

## **(1) THE IDENTITY OF KIRKUK**

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Kirkuk is one of the oldest cities in Iraq. There is very little information about its history before Islam. It is mostly known after the Abbasis. The city has had a specific identity for almost six hundred years.

### ***(2) A Short Glance at the History of the City***

**(3)** It is possible to say that Turks started to settle down in Kirkuk after 835. Tugrul Bey the ruler of the seljuks, entered Iraq in 1055 with his army that was composed of mostly Oghuz Turks. Kirkuk had remained under the control of the Great Seljuk Empire for 63 years.

Arslantaş's son Kipchak took the control of Kirkuk and he became the only powerful ruler in the region in 1130. İmadeddin Zengi, Prince of Mosul, captured Kirkuk in 1139. The most famous member of this dynasty was Muzaffereddin Gökbörü who lived between 1154-1232. **(4)** This Turkish hero had a lot of art works built, most of which have survived. After Gökbörü's reign, The Jalairies, a Mongolian tribe, took the control of Kirkuk. The region, inhabited by the Turks, was open to the Mongol clans who were turkified. Therefore, we can say that Kirkuk and Erbil were turkified in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Turkish started to be used as the official language in Iraq.

It is known that Timur visited the Kirkuk Castle in 1393. **(5)** The Black Sheep state captured the castle 18 years later. The White Sheep state dominated northern Iraq and Kirkuk in 1470. Today, the White Sheep (Akkoyunlu) and the Black Sheep (Karakoyunlu) are

the surnames of two well-known Turcoman families who live in Kirkuk and Erbil.

The Safavies became a Shi'i Turcoman State in 1508 and they governed Iraq until 1534. **(6)** When Süleyman The magnificent went for Irakeyn Campaign in 1534, Turkish Poet Fuzuli, **(7)** who was from Kirkuk and a member of Bayat tribe, presented the famous Baghdad Kasida to the sultan. Kirkuk was called "Gökyurt" in the Ottoman records. **(8)** "Gökyurt" means, "blue homeland" and we don't know why this Turkish name was used instead of "Kirkuk". This act of the Ottoman Empire may show that Kirkuk was a Turkish city. However, this name was not used for a long time. **(9)** Murat The IV started his Baghdad campaign in 1638. Baghdad was taken from the Safavi State and Kirkuk became a city of the Ottoman Empire again. The Ottoman Empire dominated Kirkuk until 1918.

**(10)** As we understand from this review, Kirkuk embraced the Turkish culture centuries ago. Batatu, who is originally an Arabian writer, accepts that Kirkuk is a Turcoman settlement. Edmonds is another researcher who studied the ethnic structure of the region. This author, whose book entitled "Kurds, Turks and Arabs," states that the population of Kirkuk was about 25.000 and most of them were Turcoman in 1922.

### **(11) *Kirkuk under the control of Britain***

England aimed to control oil reserves in Kirkuk by entering Iraq at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They fought against the Ottoman army until they captured Kirkuk. The government in Baghdad accepted the existence of Turkmens. The Education and Health Ministries were consigned to İzzet Pasha, who is a Turkmen from Kirkuk, in the cabinet that was assembled by Abdul-Rahman El-Geylani in October 1920. The settlers of Kirkuk refused the kingship of Prince Faysal in the referendum that was held in July 1921. They

showed clearly that they were against the British regime. Some prominent people were asked to support the new Iraqi Constitution that was being prepared in 1923. These people, however, put forward four conditions for supporting the British regime. **(12)**

1. Not to interfere in the government formation process after the elections.
2. To protect the Turkish identity in the local government of Kirkuk.
3. To accept Turkish as an official language in Kirkuk.
4. To give responsibility to the Turkmens in all the cabinets that will be assembled in Baghdad.

Iraq Prime Minister Abdül-Muhsin Al-Sadun responded to these conditions with a letter written in Turkish in July 1923 and informed that the second and the third conditions were accepted.

The first conflict between the Turkmens and the British government in Kirkuk occurred in May 1924. A lot of Turcomans died in the fight between the Teyyaries, the supporters of the British regime, and the Kirkuk's Big Market Tradesmen. **(13)** Kirkuk Governorship announced in the Necme newspaper in February 1924 that they would indemnify the loss and damages of the individuals, families, and tradesmen. This newspaper was being published in Turkish in Kirkuk. The names and professions of 199 people who suffered from this fight were published in the newspaper and they were all Turkmens. The Gavurbağı massacre took place in July 1946. The Iraqi police fired on workers who started a protest march from an oil company. As a result, a lot of Turkmens were either wounded or killed in this incidence.

