Iran after numerous foiled attempts on his life, including the final incident involving a car chase by military officials in the Mosul region. Curate Zaya died in exile in the Urmia region in 1989.

### **A Time of “Amnesty”**

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<sup>901</sup> For a preliminary list of 115 recorded Assyrians who were abducted or disappeared during the Anfal operations see FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 56-57.

<sup>902</sup> Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*, 235.

<sup>903</sup> See Annexes figures 67-68 which concern ‘Abd Al-Massih Y.



On September 6, 1988, the Iraqi government made a call for general amnesty to all refugees who had fled to Turkey. Many returning refugees were forced into collective towns by the government forces. Despite the seemingly positive nature of this government action, the Assyrians who returned along with Kurds were captured and later disappeared. The reason for the arrest of the Assyrians was based on the amnesty itself, which was addressed solely to Kurds, and did not extend to other ethnic groups. The story of “Isho,” the father of four brothers from the Sarsang region, was recorded by HRW in Arbil in July 1992.<sup>904</sup> Isho’s family had fled their village just prior to the Anfal operations, and three of his four sons had defected from military duty. All four brothers surrendered during the grace period following the amnesty announcement and were taken to fort Nizarkeh in Dohuk. As with most Christians and Yezidis, the four detainees disappeared during this period of amnesty.

Another example of the misfortune that the so-called amnesty spelled for Assyrians is reflected in the story of a potter from the village of Komāne. Following their return from Turkey after general amnesty, the potter’s son, daughter-in-law, and six grandchildren disappeared after they had surrendered themselves into the hands of the Iraqi authorities. The psychological and emotional pain caused the man to become deeply introverted, and he has since not spoken again.<sup>905</sup>

Amnesty International reported on the approximately thirty-three Assyrians who mysteriously disappeared during the official amnesties after returning from refugee camps in Turkey and Iran in 1988 and 1989.<sup>906</sup> In addition, Vicar Shimon Shlemon Zaya

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<sup>904</sup> See Annexes figures 60-66 documents A1, A3, A4, and A5

<sup>905</sup> Conversation with Professor Amir Harrak 10 February 2008.

<sup>906</sup> Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 1991*, (Amnesty International Publications: London, 1991), 123.

of Bersive was hanged in 1989 after returning from a refugee camp in Diyarbekir during a general call for amnesty. In March 1990, another general amnesty was declared for Kurds living abroad. In response to the call, in April and June of that year, some 2,900 Iraqi Kurds, Assyrians, and Turkomen reportedly returned from Turkey to Iraq. Many were arrested and later disappeared.<sup>907</sup>

How and why the Assyrians disappeared after the amnesty has been left unquestioned by scholars.

One plausible explanation is this: these obstinate minorities had refused to be part of the national ranks, as defined by the Iraqi authorities. To aggravate their crime, they also refused to accept the regime's designation of their ethnicity. Not only did they want to be treated as Kurds, they acted as bad Arabs. Accordingly, they were considered traitors on two counts and punished accordingly.<sup>908</sup>

The above statement, though conceivably a reason behind the governmental policy as to the treatment of Assyrians in general, does not answer the question of what happened to the hundreds of Assyrian families, including women, men, children, and elders, whose trace was never found throughout Iraq, despite intense searches conducted by their kith and kin. Furthermore, were they treated as Kurds as stipulated by the amnesty, then they (theoretically) would have been able to return unharmed.<sup>909</sup> Simply understood, the Ba'ath regime used the opportunity to further cleanse the region of one possibly irksome component. It is perhaps interesting to note that from an Assyrian perspective, Stalin's 1945 amnesty, which released thousands of gulag prisoners, may have appeared more honorable than the "amnesty" issued by the Ba'ath regime.

## **Summary**

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<sup>907</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>908</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 213.

<sup>909</sup> This was not the case in every instance.

The destruction wrought by the Iran-Iraq war and later Anfal campaign spanned various regions and ethnic and religious groups, and affected the entirety of Iraq simultaneously. Iraq of the 1980s was party to a conscious decision to increase economic prosperity at the expense of cultural plurality. The Iraqi government worked diligently to further discord among Assyrians, especially in regard to influencing church officials.

Influence the clergy in the Assyrian community and use them in a manner to cause damage to the activities of the group. Hire some clergy to infiltrate and have access to their precincts in order to gain information from the families of those who have fled [deserters].<sup>910</sup>

Such influence would sow discord and fear within the ranks of those working in political and cultural circles.

Due to constant instability furthered by foreign powers, war, and the continued growth of zealous Iraqi-Arab-based nationalism, the 1980s saw a rise in both Assyrian political activity and governmental persecution thereof. Very little of these issues received international attention.<sup>911</sup> The targeting of villages and families of known Assyrian dissidents would leave a vivid memory in the collective consciousness of this people and see a further descent into extreme minority roles controlled by religious sects.<sup>912</sup> The strain on individual development and cultural plurality among all Iraqis was immense, which translated into deeper socioeconomic and cultural divisions and disparities for a community that, according to the Iraqi census, did not exist as an ethnic group.

Academically published statistics on the destruction of specific Assyrian villages are scant and general at best. As for the gassing of villages (the most well-known of

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<sup>910</sup> Document E: IMF Document from 1984 dealing with the Assyrian Democratic Coalition and its relationship to the KDP. (See annex figures 40-41)

<sup>911</sup> There are few exceptions, but most are difficult to locate. See UNHCR file No. 3284 Annexes figure 69

<sup>912</sup> The conditions of post-2003 Iraq would cause further reversal into extreme minority roles and see the rise of denominational based nationalism and singular minded political adherence among many Assyrian groups.

which is Halabja, on March 16, 1988), upwards of two thousand Assyrians were among the death toll of those disquieting events.<sup>913</sup> According to Kanan Makiya, between the spring of 1987 and February 1988, the Iraqi government destroyed thirty-one Assyrian villages, including twenty-five Assyrian monasteries and churches.<sup>914</sup> This statement is echoed by Sandra Mackey in her work *The Reckoning* (2002), as a footnote, however, further illustrating the lack of concern for the Assyrians amidst the more politically visible and numerically significant Kurds.

The Assyrians were also affected by operations in these security areas. Although Assyrians were less likely than the Kurds to simply disappear, thirty-one Assyrian villages, including twenty-five Assyrian monasteries and churches, were destroyed between the spring of 1987 and February of 1988.<sup>915</sup>

Mackey and Makiya have cited either the same source, or one another, in reference to Assyrian villages and churches and monasteries.

Numerous Assyrian villages met with forced evacuation during 1987 and 1988. The Ba‘th schema of ethnocide and the Anfal operations destroyed over eighty Assyrian villages during this period and displaced two- to three hundred thousand families from their ancestral lands. The elimination of Syriac liturgical and cultural material also increased during this period, and its extent remains largely unknown. Furthermore, since a large percentage of the villages targeted during the 1980s were also targeted in the 1960s and 1970s (some since 1933), this leaves little doubt concerning a continuous campaign of both physical and cultural (spiritual) devastation directed against the Assyrians.

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<sup>913</sup> Harald Suermann, “The History of Christianity in Iraq of the 20th and 21st Century,” *The Harp: A Review of Syriac and Oriental Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. XX 2006, (Kerala: SEERI, 2006), 179.

<sup>914</sup> Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World* (NY: Norton, 1993), 219.

<sup>915</sup> Sandra Mackey, *The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein* (NY: Norton, 2002), 262.

**Table 5 Assyrian Village Summary 1980s**

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
Kharab-Kulk	Dohuk	Simele	Harbai(?)		1	1933, 1961, 1987	
Dohuke	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Dahoki, Dohoke		1	1933, 1962, 1977, 1988	60 families displaced, 1988
Deralok	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Deira d'Luqa		4	1933, 1978, 1987–88	Used as collective town, 1978 and Anfal
Deze	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Dizze		1	1933, 1987	90 families displaced
Cham 'Ashrat	Dohuk	'Aqra	Cham Shirte		1	1933, 1988	
Gund Kosa	Dohuk	Dohuk			1	1933, 1988	
Aṭush,	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Aṭosh		4	1933, 1988	25 families displaced
Arāden	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh		2	4	1961, 1987–88	Razed 1961, 1987–88; 220 families displaced
Komāne	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Kowane	1	5	1961, 1965, 1977, 1987–88	Became a collective town, 1977
Hazarjot	Dohuk	'Aqra			1	1961, 1972, 1988	
Blejanke	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Blejane		1	1961, 1987	28 families displaced, 1987
Badarrash	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Beth Darrash, Beth Durashe		1	1961, 1987	
Kashkawa	Dohuk	'Aqra			1	1961, 1987	100 families displaced
Kalilane	Dohuk	'Aqra	Khalilani			1961, 1987	
Malta	Dohuk	Dohuk	Ma'althaye, Maltai		2	1961, 1987–88	Turned into a collective town
Bebede	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Be Bede, Beth Bede		2	1961, 1987–88	Razed and resettled in 1961 by Zebari tribes; 75 families displaced, 1987–88
Eṣṣān	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Ṣiyān		2	1961, 1987–88	
Argen	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Ergin, Hargin, Argin		4	1961, 1988	Destroyed during Anfal
'Aqra (City)	Dohuk	'Aqra	'Aqra		2	1961,	Mass exodus of

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
						1988	Assyrians beginning in 1961
Baz	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Bas		2	1961, 1988	20 families displaced, 1988
Meze	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			2	1961, 1988	
Cham Chali	Dohuk	'Aqra				1961, 1988	
Hayyis	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Hayis		2	1968, 1988	Site of napalm attack, 1968 50 families displaced Anfal
Bebōze	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Beth Bōzi			1976, 1987	
Mar Yaqob	Dohuk	Simele	Mar Yaco, Mar Ya'aqub, Qashafir	1	2	1976, 1988	Destroyed ancient monastery of the same name, 20 families displaced
Bersive	Dohuk	Zakho	Birsivi, Beth Sawe		2	1976, 1988	Transformed into a military camp and collective town
Nerwa (lower)	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Nerwa Khtetha, Lower Nerwa		1	1976, 1988	60 families displaced, 1988
Wela	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Welah		2	1977, 1988	Border clearings, Anfal; 20 families displaced
Qārō	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Qarou, Karou		2	1977–78, 1988	Border clearings, Anfal; 50 families displaced
Bāsh	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh		1	2	1977–78, 1988	Border clearings; 50 families displaced
Pireka	Dohuk	Zakho				1978, 1984	90 families displaced, 1978
Tashish	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			2	1988	Destroyed during Anfal
Balūkā	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Bebālūk, Beth Bālūk		1	1978, 1988	15 families displaced, site of chemical attack
Badaliya	Dohuk	Simele			1	1983, 1987	60 families displaced
Hejerke	Dohuk	Simele	Hizeerke		1	1984, 1987	
Inishke	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Inishk, Enishke			1986	Lands confiscated by government, 1980s
Guhana	Dohuk	'Aqra				1986	45 families displaced

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
Sardarawa	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			1	1987	30 families displaced
Sheze	Dohuk	Simele	Shiyoz	1	2	1987	80 families displaced
Armashe	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Armash, Harmache		2	1987	55 families displaced
Tilla	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Tella, Tillan	1	3	1987	
Zouli	Dohuk	‘Aqra	Zuli			1987	34 families displaced
Surka	Dohuk	Simele	Sorka	1		1987	Christians and Yezidis, 30 families displaced
Peda	Dohuk	Dohuk				1987	
Hamziya	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh			2	1987	32 families displaced
Cham Rabatke	Dohuk	‘Aqra				1987	45 families displaced
Banasora	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh				1987	
Meristeg	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Meristak			1987	5 families displaced
Alolen	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh				1987	
Kherbasla	Dohuk	Simele				1987	
Azakh	Dohuk	Sheikhan	Adhekh		2	1987	50 families displaced
Ten	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Tin		1	1987	45 families displaced
Tajika	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh				1987	
Sikrīne	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh				1987	37 families displaced
Bakhitme	Dohuk	Simele	Beth Khatme, Bekhitme		3	1987	140 families displaced
Benāta	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Benātha, Beth ‘Ainātha			1987	
Dere	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh		1	2	1987	70 families displaced
Bibava	Dohuk	‘Amēdīyāh	Bubawa			1987	32 families displaced
Meroke	Dohuk	‘Aqra	Maroke, Marogue, Mar Ogin			1987	35 families displaced
Sharanish	Dohuk	Zakho	Sharanish Nasara		2	1987	80 families displaced
Bilmand	Dohuk	‘Aqra	Bilmandi			1987–88	
Hizane (upper)	Dohuk	‘Aqra	Hizane (Eletha), Hizanke			1987–88	110 families displaced total (upper, lower)

Name	Province	District	Other Name	Schools	Religious Structures	Year(s)	Comments
Hizane (lower)	Dohuk	'Aqra	Hizane (Khtetha), Hizanke	1	1	1987–88	110 families displaced total (upper, lower)
Turkaye	Dohuk	'Aqra	Takhed Turkaye			1987–88	
Madude	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Mahude			1988	8 families displaced
Dehe	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh			3	1988	Anfal, 50 families displaced
Derishke	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Derishk	1	2	1988	Destroyed during Anfal; 50 families displaced
Jadide	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh			1	1988	13 families displaced during Anfal
Merkajiya	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh				1988	1970, village headman assassinated
Derigni	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Derigne, Dirgin	1	1	1988	40 families displaced
Chammike	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh				1988	4 families displaced
Musaka	Dohuk	Amēdīyāh	Mosaka		1	1988	35 families displaced
Kani Balav	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Kani Balaf		2	1988	70 families displaced
Nav-Kandal	Dohuk	Zakho	Naf-Kandal		1	1988	110 families displaced
Mergasūr	Dohuk	Zakho	Margasūr			1988	60 families displaced
Mala 'Arab	Dohuk	Zakho			1	1988	60 families displaced
Taftiya	Ninawa	Tel Keif				1988	5 families displaced
Tuthe-Shemaya	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Tishambik		1	1988	10 families displaced
Suse	Dohuk	'Aqra	Barraka d'Qaddisha		1	1988	
Levo	Dohuk	Zakho			2	1988	140 families displaced
Dawodiya	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	Daudiya		2	1988	Anfal, 82 families displaced
Annūnē	Dohuk	'Amēdīyāh	'Ain Nūnē, Kani Masi	1	2	1988	140 families displaced

With the violence wreaked against thousands of civilians and the destruction of various villages and forty to fifty cultural and historical sites, including ancient churches



and monasteries, a human rights violation report is effortlessly justifiable, as well as an accusation of genocide and ethnocide. Interestingly, such a report was never brought to fruition. The issues of *Amnesty International Report* from 1980 to 1984 and 1987 to 1989 do not discuss Assyrians in reference to Iraq or the Anfal campaign.<sup>916</sup> Assyrians are referred to briefly in the 1985 report, and glossed in an AI report for 1986, which briefly discusses opposition parties.

The data illustrates a policy of ethnic cleansing and ethnocide, which were part and parcel of a continuous genocide against Assyrians since the birth of the Iraqi state. Besides the ethnic cleansing campaign of village destruction, the establishment of collective towns, and the destruction of edifices of cultural or religious significance, the omission of “Assyrian” from the 1987 census confirms the ethnocidal character that marked the 1980s. As observed by HRW, “only two options were offered by the census: one could either be an Arab or a Kurd—nothing else.”<sup>917</sup> Assyrians had effectively become a nonentity; they had been almost completely unimagined (or deconstructed) as a distinct indigenous ethno-religious, cultural, and linguistic group.

There are conceivable reasons for the neglect of Assyrians—their geopolitical insignificance, their ecclesiastical divisiveness, general apathy within their community, or lack of information about them—that could be used to justify their exclusion from human rights and academic literature. Yet the question must be posed that if there is both physical and oral evidence available, why have both scholarship and international NGO work neglected these atrocities and the people who were subjected to them? Amnesty International has criticized the lack of attention concerning the approximately five

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<sup>916</sup> Some researchers assume this to be the product of divisive Christian denominationalism yet “Christians” in a religious sense is vacant from the reports as well.

<sup>917</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 58.

hundred thousand Kurds and Assyrians who were forcibly relocated by the Iraqi government.<sup>918</sup> Yet the bulk of AI's work does speak of the Assyrians as more or less 'secondary' and to a lesser extent than their work on the Kurds.

Human Rights Watch's criticism of the United States government's failure to act on certain issues that befell Iraq in the late 1980s (especially Halabja) has reminded scholarship of the plight of Iraqi minorities. However, it is remarkable that while HRW points to the US government's failure to acknowledge the atrocities of Anfal, the organization refers to the September 1988 targeting of Christians and Yazidis following an amnesty decree as a "brutal sideshow ... to the Kurdish genocide."<sup>919</sup> The degrading description as a "sideshow" seems to insinuate that Assyrians targeted by the Iraqis were somehow secondary, and that by extension, so too was their suffering.

The HRW report goes on to state that the Assyrian Christians and Yazidis who were also gathered into military camps, especially many women and children, were "collateral victims of the Kurdish genocide."<sup>920</sup> This nomenclature is problematic due simply to its secondary nature. Although this does not in any conventional or moral way negate the agony of Assyrians, nor change the fact that they faced ethnic cleansing, the *intent* of the suffering is one of the key elements of genocide as per the definition of the 1948 Genocide Convention.

The people killed during Anfal, however, were not "collateral damage" to the regime's military operations. If Assyrians are differentiated from Kurds and targeted specifically (as discussed in this chapter), then there is an explicit intent of genocide,

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<sup>918</sup> Interestingly, the state department did express that the US ambassador to Baghdad discussed such issues with Iraqi officials in 1988 and 1989. See Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Iraq: Middle East Watch*, 107.

<sup>919</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, 236.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

which cannot be labeled as collateral damage as noted in the HRW report. However, since the Assyrians presently hold little political and numerical clout, academia is as apt to minimize their suffering.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

This work serves as a minority historical narrative about Iraq in the twentieth century. It has looked outside of the prism of the state and attempted to use the Assyrian situation to present another view of the historical events—a retelling of how and why they occurred, and why such issues, from a minority perspective, are important. It is the duty of scholarship to examine the story left untold. Unfortunately, most historians, both Eastern and Western, still appear to adhere to the sometimes subconscious view that “at best, history is a story of power, a history of those who won.”<sup>921</sup>

### ***Post-Anfal Repercussions: End of a Trend?***

Though the beginning of the First Gulf War, 1991, signals the culmination of most of this research, it unfortunately does not signal the end of the repression and demographic displacement that the Assyrian population in Iraq has faced. Ambitions for power, and the violent policies driving them, did not cease following the Anfal campaign, neither under Kurdish control nor under the central regime. As with the Iran-Iraq war, the Hussein-run Iraqi regime continued a policy of conscripting Assyrians and other dissidents, who were then forcibly stationed on the front lines of the invasion of Kuwait.<sup>922</sup> Such activities marked a continued trend of discrimination and of neglect for the lives of many Assyrians and others who served as fodder for a dispassionate Iraqi regime, similar to the behavior of the British some three decades earlier. It is of note that

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<sup>921</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>922</sup> Stephen Zunes, ‘The US Obsession with Iraq and the Triumph of Militarism’, in Ismael and Haddad (eds), *Iraq/ The Human Cost of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 192.

today Assyrians living in the larger cities of southern Iraq have been forced back to their former territories in the northern region both under the central government and KRG due to ethnic and more predominantly, religious persecution. Thus a reverse demographic shifting has begun to take place which may or may not aid the survival of the Assyrians and is a topic in need of further study.

In terms of framing the patterns of destruction, the villages discussed throughout this study have been those with known historical and cultural significance.<sup>923</sup> Indeed, almost two hundred Assyrian cultural sites—including ancient churches and monasteries, schools, shrines, and reliefs—were destroyed during this thirty-year period as a result of political maneuvering by majority groups, including both state and non-state actors. (The numbers quoted referring to the cultural devastation are based on previous data and my own research.)

The year 1991 signifies the division of the country into three sections, following the implementation of the United Nations no-fly zones. Though the details are beyond the scope of this research, it is of intrinsic importance to illustrate the clear continuity of repression faced by Assyrians following the Anfal campaign. As a result of the start of the Iraqi-Kuwait War and the following Gulf War, an estimated one hundred thousand Assyrians fled to neighboring countries from 1990 to 1991.<sup>924</sup> This not only meant persistent demographic shifting, but also possible disappearances and deaths during the exodus itself.<sup>925</sup> Various nongovernmental and US-government agencies reported on the Assyrians in the formative years after the first Gulf War:

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<sup>923</sup> This is by no means exhaustive and future studies must be undertaken in Iraq including forensic and research including proper oral history of the Assyrians.

