

Kirkuk

Kirkuk (also spelled **Karkuk** or **Kerkuk**, Arabic: كركوك *karkūk*, Kurdish: *Kerkûk*/کەرکووک, Syriac: ܟܪܟܘܟ *kark sluk*, Turkish: *Kerkük*) is a city in Iraq and the capital of Kirkuk Governorate.

It is located in the Iraqi governorate of Kirkuk, 236 kilometres (147 mi) north of the capital, Baghdad. Kirkuk city lies 83 km south of Arbil, 149 km southeast of Mosul, 97 km west of Sulaymaniyah, and 116 km northeast Tikrit

It stands on the site of the ancient Assyrian capital of Arrapha,^[3] which sits near the Khasa River on the ruins of a 5,000-year-old settlement (Kirkuk Citadel). Arrapha reached great importance under the Assyrians in the 10th and 11th centuries BC. Because of the strategic geographical location of the city, Kirkuk was the battle ground for three empires—the Neo Assyrian Empire,

Babylonia, and Media—which controlled the city at



Kirkuk lies in a wide zone with an ethnically mixed population, which has moreover experienced dramatic demographic changes in the course of the twentieth century. Kurds, Turkmen and Arabs lay conflicting claims to this zone, and all have their historical accounts and memories to buttress their claims.

Historically, the city has always been considered by Kurds and Turkmen as a cultural capital. It was named the "capital of Iraqi culture" by the ministry of culture in 2010.

The city currently consists of Kurds, Arabs, Iraqi Turkmen and some Assyrians. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the Kurdish population in the city is estimated to have increased from 150,000 to 350,000.

Etymology

The ancient name of Kirkuk was the Assyrian *Arraphka*. During the Parthian era, a *Korkura* is mentioned by Ptolemy, which is believed to refer either to Kirkuk or to the site of Baba Gurgur three miles (5 km) from the city.^[11] Under Greek reign it was known as *Karkha D-Bet Slokh*, which means 'Citadel of the House of Seleucid'^[12] in Mesopotamian Aramaic, the lingua franca of the Fertile Crescent in that era.^[13]

The region around Kirkuk was known in Aramaic and Syriac sources as "Beth Garmai" (Syriac: ܒܝܬ ܓܪܡܝ), which means the "place of bones" in a reference to bones of slaughtered Achaemenids which littered the plains after a decisive battle between Alexander the Great and Darius III.^[14] It is also thought that region was known during the Parthian and Sassanid periods as *Garmakan*, which means the 'Land of Warmth' or the 'Hot Land' in Persian. In the modern Persian and Kurdish languages too "Garm" means warmth;^[15] the name is still used by the Kurds in the form *Garmian* with the same meaning.

And from the 7th century, when Muslim Arabs conquered the area, up to the medieval era, Arab writers simply used the name *Kirkheni* (Syriac for "citadel"^[16]) to refer to the city.^[17] Some Arabs used the names *Bajermi* or *Jermakan*^[15] (both Semitic variations of Aryan 'Garmakan').

A cuneiform script found in 1927 at the foot of Kirkuk Citadel stated that the city of Erekh of Babylonia was on the site of Kirkuk. Other sources consider Erekh to have been simply one part of the larger Arrapha metropolis.

History

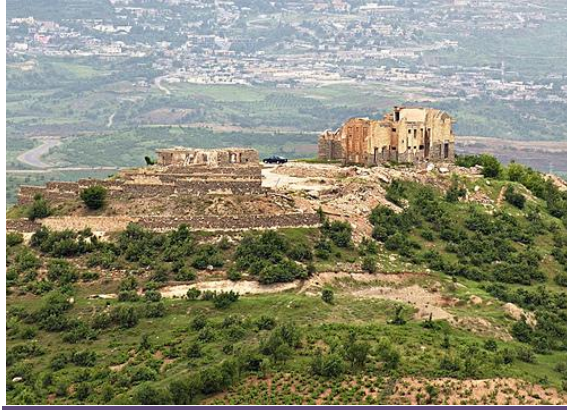


Kirkuk Citadel.

Originally the city was founded by Hurrian-related Zagros-Taurus dwellers who were known as Gutian people by lowland-dwellers of Southern Mesopotamia. Under its ancient name *Arraphkha*, Kirkuk was capital of Kingdom of Gutium which is mentioned in cuneiform records about 2400 BC.