### ***(14) Kirkuk's Political Identity during the Period of Republic***

(15) Abdülkerim Kasım's coup of July 1958 eliminated the Kingdom in Iraq. The Turkmens were pleased of the declaration of republic. However, the Turkmens in Kirkuk were worried about the Communist Party's activities for coming to power. (16) Especially, Kurdish leader Molla Mustafa Barzani's attempts to make Kirkuk a city of Kurdistan and his cooperation with the Communist Party disquieted the citizens. The headquarters of the Second Division was in Kirkuk.

(17) General Nazım Tabakçalı, the commander of the Second Division, sent a secret report to Kasım in September 1958. (18) In his report he said, "Although the citizens of Kirkuk are not Kurdish, there is the intention to include Kirkuk in Kurdistan. The purpose here is to dominate petroleum, which is the national wealth of Iraq. Establishing the headquarters of Kurdistan Directorate of Education in Kirkuk and appointing a Kurdish, as a director is absolutely wrong. The Director of Education that will work in Kirkuk, besides being an Arab, must be neutral and must deal justly". Tabakçalı sent another report in January 1959 and revealed the secret activities of Kurdish officers in the army. (19) He telegraphed in February 1959 and said, "Please pay attention to the reports that we previously sent to you; otherwise, the Kurds will include Kirkuk in Kurdistan even if the majority of the citizens in Kirkuk are Turkmen. This conflicts with the national interests of the newly established Republic of Iraq".

Tabakçalı was discharged because of his reports against Communist Party and Kurds. (20) Maruf Berzenci, who was a Kurd originally, was appointed as the mayor of Kirkuk. In July 1959, during the celebration of the first anniversary of the Republic, some unpleasant incidents occurred and many Turkmens were arrested. (21) (22) Twenty-five Turcoman citizens were brutally killed and many Turkmens' houses and shops were looted and destroyed. The Kurdish mayor buried the Turkmens, who were killed by communist

Kurds, in a mass grave in the city. General Kasim accused the Communist Party and Kurdish political groups of the massacre.

Baath Party came into power in 1968 and tried to change the identity of Kirkuk in the 1970s. Saddam, who became the Vice-President in 1974, changed the name of Kirkuk. He took some Turcoman cities such as Tuzhurmatı and Kifri back from Kirkuk and joined them with Arabian cities. He forbade Turkmens to buy any properties in the city. He exiled the Turkmens to the South. He had the historical castle demolished. He also sentenced a lot of Turkmens to death in Kirkuk.

### **(23) THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF KIRKUK**

While investigating the identity of a city, it is not enough to take into consideration only the demographic or the ethnic structure of that city. What is important is the value that the community of that city contributes to its cultural heritage.

The Kirkuk massacre in 1959 led to the migration of many Turkmen families to Baghdad. Though Kirkuk continued to be a Turkmen city until the beginning of the 1960's in terms of population, there had been considerable political interferences in the ethnic structure of the city. During the reign of Saddam, the city was tried to be arabized; yet after the war in 2003, an excessive Kurdification activities began with the support of the United States.

Apart from the Turkmen population, another thing that continues to maintain the city's Turkmenity is the cultural structure.

The old historical works of art, mosques, inns, public bathes, bazaars, bridges, home architecture, press and publication, music and literature in the city are the significant indicators that reveal the

identity of the city. **(24)** As long as these indicators exist, it will be impossible to change the identity of the city.

## **(25) PRESS AND PUBLICATION IN KIRKUK**

**(26)** The first newspaper published in Kirkuk was the journal of Havadis. **(27)** Ahmed Medeni Kudsizade, was the owner and the editor of the newspaper. This Turkish newspaper was published in February 1911 for the first time and closed by the English in 1918. In Kirkuk, another newspaper published in Turkish was “Ajans Journal.” Its publication started in May 1918 and it was closed by the English administration too. **(28)** The first Turkish magazine was called “Maarif”. It was published in April 1913 and closed at the end of the same year and rearranged for publication in 1915 under the name of Kevkeb-i Maarif. All the writers of mentioned publications were consisted of Turkmens.