<sup>924</sup> Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East*, 191.

<sup>925</sup> See FIDH & AIJ, (January 2003), 58.

In 1994 the Special Rapporteur stated that in late 1993 the Iraq regime dismissed or expelled hundreds of Assyrian teachers and students from universities and public positions.<sup>926</sup>

Assyrians are an ethnic group as well as a Christian Community and [have] a distinct language (Syriac). Public instruction in Syriac, which was to have been allowed under a 1972 decree, has never been implemented. The Special Rapporteur reported continued discrimination against Assyrians throughout 1995. According to opposition reports, many Assyrian families were forced to leave Baghdad after they had fled to that city for safety following the regime's suppression of the northern uprising in 1991.<sup>927</sup>

Concurrently, in 1992 to 1993, all Assyrian teachers and professors whose families originated from modern Turkey (i.e. those whose families originated in Hakkâri) were forced to retire, and some families faced deportation to Istanbul.<sup>928</sup> Such discrimination strongly echoed the situation that Assyrians whose families originated from villages in Iran faced during the 1980s and the Iran-Iraq war, as mentioned earlier.

Such conditions also persisted in the north, in Iraqi Kurdistan under KRG control. Kurds from Meristak and nearby villages confiscated land in the town of Dere after the Assyrians fled following the Anfal operations.<sup>929</sup> In 1993, the KDP leadership reportedly allowed the illegal building of five hundred houses on the agricultural lands east of Sarsang for Kurds from the Assyrian village of Chiya in the Arbil province.<sup>930</sup>

More recently, the continued displacement by the newly formed Kurdish regime is reminiscent of the Iraqi regime just years prior, from paying off local clergy to imposing discriminatory socioeconomic conditions. This is exemplified in the story of an Assyrian man, Abu Ishtar, who was hospitalized after being beaten for opposing the KDP move to absorb the Nineveh Plain region of Mosul.

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<sup>926</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 122.

<sup>927</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>928</sup> Assyrian International News Agency, *Assyrian Human Rights Report 1997*, <http://www.aina.org/reports/ahrr.htm> (Accessed 10 November 2008)

<sup>929</sup> AAS, *Field Mission Iraq 2004*

<sup>930</sup> Ibid.

The Ba'ath, in a program of cultural genocide, made it illegal to be an Assyrian. As the recent beating and hospitalization of Abu Ishtar shows, very little has changed for these people from 1977 to 2006.<sup>931</sup>

The continuing cultural destruction and demographic upheaval following the Anfal campaign is evident as well. It is estimated that the number of Assyrians dwindled from over one million to three- or four hundred thousand from 1961 to 1991.<sup>932</sup> The 1991 Gulf War saw a dramatic increase in refugees and asylum seekers in neighboring countries.

### ***Patterns of Hostility, Mendacity, and Silence***

Iraq was formed in a crucible of competing colonial powers and rising ethno-nationalist sentiments. Yet only through an exhaustive study of the Assyrian situation can all of Iraq's historical events and issues be thoroughly elucidated. In the absence of such an accurate accounting, in the words of Sami Zubaida, "the fragments imagine the nation." In this case, however, the nation (Iraq) un-imagines its fragments (Assyrians). This underrepresented ethno-cultural group has remained absent within main trend academic and political literature, further contributing to the continuing repression and discrimination. Yet with the substantiation presented in this study of the devastation the Assyrians have suffered, the lacuna of critical attention toward this group can be explained by a three-part structure. The first element is the traditional hostility created by ultra-nationalism in the state- and nation-building process, captured most elegantly by Rienhold Niebuhr in the following statement:

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<sup>931</sup> See Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, *North Iraq Human Rights Field Mission*, 2006 <http://www.iraqdemocracyproject.org/pdf/Northern%20Iraq%20Human%20Rights%20Field%20Mission.pdf> (Accessed 20 September 2008)

<sup>932</sup> Anthony O'Mahony, 'The Chaldean Catholic Church: The Politics of Church-State Relations in Modern Iraq' *The Heythrop Journal* 45 (4), (2004), 438 cites 1 million to 150,000 from 1961-1995.

The necessity of using force in the establishment of unity in a national community, and the inevitable selfish exploitation of the instruments of coercion by the groups who wield them, adds to the selfishness of nations.<sup>933</sup>

The second element is the mendacity of the perpetrators and benefactors of the events that caused the ethno-cultural, social, and political ruination of this people. This deception is exhibited by denialists like Salahi Ramadan Sonyel and others (in the case of the massacres of Assyrians during World War I) and Khaldun Husry (in the case of Simele), and in the Iraqi government documents that have attempted to minimize the importance of the events by adjusting the details with denialist political argot, and more recently, the subsuming of Assyrian suffering under the Kurdish push for recognition of Anfal as genocide.

The final element is the silence or neglect of events in which the Assyrians played a major role, such as the 1961 armed autonomist movement, the border clearings of the 1970s, and the Anfal period of the late 1980s. This third element stems from the acceptance or apathy toward the mendacity as espoused by past literature (both academic and political)<sup>934</sup> and by more recent literature (both academic and political). Thus the Assyrians have been left champion-less in the midst of competing intrigue.

When understood, this structure, which is quintessential for the Assyrian case in Iraq, can also be utilized to comprehend the similar struggles of Iraqi Kurds. The dismissal or neglect of events in Kurdish history and the dismissal by the international community of the Soviet Russian and Mongolian accusation of genocide by the Iraqis against the Kurds plays a similar role to the neglect of Simele for the Assyrians.<sup>935</sup> The following chronological table shows atrocities committed by the Iraqi regimes against its

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<sup>933</sup> Rienhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (NY: Touchstone, 1960), 89.

<sup>934</sup> In many cases there is little separation between the two.

<sup>935</sup> Their current political prowess (perhaps based largely on cultural and political development made possible by their geopolitical significance) has remedied much of such past academic negligence.



own people following its independence in 1932 and almost immediate acceptance into the League of Nations.

<b>Event</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Year</b>
Simele Massacres	Assyrians	1933
Farhud	Jews	1941
Executions	Communists	1949, 1959, 1963, 1966, 1978
Armed Autonomist Movement	Kurds, Assyrians, Communists	1961–1963
Mass Expulsion	Shiite Arabs	1969–1971
Armed Autonomist Movement (cont.)	Kurds, Assyrians	1974–1975
Border Clearings	Assyrians, Kurds	1977–1978
Anfal Prelude	Assyrians, Kurds, Yezidis	1987
Anfal	Assyrians, Kurds, Yezidis	1988
Gassing of Halabja	Kurds	1988
Massacre following Intifada	Shiite Arabs	1991

### ***The Importance of the Assyrian Case***

It was an ill day for his tribe when he led them to fight in a war for the liberty of small nations. Now we have to meet death at long last, so let us prepare to face the enemy whom we know, that we may the more readily forget the desertion of those whom we once thought to be our friends.<sup>936</sup>

—Yako Ismail translating for his father, Malik Ismail, of Upper Tiyari, 1932

The tribulations faced by Assyrians and other minorities within Iraq during the twentieth century, especially post-1960, were the culmination of the ethno-religious and politically motivated Simele massacres in the course of the construction of a homogenous and indivisible nation-state. This trend imbued the early stages of state formation following the colonization of the Middle East. Seemingly, the British authorities in Iraq feigned ignorance toward the condition of their former “smallest ally” after the release of the Iraq levies in 1955, and continued to disregard the Assyrian community. This lack of interest in the Assyrians’ state of affairs, along with numerous promises of a homeland, have echoed throughout the subsequent fifty years, and is evident in their diminished numbers and lack of cultural preservation and progress. The core of this research has

<sup>936</sup> Hamilton, *Road Through Kurdistan*, 217.

illuminated the waves of destruction and assimilation— especially during three periods: the events post-1961, 1972 to 1978, and 1987 to the 1991 Gulf War—that have caused a major rift in the evolution of an integrated Assyrian ethnic identity in Iraq.

Much of the neglect of Assyrians in academic works stems from an obvious political neglect based simply on power politics and scholarly disinterest. Contrary to assuming that academia retains some measure of apolitical(-ness), it is unmistakable that political trends have a direct working correlation to and relationship with developments in academia. While dealing with a scarcity of material on Assyrians during the time period covered in this work, it has remained difficult to obtain well-balanced and relatively unbiased approaches to the historical events. Generally, Assyrian-produced material is disregarded as nationalist and nonacademic. This issue, coupled with disinterest by more powerful forces—“major powers,” NGOs, and mainstream media—leaves the Assyrians in proverbial limbo: in the words of Taner Akçam, “the gypsies of the holocaust.”<sup>937</sup>

### **Simele Revisited**

The present data has emphasized both the ethnic-Assyrian and the religious-Christian elements in order to remain close to the causes for the diminishment of this minority in the second half of the twentieth century. The Assyrians appear to have been targeted both as a Christian religious minority and for being ethnic Assyrians. The echo of E.B.’s eyewitness observations “either become Muslim or we will kill you” is a vivid

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<sup>937</sup> In a talk given 20 May 2004 where promoting his new book, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*, in Cambridge, Massachusetts at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. The comment was in response to a question posed by an audience member who inquired, “My family also suffered. Why do you always speak about the Armenians and never the Assyrians.”

reminder of the religious persecution where de Gaury's remarks "it was enough for them to be Assyrians to be shot" and Stafford's remark, "...it was evident by now that the Army Command was quite certain in its own mind that, in its decision to wipe out the Assyrians..." reverberates with anti-Assyrian sentiment.<sup>938</sup> It was this which caused, the various ecclesiastical Christian sects began (both forcibly and of their own volition) to detach themselves from their ethnic identity, and as an alternative, began identifying solely with their religious denominations to avoid such horrid retribution.<sup>939</sup>

Though the religious and ethnic basis for their targeting and destruction are strongly apparent, it was basic fear and the desire for self-preservation in a hostile situation that motivated these internal divisions, at least initially.

You have seen what happened to the Assyrians just as soon as they ceased to be of use to the British. You read how the English ministers stood up in their Mejliss at Westminster and disowned any claims made by their fellow Christians, pleading for their wives and children to be safe from rape and slaughter.<sup>940</sup>

Years later, with fear remaining a motivating factor, many Assyrians became embedded into the Arab mainstream (Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish as well), and being Assyrian became as foreign to them as being Arab had been to their parents and grandparents.

As for the massacres, Iraqi denial and redistribution of the blame on the Assyrians is anything but justifiable.<sup>941</sup> The atrocities of Simele certainly were not enacted under a war paradigm, as "... there was no war in sight in 1933 when the Assyrians were being martyred because Britain feared for her oil in Mosul."<sup>942</sup> This inarguably supports Pappé's paradigm of ethnic cleansing, since in 1933 there was no justification of wartime

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<sup>938</sup> Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 154.

<sup>939</sup> Refer to Donabed and Mako, "Ethno-Cultural and Religious Identity of Syrian Orthodox Christians," *Chronos*, (University of Balamand, Lebanon 2009)

<sup>940</sup> Douglas Duff, *Poor Knight's Saddle* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1938), 150.

<sup>941</sup> Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933," 176 remarks that the Assyrians mutilated the bodies of Iraqi soldiers in Deirabun. In the following sentence he contradicts this statement with a quote from Stafford who admitted freely that such accusations "may or may not have been true."

<sup>942</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

acts.<sup>943</sup> The initial British fear of losing power—and control of resources—in the region permitted the massacres to occur and assured their exclusion from any serious international investigation and response. Furthermore, the Iraqi regime’s continued genocidal attacks and ethnocidal policies against Assyrians and others, while being exonerated from the atrocities, simply followed the colonial model for power consolidation.

Essentially, it appears that the Assyrian experience in Iraq should be segmented and discussed as distinct, though intertwined, campaigns aimed at accomplishing a similar goal: the complete assimilation or destruction of this indigenous people, a benefit to the indivisibility of the state. The systematic massacre of the entire male population of Simele on August 11, 1933, certainly a gendercidal event, guaranteed the silence of this already devastated minority.<sup>944</sup> The Assyrians were portrayed as British puppets being used to destroy the new and independent Iraqi state “which the British had consistently opposed.”<sup>945</sup> The incitement of Iraqis was a large propagandistic campaign, which circulated reports that armed Assyrians returning from Syria had mutilated the bodies of Iraqi army soldiers, despite other reports that the Assyrians had been disarmed by the French.<sup>946</sup> The propaganda of Assyrians mutilating bodies and the call by the Ikha al-Watani (National Brotherhood) party in Mosul to eliminate all “foreign elements” are part and parcel of the government’s call for ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Iraq was able to solidify its homogeneity as a nation through the destruction of those Assyrians at Simele and the surrounding district. Once the last vestiges of Assyrian

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<sup>943</sup> Refer to Pappé’s theory as discussed in Chapter 1 under the subheading “Genocide Studies.”

<sup>944</sup> Recall here E.B.’s observation that young Assyrian men were dressed as young women in order to save their lives.

<sup>945</sup> Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: The Militarist Origins of Tyranny*, 112-113.

<sup>946</sup> Ibid.

power in the region were wiped out, more subtle forms of eradication, such as assimilation, could be used in place of physical destruction.

The massacre of the Assyrians at Simmel [Simele] by Iraqi forces in 1933 was the shocking consequence, and epitomized the complexity of a situation in which the envisaged state-building could only progress via “nation-destroying.”<sup>947</sup>

Zoë Preston’s conclusion illustrates the importance of forced homogeneity in state- and nation-building, which would continue with the subsequent maltreatment of non-Arab minorities throughout Iraq’s tumultuous history. As for the regime’s genocidal tendency, Stafford remarks,

Here and there in the mountains they came up with fugitive Assyrians. And every Assyrian they caught they shot out of hand. Clearly by now the Army had decided that the Assyrians, as far as possible, were to be exterminated. No pretense was made that these operations had any purely military objective, for the Army Intelligence officers did not even take the trouble to cross-question the captured Assyrians, who were simply shot as they were rounded up ... it was evident by now that the Army Command was quite certain in its own mind that, in its decision to wipe out the Assyrians, it would ... be backed not only by Arab public opinion, but by the Baghdad Government.<sup>948</sup>

Since the army had planned to continue the massacres with Alqosh and other non-Nestorian villages (as many in the region of Alqosh were predominantly Chaldean), the entire event spoke to a frenzy of pan-Assyrian paranoia and desired state-sponsored destruction of the entire community.<sup>949</sup> Stafford also mentions that on August 9 the Iraqi Airforce bombed the Kurdish village of Ziwa, and killed a woman, under false pretense that Assyrians had attacked the village. After further investigation, the Kurds stated that they had never seen an Assyrian in the village, which speaks to the official desire to kill any Assyrians found in the region at all costs, which signals a genocidal intent.

The initial destruction of Simele and the killing of over three hundred unarmed individuals continued with the looting and razing of over one hundred villages and the

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<sup>947</sup> Preston, *The Crystallization of the Iraqi State: Geopolitical Function and Form*, 251.

<sup>948</sup> Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 154.

<sup>949</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

killing of up to six thousand Assyrians. This was one of the two events in the living memory of a young Raphael Lemkin to influence his presentation to the League of Nations in 1933 in Madrid arguing the issue as a crime according to international law.<sup>950</sup> Due to the volatile nature of his argument (at least concerning international law), Lemkin was forced by the Polish foreign minister to resign from his post not long afterward, in 1934. Thus, it is unambiguous that the international community was still unable or unwilling to inquire into such acts of cruelty, though these acts would become the foundation for the Genocide Convention, which was later adopted by the newly established United Nations in 1948.

With respect to the denialist camp, Husry's dubbing of the Simele massacres as the "Assyrian Incident," has essentially rendered invisible the starting point for the Assyrian suffering in Iraq. This unchecked continuous targeting of Assyrians constituted a clear linear development that would affect all non-Arab minorities in the newly created state. The overlooking of the genocide against Assyrians in the Simele region in 1933 has created a rift in the understanding of the armed autonomist movement, border clearings, and Anfal campaign in the decades that followed. The use of the Iraqi military in the murderous operations of the 1960s and 1970s has been dismissed by some scholars arguing that the true destruction was the fault of the Assyrians themselves, or local Arabs and irregular Kurds, rather than shifting the focus and the blame on the main culprit, as Zubaida does, the Iraqi state and its propaganda machine.<sup>951</sup> This dismissal, which purports the self-defense of the state against a rebel faction, and which is commonly used

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<sup>950</sup> Richard Kleiner "Lemkin's 35- Year Crusade Against Genocide Reaches Successful End," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, WI, September 22, 1949.

<sup>951</sup> See Zubaida, "Contested Nations: Iraq and the Assyrians," 370. Though some local Arabs and Kurds continued looting villages and killing Assyrians in the region, to assume that this was not at the urging or in the least, under the watchful eye of the army and the government would be insincere.

to legitimate the elimination of most Assyrians in the region since the birth of the state of Iraq, is a tactic commonly used by genocide perpetrators.<sup>952</sup>

### **An Overshadowing of Genocide(s)**

The destruction of the spirit of the Assyrian people has complimented the scarcity of information concerning their trials within Iraq. This process, beginning with World War I, has quelled the Assyrians and ensured that they would remain docile in documenting the destruction of their people and culture. This silencing is especially evident in Western scholarship as exemplified by the removal of “Assyrian” by Arnold Toynbee and Viscount James Bryce from the original title of the Blue Book [*Papers and Documents on the Treatment of Armenians and Assyrian Christians by the Turks, 1915–1916, in the Ottoman Empire and North-West Persia*], a “compilation of American and European eyewitness testimony and documentation of the Armenian and Assyrian genocides,” to *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915–1916*.<sup>953</sup> This, coupled with the erasure of the accounts of the Assyrian massacres from the French translation of the Blue Book presented to the Paris Peace Conference, further distorted the historical record.<sup>954</sup> This trend ensured that future Assyrian generations would find it difficult to substantiate the claims of genocide as transmitted by their elders.

In the face of such blatant disregard for the historical reality of the destruction of the Assyrian people during World War I, it is not surprising to see the further disregard of the Simele massacres and the complete neglect of Assyrians in almost all academic material that followed, into the 1990s. Notwithstanding the academic negligence of Bryce

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<sup>952</sup> Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 352.

<sup>953</sup> Travis, “Native Christians Massacred: The Ottoman Genocide of the Assyrians during World War I,” 331.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*

and Toynbee, they, along with various Armenian associations promoting the book, continue to receive impunity with full knowledge of its history.<sup>955</sup> This tension has reverberated in the literature surrounding the events in Iraq during the decades that followed.

Mark Levene's work has made it possible to revise the "events" of Simele and to reinsert the indigenous Assyrians into the seemingly unending calamities beginning prior to World War I in the "zone of genocide," which is northern Mesopotamia and southern Anatolia. Since the nation-building genocide under the Kemalist regime and the adoption of the event as solely the "Armenian Genocide," the Assyrians have been a party to regular massacres, cultural obliterations, and massive demographic upheavals through to the present day, in which they were targeted specifically. If we accept the Levene model uncritically, then the Assyrians once again take a back seat and minor role to all other groups involved, since in all cases, Assyrians are the political and numerical minority among the targeted peoples.

It would be illogical to assume Armenian nationalists would release their monopoly over the genocide committed during World War I, as it would be illogical to assume Kurdish nationalists would release their monopoly over Anfal.<sup>956</sup> Precedence for this can be seen simply through a deeper look at the broad perception of the Holocaust as

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<sup>955</sup> This is until the 2005 edition edited by Ara Sarafian which includes the information on the Assyrians, yet was republished under the altered name *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon by Viscount Bryce [Uncensored Edition]*, edited and with an introduction by Ara Sarafian (Gomidas Institute 2005).

<sup>956</sup> A recent conference entitled "The Genocide on Kurds in 1988" was held on Thursday, 2 April 2009 in the European Parliament. The event was organised by Olle Schmidt, MEP from ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe), and the Kurdish Gulan association from Sweden. The aim of the conference was to raise awareness about Anfal. When those Assyrians and Assyrian sympathizers in attendance spoke up that they too were targeted and suffered during Anfal, they were immediately verbally assailed and their comments curtailed. Email correspondence with Assyria Council of Europe, 3 April 2009



a solely anti-Jewish project.<sup>957</sup> Thus, although Levene’s “zone of genocide” is pertinent, until the individual ethnic groups each receive some semblance of equal academic and political concern, it is unbalanced and unreasonable to mention a group (in this case, the Assyrians) at the *exclusion* of conducting specific work on that group. In other words, the Assyrian experience needs much more specific attention, lest their suffering be assumed to be ‘secondary.’