The small Hurrian kingdom of Arraphka, of which modern Kirkuk was the capital,^[19] was situated along the southeastern edge of the area under Aryan Mittanian domination.^[20] From 1500 to 1360 BC all kings of Assyria were vassals of kingdom of Mittani.^[20] Assyria's revolt against the Hurrian kingdom of Mittani probably led to fall of the kingdom in the 14th BC century and ultimately contributed to Mittani empires's collapse.^[21]

The city reached great prominence in the 10th and 11th centuries BC under Assyrian rule. However in 6th BC, Assyria was conquered by a union of Medes, remaining Hurrian-related tribes, and Babylonians.^[21] After Achaemenids had the region under their dominion; in the Parthian and Sassanid eras Kirkuk was capital of a local kingdom called *Garmakan* (Persian: گرمیان *Garmian*).



After the Islamic conquest

Arab Muslims invaded the Sassanid empire in the 7th century AD. Up to the end of the 14th century AD, Kirkuk often administratively and economically belonged to Daquq and they were both at the same time in contact with Arbil, the modern capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, and Sharazor and their extensions. In the medieval era the city was part - and since the 16th century the capital - of the ancient wilayet of Sharazor which is still important to Kurdistan's economy.

Arab immigration

The principal Arab extended families in the city of Kirkuk were: the Tikriti and the Hadidi (Arabic: حديدي). The Tikriti family was the main Arab family in Kirkuk coming from Tikrit in 17th century. Other Arab tribes who settled in Kirkuk during the Ottoman Period are the Al-Ubaid (Arabic: آل عبيد) and the Al-Jiburi (Arabic: آل جبور). The Al-Ubaid came from just northwest of Mosul when they were forced out of the area by other Arab tribes of that region. They settled in the Hawija district in Kirkuk in 1935 during the government of Yasin al-Hashimi.

Kurdish presence

Kurds have a long history in Kirkuk before the Baban family. The Baban family was a Kurdish family that, in the 18th and 19th centuries, dominated the political life of the province of Sharazor, in present-day Iraqi Kurdistan. The first member of the clan to gain control of the province and its capital, Kirkuk, was Sulayman Beg. Enjoying almost full autonomy, the Baban family established Kirkuk as their capital. This persisted even after the Babans moved their administration to the new town of Sulaymaniya, named after the dynasty's founder, in the late 18th century.

Turkmen immigration

Turkmens migrated to Iraq during the Umayyads and Abbasid eras as military recruits. Considerable Turkmen settlement began during the Seljuq era when Toghrul entered Iraq in 1055 with his army composed mostly of Oghuz Turks. Kirkuk remained under the control of the Seljuq Empire for 63 years. The Turkmen settlement in Kirkuk was further expanded later during the Ottoman Era, when people were brought to the city from Turkey. Tuzhurmati has been one of the historical Turkmen settlements in Iraq.

During the Ottoman period the Turkmen were the predominant population of Kirkuk city but Kurds constituted the majority of the rural population of Kirkuk.

British occupation

At the end of World War I, the British occupied Kirkuk on May 7, 1918. Abandoning the city after about two weeks, the British returned to Kirkuk a few months later after the Armistice of Mudros. Kirkuk avoided the troubles caused by the British-backed Shaykh Mahmud, who quickly attempted to defy the British and establish his own fiefdom in Sulaymaniyah. The townspeople and tribesmen of Kirkuk, notably the Talabani shaykhs, demanded to be

excluded from Shaykh Mahmud's area of authority before he was put in place.

Entry Into the Kingdom of Iraq

As both Turkey and Great Britain desperately wanted control of the wilayet of Mosul (of which Kirkuk was a part), the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 failed to solve the issue. For this reason, the question of Mosul was sent to the League of Nations. A committee traveled to the area before coming to a final decision: the territory south of the "Brussels line" belonged to Iraq. Kirkuk then became a part of the Kingdom of Iraq

Discovery of oil

In 1927 a huge oil gusher was discovered at Baba Gurgur ("St. Blaze" or father blaze in Turkmen and Kurdish) near Kirkuk. The Kirkuk oil field was brought into use by the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) in 1934. The field has remained the basis of northern Iraqi oil production with over ten billion barrels (1.6 km³) of proven remaining oil reserves as of 1998. After about seven decades of operation, Kirkuk still produces up to one million barrels a day, almost half of all Iraqi oil exports.

The exploitation of Kirkuk's oil, which began around 1930, attracted both Arabs and Kurds to the city in search of work. Kirkuk, which had been a predominantly Turkmen city, gradually lost its uniquely Turkmen character. At the same time, large numbers of Kurds from the mountains were settling in the uninhabited but cultivable rural parts of the district of Kirkuk. The influx of Kurds into Kirkuk continued through the 1960s.