**(29)** The first newspaper published in Kirkuk after the start of English occupation was Necme. This newspaper also published in Turkish and its publication continued between 1918 and 1926.

In 1926, after Nemce newspaper was closed, Kirkuk newspaper began to be published in Turkish. The publication of this newspaper lasted until 1953. On the other hand; we come across another newspaper titled “ileri.” It was published twice a week in Kirkuk in 1915. **(30)** Turkish and Arabic Afak newspaper, which started its publication life in 1954 and closed in 1959, has been considered to be an important newspaper in Kirkuk. After the 1950s, it is possible to see Arabic newspapers and magazines such as El-Şebab, El-Vahde, Sada El-Şimal, El-Thekafa, and El-Hadithe. The majority of the staff who wrote for either Turkish or Turkish-Arabic newspapers was consisted of Turkmens.

**(31)** The first weekly newspaper in the republic period was Beşir. It was published in both Turkish and Arabic in July 1958 following the declaration of republic. Despite its relatively short publication life, it had become the voice of the Turkmens during the Republican era. Yet, after this date, we don't see an autonomous Turkish newspaper or magazine as a result of political pressures.

Until the beginning of the 1970's, there was not any autonomous Kurdish newspaper or magazine published in Kirkuk. The only Kurdish magazine published for a short time in 1972 was known as El-Buzuğ. Moreover the first magazine published in Arabic-Kurdish in Kirkuk was entitled "El-Şafak". Its publication started in 1958 and it was closed in 1959. The first Arabic-Kurdish newspaper was Rey El-Ehali. Its publication started in 1959 and it was closed in 1961. Azadi newspaper in 1959 and El-Talia newspaper in 1960, both of which were published in Arabic-Kurdish, were short-lived newspapers.

**(32)** It is possible to draw four important conclusions from this review:

1. The newspapers published in Kirkuk until the mid-1940's were all in Turkish.
2. All the staffs of those newspapers were consisted of Turkmens.
3. Kurdish publication in Kirkuk started only after the declaration of the Republic.
4. In general, Kurdish publications were short-lived.

### **(33) THE ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURE AND THE DISTRICTS OF THE CITY**

A considerable number of Turkish art works existed in Kirkuk. Yet, Baghdad governments and Saddam demolished most of them.

**(34)** A number of palaces that were built during the reign of the

Ottoman Empire and the stone bridge of Kirkuk are among the demolished works of art. The Kirkuk Castle, which has become the symbol of Kirkuk, safeguards the oldest historical works of arts, ramparts. **(35)** The “Danyal Peygamber Mosque,” considered holy by the Turkmens, was originally a Jewish temple, and **(36)** The Great Mosque was originally a Christian church. Moreover, the Turkmens showed their respect and affection to Christianity by calling this place of worship as Virgin Mary Mosque. Also, the respect of Turkmens toward Christian or Jewish graves was so boundless that they buried their corpses next to them. The graveyard of this place may be regarded as the first cemetery in Kirkuk. The corpses of the small cemetery next to the Mosque were all Turkmens. **(37)** Another Turkish work of art, which survived up until today, is Blue Vault (Gök Kümbet). Its construction occurred during the reign of Ilkhanate in 1361. That is to say; Kirkuk’s oldest works of art were located in Castle where the majority of the Turkish population lived until the day of its destruction.

Either pashas or Turkmens built all of the art works located in the outer part of the Kirkuk Castle during the Ottoman reign. **(38)** Nakışlı Minare Mosque, **(39)** Covered Bazaar, Hacı Numan Mosque, Kırdarlar Mosque (1885), Neftçizade İbrahim Bey Mosque (demolished), Şeyh Baki Lodge (demolished), İncili Palace (demolished), Mecidiye Palace (demolished in 1971), **(40)** Aziziye Barracks (1854), Stone Bridge (1875), (demolished in 1954), Molla Kavun Mosque (1876), Arsalan Mosque are important Turkish art works in Kirkuk.

An old and original Turcoman civil architecture in Kirkuk attracts attention. Especially, a small part of houses located in the Castle that belongs to the well-known Turkmen families has survived. Among these are **(41)** **(42)** **(43)** **(44)** **(45)** **(46)** **(47)** Sıddık Allaf House, Ali Ortakçı House, Kadı Abdurrahman Nakip House, Tayfur House,



Toma House, Gülhanlar House, Mustafa Ağa House, Mullah Sıdık Terzibaşı House.