Essentially, nationalism—and nationalists themselves, including some scholarship and scholars—has appropriated genocide to serve its own agenda. There appears to be a nationalist fear of recognizing others as part of modern genocide—a fear that presumes the diminishment of one’s own suffering due to the inclusion of another community.<sup>958</sup> This continues to affect the Assyrians, since as a numerical and political (including monetary and academic) minority they lack the potency to have scholars document their trials. In instances where Assyrians themselves have documented atrocities, they are usually disregarded (for example, Yusuf Malek’s *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*), proving that they remain a devalued entity in scholarship. Furthermore there is also the tendency of using one’s own genocide as justification for conducting genocide.<sup>959</sup> While the this trend has become more apparent in recent decades, the unfortunate side-effect to genocide/ethnic cleansing/cultural genocide as a component in nation- and state-building is the justification that there is no other way. In a sense, such unfortunate byproducts (here I reiterate the idea of ‘collateral damage’) are acceptable since they are simply part

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<sup>957</sup> See Ward Churchill’s chapter entitled “Linkages Between Holocaust Deniers and Proponents of the Uniqueness of the Jewish Experience,” in *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 1998), 63-75.

<sup>958</sup> See Yair Auron, *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000).

<sup>959</sup> For a description of this trend see Idith Zertal’s, *Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

and parcel of state-building making it in a distorted way, equally as dangerous in its acceptance as in its denial.

### **The Focus of the Iraqi Regime**

It is certain that the continued campaign against non-Arabs that saw the demographic change in Iraq focused on Kurds and Assyrians. The campaign was probably not focused against all non-Arabs, as Armenians did not face similar persecution, since they were neither concentrated in rural areas nor involved in the armed struggles. Furthermore, since Armenians made no nationalist claims on territory (as a homeland) within the geographical borders of Iraq, they were no threat to the various Iraqi regimes and worries of territorial integrity.

The campaign was not directed at the Assyrians simply as Christians, as many villages both neutral and loyal to the Ba'ath were spared, and in some cases enjoyed religious funding while others were eradicated. The government targeting was done against ethnic Kurds and ethnic Assyrians due to their independent tendencies and general mistrust of the government in Baghdad, and their resentment toward Arabization and willingness to resist with force. However, it is evident that Assyrians faced a secondary onslaught, due to some of the government forces being *Fursan Salahadin* (Knights of Saladin), mostly ethnic Kurds. In many reported cases, when attacking villages in predominantly Kurdish or Assyrian regions, many Kurds (being of the same ethnic stock as the *chatta*, or militia) were not forced to abandon their homes, while the Assyrians were. In a strictly demographic sense, the consequences of the state-led violence against non-Arabs was arguably more damaging toward the Assyrians than the

Kurds, as many of the villages abandoned by Assyrians following the 1961–1963 fighting either remained empty or were resettled by other Kurdish groups.<sup>960</sup>

To reiterate, only more recent reevaluations concerning the events of World War I have brought to attention the equal plight of Christian groups, namely, Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks. Since the lack of inclusion of the Assyrians in the atrocities committed against minorities in the Ottoman Empire, they, as a habitually numerical (quantitative) and political (qualitative) minority have continued to be overshadowed (within politics and literature) in all events by larger groups, such as Armenians and Kurds. This inclination led to the continued inability of Assyrians to assert their ethno-cultural identity and to the inability of their political parties to divorce themselves from tribal and religious influence and establish a secular foothold.

### **Kurdish Neglect of Assyrians during 1961-1988**

A further result of the vacuum of power has seen some Kurds become dismissive toward Assyrian suffering, as Kurds have received more external support and press coverage—a parallel to the Armenian neglect of Assyrians in reference to the genocide of World War I. In addition, many Assyrians in Iraq, like the Kurds, maintained tribal and feudal relations despite integration into a greater Assyrian community. Yet unlike the Kurds, the Assyrian geopolitical situation (or lack thereof) assured them a relatively negligible role in the opposition movement.

Despite the attempts of various Assyrian political parties to work toward a united Assyrian front alongside the Kurds, especially in the 1980s, the failure of Assyrian

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<sup>960</sup> P.W. (Diyana), C.C. (Darbandoke), I.Y. (Diyana), B.B. (Harîr), E.B. (Hejerke-Simele), Interview, 17 February 2008, Toronto, Canada and K.S. (Düre), T.S. (Düre), D.T. (Blejanke), Z.Y. (Annünē), Y.D. (Annünē), Y.G. (Bebede), Interview, 24 February 2008, Toronto, Canada, B. (Komāne) Interview, 26 July 2008, Toronto, Canada

nationalism (in Iraq) to minimize the tribal context allowed the Kurds to dismiss their former allies or, from the perspective of Kurdish leader Idris Barzani concerning Assyrian-Kurdish collaboration, to effectively subsume them as part of the Kurdish forces in 1984. According to confidential Iraqi government correspondence,

The Beth Nahrain party agreed to take responsibilities of military functions and mediate between the Assyrian National Front and the Democratic Front. They also opened negotiations with the Kurdish Democratic Party in order to work with each other, even though the AUA has previously requested from the traitor Idris Al-Barzani to fight under the Assyrian name. Idris replied that if they wanted they could fight, but under the condition that they fight under the Kurdish name and not under [an] Assyrian or any other front.<sup>961</sup>

This lack of political authority guaranteed the Assyrians a continued minor role in any opposition movement in the years that followed.

It stands to reason that if the Anfal campaign is considered genocide against the Kurds, then it must also be the case with the Assyrians. The two thousand Assyrians killed in the gas campaigns in Iraq from 1987 to 1988, the hundreds of deaths and disappearances following the various decrees of “amnesty,” the destruction of hundreds of villages, and the elimination of any Assyrian political party members such as the ADM in Baghdad and Kirkuk, all warrant equal consideration to the Kurdish issue.<sup>962</sup> Of great importance to the genocide case is the *intent* to eliminate.

Since, in most cases, the Assyrians were considered Arabs or Kurds, and those considered Kurds faced persecution equal to that of the Kurds, then the Assyrians were targeted to the same extent as their Kurdish neighbors. Furthermore, given that the Assyrians were singled out during the amnesty decree and notified that the decree was “for Kurds only,” it is obvious the Iraqi regime knew of the Assyrians and arguably treated them with more disdain than the Kurds.

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<sup>961</sup> See Annexes figures 45-47 documents C1 and C2 and translations.

<sup>962</sup> World Net Daily, *Faith Under Fire: Saddam's Terrorizing of Christian Villages*, August 04, 2004, Accessed 2008-02-22 10:29:52

### ***Arabization and Urbanization as Cultural Genocide***

The creation of an Arabist ideology, or the propagation of Arabization or Ba‘thification, which assumed the Assyrian identity into itself and did not officially recognize the Assyrians as an ethnic minority, thereby silencing or essentially eliminating them as a separate group, is identical to the assimilatory policies of various states (both ethnic and civic) against indigenous populations. Eliminating millennia-old churches and monasteries, statues, inscriptions, books, and tomes; burning apple, walnut, and almond orchards; and salting the earth were deliberate attempts to destroy this people’s sustainability and way of life.

Therefore, as Arjun Appadurai states, genocide, in its ethnocidal or cultural-genocidal form, speaks to a social death, when “one group begins to feel that the very existence of the other group is a danger to its own survival.”<sup>963</sup> Thus, logically extending the argument, one may claim that the Iraqi government feared the Assyrian minority. The question remains as to why. A likely answer reflects on the idea that “ethnocide and ethnic cleansing are among the most significant markers or sources of indigenous identity.”<sup>964</sup> It is therefore probable that the Iraqi government’s attempt to absorb the Assyrians into Iraqi Arab society, see them as outcasts and label them as Kurds, or eliminate their ancestral ties to the land through cultural genocide and ethnic cleansing, solidified a policy of stabilizing an insecure national identity in order to consolidate and justify political, military, and economic control of the country.

It is evident that since Iraqi Arab nationalism saw the Arabs as the inheritors of ancient Mesopotamian civilization (dogma most Iraqi nationalists also adhered to), then

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<sup>963</sup> Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*, 88-89.

<sup>964</sup> Ibid, 56.

Assyrians could not be an entity separate from the Arab identity, leaving them simply as Christians. The type of Christian they were was determined by their loyalty to Iraq, and geographic distribution: the Arab Christian element in urban areas of “Arab” Iraq on the one hand, and those who were lumped geographically with the “rebellious” Kurds and considered traitors to the regime.

The hardening of Arabization following the Ba‘thist rise to power ensured that cultural genocide became part and parcel of successive government policies as tools and mechanisms by which the government could suppress, assimilate, and silence its population without purging them physically, as they had done in 1933. This building of a coerced collective “Iraqi” identity, with all of its subtexts, would demonstrate the solidification of systematic and subsequent policies of assimilation and homogenization of an otherwise pluralistic society. This attempt at ethno-cultural homogenization “constituted the states system, for it has been constructed in large measure on the exclusionary categories of insider and outsider,” as succinctly noted by Heather Rae.<sup>965</sup>

Thus the usual rhetoric of the Assyrians as being “some forty thousand persons who were brought to Iraq from Turkey” has led to the view of this people as “outsiders” or non-Iraqis, which would contribute to the justification of their massacre in 1933. The incessant labeling of these mountaineer Nestorians as “Assyrians” (and as outsiders) furthered the rift between Assyrians of various ecclesiastic sects as many reinvented themselves as Iraqi and as “insiders” rather than “Assyrian” and “outsiders.” Cultural genocide is an apt term for the continued denial of their existence in Iraq as a distinct entity, sometimes furthered by modern scholarship in questioning their distinctive

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<sup>965</sup> Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14.

culture, particularly when self-identification as “Assyrian” (*Ashuri* in Arabic) results in imprisonment and torture.

A telltale result of the cultural-genocidal campaign within Iraq was marked in the fracture within the Assyrian community, with some showing partiality toward the more Arabized segments of the populace and in fact ridiculing the Assyrian identity as peasant-oriented and abased. Thus the cultural chasm widened, and vocabulary such as *felehi* in Christian Arabic became commonplace to refer to those who spoke some ancient language, dressed strangely, and retained notions of a distinct ethnic and cultural identity.

The specific treatment of Assyrian asylum seekers returning from Turkey to Iraq under amnesty decree no. 736 on September 8, 1988 is further indicative of the discrimination against Assyrians, and illustrates the original clause “number three” as proposed by Lebanon during debates over what constituted ‘genocide,’ which stated that “subjecting members of a group to such conditions as would cause them to renounce their language, religion, or culture” should also be considered genocide.<sup>966</sup>

Though the total number of missing persons during the aforementioned time period is unclear, from government documents and oral estimates it can be calculated that thousands of Assyrians “disappeared” following the Anfal campaign and that many were forcibly assimilated. Furthermore, being told that only Kurds were subject to the “amnesty,” it is probable that for survival purposes, many Assyrians living in Iraqi Kurdistan were forced to adopt a cover of a Kurdish identity. Thus, the identity conundrum had come full circle. Arab identification became commensurate with strong socioeconomic stature, forcibly attracting many Assyrians and Kurds alike. Yet the

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<sup>966</sup> Ad Hoc Committee on Genocide Summary Record of the 14th Meeting, U.N. ESCOR, Doc. E/AC.25/SR.14 (1948), 13.

drawback for Assyrians was twofold, because at specific times and in specific locales, identifying as a Kurd guaranteed even greater socioeconomic prowess (in Iraqi Kurdistan) and was seemingly (according to the government census) safer than being a non-Kurd. Also, unchecked and unreported Arabization tactics faced by the Assyrians would be a precursor to some Kurdification processes under the KRG in Iraqi Kurdistan, just as the relative silence surrounding Simele allowed the Iraqi government to continue its suppression of other minorities, including the Kurds.<sup>967</sup>

In addition to cultural destruction, that thousands of Assyrians lost their lives during the period of 1961 to 1991, either physically or “spiritually” or “mentally” (through forced assimilation), and that thousands more were ethnically cleansed from their ancestral lands, is beyond contestation. Article 2-b of the United Nations Genocide Convention states that “causing serious bodily or *mental* harm to members of the group” is an act of genocide. Any assertion and/or proliferation of Assyrian culture and identity, denied through policies, census accounts, and so forth, was punishable by imprisonment and torture, and reflects subsection “b.” There can be few cases of mental harm greater than the denial of one’s existence.

This process of ethnic cleansing, under a guise of integration, was first used by the British on the highland Assyrians of Hakkâri, who had established a cohesive settlement in the region of Diyana, then still under British dominion. These Assyrians were “given orders to move from Di[y]ana” and “moved to the lowlands well south of the Zab” before the end of the mandate.<sup>968</sup> The comment from Malik Yako, the tribal leader

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<sup>967</sup> See Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, *North Iraq Human Rights Field Mission*, 2006 <http://www.iraqdemocracyproject.org/pdf/Northern%20Iraq%20Human%20Rights%20Field%20Mission.pdf> (Accessed 20 September 2008)

<sup>968</sup> Hamilton, *Road Through Kurdistan*, 217.



of Upper Tiyari quoted at the opening of this chapter, was his response to the news of the termination of the British mandate in Iraq and Assyrian situation, and is essential in understanding the formula for the Assyrian question in Iraq.

The elderly Yako's statement, "Now we have to meet death at long last ..." is a reference to a "social" death or identity death; a death of being "Assyrian." According to the Genocide Convention article 2-c, "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part"—such as the elimination of Assyrian villages, churches, and orchards; and demographic shifting to unknown regions—reflects the purposeful policies of drastically altering a people's way of life. Such alterations would eventually cause the distinctly "Assyrian" physical element of this people to end. Of course, this was done only in part, as not all Assyrians were physically eliminated by such policies—with the exception of Simele, which was certainly an attempt to physically eliminate the Assyrians *as such* and *in part* from Iraq.

Such geopolitical plots assured the stagnation of a nascent Assyrian identity in Iraq, owing in part to the strength of Arab and Kurdish nationalisms and the relative weakness of Assyrian nationalism. Their weaker political power is due not necessarily to the Assyrian people's unwillingness to absorb ethnic nationalism, but rather to governmental policies, including ethnic cleansing, cultural genocide, and the lack of external aid, as discussed in the preceding chapters. This study is in agreement with Joseph Yacoub's description of the Assyrian predicament as a *dynamisme démographique*.<sup>969</sup> It appears likely that, thanks in part to globalization and the Assyrian diaspora created in the West, the Assyrians were offered an opportunity to create a forum for the interaction of ecclesiastic groups under the cultural Assyrian umbrella.

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<sup>969</sup> Joseph Yacoub, *Les minorités dans le monde: Faits et analyses* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1998), 691.

Unfortunately, the initial meeting of Assyrians with “the white man” was with those Western missionaries who desired to develop a simple language and culture for the Assyrians in order to facilitate a speedy evangelization process. Furthermore, the benefits of “integration” were vastly overshadowed by the imminent assimilation for a political/social/economic (qualifiable) and numerical (quantifiable) minority, which Malik Yako could see, perhaps after a closer look at his brethren who had lived for hundreds of years in metropolitan centers and lost their cultural “Assyrianness.” Like all “progress,” it had proved a double-edged sword.

Demographic shifting and thus urbanization produced the state and non-state actors’ desired effect on the Assyrians. As a direct result of urbanization, attributed to ethnic cleansing campaigns, Assyrians were indoctrinated into the language, traditions, clothing, lifestyle, and names of Arab Iraq (and in some cases, Kurdish Iraq). The desired result was accomplished through both direct and indirect Arabization. It is of note that over one million Assyrians resided in northern Iraq prior to the demographic shifting following 1961; that number had declined to less than two hundred thousand by the mid-1990s.<sup>970</sup>

The Iraqi state and its political policies in the twentieth century can be explained by closely examining the Assyrian minority. The policies directed against the Assyrians are a microcosm of the larger situation, which affected various political, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. The treatment of the Assyrians initially by the British colonialists and then the new Iraqi government was the litmus test for nation- and state-building and international response. The cost of the establishment of Iraq and the attendant subordination of minorities to a Sunni Arab elite by the British for strategic

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<sup>970</sup> Joseph Yacoub, *Les minorités: Quelle protection?* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1995), 241.

purposes guaranteed that the “identity chosen for Iraq was unrepresentative and exclusionary.”<sup>971</sup>

Thus this artificial creation of an Iraqi (Arab) identity upon a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious region by the British, effectively assured the violent nature of its state formation. It was essentially “an imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>972</sup> In actuality, it is this imagined community that also gave hope to non-Muslim religious communities to become part of a larger secular community that would not discriminate on the basis of religious adherence. To many urban Christians, it theoretically permitted them “equality” with their Muslim neighbors in a land they had inhabited for millennia. This further impeded any integrated development of an ethnic or cultural Assyrian identity assured the alienation from all aspects of Iraqi social life, in many cases.

### ***Other Indigenous Parallels***

Evil does not arrive from outside of our civilization, from a separate realm we are tempted to call “primitive.” Evil is generated by civilization itself.

—Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*

In the case of the Assyrians and the nation-building of the Iraqi state, various parallels can be drawn with other indigenous peoples, illustrating that such crimes are committed by democracies as well as dictatorships. As mentioned briefly in the introduction, the Simele massacres bear an uncanny resemblance to the Battle at Wounded Knee in South Dakota in December 1890, when five hundred troops of the US Seventh Cavalry surrounded and massacred a band of Lakota Sioux for fear of a spiritual movement called the Ghost Dance. From the broken land treaty, which angered the

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<sup>971</sup> Preston, *The Crystallization of the Iraqi State: Geopolitical Function and Form*, 252.

<sup>972</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

Lakota, to their later disarmament, and finally to the initial number of casualties at around three hundred, the attacks at Wounded Knee and Simele are methodically similar in their *intent* to destroy *in part* the Sioux and Assyrians, respectively. Furthermore, the reactions of the US government and the Iraqi government are peculiarly analogous.

The American cavalry troops were venerated with eighteen congressional medals of honor, parallel to the parades held for the “victoriously” returning Iraqi troops following the murders at Simele.<sup>973</sup> In most cases, local “Americans” already suspicious of “savage redskins” saw the event through an ethno-religious lens—similar to the local “Iraqi” general distrust of these rural Christians, which was furthered by government and media propaganda. This idea of savagery and rebellion was also promoted by the Iraqi government in a US Department of State document stating, “Rebels mutilated dead and wounded, burned bodies [of] officers and killed some women and children.”<sup>974</sup> Similarly, the United States military attempted to blame the Lakota for the genocidal massacre. As some historians have attempted to blame the Assyrian victims for the Iraqi military action at Simele, citing premeditated rebellion (Husry being the most prominent),<sup>975</sup> a similar case has occurred regarding the Lakota and Wounded Knee:

Many historians have argued that the Sioux changed Wovoka’s originally peaceful movement into a militant one, thus ultimately leading to the battle at Wounded Knee, but Ostler flatly denies this and claims that the idea originated in the army’s attempts to justify the suppression of the Ghost Dance.<sup>976</sup>

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<sup>973</sup> This is the single most medals awarded in a single US military action prior to and since Wounded Knee. See Scott Pratt, “Wounded Knee and the Prospect of Pluralism”, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2005, 153.

<sup>974</sup> Pratt, “Wounded Knee and the Prospect of Pluralism”, 2005, 152-154. See also figure 10 US State Department document (no 165, 3 of 4) for the Iraq government’s release concerning the “rebel Assyrians.”

<sup>975</sup> See Husry, “The Assyrian Affair of 1933,” 168.

<sup>976</sup> Francis Prucha, “Wounded Knee Through the Lens of Colonialism”, review of Jeffrey Ostler’s *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (September 2005), 727. The ghost dance was a spiritual belief based on the prophetic vision of a Paiute elder Wovoka, which contested that the White man would soon be removed from the land and it would be given back to the native peoples. The

Jeffery Ostler views the violence at Wounded Knee as a colonialist action by the government. “It was not the Lakota Ghost dancers who were becoming hostile or threatening to use force ... it was the United States.”<sup>977</sup> The same is true with the new Iraqi government and their actions concerning Simele. The fact that the Lakota and Assyrians were partially armed was no excuse for their near annihilation.

The specific trend of forced demographic shifting by both state and non-state actors follows similar trends observed during World War II in the United States. The Iraqi use of wartime powers, which created collective towns and destroyed entire regions of Assyrian villages, have many well-documented parallel situations in the United States, which are illustrated by executive order 9066 signed by President F. D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942. This order permitted authorized military commanders to designate military areas within the United States at their discretion, “from which any or all persons may be excluded.” Eventually, such zones would include parts of both the East and West Coasts, totaling almost one-third of the country.<sup>978</sup> Under this order, many US citizens of German and Italian ancestry were targeted by the military. This corresponds directly to the border clearings in Iraq during the 1970s. Regions in which Assyrian villages predominated were dynamited and bulldozed as part of so-called “security measures” to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq. Thus the Americans did with the military zones, again on the coast or border regions. In the case of the Assyrians, most of the population was removed and in most instances offered no compensation.