According to the 1957 census, Kirkuk was 40% Iraqi Turkmen, 35% Kurdish with Arabs less than 25% of its population.

Some analysts believe that poor reservoir-management practices during the Saddam Hussein years may have

seriously, and even permanently, damaged Kirkuk's oil field. One example showed an estimated 1,500,000,000 barrels (240,000,000 m³) of excess fuel oil being reinjected. Other problems include refinery residue and gas-stripped oil. Fuel oil reinjection has increased oil viscosity at Kirkuk making it more difficult and expensive to get the oil out of the ground.

Overall, between April 2003 and late December 2004 there were an estimated 123 attacks on Iraqi energy infrastructures, including the country's 7,000 km-long pipeline system. In response to these attacks, which cost Iraq billions of US dollars in lost oil-export revenues and repair costs, the US military set up the Task Force Shield to guard Iraq's energy infrastructure and the Kirkuk-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline in particular. In spite of the fact that little damage was done to Iraq's oil fields during the war itself, looting and sabotage after the war ended was highly destructive and accounted for perhaps eighty percent of the total damage.

The discovery of vast quantities of oil in the region after World War I provided the impetus for the annexation of the former Ottoman Wilayah of Mosul (of which the Kirkuk region was a part), to the Iraqi Kingdom, established in 1921. Since then and particularly from 1963 onwards, there have been continuous attempts to transform the ethnic make-up of the region.

Pipelines from Kirkuk run through Turkey to Ceyhan on the Mediterranean Sea and were one of the two main routes for the export of Iraqi oil under the Oil-for-Food Programme following the Gulf War of 1991. This was in accordance with a United Nations mandate that at least 50% of the oil exports pass through Turkey. There were two parallel lines built in 1977 and 1987.

1970 Autonomy Agreement

On paper, the Autonomy Agreement of March 11, 1970, recognized the legitimacy of Kurdish participation in government and Kurdish language teaching in schools. However, it reserved judgment on the territorial extent of

Kurdistan, pending a new census. Such a census, according to Kurds would surely have shown a solid Kurdish majority in the city of Kirkuk and the surrounding oilfields, as well as in the secondary oil-bearing Kurdish area of Khanaqin, south of the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah (Kurdish: Sîlemani). A census was not scheduled until 1977, by which time the autonomy deal was dead. In June 1973, with Ba'ath-Kurdish relations already souring, the guerrilla leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani laid formal claim to the Kirkuk oilfields.

Baghdad interpreted this as a virtual declaration of war, and, in March 1974, unilaterally decreed an autonomy statute. The new statute was a far cry from the 1970 Manifesto, and its definition of the Kurdish autonomous area explicitly excluded the oil-rich areas of Kirkuk, Khanaqin and Shingal/Sinjar. In tandem with the 1970–1974 autonomy process, the Iraqi regime carried out a comprehensive administrative reform, in which the country's sixteen provinces, or governorates, were renamed and in some cases had their boundaries altered. The old province of Kirkuk was split in half. The area around the city itself was named At-Ta'mim (Arabic: التأميم) ("nationalization"), and its boundaries were redrawn to give an Arab majority.

According to Human Rights Watch, from the 1991 Gulf War until 2003, the former Iraqi government systematically expelled an estimated 500,000 Kurds and some Assyrians from Kirkuk and other towns and villages in this oil-rich region. Most have settled in the Kurdish-controlled northern provinces. Meanwhile, the Iraqi government resettled Arab families in their place in an attempt to reduce the political power and presence of ethnic minorities, a process known as Arabization.

The "Arabization" of Kirkuk and other oil-rich regions is not a recent phenomenon. Successive governments have sought at various times to reduce the ethnic minority populations residing there since the discovery of significant oil deposits in the 1920s. By the mid-1970s, the Ba'ath Party government that seized power in 1968 embarked on a concerted campaign to alter the

demographic makeup of multi-ethnic Kirkuk. The campaign involved the massive relocation of tens of thousands of ethnic minority families from Kirkuk, Sinjar, Khanaqin, and other areas, transferring them to purpose-built resettlement camps. This policy was intensified after the failed Kurdish uprising in March 1991. Those expelled included individuals who had refused to sign so-called "nationality correction" forms, introduced by the authorities prior to the 1997 population census, requiring members of ethnic groups residing in these districts to relinquish their Kurdish or Assyrians identities and to register officially as Arabs. The Iraqi authorities also seized their property and assets; those who were expelled to areas controlled by Kurdish forces were stripped of all possessions and their ration cards were withdrawn.

Kirkuk Provincial Council www.kirkukpc.net