**(48) (49) (50) (51)** Not only the owners but also the creators of this civil architecture were also Turkmens. Among the Turkmen masters of architecture are Hadji Halil İbrahim, Hasan Resul Nakkaş, Osman İbrahim, İzzet Mahmut Bayram, Sıdık Bende Gafur, and Mehmet Coker.

The first districts of Kirkuk were established in interior part of the Castle. Because of the population increase, they began to constitute new districts around The Castle. The Turkmens, however, populated all of these districts.

**(52)** The oldest districts in The Castle are:

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Topkapı (entrance of The Castle) | 5. Hamam                   |
| 2. Helvacılar                       | 6. Ağalık                  |
| 3. Cüt Kahve                        | 7. Zindan                  |
| 4. Yedi Kızlar                      | 8. Kılıcılar (katma) Bazar |

**(53)** The most important and oldest districts of Eskiyağa that is placed next to The Castle are:

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|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Ahi Hüseyin         | 8. İmam Kasım        |
| 2. Avcılar             | 9. Karakaç           |
| 3. Bulağ               | 10. Musalla          |
| 4. Büyük Bazar (çarşı) | 11. Piryadi          |
| 5. Çay                 | 12. Sakahane         |
| 6. Çukur               | 13. Seyit Kızı Slope |
| 7. Gedikler            | 14. Zeve             |

The oldest districts in the other side of Kirkuk (Karşıyağa) are:

- |           |            |              |
|-----------|------------|--------------|
| 1. Begler | 2. Şaturlu | 3. Sarıkahya |
|-----------|------------|--------------|

The districts mentioned above were constituted naturally without any administrative interference. If we investigate linguistically; we realize that the names of the majority of these districts are Turkish names. For example, Sarıkahya, Avcılar, Gedikler, Karakaçlar and Begler are not only the names of the districts but of Turkmen families. These families have maintained their existence. We can observe that the names of the other districts are either Turkish and Arabic or semi Turkish and semi Arabic. The situation in villages and towns around the city is not different.

## **THE POETS OF KIRKUK**

One of the most considerable things that reveal a city's identity and the cultural heritage over the historical course is the poets, writers, and authors who lived in that city. İmamüddin **(54)** Nesimi is the oldest poet of Iraqi Turkmens. Nesimi, the pioneer of Turkish Sufism, lived between 1370 and 1417. He is famous for his hurufism and well-known and respected by the Bektashies. Yet, he was accused of atheism and murdered. His fame spread to the Balkans, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. A splendid statue of Nesimi was erected in Baku by the Soviet government.

**(55)** Another poet who might be only compared to Nesimi was Mehmed Süleyman Fuzuli. He was arguably born in Kirkuk. He died in 1556. A house and a mosque are registered in his name in the records of the Kirkuk Castle. Undoubtedly; he is the greatest poet of the Oguz-Turk literature. Also an excellent statue of him was erected in Baku. Moreover one of the biggest squares in Baku is named after "Fuzuli."

**(56)** Moreover, the poems of forty-four Turkmen poets are included in "Iraqi Contemporary Turks Poets Anthology"

which was prepared and published by the Turkish Ministry of Culture. In this anthology; the earliest poet's date of birth is 1880 and the latest poet's date of birth is 1959. The observation on these poets reveals that thirty-seven out of forty-four poets are from Kirkuk. When we classify the poems of these poets, we can observe that thirty-one out of these forty-four poets wrote at least one poem on Kirkuk.

(57) The book which was entitled "Contemporary Poets of Turcoman Women" and published in 1993 by the Iraqi Ministry of Culture is yet another example of Turkmen literature. In this study, we gather critical information about twenty-six female Turcoman writers. The oldest woman included in this anthology was born in 1932 and the youngest was born in 1972. Seventeen of these female poets are from Kirkuk, eight of them are from other Turkish cities.

(58) Also, there are a lot of Turcoman researchers who study Kirkuk Culture. Ata Terzibaşı is the most prominent of them. Terzibaşı wrote 276 essays and 26 books. (59) All of the books and 77 percent of the essays are on Kirkuk Turcoman culture. It is important to note that in Iraq there has been no other person or institution that wrote such many works of art on a city.