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idea gained strong backing among the Lakota in the late 1800s. For more information see Pratt, “Wounded Knee and the Prospect of Pluralism”, 2005, 151.

<sup>977</sup> Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 287-288.

<sup>978</sup> *WWII Enemy Alien Control Overview*, The National Archives, <http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/immigration/enemy-aliens-overview.html>, accessed 20 May 2008

As a second parallel, the scheme of the *mujamma'āt*, the collective towns and processing centers during the Iraqi government's continuous campaigns in the north, was not dissimilar ideologically to those created by the German army (perhaps the first modern idea of a *konzentrationslager*, or "concentration camp") when dealing with the Herero people in Namibia at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>979</sup> The *mujamma'āt*, however, were probably more in line (treatment-wise) with the internment camps, also known as "war relocation camps" and "assembly centers," that the US and Canadian governments used to detain citizens of Japanese descent during World War II.<sup>980</sup> In the cases of both East and West, thanks to the ideology promoted by the "collective camps," the negative stigma and socioeconomic ramifications attached to one's being Kurdish or Assyrian in Iraq, or Italian, German, or Japanese in the United States and Canada, became a social and economic deterrent that compelled many people among these ethnic groups to distance themselves from their ethno-cultural identity.

The effort in the United States and Canada was directed toward an ethnic group within the country perceived as a "possible threat" by many political leaders, in all likelihood to disguise a program of ethnic cleansing. The case of the Assyrians in Iraq followed this pattern as well, and did further damage by identifying the Assyrians as Kurds (who were seen as separatists) and rebellious Arabs. Thus, not only were they processed in such camps, they were denied even their self-identification, something also akin to the experience of First Nations peoples in the United States and Canada.

The Assyrians experienced a social death under the guise of socioeconomic empowerment and integration similar to that of many First Nations peoples in Canada,

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<sup>979</sup> Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 81.

<sup>980</sup> For the case Canada see Iacovetta and Perin ed., *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 11.

through residential schools only recently terminated in 1996.<sup>981</sup> The 1972 decree 251 under Aḥmed Ḥassan al-Bakr depicted a cohesive image of the country amidst growing concerns illustrating the contrary. In actuality, the decree eliminated all private Assyrian schools (including classes in culture and history) and instruction in Aramaic or Syriac. Such assimilatory practices disguised as progressive measures share their misfortune with the treatment of other indigenous communities, such as those of Brazil, where the “Service for the Protection of Indians was actually found to be destroying them.”<sup>982</sup>

Ulterior motives, dwelling behind the facade of, in the Assyrian case, a cultural decree, are nothing new and must be subject to immediate questioning. The Iraqi regime, like a multitude of others, sometimes circumvented the “physical” death of genocide, which, after its military actions early on in and around Simele, it followed with the “spiritual” or “social” death inherent to cultural genocide or ethnocide. The Iraqi government’s engagement in village clearings, including destroying churches, monasteries, schools, and agricultural fields, and seizing livestock—attacking all means of a stable livelihood—and expelling and resettling Assyrians into urban areas, guaranteed the death of the Assyrian way of life. Since by definition cultural genocide or ethnocide, as the destruction of the thought and way of life of a people, is a categorical variation of genocide, then the major periods following the genocide at Simele typified cultural genocide in the wake of the formation of a cohesive and homogenous Iraqi state.

### ***Final Thoughts***

As long as there are slaughterhouses, there will be battlefields.  
—Leo Tolstoy

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<sup>981</sup> “Residential schools apology too late, say survivors,” CBC Online, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/prince-edward-island/story/2008/06/11/school-survivors.html>, Accessed 6-17-2008

<sup>982</sup> Vernon Van Dyke, *Human Rights, Ethnicity, and Discrimination* (London: Greenwood Press, 1985), 81.

In the case of this study, to say there is a lack of evidence about the Assyrian situation in Iraq, and indeed throughout the Middle East, is clearly a misstatement. The issues concerning the Assyrians warrant as much scholarly attention as those concerning other ethnic and religious groups in Iraq. As for *why* states and nations (whether ethnic or civic) engage in violent and nonviolent homogenization during the nation- and state-building process is another cause for reflection. Michael Mann cites nine motives used by perpetrators of violent crimes (including states). They include ideological, bigoted, violent, fearful, careerist, materialist, disciplined, comradely, and bureaucratic aims.<sup>983</sup> Since people are the true power behind the state, individual and professional reasons often overlap through social influence, creating perpetrator campaigns of both violent and nonviolent justification, often spearheaded by nationalist elites.

It appears as though a major effect of the problem of the lacuna concerning the Assyrians in academia is a scarcity of scholarly interest, most likely manipulated by the political ambitions for authority and supremacy in the modern nation-state. This includes the fears of powerful Western states to bring up ideas of genocide and the violations of indigenous peoples' rights, which would in turn force them to face their own gross human rights violations against indigenous populations. This problem has further contributed to the lack of scholarly and political influence of the Assyrians as a community, which is a matter embedded in a process of marginalization beginning with both Eastern and Western scholarship and political powers at the start of the 1900s. In fact, in most cases, at the turn of the twentieth century, scholarship was (and is) embedded in the political ambitions and processes of states. The same can be said for the

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<sup>983</sup> Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 27-29.



Assyrian predicament in Iraq in the twentieth century—a long tale that requires greater examination from various perspectives.

In summation, it must be made clear that in each and every account of the maltreatment treatment of or violence against the Assyrians by the Iraqi and state it was not a reflection of the Iraqis as “Arabs,” any more than the Holocaust perpetrated against the Jewish people was a consequence of the Germans’ being “German.” These policies, both violent and nonviolent, are embedded in a more basic nationalist ambition to control, to desire more; and the achievement of anything less than absolute control creates the fear of losing it to others. Power and the illusion of control rooted in a learned idea or behavior are the culprits of this global pandemic of violence and genocide. As Tolstoy’s remark above, it is only after a further look at this learned desire for control, based in fear and lack of reverence, that humanity may finally glimpse one of its fundamental flaws. For if it is learned, it can be unlearned.

## Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

### **Abbreviations**

Amnesty International (AI)

Assyrian Academic Society (AAS)

Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM)

Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA)

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF)

Iraq Memory Foundation (IMF)

Iraqi Communist Party (ICP)

Kheith Kheith Allap I (KKA I)

Kheith Kheith Allap II (KKA II)

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)

Nineveh Center for Research and Development (NCRD)

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

Royal Air Force (RAF) (Britain)

United Arab Republic (UAR)

United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC)

### **Terms**

Chaldeans – Former Nestorians (or members of the Church of the East) who first began converting to Catholicism in 1553. Given the name *Chaldean* upon their conversion to Catholicism

Chatta (Turkish “militia” also robber or thief) – term used by Kurds and Assyrians living in northern Iraq to refer to the pro-government Kurdish irregulars

Fursan (Arabic mounted “knights”) – was utilized by the regime to refer to those forces, dubbing them *fursan Salahadin*, or the “knights of Saladin.” See Chatta

Gippa (Assyrian) – cave/grotto

Jacobites – Also known as members of the Syrian/Syriac Orthodox Church Orthodox Church and its offshoot, the Syrian/Syriac Catholic Church

Jahsh (Arabic “little donkey”) – see Chatta

Mar (Assyrian) – Saint (m)

Mart (Assyrian) – Saint (f)

Naşara (Arabic) – Literally “nazereene” or more simply “Christian.” Many villages in northern Iraq are in fact split between their Assyrian and Kurdish inhabitants. They are sometimes designated as *naşara* (Christian Assyrian) and *islami* (Muslim Kurdish)

Nestorians – Also known as members of the Church of the East/East Syrian Church/Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East

Pêşmerge (Kurdish) – “Those who face death.” A term for the fighters in resistance against the Iraqi regime

Qasha (Assyrian) – priest

Shamasha (Assyrian) – deacon

## Personal Names

Adde –Thaddeus

Aprim – Ephrem

Gewargis – George

Luqa – Luke

Mari – Bartholomew

Maryam – Mary

Mattay/Mattai – Matthew

Oraha (Oraham, Awraham) – Abraham

Pius – Pius

Quryaqos – Cyriacus

Yawsep – Joseph

Yonan – Jonah

Youhannan – John

## Annexes<sup>984</sup>

**Table 7 Data on the Simele Massacres**

	Village	Population	Houses	Region
1	Simele			Dohuk
2	Kolabni			Dohuk
3	Mansuriya			Dohuk
4	Kharab Kulk			Dohuk
5	Sayyid Zahir (Sezari)			Dohuk
6	Qasr Yazdin			Dohuk
7	Mawana (Mavan)			Dohuk
8	Giril (Karpil, Garfil)			Dohuk
9	Ser Shari (Sar Shur)			Dohuk
10	Cham Jihane (Jajamani)			Dohuk
11	Dari			Dohuk
12	Garmawa			Dohuk
13	Hajisni			Dohuk
14	Masiki (Musa Laka)			Dohuk
15	Ruhaidi			Dohuk
16	Khabartu (Kabartu, Kabirtu)			Dohuk
17	Qala‘ d’Badri			Dohuk
18	Zorawa			Dohuk
19	Dosteka (Dostka)			Dohuk
20	Salahiya			Dohuk
21	Tel Hish (Tel Khish, Khishaf)			Dohuk
22	Karaiphan (Cariphan)			Dohuk
23	Iazkin			Dohuk
24	Reqawa (Rekawa)			Dohuk
25	Badi (Bade)			Dohuk
26	Babilo (Babalu)			Dohuk
27	Bagiri (Bakir) Upper			Dohuk
28	Bagiri (Bakir) Lower	150		Dohuk
29	Kola Hassan			Dohuk
30	Majal Makhti			Dohuk
31	Alqushta			Dohuk
32	Gundikta			Dohuk
33	Tutika			Dohuk
34	Aloka (upper)			Dohuk ‘Amēdiyāh
35	Baroski			Dohuk ‘Amēdiyāh
36	Cham ‘Ashrat			Dohuk ‘Amēdiyāh
37	Musalakia			Dohuk ‘Amēdiyāh
38	Sawura (Sawra)			Dohuk ‘Amēdiyāh
39	Cham Ashaki			Dohuk ‘Amēdiyāh
40	Aṭush			Dohuk ‘Amēdiyāh
41	Cham Sus	200		Dohuk ‘Amēdiyāh

<sup>984</sup> I am indebted to Shamiran Zendo, Nineb Lamassu, Amir Hassanpour and Amir Harrak for their aid with the translations and/or clarifications in regard to the Arabic originals.

42	Berbangi			Dohuk 'Amēdīyāh
43	Dohoke (Dahoki)			Dohuk 'Amēdīyāh
44	Nourdinswa			Dohuk 'Amēdīyāh
45	'Ain Baqra			Sheikhan
46	Karanjawa (Karanjak)	35		Sheikhan
47	Porusawa (Birozawa)	65		Sheikhan
48	Jarahiya	11		Sheikhan
49	Naristik			Sheikhan
50	'Ain Sifni			Sheikhan
51	Basifni			Sheikhan
52	Machna			Sheikhan
53	Badriya	100		Sheikhan
54	Dikan (Dahkan)	32	5	Sheikhan
55	Baqqaq			Sheikhan
56	Qasrune	38		Sheikhan
57	Totiyan (Taftiyan)	120		Sheikhan
58	'Ain Halwa	100	27	Sheikhan
59	Karrana	110	25	Dohuk
60	Gutba (Qutba)			Dohuk
61	Kwashe (Kowashe)			Dohuk
62	Chelok (Chelki)	210		Dohuk 'Amēdīyāh
63	Biswaya			
64	Kavla-Sin (Kafla Sin)	80		Dohuk
65	Gund-Naze			Dohuk
66	Nawdara			
67	Cham Kare			Dohuk
68	Shindokha			Dohuk
69	Kani-Gulan			
70	Bakhitme			Dohuk Simele
71	Deralok	130		Dohuk 'Amēdīyāh
72	Badrdin			
73	Bestawa			
74	Spindarok			Dohuk
75	Korbel (Kar Bile)			
76	Derke			Dohuk
77	Ala Kina			Dohuk
78	Sheikhidra			
79	Bativer (Ba-Tipre)			
80	Gere-Bahen			
81	Benarink			
82	Begah			
83	Pirozan			
84	Dizze			Ninewa Sheikhan
85	Guske			
86	Sikrīne			
87	Marona			Dohuk Simele
88	Der Jindi			
89	Gera-Gora			
90	Sina			
91	Kore- Gavana			
92	Muqble			
93	Dulip (Deleb, Idlib)			Dohuk Simele

94	Khirsheniya			
95	Lazga (Lazaka)			Dohuk Simele
96	Tel Zayt			Dohuk Simele
97	Be Torshi (Batirshi)			Dohuk Simele
98	Bamir (Ba-Mere)			
99	Kar-Sin			
100	Badaliya			
101	Tahlawa			
102	Kifre			Ninewa Sheikhan
103	Bajilla			Ninewa Sheikhan
104	Cham-Gaur			
105	Barzanke			
106	Qadish (Akdish)	150		Dohuk 'Amēdiyāh
107	Kortka			
108	Zeniyat			
109	Shirti			
110	Basitke (upper)			Dohuk
111	Basitke (lower)			Dohuk
112	Jalan-Arabok			Dohuk 'Aqra
113	Bazhora			Dohuk 'Aqra
114	Kashkawa	134		
115	Malla Birwan (Mulla Barwan)	35		Sheikhan
116	Nāṣerīyā	41	18	Sheikhan
117	Khalikan			
118	Safra Zor	35		Dohuk 'Amēdiyāh
119	Kani Balav (Balaf)	110		Dohuk 'Amēdiyāh
120	Gund Kosa	150		Dohuk 'Amēdiyāh

\* A list of Assyrian villages looted and burned following the Simele massacre of 1933, based on Yusuf Malek's *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians* (1935), 338–339 and League of Nations, *Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq*, 0.69.1934.VII, Geneva, January 18, 1934, enclosure II–IV, 8–11.



LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 177 - Diplomatic. Baghdad, August 30, 1933.

Subject: Iraq's Victorious Army Returns to Baghdad.

*AE*  
*Ad/c*  
*NE*

RECD  
DEPT OF STATE  
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
SEP 21 1933  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE  
SEP 27 1933  
C/O/C

FOR DISPATCH  
SEP 28 1933  
*Com E Mid*  
*RV*  
*EB*

8906.4016 ASSYR IANS/89

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
SEP 21 1933  
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Sir:

I have the honor to report that the Iraq Army returned on Saturday, August 26th from the operations against the Assyrians in the north. Not for many years has Baghdad been so excited. Beating of drums was heard in every quarter of the city from very early in the morning.

Two hours before the troop train arrived deputations of the trade guilds started marching through the city halting at frequent intervals to

sing

FILED  
SEP 24 1934

Figure 14 United States Department of State (diplomatic document no 177) from Paul Knabenshue the US Ambassador to Iraq (1932-1942) "Iraq's Victorious Army Returns to Baghdad," August 30, 1933 - 1 of 4 (AAS Archives)

- 2 -

sing paeans of victory "Thanks to Allah, our Army is victorious," "Long live King Faisal and the Emir Ghazi". These processions made their way to the parade ground opposite the Royal Palace where shouts were raised for King Faisal. His Majesty eventually appeared and saluted in acknowledgment of the plaudits of the multitude. The assemblage then moved en bloc to the railway station where the reception accorded to the troop train was almost frenzied in its enthusiasm. New processions were quickly formed with the trade guilds preceding the soldiers in their march through the city.

None of the stores and shops in Baghdad were open and Al Rasheed Street (New Street) devoid of all automobiles, was alive with a moving, pushing, emotional mass of humanity interspersed with police on foot and horseback. There was an unusual feeling of tension in the air. Occasionally a shout was raised above the din and hundreds of men and boys brandishing daggers, swords and a revolver or two and carrying silken banners of every hue and description would be harrangued to thrust themselves through the police lines. Looking down from a balcony on this moving mass, at times unmanageable and the next moment quite subdued and orderly, one could not help but feel that their present anti-Assyrian feeling was a potential menacing danger to Baghdad's whole Christian community.

Suddenly



- 3 -

Suddenly the crowd became electrified with excitement; a military band was heard in the distance amidst clapping, shouting and a universal din of sounds; then twelve mounted officers in khaki army uniform and khaki sun helmets appeared on nervous, shying Arab ponies. From the crowded balconies and verandas overlooking Al Rasheed Street flowers were strewn by women and children in the pathway of these mounted warriors as they proceeded gallantly along the street. Next appeared the band arrayed in white tunics missing a note here and there in their selections which varied from "As we go marching through Georgia," to "The men of Harlech". The crowd once again became unmanageable and pushed into the street at the appearance of the troops which marched in as orderly a fashion as possible through the excited rabble.

Babies were raised to mother's shoulders, flowers were thrown and confetti sprinkled on the heads of Baghdad's victorious army. Next was beheld a truly oriental custom. Each and every soldier was sprinkled with rose water from a long necked metal container. Not only the private soldiers but the officers and their mounts received copious dashes of the liquid.

Following the troops marched a solid phalanx of civilian admirers occupying every inch of the roadway. The impression gained was that of an army returning from a long and arduous campaign.

As a mark

- 4 -

As a mark of public gratitude all coffee shops offered free coffee and the barbers free shaves to the soldiers for three days. Thus was the victorious army received in Baghdad. There is always a touch of humor in everything. In this case the amusing part about it was in the fact that none of these troops had actually taken part in the recent so-called battles. The real heroes are at Mosul and will be reviewed there on August 30th by His Highness the Emir Ghazi.

Only one unfortunate incident marked the otherwise peaceful demonstration during the day. Most of the Baghdad Assyrian population, cognizant of the potential danger to themselves, remained quietly secluded in their houses. One recently discharged Assyrian Levies' Officer, however, was on his way to the railway station to meet his wife and family when the crowd suddenly espied and maliciously murdered him.

Respectfully yours,



P. Knabenshue.

File No. 800

GWR/gkm

Copy to American Embassy, London.



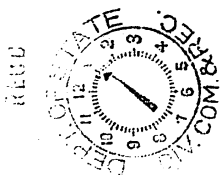
LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 165 Diplomatic Baghdad, August 23, 1933.

Subject: SUPPRESSION OF ASSYRIAN REVOLT --

IRAQ GOVERNMENT'S SECOND TELEGRAM

TO GENEVA



SEP 14 1933 DEPARTMENT OF STATE A-C/C SEP 21 1933 ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE SEP 1 1933 DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

DISTRIBUTION - CHECK Yes No To Mr. ... In U. S. A. SEP 21 1933

992 with original 2-1-33 5000

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

8906.4016 ASSYRIANS/82

CONFIDENTIAL

The Honorable The Secretary of State, Washington.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE SEP 15 1933 DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

SEP 2 - 1934

FILED

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose a copy of the second 1/ telegram sent by the Iraq Government to the League of Nations in connection with the Assyrian revolt. This

telegram

Figure 18 USDOS Documents (no 165) August 23, 1933. Concerning the celebration for the Iraqi troops following the massacre of the Assyrians - 1 of 4. (Assyrian Academic Society Archives)

- 2 -

telegram seems to have been sent on August 20, 1933.

The enclosure herewith is a copy of the English text actually sent. It is not a good translation of the original Arabic, a copy of which is also enclosed.

This second report to the League of Nations cannot, I fear, be accepted as an entirely correct representation of what has transpired. However, it is yet too early to get possession of all the facts, and out of the mass of rumors, exaggerations, prevarication and propaganda, it is difficult if not impossible to sift the truth.

However, it may now be considered that the Assyrian revolt has been suppressed. Aside from a few isolated small groups which have taken refuge in the hills, the Assyrians who returned from Syria have now either been killed in battle or massacred -- with a few probably overlooked and still hiding in their villages.

One section of the victorious Iraq army returning from the front is now quartered at Mosul, and another section is arriving at Baghdad to-day. Mosul gave an enthusiastic welcome to its allotment. Triumphal arches were erected, decorated with watermelons shaped as skulls into which daggers were thrust and with red streamers suspended, intended, it is assumed, to represent blood.

The actual original revolt has been suppressed, and we are now awaiting the repercussions, if any.

Respectfully yours,

*P. Knabenshue*  
P. Knabenshue

/K/jsm

Enclosures: 1/ Translation of telegram.  
2/ Original Telegram.

Copy to American Embassy, London.

File No. 840.1 2 Carbon Copies

EP  
L.C.

Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 165 of August 23, 1933  
from the American Legation at Baghdad, Iraq.

C O P Y

Secretary-General,  
League of Nations,  
Geneva.

Continuation our telegram 6 August 1933.

Armed rebellion undertaken by supporters of Mar Shimun with object destroying our Military Forces and then causing general massacre among peace loving sects of Iraq has been suppressed within week of outbreak as result prompt measures taken by Government.

During operations no case occurred oppression by regular or newly recruited forces of Government against villages and inhabitants whether women children or men casualties on both sides confined to rebels and Government forces. Rebels mutilated dead and wounded, burned bodies officers and killed some women and children.

Overwhelming majority Assyrians supported Government against rebellious followers of Mar Shimun and gave active assistance either by volunteering for enlistment in police or by preserving order in their districts. About 700 of them still loyally serving in Government forces thefts occurred in villages belonging to rebels and other who joined outlaw bands after being abandoned by their families who took refuge in nearest administrative headquarters. Government took immediate steps stop these recovered and returned most of loot to owners.

Government has given compensation for small quantity not recovered. Two of looters killed during pursuit and inquiries proceeding from those arrested.

New police posts established in abandoned villages to give owners confidence to return. Relief committees formed with assistance settlement expert Major Thomson to feed and lodge destitute or restore them to homes.

Inquiries proceeding regarding instigators and responsible leaders of armed rebellion Government investigating allegations of unjustifiable breaches of law.

Government protests energetically against misleading propaganda encouraged by quarters desirous of confusing the issue so as to hide the truth and injure reputation of Iraq.

Security restored. Troops withdrawn to permanent stations.

Detailed statement will be prepared due course.

Foreign Affairs

Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
Baghdad, 20/8/1933.  
No. 7850

Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Enclosure No. 2 to Despatch No. 165 of August 25, 1933  
from the American Legation at Baghdad, Iraq.

### السكرتير العام لعصبة الامم

لاحقا لبرقيتنا . . . . . قمع الاضطراب المسلح الذي قام به اعوان  
المارشمعون والذي اريد به القضاء على القوات المرابطة من الجيش ثم احدات  
قتل عام بين الطوائف المراقبة المنظمة وذلك خلال اسبوع واحد من تاريخ  
وقوعه بفتيجة التدابير السريعة التي اتخذتها الحكومة .  
لم يقع خلال الحركات اى اعتداء من جانب قوات الحكومة النظامية والمنتوعة  
على القرى او سكانها من النساء والأطفال والشيخ والرجال . والخسائر من  
الطرفين بقيت منحصرة بالمتمردين والقوات . مثل المتمردين بالقتلى والجرحي  
واحرقوا جيش الضباط وقتلوا بعض النساء والاطفال .  
ان الاكثوية الساحقة من الاثوريين التزموا جانب الحكومة ضد المتمردين اتباع  
المارشمعون وقدموا لها مساعدات فعالة سواء بالتطوع في سلك الشرطة المطوعة  
او بحفظ الامن في مناطقهم ولم يزل حوالي ٧٠٠ منهم مجددين في قوات الحكومة  
قائمين بواجباتهم بكل اخلاص . واما حوادث السرقات التي وقعت في القرى  
المتروكة من قبل عائلات المتمردين والذين التحقوا بالعصاة التي التجأت الى  
مراكز النواحي القريبة فقد قامت الحكومة فوراً لمنعها في يوم وقوعها واسترد معظمها  
واعيدت الى اصحابها .  
والقليل الذي لم يسترد عوضته الحكومة وقتل اثنان من السراق المتحاربين  
اثناء التعميق والتحقيق جار مع الموقوفين منهم .  
وضعت مخافر جديدة في القرى المتروكة لتنظيم اصحابها من الرجوع اليها .  
تألفت لجان الاسماء لاطعام المعوزين وايوا الملتجئين يساعدها الخبير الميجر  
تومسن . الحكومة تستقصى عن محرضي هذه الثورة المسلحة والمسؤولين عنها  
وتتظر فيما عزي من مخالفة للقوانين التي لا تهررها الظروف . تحتج الحكومة  
بكل شدة على الدعايات المضللة التي يشجعها البعض بقصد التمويه لستر  
الحقائق ولتشويه سمعة العراق . اعهد الامن الى نصابه وسحبت القوات  
الى مراكزها الدائمة وستوافيكم بالتقرير المفصل .

Figure 21 USDOS Documents (no 165) Telegram from Iraqi government to League of Nations concerning Assyrian 'incident' Arabic original - 4 of 4. (Assyrian Academic Society Archives)



LEGATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*Handwritten initials: AOC, AE*

No. 167 Diplomatic

Baghdad, August 23, 1933.

Subject: CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS HEADS AND ASSYRIAN  
MASSACRES.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
OF STATE  
SEP 15 1933  
*Handwritten initials: J.A.C.*

SEP 14 1933

FOR DISTRIBUTION  
*M.D.*  
SEP 20 1933

CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
SEP 15 1933  
DIVISION OF  
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS  
*Handwritten initials: H.S.V., M.S., M.H.*

B90G.4016 ASSYRIANS/84

*Handwritten notes: 8909, 2000*

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State  
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to my despatch No. 164 Diplomatic dated August 21, 1933, regarding the recent massacre of Assyrians in the northern town of Simel, and to report in that connection the telegrams of congratulation sent to King Faisal by three christian religious heads, as published in the AL-IMHA AL-WATANI of Baghdad on August 20th, in contrast with the information the Papal Nuncio in Mosul is reported to have sent to the Vatican.

The authors of the three telegrams were: Patriarch

Emmanuel

FILED  
SEP 2 - 1934

Figure 22 USDOS Documents (no 167) "Christian Religious Heads and Assyrian Massacres," sent by ambassador to Iraq, Paul Knabenshue - 1 of 5 (AAS Archives)

-2-

Emmanuel, Chaldean Archbishop and head of more than two-thirds of all christians in Iraq; Athanasius Thoma Kassir, Bishop of the Orthodox Syrians (Jacobites), who has a large congregation around Mosul; and Priest Wadishoo, who signs himself Chief of the Chaldean Monasteries on behalf of the people of Alkosh where about 250 Assyrian insurgents had taken refuge. As they were practically identical telegrams, the Patriarch's is quoted:

"By the benevolence of God and the wisdom of Your Majesty peace is now dominant. We would mention with pride the firmness of the Minister of Interior and the Director-General of Police and the devotion of the Acting Mutassarif and the Director of Police of the Mosul Liwa. We beseech God for Your Majesty's long life and continued victories for the country"

Although unconfirmed as yet, it is reliably reported that the Papal Nuncio in Mosul attempted to send a telegram to the Vatican in protest against the activities of the Iraq Government with reference to the massacre of christians (Assyrians) in the northern district (Simel). It is understood that the Government Telegraph Officials at first refused to send the telegram, and upon the insistence of the Papal Nuncio they referred the matter to Baghdad. It is not known whether permission has now been granted for its transmission, but it is not doubted that the message arrived by some means.

The Government quite naturally desires to discount all stories of irregularities, atrocities committed by regular or even irregular forces, and reports of wanton murder and pillage that are being circulated. The Simel massacre of unarmed Assyrians by regular troops is undoubtedly going to be very difficult for

the



-3-

the Government to explain, and it is doing all in its power to build up evidence to discredit the report and to show that other christians were not ill treated, were protected by the troops throughout operations and that all christians are very grateful to the Government. It is reliably reported that the messages are not voluntary but have been sent at the instigation of local officials, which accounts for the continued receipt of telegrams from all classes of christian clergy and laymen in the Mosul district, thanking the Government for its consideration and protection during the Assyrian rebellion. They evidently feel that refusal to send such messages would result in reprisals against them.

The other reason advanced for the sending of those messages is that the christian clergy, realizing the perilous situation in which all christians might easily find themselves if there are any further provocations for the eager moslems to extend their activities toward eliminating all christians, and also realizing the futility of protesting to the Government against its own acts, have chosen the more expedient course of flattering and commending all officials concerned in the hope that their backing will be remembered if and when further occasion for real protection arises.

While at first the desire to curry favor theory was credited, later information seems to point strongly to coercion by Government and local officials who in some cases are reported to have dictated the messages which continue to arrive in Baghdad. The authorities concerned want to appear well in any subsequent investigations, and believe that the

testimony

-4-

testimony of Christians in their districts will make a good showing. One telegram to the Royal Chamberlain received August 21st reads as follows:

"We, the inhabitants of Telkeif, Taleskef, Batnaya and Baqofa express our sincere thanks and our devotion to His Royal Majesty for the effective measures taken by the Government to protect our villages during the rebellion undertaken by a band of ignorant Assyrians in our northern districts and pray God that the Almighty preserve the Sovereign and Defender of the State."

The inhabitants of those villages are practically all Roman Catholics and Chaldean Christians, and the significant fact that they make no mention of the Simele massacre will be of value to the Government.

Most foreigners resident in Iraq hold the definite opinion that the Simele outrage will eventually be investigated by the League of Nations, and because there are witnesses and first-hand reports it will be much more difficult to minimize or justify than the previously reported execution of some fifteen Assyrian prisoners. (The British Embassy informed me this morning that the League had just appointed a special sub-committee to investigate the Assyrian revolt and present conditions and report at the September 23rd meeting of the League Council.) It is not likely that the Government will be able successfully to deny the Simele affair, although it might be able to offer some explanation. By intimidation of eye witnesses and production of false witnesses it might make it appear that the massacre was perpetrated by Bedouin or Kurdish tribes.

As more conclusive proof of the Government's growing anxiety regarding future international opinion, reference is made to the telegram sent to

the

-5-

the League of Nations on August 20th, a copy of which is enclosed with despatch No.165 Diplomatic of August 23, 1933.

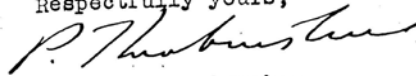
Seeking every means with which to build up prestige and protection, the Minister of Interior, H.E. Hikmet Beg Sulaiman, during his present visit to Mosul to investigate personally the situation and rumors, gave a large banquet to celebrate the successful termination of the military operations against the rebel Assyrians, to which were invited not only prominent Moslems but also the leading Christians of the district. Thereupon the invited Christians were reported to have "expressed their satisfaction at the manner in which the Government had handled the Assyrian uprising."

The ever apprehensive Armenians have also seen fit to take favorable action. Their Council in Baghdad through their religious head has not only offered congratulations to the King, but it has also begun taking a collection among Armenians to distribute to the relatives of fallen Iraqi soldiers, "as a token of its appreciation of the brave Iraqi Army."

The local Christians, while desirous of doing something to relieve the distress of the Assyrian sufferers--widows, children, etcetera--fear to do so.

The exaction of false testimonials from the various Christian dignitaries, virtually at the point of the pistol, is a sad testimonial to the integrity of the Iraq Government.

Respectfully yours,



P. Knabenshue.

PK/MNH/mnh

File No.840.1

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Figure 26 USDOS Documents (no 167) "Christian Religious Heads and Assyrian Massacres" Concerning praise for the massacre of Assyrians and a monetary collection from the Armenian community to distribute to "the relatives of fallen Iraqi soldiers" 5 of 5 (AAS Archives)

# Correspondence and Photographs: 1969-1980

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 E.O. 12958, as amended  
 June 21, 2006

This document consists of 7 pages  
 Number 1 of 1 copies, Serial 5

SECRET

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE Memorandum of Conversation

L I M D I S

DATE: May 29, 1969

**SUBJECT:** Kurdish Threat Against Kirkuk Oil Installations;  
Iranian and Israeli Support for Assyrians

**PARTICIPANTS:** Mr. Zaya Malek Isma'il  
 Mr. Sam Andrews  
 Mr. William Yonan  
 Mr. Rodger P. Davies, NEA *RPD*  
 Mr. Bryan H. Baas, NEA/ARN

100 JAN 2 PM 4 47  
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 NEA/IRN  
 NEA/IAI  
 White House - Mr. Saunders

Amembassy TEHRAN  
 Amembassy BEIRUT  
 Amembassy LONDON  
 Amembassy TEL AVIV

19

The Assyrian gentlemen called on Mr. Davies at their request. Mr. Yonan introduced Messrs. Isma'il and Andrews stating that they had recently been in Kurdistan and had some information which they wished to share with us.

Mr. Andrews said that he and Mr. Isma'il had gone to Iran in early April 1969. Through the intercession of the Assyrian representative in Majlis, they were able to obtain permission - apparently from the Shah himself - to visit Mullah Mustafa Barzani in Kurdistan. A primary purpose of their visit was to ascertain the condition of Assyrians in Kurdish territory. The Iranian armed forces obligingly provided a helicopter to take them into Kurdistan. They arrived there April 20 and departed April 23.

PET IRAQ 23-9 Aug  
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② *R* *AS*  
 NEA/ARN:BHBaas:dmg 5/29/69  
 (Drafting Office and Officer)

GROUP 3

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2-65

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not automatically declassified.

Figure 27 Document concerning Assyrian and Kurdish and Iraqi relations from USDOS, Memorandum of Conversation, May 29, 1969, accessed April 22, 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e4/65194.htm> - 1 of 6

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June 21, 2006

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Mr. Andrews said they had long talks with Mullah Mustafa every evening. The Mullah gave them a letter addressed to Secretary Rogers. The letter, a copy of which is attached, will be officially delivered next week by them in the company of the Kurdish representative in Washington, Shafiq Qazzaz. They permitted us in confidence to make a copy of the letter for our own information. Mullah Mustafa had specifically asked Messrs. Andrews and Isma'il to convey a message to the American Government. That is, the Mullah wants us to know that he is under pressure from his followers to unleash attacks on the Kirkuk oil facilities. The Kurds will give serious consideration to this in the future. The rationale is that the oil earns income for the Iraqi Government which in turn is used to buy arms to attack the Kurds. In reply to a specific inquiry from Mr. Baas, Mr. Andrews said that Mullah Mustafa was not demanding anything from us in return for agreement not to attack the Kirkuk facilities. Mullah Mustafa merely wanted us to be informed. Mr. Andrews said that, of course, Barzani looks for support from any quarter. He added that the Mullah said he would like to see Kurdistan become the 51st state.

In discussing the threat to the IPC facilities at Kirkuk, Andrews and Isma'il seemed to be unaware of the March 1969 attack on the facilities. (This is puzzling, since the Kurds have publicly taken credit for the attack.)

Mr. Andrews said that the Assyrians are fighting the Iraqis alongside the Kurds. There is apparently complete confidence between the Kurds and the Assyrians and some integration of their fighting forces. In this connection, Mr. Andrews said that the Iranian Government had assured him of Iranian assistance to the Assyrians in their confrontation with the Iraqis. In Tehran he had also gotten in touch with the Israelis. The Israelis also assured him that they would be pleased to provide Assyrians with arms. Mr. Andrews added that the Israelis are supplying the Kurds with arms while the Iranians provide them

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with food and other supplies. Iranian support for the Kurds, Mr. Andrews noted, tends to vary in direct proportion to tensions between the Iranian and Iraqi Governments. Mullah Mustafa had complained to Mr. Andrews that when there is rapprochement between the Iraqis and the Iranians, aid to the Kurds becomes a mere trickle. At times like the present, the Kurds are well supplied by the Iranians.

Mr. Andrews reported that the Kurds enjoyed high morale and were determined to carry on their war with the Government of Iraq. The Iranians, the Israelis and the Kurds all agreed that even if Mullah Mustafa were to die, the Kurds were united enough in their confrontation with the Iraqis that they would carry on the fight.

Mr. Andrews noted in passing that Jalal Talabani's forces are ineffectual. Mr. Davies said that we had heard about two months ago a rumor that Talabani had been killed in a clash with the Barzani forces. Mr. Andrews said most emphatically that Talabani is still alive. He said that at about the time we understood that he had been killed, Talabani and a band of supporters attempted to ambush Barzani and a group of his followers. The ambush failed, and some 60 Talabani followers were killed. Both Talabani and Barzani escaped unscathed.

In reply to a question from Mr. Davies, Mr. Andrews said there are no negotiations between Barzani and the GOI at present.

Mr. Andrews alluded to the possibility of US assistance to the Kurds and Assyrians. Mr. Davies informed the gentlemen that following the February 1964 truce between the Kurds and the GOI, the US Government had instituted a Title II program in northern Iraq to provide relief to needy Kurds. This program had been terminated by the break in relations between the United States and Iraq. In the absence of relations there is little we can do to provide relief to needy minorities in that country. Mr. Davies went on to say that we are very sympathetic with all the minorities including the Kurds,

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the Assyrians, the Jews, the Chaldeans, and others.

Mr. Andrews said that he would get in touch with Shafiq Qazzaz and would then be back in touch with Mr. Baas to arrange for an appointment to deliver Mullah Mustafa's letter to the Secretary. Mr. Andrews said he stands ready to be helpful in any way possible and asked that we feel free to call on him. Mr. Davies thanked him and said we are happy to have this new channel of communication.

*Att*  
Attachment:

Copy of a letter to the  
Secretary from Barzani.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 DIVISION OF LANGUAGE SERVICES

(TRANSLATION)

LS NO. 10056  
 T-58  
 Arabic

The Honorable William Rogers  
 Secretary of State of the United States of America

Greetings and respects.

Your Excellency, you are aware of the fact that the people of Kurdistan of Iraq have been for more than seven and a half years the victims of a racial war waged against them by the dictators in Baghdad, who seized power through bloody military coups.

In addition to the threat which this war has aimed at the existence and legitimate aspirations of our people, both Kurds and Assyrians, it has brought disaster and affliction upon all its victims, deprived the people of Kurdistan, particularly the Assyrians and the Kurds, of education and health [needs], and rendered tens of thousands of them refugees. All these [calamities] have been inflicted upon us only because we have claimed the basic and legitimate human and national rights, to which we, like any other people, are entitled.

On more than one occasion, our people have appealed to the people and Government of the United States of America for assistance in their tribulation and inclusion in

Figure 31 USDOS, *Memorandum of Conversation*, May 29, 1969, accessed April 22, 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e4/65194.htm>. First part of Mustafa Barzani's letter - 5 of 6.



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-2-

your country's aid, in all fields, to many of the under-developed peoples.

As we reiterate our appeal to the people and government of the United States through Your Excellency, we hope that President Richard Nixon's administration may usher in more propitious times for our cause, and that this appeal may meet a receptive ear on your part and gain the necessary sympathy and support.

Any serious step you may take towards this end will ensure for your country the generous gratitude and support of our people, as well as prove the best application of the policy of the United States, whose objective is to serve humanity and stand by small nations subjected to distress and suffering.

The delegation consisting of Shafiq Qazzaz, Zia Malak Ismail, and Sam Andrews is authorized to speak on my behalf and to set forth in detail the various aspects of our case. I am hopeful that the delegation will enjoy the favor of an audience with you.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Mustafa Al-Barazani  
 4/22/69

Figure 32 USDOS, *Memorandum of Conversation*, May 29, 1969, accessed April 22, 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e4/65194.htm>. Second part of Mustafa Barzani's letter - 6 of 6.

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June 21, 2006

NEA/ARN:BHBaas

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~~SECRET~~

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: June 13, 1969

L I M D I S

SUBJECT: Kurdish/Assyrian Appeal for U.S. Assistance

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. William Yonan, President, Assyrian-American Federation  
Mr. Sam Andrews, Secretary, Assyrian-American Federation  
Mr. Zaya Malek Isma'il, Representative of Assyrians in Syria  
Dr. Perley, Attorney for Assyrian-American Federation  
Mr. Shafiq Qazzaz, Representative of the Kurdish Revolution in the USA  
Mr. Talcott W. Seelye, NEA/ARN  
Mr. Bryan H. Baas, NEA/ARN

COPIES TO: NEA White House - Mr. Saunders  
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19

20 JUN 1969

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Mr. Qazzaz stated that the principal purpose of his visit was to deliver a letter from Mullah Mustafa Barzani to Secretary of State William P. Rogers. The letter appeals to the United States to provide assistance to the Kurds and the Assyrians in their struggle with the Iraqi Government. Mr. Seelye accepted the letter and assured the gentlemen that it would be brought to the Secretary's attention.

Mr. Andrews and Mr. Isma'il related approximately the same story they had given to Mr. Davies on May 29 (see Memorandum of Conversation of that date). Mr. Qazzaz added a new dimension to the problem by emphasizing that the Kurds felt compelled to take decisive action against the Iraqi Government. He said it is more imperative now than at any time in the past eight years that the Kurds attack the IPC oil installations and interrupt the flow of oil. He noted that oil income is vital to the Iraqi economy. If this income is denied the GOI, the economy will suffer a severe blow and the government itself will be weakened to its very foundation. The GOI would lack money to purchase arms and its war effort would be severely impaired.