## **CONCLUSION**

As it should be clear from this review; Kirkuk has culturally been a Turkish city for a long time. Also the majority of its citizens have always been Turkmens within the natural progress of the city. After the 1920's the political interferences in the identity of the city started; after 1960's these interferences increased and after 1970, it become serious. Cultural erosion in Kirkuk became more intense and a planned

activity of the government during the reign of Saddam. In the Iraq-Iran war; people of the city were either squandered or exiled. The embargo imposed on Iraq after 1991 proved to be a disaster for the city.

**(60)** Saddam's fall, unfortunately, didn't solve the problems. On the contrary, the erosion continued in a different style; only the actors have changed. Arabization ended and this time a fast Kurdization activity began. Therefore Kirkuk, which was occupied by the English in 1918, not only failed to blend its rich culture with contemporary values; but also faced the risk of losing its identity completely. Saddam tried to arabize the city by changing its name as El – Tamim, and now the Kurdish political leaders announce that they regard this city as the heart of Kurdistan and that they will fight for the city, if necessary.

A question that comes to mind is: in which century are these people living? Is it easy to change the identity of any city only by occupying it by force? Also, why did Saddam try to Arabize Kirkuk, but not Süleymaniye? The answer is clear to me: because Kirkuk is an oil-rich city. And now why do Kurdish leaders proclaim not Duhok but Kirkuk as the heart of the so-called Kurdish land? The reasons for English occupation in Kirkuk and Saddam's desire to arabize the city today are all the same. The struggle is not for Kirkuk or Kirkuk's inhabitants, but for Kirkuk's oil.

Now we, as Turkmens, would like to ask some questions: Turkmens have contributed the values mentioned above to the cultural heritage of Kirkuk for centuries. But the Kurdish people occupied the city in 1991 and in 2003. **(61) (62) (63) (64)**. They looted the shops and stores; lit the official title

deeds and the population registers. If Kirkuk is really a Kurdish city, why did they lit and loot title deed and offices of vital records? Have those who are claiming that Kirkuk is a Kurdish city and the heart of the so-called Kurdistan been able to contribute anything to the culture of this city throughout the history? Let us know the values, if any, they contributed to the city. How many newspapers and journals have they been able to publish up to now in this city? We know tens of Kurdish writers, artists, and musician from north of Iraq. How many of them were born in Kirkuk? Also, how many mosques, covered bazaars, barracks, stone bridges and palaces did they build in the entire history of Kirkuk? Did any group other than the Turkmens live in the Kirkuk Castle? How many Kurdish poets write poems for Kirkuk? How many Kurdish musicians composed music for Kirkuk? How many historical architectural works do they have in Kirkuk? The answer to these questions is obvious and everybody knows it.

### **(65) Final Conclusion**

Despite all these facts, the Turkmens are not saying that Kirkuk is the heart of Turkmenistan but insisting that Kirkuk is a city that belongs to all Iraqi people and the oil income of this city should be fairly distributed among the Iraqi people. On the other side the Kurdish political groups have dared to claim that Kirkuk is situated in the so-called Kurdistan and they should exclusively have the oil income.

**(66)** The problems exist partly because of the fact that the U.S. has followed wrong policies in the region. No doubt that the Iraqi people, including the Turkmens, are grateful to the American people due to the fact that they saved us from Saddam. However, not only that the Iraqi people did not receive the justice, democracy, freedom and welfare promised

by the U.S. government, but also the previous order, though it was a bad one, disappeared with the arrival of the American soldiers. The U.S. has not been able to create a new order yet. Moreover, it has ignored the injustices and wrongful behaviours in the region.

All of these indicate that the case of Kirkuk should be internationally debated and certain parameters such as cultural contributions should be determined. This would be the most appropriate way to reach lasting solutions on the question. Natural sources of this city should be under the control of central government in Baghdad; not under the control of any single ethnic group. **(67)** Kirkuk should have a special status that would give Turkmens, Arabs and Kurds equal representative rights and ensure that no group will be in a position to dominate other groups.

**(68)** The real owners of Kirkuk have done their best for the city. Today, without a just arbitrator; Kirkuk cannot find its real owner. Kirkuk should be the heart of Turcoman, Arab, and Kurdish peoples' brotherhood, not the heart of the so-called Kurdistan. Without abandoning of fanatic approaches, it is impossible to establish the peace in Iraq.

**(69)** The cultural heritage of Kirkuk should be survived.

Thank you very much.