1  
NEA/ARN:BHBaas:mvh 6/19/69  
(Drafting Office and Officer)

Figure 33 Document concerning Assyrian and Kurdish and Iraqi relations from USDOS, Memorandum of Conversation, June 13, 1969, accessed April 22, 2008 - 1 of 3.

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 PA/HO Department of State  
 E.O. 12958, as amended  
 June 21, 2006

2

~~SECRET~~

Mr. Qazzaz asked for assistance from the United States Government. He was not very specific, but he said the Kurds needed money to buy arms and other supplies. He alluded to the sufferings of the Kurds in the north, malnutrition among the children and lack of medical supplies. He said that if the Kurds were provided with essential commodities they could handle the Iraqis by themselves and would not need further help. He said 25,000 Kurds are now under arms. In response to a question about Iranian and Israeli assistance, he acknowledged help from these sources but said it was insufficient. Much later in the conversation, when it became apparent that no US assistance was forthcoming, Mr. Qazzaz noted that if the Kurds succeeded in gaining limited autonomy or independence, they would not forget who had refused them aid when they needed it.

Mr. Seelye told the visitors quite explicitly that the United States Government does not get into this type of clandestine operation. Mr. Yonan alluded to the landings of the Marines in Lebanon in 1958. Mr. Seelye pointed out that times have changed and that the attitudes of the American public and American Government are quite different on the subject of foreign adventures. The gentlemen apparently understood quite clearly that clandestine assistance from the United States was not forthcoming.

Mr. Seelye asked Mr. Qazzaz about assistance for needy Kurds from international organizations. Mr. Qazzaz said that the ICRC had provided some help to the Kurds through the Iranian Red Crescent. He said that the American Red Cross had not been helpful and he felt that that door was entirely closed to help from that source.

Considering the Kurdish question from a humanitarian viewpoint, Mr. Qazzaz said that the Kurds had made an appeal to U Thant to have their problem brought before the Human Rights Commission. Apparently, nothing resulted from this effort.

independence -- only limited autonomy and cultural integrity -- he could not vouch for their demands in another five or ten years. In other words, the Kurds are completely fed up. They have absolutely no trust in the Iraqi Arabs and they are becoming less inclined toward compromise.

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Authority 969003  
By ~~FK~~ Date 7/1/02DECLASSIFIED  
PA/HO Department of State  
E.O. 12958, as amended  
June 21, 2006

3

The Assyrian visitors stated that the Assyrians in Kurdish areas have joined the Kurds in their rebellion against the Iraqi Government. Assyrians fight side by side with the Kurds, and one of Idris Barzani's bodyguards is an Assyrian. (Idris is Mullah's son and is a field commander of the Kurdish forces.) Mr. Seelye noted that Assyrian participation in the insurgency entails a number of risks for the Assyrian community as a whole in Iraq, which is more exposed.

Mr. Seelye assured the gentlemen that the United States is sympathetic toward the sufferings of the Kurds and the Assyrians. We do not however support an independent Kurdish/Assyrian state, and we are not prepared to support this objective either overtly or covertly. He added that the United States has many interests in the area and had to take those interests into consideration also. In conclusion Mr. Seelye said that he thought that this had been a useful exchange and said he would be pleased to talk to the gentlemen again at any time.

As the gentlemen were leaving, Dr. Perley took Mr. Baas aside and said that he really wouldn't look with favor upon an independent Kurdish state because he knew that the Muslim Kurds at that point would immediately turn on the Christian Assyrians.

~~SECRET~~

Figure 35 Document concerning Assyrian and Kurdish and Iraqi relations from USDOS, *Memorandum of Conversation*, June 13, 1969, accessed April 22, 2008 - 3 of 3.



**Figure 36 Shrine to Assyrian Ethniel Shleimon of Dūre, Barwar who was the first person to be killed during the civil war in 1961. The shrine stands today in ‘Amēdīyāh.**



**Figure 37 Mar Yosip Khananishu (right) and bishop Mar Youalah (left) of Dūre, Barwar prior to his assassination by poisoning in 1972.**



**Figure 38** Ruins of Mart Maryam church in Khardis village destroyed in 1961. (Photo courtesy of Assyrian Academic Society 2004)



**Figure 39** Ruins of Mar Gewargis in Iyyat, Barwar built AD 920. Destroyed during the border clearings in 1978. (Photo courtesy of Assyrian Academic Society 2004)



**Figure 40** Mar Gewargis church of Dûre. Picture taken 1978 just prior to border clearing campaign. (courtesy <http://www.assyriandooreh.com/>)



**Figure 41** Mar Gewargis of Dûre. The church of Mar Gewargis was destroyed by the Iraqi government in 8/7/1978. (courtesy <http://www.assyriandooreh.com/>)



Figure 42 Mar Qayyoma Church in Dûre, Barwar prior to demolition. (Courtesy <http://www.assyriandooreh.com/>)



Figure 43 Mar Qayyoma Church in Dûre, Barwar following the 1978 border clearings and destruction. (Courtesy <http://www.assyriandooreh.com/>)





**Figure 44** The village of Düre was destroyed in the summer of 1978 (8/7/1978). This photo was taken as the villagers awaited their deportation. (Courtesy <http://www.assyriandooreh.com/>)

Documents Concerning Cultural and Political Organizations

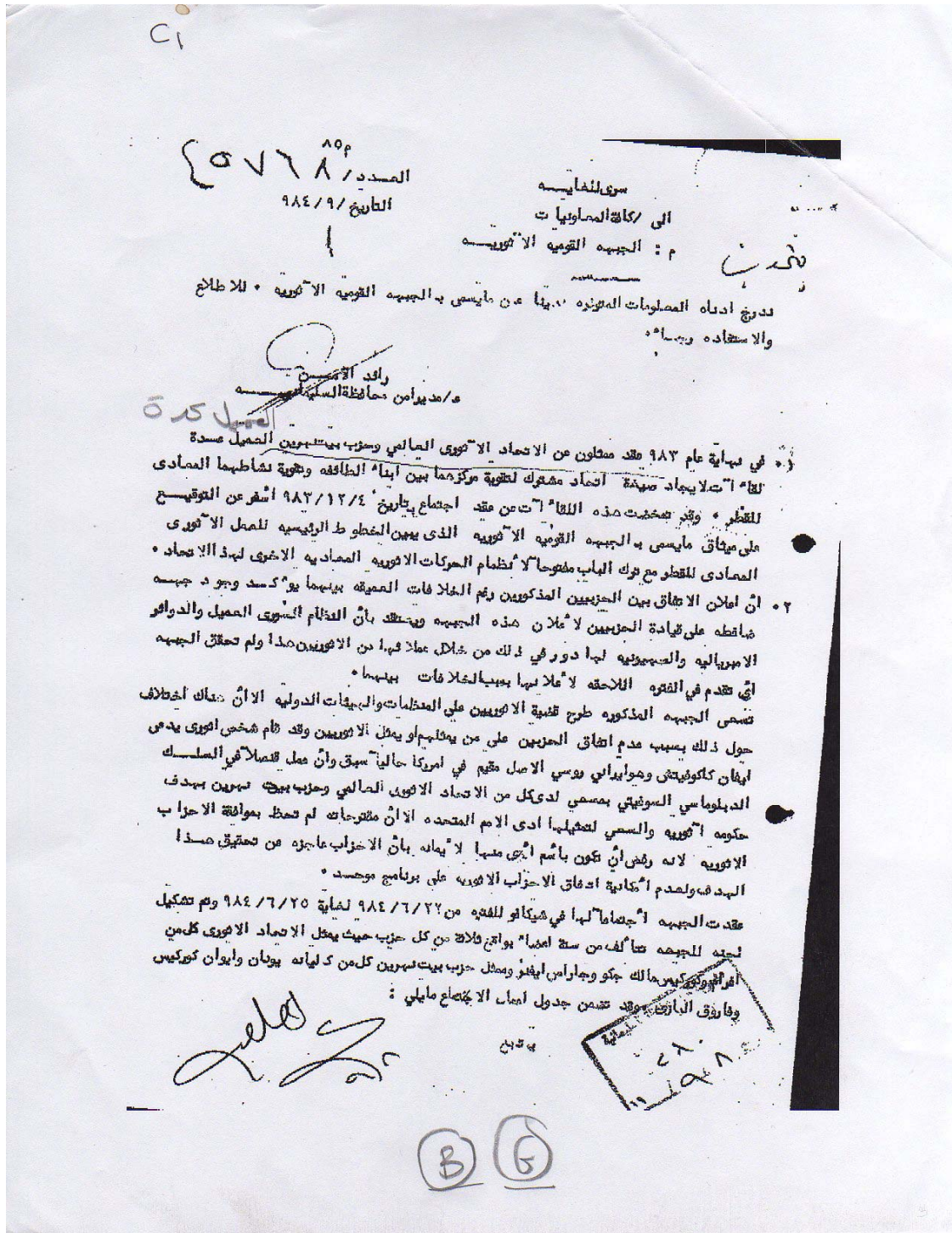


Figure 45 Iraqi secret document C1 concerning the Assyrian National Front, Assyrian Universal Alliance, and the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party in 1984. (Courtesy of the Assyrian Academic Society)

C 2

٥٠ السياسة الخارجية

اولاً - تم الاتفاق على ان يقوم الاتحاد الاثوري بالتحرك سياسياً واعلامياً في الولايات المتحدة بشكل عام والكونغرس الامريكى بشكل خاص للترويج بالقضية الاثورية بأشهر ان الاتحاد الاثوري لديه رغبة الاضطلاع بالمخصصات السياسية الامريكى والكونغرساً ثانياً - الاتفاق على طرح القضية على الامم المتحدة والمطالبة بانحتم الذاتي للاثوريين على ان تكون الدعوة باسم كلا الحزبين وان يقوم حزب بيت نهرين بهذا الجهد بأشهر ان لديه اتصالات مع ماكين ديمون سيق وان قاموا بطرح مسأله كمنظمة وزارة الاوقاف الدينية العراقية على الكنائس في العراق  
 زيه القضايا العسكريه

ثانياً ان يكون حزب بيت نهرين مسؤولاً عن القضايا العسكريه وان يكون وسيطاً بين الجبهه القوميه الاثوريه وبين مايسمى بالجبهه الوطنيه والقوميه الديمقراطييه (جوقد) كما كلف بفتح مفاوضات مع الحزب الديمقراطي الكردستاني (جماعة الملا) لادارة الوفاق مع الاتحاد - علماً بان الاتحاد الاثوري سبق وان دالغ من المصيل اديب البارزاني ان يحارب باسم الاثوريين وكان جواب اديبين باسمه يحارب باسم الاتحاد ولهم باسم الاثوريين او ان جبهه اخرى - كما وان حزب بيت نهرين سبق وان قدم نفس الطلب فكان الجواب هو الرقص ثم عادوا فوافقوا بشرط ان يقوم حزب بيت نهرين بمساعدتهم اعلامياً في امريكا وغيرها  
 جـ القضايا العديسيه

تم الاتفاق على عدم طرح هذه القضايا في السياسة وقصدها كلياً من اجل توحيد جهود جميع الاثوريين

د - القضايا الماليه

تم الاتفاق على تأسيس صندوق مالي باسم الجبهه ووضع القوائم لها  
 هـ - الاتفاق على طرح فكرة هذه القضايا في امريكا في الاثوري المالي الذي يقود شؤونها في شيكاغو بجانبه  
 مع العلم ان القضايا التي دارت في جدران الاعمال وما تم الاتفاق عليه يجب ان يعطى بموافقة اللجان المركزيه لكلا الحزبين قبل تنفيذها

Figure 46 Iraqi secret document C2 concerning the Assyrian National Front, Assyrian Universal Alliance, and the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party in 1984. (Courtesy of the Assyrian Academic Society)

Number: 45768  
Date: 9/1984

Highly Confidential  
To: All Administrative Departments  
Subject: Assyrian National Front

We have the following information regarding what they call the Assyrian National Front. Please review and provide us with useful information.

Security Major

Sulaymaniya District Security Manager,

First, at the end of 1983 the traitorous Assyrian United Alliance [Most likely Assyrian Universal Alliance] and Beth Nahrain Party had many meetings to find a way to unite and strengthen their position among their people and strengthen opposition activity against the country [Iraq]. As a result of those meetings both sides signed a treaty agreement called the Assyrian National Front. This treaty shows the highlights of how the Assyrians will oppose the country [Iraq], by leaving the door open to other opposing Assyrian organization to join this alliance.

Second, even though both parties have conflicts between them they declared their agreement. This proves that there is pressure on both leaders of the two parties to declare their front. It is assumed that the disloyal Syrian regime and the Zionist [Israel] and Imperialist [United States] agencies play a role in this through the Assyrians, since this front did not make any advancement until recent times due to conflicts between them.

This front seeks to put forward the Assyrian cause before international organizations but there is a disagreement in regards to who will represent the Assyrians. An Assyrian man by the name of Ivan Kakovich of Iranian Russian origins residing currently in the USA was previously a diplomat in the Soviet Government. He attempted to form an Assyrian government with both parties to be represented before the United Nations, but his proposal did not receive an approval from any Assyrian party since he refused to represent the name of any of the parties, he did not believe that any of the Assyrian political parties could fulfill this goal because the Assyrian political parties can not agree on a united political agenda.

The Assyrian front hosted a meeting in Chicago between 22/6/1984 until 21/6/1984 and a formation of a committee of six people was formed, three people from each party. The Assyrian United Alliance was presented by Afram, Gewargis Malik Chikko and Geras Awador. The Beth Nahrain party was represented by Giliana Younan, Ewan Gewargis and Faroq Al-Bazi. The meeting contained the following:

a) Foreign Affairs:

First: an agreement that the AUA acts politically to create awareness regarding the Assyrian cause by doing general advertisements as well as within Congress. The Assyrian Alliance has associations with political figures in the United States and Congress.

Second: an agreement to propose the cause before the United Nations and plea for an administrative region for the Assyrians. This plea will be proposed under the name of both parties. The Beth Nahrain party is well connected with international lawyers that have preciously opposed the control of the Iraqi Ministry of Religion over Iraqi churches.

b) Military Affairs:

The Beth Nahrain party agreed to take responsibilities of military functions and mediate between the Assyrian National Front and the Democratic Front. They also opened negotiations with the Kurdish Democratic Party in order to work with each other even through the AUA has previously requested from the traitor Idris Al-Barzani to fight under the Assyrian name. Idris replied that if they wanted they could fight but under the condition that they fight under the Kurdish name and not under Assyrian or any other front.

The Beth Nahrain party had previously requested the same thing, but they [Kurds] rejected at first, and then they agreed under the condition that the Beth Nahrain party would promote them [Kurdish Democratic Party] in America and Europe.

c) Religious Affairs:

They agreed to not discuss about it [religious denominations] in politics and separated it completely for the sake of uniting all Assyrians.

d) Financial Affairs:

They agreed to form a financial account in the name of the Front, received donations for it and agreed to propose these issues at the annual Assyrian Convention meeting in Chicago that takes place during the end of August.

Knowing well that the case proposed in the agenda of the meetings should be granted by an agreement of the caucus of both parties before approving them.

**Figure 47 Translation of Arabic documents C1 and C2 from 1984.**

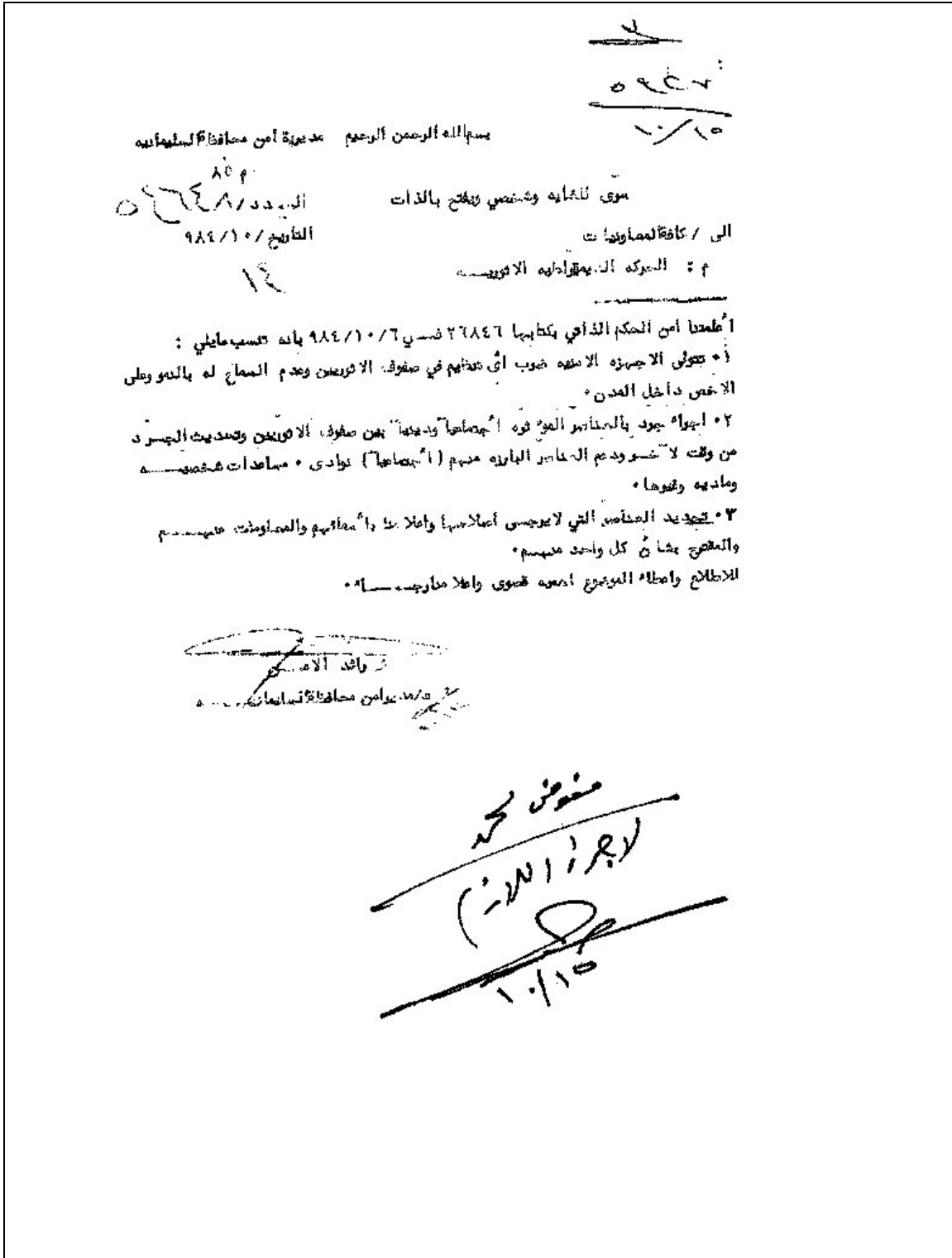


Figure 48 Iraqi government document 54648 concerning the ADM. AAS # Z-10004 (Courtesy AAS)

AAS # Z-10004

In the name of God the merciful and compassionate

Suleimaniyeh Security Directorate

Number: 54648

Date: 1984/10/14

Top Secret and Personal and to be opened by the addressee

To: all Security Divisions

Subject: Assyrian Democratic Movement

The autonomy security directorate, through its letter, number 26846, dated 1984/10/06, has informed us that the following was ordered:

1. The security agencies are charged to squash any organization within the ranks of the Assyrians and keep them from progressing, especially inside the cities.
2. Prepare a list of all influential individuals within the ranks of Assyrians in the church and among the general community. The list should be updated on regular basis. The prominent individuals among them in the community [social and sports clubs] will be provided personal and financial help etc. [For working as Ba‘th informants]
3. Identify the individuals who are not likely to become reformed. [Those who resisted in becoming loyal Ba‘th party supporters]. Provide us with their names and information about them and what is recommended in each individual case. Give this subject the utmost attention and keep us informed.

[Signature]

Major, Security

For/ Security Directorate/Suleimaniyeh Governorate

**Figure 49 Translation of Iraqi government document 54648. AAS # Z-10004 (Adapted from previous translation courtesy of the AAS)**

E

٥٨٤٠٠  
١٩٨٤ ١٠  
المطبع  
التاريخ



١٥٥٢  
١٠ / ٤٢

جمهورية العراق  
وزارة الداخلية  
مديرية الامر العامة

مديرية امن الحكيم الذ اصلي  
صفى للغايبه وشخصي وفتح بالذات

٠٠ من -

الى / كافة مديرية امن الحكيم الذ اصلي

م / الجميع الديمقراطي الاثوري

اطلعت مديرية الامن العامه ٢٢ بكتيبه ٧١٠٥٢ في ١٠/١٠/١٩٨٤

بامر نائب مجلس قيادة الثورة - مجلس الامن القومي ما يلي :

٠١ تصعيد الخلافات الشخصية والعظيمه بين الزعيم الذكوري والحزب الديمقراطي  
الكرديستاني العراقي المعول والعمل بكل الوسائل المتاحة من اجل الحيلولة  
دون التقاء الجبهه المعادى لكلا الطرفين .

٠٢ التحرك على رجال الدين من الطائفة الاثورية واستخدمهم بشكل يفيد الى  
الحد الذي يحافظ على الزعيم الذكوري من استغلالهم في هدم للتحريك بالفساد  
تحتهم بخرماتهمم والا يستغده من ذوى فوائدهم البهايون منهم والتصرف مع جهات  
المخابرات ومديرية الاستخبارات العسكرية العامه .

٠٣ صرفه اماكن طبع نشرات الزعيم الاثوري لاسيما واثن النشرة تعال في صحيفتها  
وطريقه استفراجها التي جريده طريق الشعب الصادره عن الحزب الشيوعي المعول .

٠٤ البحث للدعوات الاتصاله وما تروج له الزعيم الذكوري واحكامه الصلاه صيها  
بهدف توظيفها بشكل سعى لخدمه الامن الوطني على ان يتم ذلك بهدوء وبدون امن  
يثير الامور ويجعل من الموضوع قضيته اهمر من حجمها .

يرجى اخذها طابقم حسبول الموضوع واحتملاها بصدد القوه (٢) امسلا  
مسبح القديس

رئيس الجبهه الثوريه

م م ع لظنقة الحكيم الذ اصلي

Figure 50 Document E: Document from 1984 dealing with the Assyrian Democratic Coalition and its relationship to the KDP. (Courtesy IMF)



In the Name of God The Merciful and Compassionate	
Number: 28200 Date: 19/10/1984	Republic of Iraq Ministry of Interior Affairs General Security Management
Autonomous Region Security Directorate	
Highly Confidential Must be opened by addressee	
To/ All Security Directorate Services in the Autonomous Region Subject/Assyrian Democratic Assembly	
We were provided the following information from the General Security Management 23 about the letter 71053 on 10/10/1984 that Thowra leader council – National Security:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Increase the personal conflict and organization between the mentioned group and the disloyal Kurdish Democratic Party. Seek all ways to create disunity and disagreement among sides of the enemy.</li><li>2. Influence the clergy in the Assyrian community and use them in a manner to cause damage to the activities of the group. Hire some clergy to infiltrate and have access to their precincts in order to gain information from the families of those who have fled [deserters]. Coordinate this with the Intelligence Services and the Office of General Military Intelligence.</li><li>3. Locate the printing facilities of this Assyrian group, since their publishing style resembles the news paper published by the disloyal Communist Party.</li><li>4. Search for separatist statements of this group and maintain communications. Also use secretive ways to serve national security; this should be performed discretely without alerting others giving the case more value.</li></ol>	
Do what is necessary and inform us specifically about the third point stated.	
With respect	
Security Colonel for the Self Administrative Region	

**Figure 51 Translation of Document E 1984 Assyrian Democratic Coalition.**

B1

"بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ"

السيد الرئيس القائد المناضل م. م. حسين المحترم

سیدی رئیس :

أشكركم بوجه حق وانتم بآسيادة الرئيس فارس الحق وبصيره ومجده ببل تحملون  
 من مبادئ البحث العظيمة مبادئ النضال والثبات والاحكام والمحبة للوطن ومن  
 أجل الشعب فانتم العمل الرائع الاستجابة لدواعي الحق والاعتزاز للمظلوم .

تسليمي التحية

نحن انما في القرى المسيحية في منطقة وادي نهلة ناحية بربيتك من عشائر  
 تباري السفلى ومن اتباع رئيس العشائر التبارية في العراق المرحوم فالك خوشابينا  
 وابنه العقيد القائد يوسف خوشابا من مجده .

أسكننا الحكومة العراقية منذ سنة ١٩٢٧ ميلادية في هذه المنطقة الاميرية  
 ذات الارض الزراعية المسيجة والملائمة لطبيعة معيشة اجدادنا الذين يراولون الفلاحة  
 منذ ذلك الحين وليرموا هذا تخلصنا بارضنا نزرعها ونعيش من خيراتها ومطالمتنا  
 موازين الزراعة ومخلفه من قربة وطننا العزيز العراق . لا تهزبل رياح ولا امضير اي  
 كاس احقادنا وكماياتها وهذا ما يهزبد لنا تاريخنا الماضي والحالي . شاركنا أبناء  
 وطننا في السراء والضراء في الجحوق والواجبات قدما ابنا لنا لخدمة العلم حسب  
 القوانين الطبيعية ، منهم من نال شرف الامتداد في الذود من تربة الوطن ضد الحدود  
 النارية والناشم ومنهم من وثق في الاشر أو نقد شأنهم في ذلك شأن اخوانهم من  
 ابناء الوطن من الشمال الى الجنوب . هذا كله بشرفنا وواجبنا على كل مواطن  
 غير شرفنا . . . غير ان الذي يعاني منه في الامة الاخيرة يمكن ان نجعله في  
 النقاط الاتية :

١- من طرق بين قريتنا في هذه المنطقة ( وادي نهلة ) رقم وصول التبليغ الي  
 جابر احدي قرانا هذه لا يقدرها سوى تاجر الخازل عند منسك حطاية باكرمان  
 الامر الذي يربو والسلطة الرشيدة العراقية ومطلب ملح ان تبذل لنا يد العون  
 وتبذل قرانا هذه بطريق سداد فكل الامانة الاحالي هذه المنطقة وابعانها  
 تحت ثناء العراق بيني بيننا بالتحية الاخيرة .

Figure 52 Documents B1-B4: Concerning the situation in the Nahla region in 1985.

B2

٢٢  
 م رجود طرق في المنطقة بعد لها درشة للإستقبال من قبل المصفاة والمخربين  
 بالدرسين وهذا ما فضل بالليل به سواء أيقنا أم لم تأبأ فيطبق علينا  
 من هاون النبي في سفر ال اوير " بنار الاشرار يحترق الأبرار " .

٢٣  
 وانا بعد بلاء هو كليل قرانا هذه راحة بين يدي كفاشة لعشائر الزبانيين  
 المصفاة منهم الى الشمال والواين الى الجنوب ، فمن لا تنعم العوائق منهم  
 وكان هذا يتل ما يات بانهم يتخرجوننا بشق الدارق لنصلوا على كجر المصفاة  
 ونصن لهم الجوزياتون من كلين قرانا العامة والتي ضحينا في فلاحها ومخيرها  
 منذ سنة ١٩٤٧ ميلادية والى اليوم . . . . . وتنفيذا لخطنم في توجيرنا فقد تمرن  
 بعض افراد فلاحين قرانا الى الاعتداء آخرها كان قبل اسبوعين أو ثلاثة إذ تصدى  
 نفر من أهالي قرية باكرمان بن الهندسين بين الموالين لا حد أفراد إلى آخر ذلك  
 كان يفتكنا بظلمة لظلمة لا يحسن لهم بعض الكاشين بدنية فأطلق علينا  
 النار فأصابه أصابات بيده وزوجه لحسن حمله وتوجد أناس قريبين منه لم تكن  
 الأصابات خطيرة معينة . هذه بعض الحوادث من كفرة عمدة تتكرر بحجسة  
 فطقتكم مخرمة ولا يسمن لكم بالنقل ونقل الأرزاق والأهنة .

سيدى الرشيد :

٢٤  
 ط جاء في طلبنا هذا بعض نداء هل يعرف يرجى الاستجابة وليس هذا الكرمين  
 على قايذ الشعب القذ الذي لا يالوا يوجد في الاستماع لهمم المواطنين وحلها على  
 وجه السرعة بما يدل على حق الرابطة التي تربط القائد بالشعب .

وقدم الله قائدا فذا للإمة العربية وثلا فريدا لاحقا الحق .

تقبلوا ياسادة الرعنين القائد أعظم آيات الاجلال والتقدير والحب .

عنهم / المطران دار ترضا أرميا كوركيس  
 ١٩٨٥ / ٩ / ٢

الحنوان  
 المطران ما رتوما أرميا كوركيس  
 بواسطة العقيد العقاد يوسف ملك خرشابا  
 مدينة المنصور حي مثنيسين  
 محلة ٦٠٧ زقاق ٢٥ رقم الدار ٣  
 هاتف : ٥٤١٧١٨٧

Figure 53 Nahla Document B2 1985

B3

امه عربيه واحسنه  
ذات رساله خطيه

٤ / ١٦  
١٨٨٩ / ١ / ١٨

السيد / قيادة شعبة النصارى

حزب البحث العربي الانستراكي

القنصل العراقي  
قياده نوح دهنوك  
قياده نعيمه النصارى  
قياده ترقيه

م بيان رأى

تحية رفاقه /

ايكم سوى للخايه العرقم ٥٤٥٤ / ١٦ في ١٥ / ١٠ / ١٩٨٥  
لدى ادناه تلك المعلومات مع رأى قيادة فرقة بخصوص منطقة طاح نبله والتي تتبع قسم منها  
من الناحية الاداريه للناحية سوسنك

اولاً

القرى التي يسكنها المسيحيين القاريين عملاً ضمن الوحدة الاداريه

ت	اسم القرية	سكنة القريه	عدد السكان حسب احصاء ١٩٧٧
١-	زولي العليا	مسيحيين (تباريين)	٣٠
٢-	بوشكسي	مفلط (مسيح تباريين واسلام)	٩٦
٣-	خيلان	مسيحيين (تباريين)	٧٣
٤-	زولي السفلى	= =	٢٥
٥-	جم جالس	= =	٦٠
٦-	جم ريكسي	= =	٩٨
٧-	جم شوتي	= =	٤٧
٨-	مهيزانكي عليا	= =	٢٠
٩-	مهيزانكي سفلى	= =	١٤٥
١٠-	بيلندي دينو	= =	١٤٦

٢- القرى التي يسكنها من غير المسيحيين وعدد ما ( ١٢ ) قرية \* ضمن الوحدة الاداريه للناحية  
سوسنك \*

٣- عدد القرى المهجوره في الوقت الحاضر ( ١٢ ) قريه \*  
تانياً سراً في قيادة الفرقة بخصوص ايصال شبكة الطرق \* ان القرى الموجوده ضمن الوحدة  
الاداريه للناحية سوسنك في طاح نبله تعتبر محذوره من الناحية الامنيه وليس باستطاعة

بفتح رجاء

Figure 54 Nahla Document B3 1985

B4

حزب البحث العربي الاشتراكي  
 قيادة فرع دمشق  
 قيادة شعبة النصر

اممة عربية واحدة  
 ذات رسالة خالدة

العدد / ١٦ / ٥٤٥٤  
 التاريخ / / ١٩٨٥ / ١٠ / ١٥

سرى للفايعة -  
 الى / قيادة فرقة سرسك / البيروك

تحية رفاقه  
 بيان رأى

=====

كتاب الفرع ١٦ / ٨٦٣٣ في ١٢ / ١٠ / ١٩٨٥  
 المخطوف على كتاب مكتب تنظيم الشمال الرقم ٧٧٨٢ في ٨ / ١٠ / ١٩٨٥  
 برفق طيا صوره طلب اهالي القرى المسيحيين في منطقته وادى سببه  
 ناحيه سرسك من عشار تيارى السقلى .  
 للتفضل بالاطلاع بيان راىكم ومعلوكم بشأن طرود واملانا بالسرية  
 الممكنة مع التقدير . ودمتم للنضال .

المرفقات  
 =====  
 ٢ / طلب

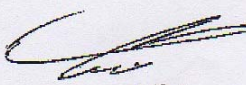
  
 طارق كافي فليح  
 امين سر قيادة شعبة النصر

Figure 55 Nahla Document B4 1985

In the Name of God  
The Merciful and Compassionate

The great leader Mr. President the respected Saddam Hussein:

Mr. President, it is a matter of truth.

You Mr. President are a knight and upholder of glory and truth, by which you carry the great Ba`thi principles, of struggle, sacrifice, loyalty and love for country and people.

You are a wonderful example of truth and guarantee of the rights of victims of injustice.

Mr. President, we the Christian people of the Nahla valley in the Sarsang District of the village of Nahla, from the lower Tiyari are the followers of the deceased Malik Khoshaba the leader of the Tiyari tribe in Iraq. His son is the retired general Yousif Malik Khoshaba.

The Iraqi government settled us in this region in 1927. This land is flat, which accommodates our people who depended on agriculture from that period till today. We are attached to our land; we plant it and live from the goods that it produces. We are loyal to our beloved country and the government of Iraq. Over the years we have not been shaken or changed by various blowing winds and our history is a testimony of that.

We participated with our countrymen in times of happiness and sadness; it is our duty and right. We urged our sons to serve the flag through the conscription law. Some of them became martyrs for their country against the Persian enemies, and some of them fell as prisoners of war, thus, their fate became similar to our people from the north and the south. All of this is our honor and duty placed upon any citizen who is patriotic and honorable.

But, lately we have been suffering from the following tribulations:

1. The lack of connecting roads in our region (Nahla Valley) even though roads have reached one of our villages, the Beckerman camp, we request from the government to aid and connect our villages with this road to save the people of this region, for we believe that we build Iraq with one hand and fight by the other.
2. Since there are no roads in this region, it makes it a safe heaven for thugs and wrong doers. We are compelled to state the latter. The prophet David stated the following proverb "The dutiful burns in the fire of evil." This fits the description of our current situation.
3. Distancing misfortune, our villages are located between Zebari tribes from the north and the south. We are not stating which of them is loyal to the government, but we have information that they are attempting to find any way to force us to abandon the region, so they have the free space and take over our villages in which we have sacrificed and worked hard to construct from 1927 until today. To carry on their plan one of our clergymen in Beckerman village was attacked by an armed man. Fortunately the injury was not fatal and they were not able to murder him. This is only one of the many incidents which had taken place within a prohibited region.

Mr. President, what you have received in this letter is a request for an answer. This is not much for the good leader of the people who always listens to the burden of citizens and quickly solves them signifying the relationship between the leader and his people.

May God grant you and all Arab nations success, and make you a unique example as the implementer of truth.

Accept Mr. Leader President [our] honor and love.

For the people of Nahla, Bishop Mar Toma Aramia Gewargis 2/9/1985

Address

Mar Toma Aramia Gewargis  
By retired General Yousif Malik Khoshaba  
City of Mansour, Mothan Neighborhood  
Place  
Phone number

**Figure 56 Translation of documents B1-B2 concerning the Nahla region in 1985.**

One Arab Nation  
With an Immortal Mission

Ba'th Socialist Party  
The Iraqi Province  
Leadership of Dohuk  
Leadership of the branch of Al-Nasir division  
Unit Leader

To the Leader of Al-Nasir Division

From /Verified Opinion

Comradly Salute,

Highly confidential number 16/5454/ date 15/10/1985, we are writing the below information that include our unit leaders' opinion in regards to the Nahla district which is part of the administrative region of Sarsang.

Firstly,

1. The villages that are inhabited by the Christian Tiyari are in the administrative region [Sarsang].

Number	Name of Village	Inhabitants of the Village	Population according to the census in 1977
1	Upper Zouli	Christian Tiyari	30
2	Bereshkey	Mixed (Christians and Muslims)	96
3	Khalelan (Khalilan)	Christian Tiyari	73
4	Lower Zouli	Christian Tiyari	25
5	Cham Jalb (Chalb)	Christian Tiyari	60
6	Cham Rabatke	Christian Tiyari	98
7	Cham Shoti	Christian Tiyari	47
8	Upper Hizanke (Hizane)	Christian Tiyari	20
9	Lower Hizanke (Hizane)	Christian Tiyari	145
10	Bilmand Deno	Christian Tiyari	149

2. The villages inhabited by non-Christians are 12 villages located in the administrative region of Sarsang.

3. The number of the abandoned villages currently is 12 villages.

Secondly,

The opinions of the unit's leadership in regards to the connected road way is the following:

The villages present in the district of Sarsang, region of Nahla are considered restricted due to security issues.

Figure 57 Translation of Nahla documents B3 and B4 concerning the situation on the region in 1985

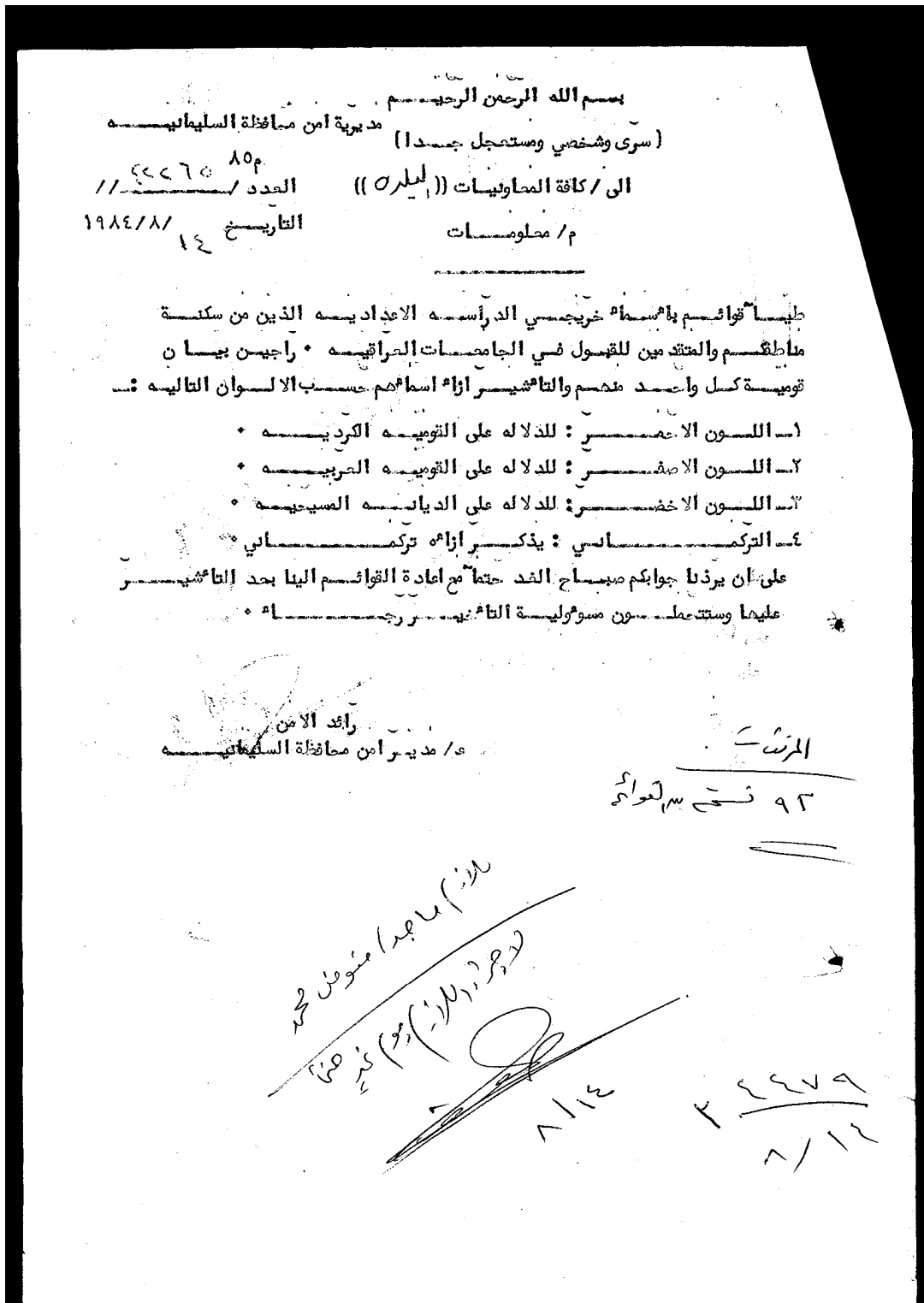


Figure 58 Iraqi government document concerning government association of various ethnic groups. Notice most are on ethnic lines except for 'Christians' [IRDP-NIDS-1270981] <http://www.iraqmemory.org/EN/>



In the Name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate

Confidential, Private and Urgent

Security Directorate of the Sulaymaniyah Governorate

File: 85

Number:42265

Date: 14 Aug 1984

To: All divisions- Al-Balda

Subject: Information

Enclosed is a list comprising the names of secondary school graduates applying for admission into Iraqi universities and residing in your areas. We request that you indicate each individual's nationality by marking the applicable color code:

1. Red: for Kurds
2. Yellow: for Arabs
3. Green: for Christians
4. Turkomens: noted as Turkomens

You are kindly requested to submit your reply accompanied by the marked lists tomorrow morning; otherwise, you will be held accountable for any delay.

[Signature]

Security Major

For the Security Director of the Sulaymaniyah Governorate

[Enclosures: 92 copies of the lists]

[Lieutenant Majid al-Mnowman Muhammad]

[To undertake all necessary measures tomorrow, definitely]

[Signature]

[August 14]

4479

Aug 14

Figure 59 IMF document [IRDP-NIDS-1270981] <http://www.iraqmemory.org/EN/> (translation)

## Anfal Period

### Documents

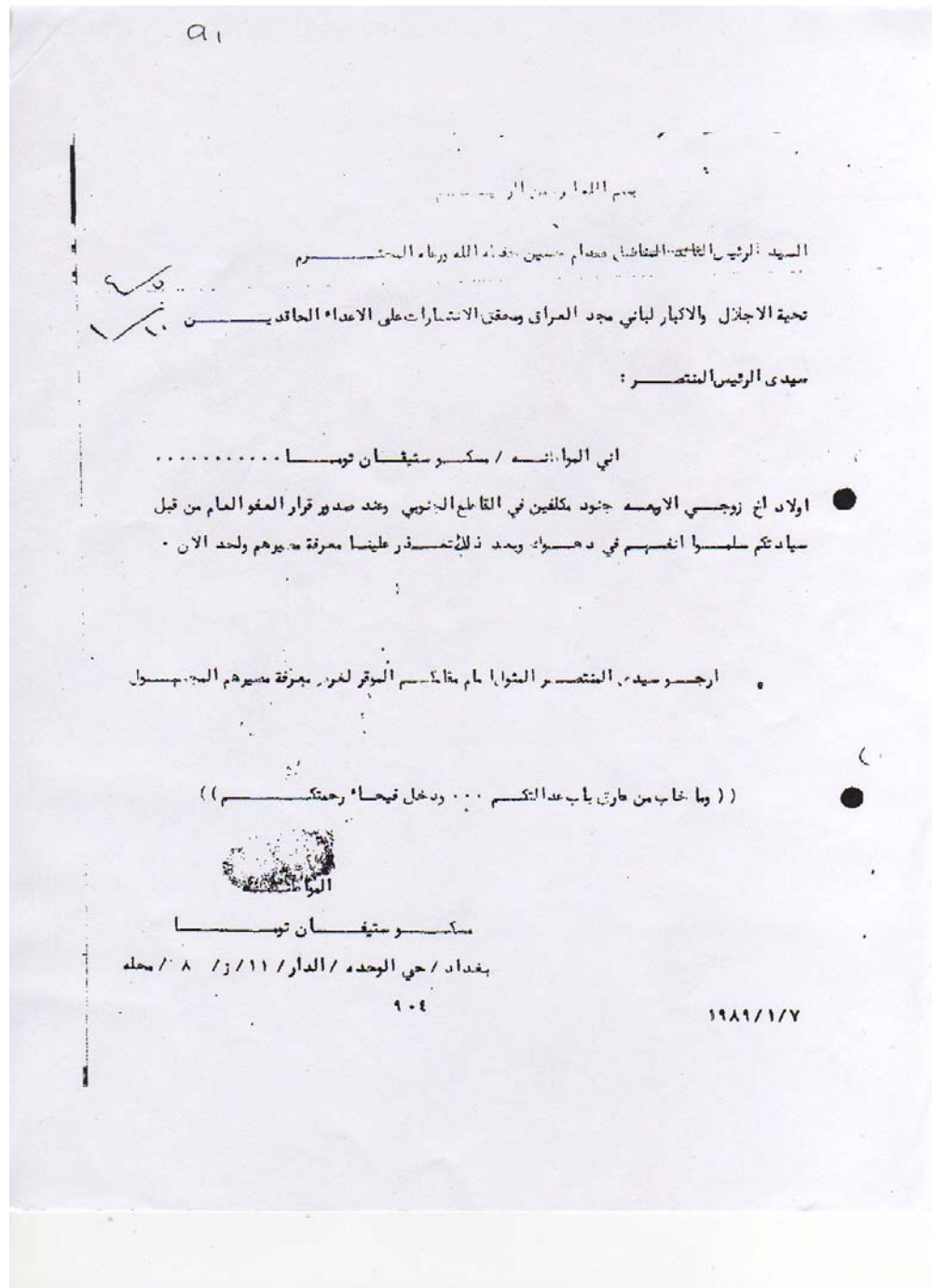


Figure 60 Anfal Document A1: Documents A1, A3, A4, A5 refer to an issue of an Iraqi citizen who had lost relatives who had surrendered during the General Amnesty.

In the name of God, the merciful and compassionate

Mr. President, the Struggler Saddam Hussein, Blessed and protected by Allah, the respected one.

A salute to he who has built the glory of Iraq and established victory upon our foes.

The victorious Mr. President,

I am citizen Misko S. Toma. The four children of my husband's brother were soldiers in the southern district, and when your honor introduced a law that gave a general pardon they surrendered themselves in Dohuk. Following that, we were not able to know their fate until this day. I request, victorious sir, to meet your honor in hope of finding their unknown fate.

No one is disappointed when they knock on the doors of your justice and enter the garden of your mercy.

[Thumb Stamp]

Citizen Misko S. Toma

Baghdad/ Hayy Al-Wahda/ Complex 11/ Number H/Z/8/ Neighborhood 904

1989/1/7

**Figure 61 Anfal Document A1: Documents A1, A3, A4, A5 refer to an issue of an Iraqi citizen who had lost relatives who had surrendered during the General Amnesty.**

93

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

٧٥٥٥  
١٤٠٦

رئاسة المخابرات  
السنية



مديرية الاستخبارات العسكرية الثالثة

سوى للغاية

منظومة استخبارات المنطقة الشمالية

الرقم / ش ٢ / ق ١ / ١٦٥

التاريخ ١٦ / ٢ / ١٩٨٨

١٠ / رجب ١٤٠٦

الى / م اس د هـ

الموضوع / معلومات

- ٠١ قدمت المواطنة مسكو صفهان توما طلباً الى السيد الرئيس القائد (حفظه الله) تستفسر عن مصير أشقاء زوجها الدرجة اسمائهم اد نساء والمرق نسخته منه طيباً .
- ٠٢ المذكورين اعلاه سلموا انفسهم ناد من الى مركز شرطة القوش بتاريخ ١٠ / ٩ / ١٩٨٨ وانهم كانوا هاربين من قرية صيدى .
- ٠٣ ج م اندرس د نومتى ايشو ب ج م خوشابود نومتى ايشو ج م منصور د نومتى ايشو د ج م بنيا من د نومتى ايشو
- نرجو التفضل بالا طيلام وتزويدنا بمفصل تفصيحهم وهدى شمولهم بقرار المنسو من الاكبراد الصادر بتاريخ ١٠ / ٩ / ١٩٨٨ من هـ سـهـ وأعلامنا بالسرفه المنكته بنجمة اجابة ديوان الرئاسة المعوق على ان تصلنا الا جابة قبيل يوم ١٩٨٨ / ٢ / ٢٥ .

المرفقات

صورة ظلمب

المقيد

مدير منظومة استخبارات المنطقة الشمالية

٢ / ١٦

(١ - ١)

سوى للغاية

Figure 62 Anfal Document A3 concerning missing persons.

In the name of God, the merciful and compassionate

Presidential Palace  
Secretary

The General Intelligence Army Services  
Northern Region Intelligence Services

Number/ Sh 2/k2/1415  
Date: 16/2/1989  
10/Rajab/1406

Extremely Confidential

To M.A.S. Dohuk

Subject Information

1. Request by citizen Misko S. Toma to Mr. President, (kept by Allah), in regards to the fate of her husband's brothers as their names are stated below and her request is attached to this letter.
  - a. Soldier Andrews
  - b. Soldier Khoshaba
  - c. Soldier Mansour
  - d. Soldier Benyamin
2. The above mentioned surrendered themselves to the police station located in Katrosh on 10/9/1988, they were fleeing from the village of Seze [Sheze/Shiyoz?]

Please view their case and provide us with detailed information in regards to their case, and if the general pardon law placed for the Kurds includes their situation [ie are Assyrians part of the amnesty].

This law was mandated on 6/9/1988. Inform us as soon as possible to reply to the presidential palace and the presidential secretary.

The reply should be received prior to 25/2/1989

Attached  
Copy of request

General  
Head of the Northern Region Intelligence Services  
2116  
(1-1) extremely confidential.

\*\*\* NOTE: M.A.S. = General Intelligence Security Services

**Figure 63 Translation of document A3 concerning missing persons.**



مطلوبه استخبارات المنطقة الشمالية  
ش /

ال / السيد السيد

الرجوع / السيد السيد

1- كتاب حسين بن اسحق القاضي في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ والتميز  
 السيد السيد السيد وكان حيا في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 تنسب فيه عن طريقه ان يكون له من اهل البيت الحسين بن علي بن ابي طالب  
 2- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 3- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 4- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 5- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 6- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 7- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 8- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 9- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ  
 10- كتاب ابن ابي عمير في تاريخ قلاية في سنة 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني 1098 هـ

( يسبح )

Figure 64 Anfal Document A4

95

750492



مملكة استخبارات المنطقة الشمالية  
رقم /

10

الموضوع /

تمت تغطية المبيعات من قبل ادارة الجوازات والادارة المدنية  
 اعلام نورية مقيم في الرياض وتم الاستمرار منه في سير العمل على  
 انهاء جميع مبيعاته من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ الموافق ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 انتم في حاله عدم وجود مبيعاته من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 يتم منعه في قلمه في حاله عدم وجود مبيعاته من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ

تم البحث والامتثال في كافة اقسام الوزارة والادارة المدنية في كل من  
 ولم يتأكد من انهاء المبيعات من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 اعطاء اذنه في حاله عدم وجود مبيعاته من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 مدير الادارة المدنية والادارة المدنية في كل من الرياض والدمام والقطيف  
 لم يرد تأجيل المبيعات في حاله عدم وجود مبيعاته من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 استكمال المبيعات من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 المكتسبة متعلقه باملاك الامتياز والادارة المدنية في كل من الرياض والدمام والقطيف  
 وهناك نفي من الاتكالية في حاله عدم وجود مبيعاته من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 قيادة فرع وهو في حاله عدم وجود مبيعاته من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 ماورد اذنه في حاله عدم وجود مبيعاته من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 على توريد المبيعات من قبله في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ  
 يبعد التفتيش بالادارة المدنية في وقت سابق من تاريخ ١٤٣٥ هـ

التوقيع

مدير المنطقة الشمالية  
١٤٣٥ هـ

لعمري اني  
 مدير المنطقة الشمالية  
 ١٤٣٥ هـ

١٤٣٥ هـ

Figure 65 Anfal Document A5

-----  
Northern Region Intelligence Service  
To/ The Honorable General  
Subject/ A citizen's request

1. A highly confidential letter M/2/Sh 4/ K 7127356 included a request of the citizen Misko S Toma which has been sent to Mr. President (protected by God) in which she inquires the fate of her husband's brother as their names are followed:
  - a. Soldier Andrews
  - b. Soldier Khoshaba
  - c. Soldier Mansour
  - d. Soldier Benyamin
2. The latter names were soldiers fleeing who surrendered themselves on 10 September 1988 in the province of Dohuk, during the period when the general pardon was issued on 6 September 1988.
3. The request from M.A.S Dohuk to provide us with detailed information regarding their fate in our confidential letter on 16 September 1989. The request was sent for M.A.S Dohuk in accordance to their extremely secret letter number 198 on 21 February 1989 to M.A.S Mosul.
4. It was confirmed that the M.A.S Mosul according to our letter 2155 and 2296 and 2615 on 25<sup>th</sup> of Feb and 1<sup>st</sup> March and 7<sup>th</sup> March knowing that our administration conformed this subject according to our extremely confidential letter. Sh/K7/38933 on 2/3/1989.
5. M.A.S Mosul replied to us with his letter 291 on 8<sup>th</sup>/March to inform us of the following:
  - a. The above mentioned surrendered themselves during the last general pardon to FK 424 in the district of Dohuk though the Anfal Operation, and they were sent to the province of Dohuk so they will be received by the receiving committee region.
  - b. The mentioned names are found in the documents of Al-Shekhan security which are connected to the Central.
  - c. The father of the mentioned names is named Danemati resides in a designated group exclusive to the returning national patriots in the province of Arbel.
  - d. The information provided by the central state that the mentioned above and the prisoners with them were transferred via military vehicles and gathered to the fort of Dohuk-Mosul. They were relocated to Darman fort on the path to Kirkuk. Then to Topzawa fort.



6. We visited the groups and found that Danematy, the father of the mentioned above, lived in Jazenkan with his wife. He was questioned regarding the fate of his children.
  - Note: He and his wife surrendered themselves on 6/9/1988. He informed us that his children surrendered themselves in the province of Dohuk and they were visited by their relatives from Baghdad when they [relatives] were visiting the province of Dohuk.
7. Searching and questioning was conducted at all centers located on the road from Kirkuk to Arbil. They were not able to trace any individuals connected to national patriots and they were not taken to any of those forts.
8. In addition, we followed up with headquarters of Dohuk-Mosul via phone for further inquires regarding the fate of the above mentioned, as to who was keeping them and where their current location was, knowing that M.A.S. Dohuk did not confirm the presence of the mentioned in the province of Dohuk and they do not have those names in the central records. We were informed by Mosul Intelligence Agency that they did not have any information more than the one provided above. Knowing that the information provided by the two headquarters contradicted one another, it is impossible to depend on it. We concluded that there was a lack of earnestness to follow this case from both headquarters, and a type of dependency where M.A.S Dohuk can follow the case in a serious manner with the leadership of party leaders in order to discover the fate of the above mentioned [people].
9. Since the fate of the above mentioned is unknown, I suggest answering the general administration with the information at hand.

Please review this case and make note

Captain of the Second Division

Signature by the reader he states

“Yes, after reviewing the subject there will be an answer on 12/3/”

**Figure 66 Translation of documents A4 and A5**

السنة  
١٩٨٨

الرقية سرية فوريه  
الى / كافة مدونات امن جم جمال / قوة الطوارئ / شعبة مفزة القبس والعوى العدد / ٩٦١٨  
من / امن السليمانية / ش ٣ / ص ٧

التاريخ ١٩٨٨ / ٩ / ١٠

يرجى التاء القطن على ذوى المجرم المقبر عبد المسيح بولص صليوه يوسف  
ذوالاسم الحركي (سوران) احد كوادر زمرة عملاء ايران الذي تم تصفيته  
في ١٦ / ٨ / ١٩٨٨ من قبل مديرية امن محافظة اربيل والمدرجيه  
اسماهم ادناه والنازيهين الى جبهه مجرليه (٠) لاتخاذ ما يلزم  
لتحضير مصادركم السريه واثبة وسيلته اخرى واعلامنا النتيجة

~~و. النازي~~

الاسماء

- ٠١ بولص صليوه يوسف تولد ١٩٢٧ والده
- ٠٢ نوكز توغان الهاس تولد ١٩٢٩ والدته
- ٠٣ حمامه بولص صليوه تولد ١٩٦٠ شقيقته
- ٠٤ صبيحه بولص صليوه تولد ١٩٦٣ شقيقته
- ٠٥ نادية بولص صليوه تولد ١٩٦٦ شقيقته
- ٠٦ شذي بولص صليوه تولد ١٩٧٣ شقيقته
- ٠٧ سبيسر صليوه برايمزه بيبا تولد ١٩٦١ زوجته
- ٠٨ وردينه بولص صليوه / شقيقته
- ٠٩ بلدا بولص صليوه / شقيقته / عمدي مكلف

شريف  
٩ / ٨ / ١٩٨٨

الوارده  
٢٠١٧  
٩ / ١١

657347

Figure 67 Anfal Document O: Security message from 1988 requiring the arrest of relatives of a man executed for working with the opposition movement two months prior.

## Immediate Confidential Telegram

To All Security Units of the Region  
Number 4618  
Date 10/1/1988

A request for the arrest of the relatives of the criminal 'Abd Al-Massih Y., his cover name was Soran. He was a member of the Iranian agents [perceived enemies of the regime] and was executed on 14/8/1988 in the Arbil Security Compound and the following relatives escaped to an unknown destination. Take action and do what is necessary from your secret resources; Report to us the results.

Political Assistant

Names:

1. Polous 1927 his father
2. Nazker 1929 his mother
3. Hamama 1960 his sister
4. Sabiha 1963 his sister
5. Nadia 1966 his sister
6. Shatha 1972 his sister
7. Esther 1961 his wife
8. Wardia his sister
9. Yalda his brother and is a soldier

Copy to

2/0/Sher

Received

Fakhre 8N/

9/8

Figure 68 Translation of Anfal Document O

UNHCR

Dear Lawyer Helina      File NO M 3284

I am Assyrian and I Love my Ethnic group very much. When I was In Secondary School, some of the leading Bath's party wanted me to join their party but I refused as I saw the bad treatment to their members. They started threatening me to torture me, to cut the monthly food stuffs given by government monthly to my family. I told them, what do you want exactly. We want to know the opinion of your relatives, the priests and bishops about the Bath's government and Saddam Hussein. As avoiding them I said all right. After some weeks they called <sup>me</sup> to the party's organization to ask me what I did. I answered, I don't have any rights to sit with bishops and priests and ask them about such things. The eldest member of the party's Hamdani organization got up to his feet and slipped me one my face and kicked me till I was thrown to the floor. He said, I will give another chance to get me the report about the bishops opinions of the government.

I Lived in this miserable condition till I was accepted in Electric Dept, Mosul Technology Institute 1980. Even In the Institute I was not saved from the party's threatens as they cut my monthly money pocket. They also prevented me to live inside the Institute Accomodation. I beared all that until my graduate day in 1983. I was taken to the compulsory Army Service after my graduate in First of November 1983 to Baghdad. As being in Baghdad, I joined the liberted Assyrian secret party centered in kurdistan. It is against the dictator Saddam Hussein Reigime. During this period and before the end of Iran-Iraq war, I lost my brothers Khalid and Bashir. That was a tragedy for me and the family. At my service in the Army, I had too many annoyance from the Bath's members because I hated the war and used to praise the western countries and the Dimocratic Leader America.

1/ organization

Figure 69 Document concerning the ill treatment of an individual Assyrian which received attention at the international level. UNHCR file no. 3284 (Afram Rayis collection).

## Village and Church Photographs



**Figure 70 Ruins of Hayyis, Barwar, Destroyed 1988. Photo courtesy of the Nineveh Center for Research and Development, Qaraqosh, Iraq.**



**Figure 71 Rubble left from the destruction of Mar Abraham church in Levo, Zakho region destroyed 1988. Photo courtesy of the Nineveh Center for Research and Development, Qaraqosh, Iraq.**



**Figure 72 Debris from the destruction of Kani Balav including the church of Mart Maryam and its school, 1988. (Photo courtesy of the Nineveh Center for Research and Development, Qaraqosh, Iraq.)**



**Figure 73 Ruins of Mar Gewargis church in Sheze. Destruction per Anfal operations 1987. (Photo courtesy of the Nineveh Center for Research and Development, Qaraqosh, Iraq.)**



**Figure 74 Rubble of a church in Bakhitme. All three churches of the village were destroyed during 1987.**



**Figure 75 Ruins of a church foundation in Bakhitme 1987.**

# Ethics Research Protocol



**University of Toronto**  
Office of the Vice-President, Research  
Office of Research Ethics

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PROTOCOL REFERENCE #22408

May 12, 2008

Prof. Amir Harrak  
Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations  
4 Bancroft Ave.  
Toronto, ON M5S 1C1

Mr. Sargon Donabed  
Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations  
4 Bancroft Ave.  
Toronto, ON M5S 1C1

Dear Prof. Harrak and Mr. Donabed:

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "The Assyrians of Iraq: Ethno-Religious and Cultural Assimilation, Devastation, and Demographic Displacement"

**ETHICS APPROVAL**

**Original Approval Date: May 12, 2008**  
**Expiry Date: May 11, 2009**  
**Continuing Review Level: 1**

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We are writing to advise you that a member of the Social Sciences, Humanities & Education Research Ethics Board has granted approval to the above-named research study, for a period of one year, under the REB's expedited review process. Ongoing projects must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

The following consent document (revised May 8, 2008) has been approved for use in this study:  
Interview Consent Form.

**Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.**

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

Raquel David  
Research Ethics Coordinator



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