

THE SIMELE MASSACRE AS A CAUSE OF IRAQI NATIONALISM:
HOW AN ASSYRIAN GENOCIDE CREATED IRAQI MARTIAL NATIONALISM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. *Argument and background narrative.*

In 1933, on the heels of an Ottoman genocidal campaign against Assyrians, the Iraqi state initiated a campaign of mass violence against the Assyrian village of Simele.¹

¹ There appears to be no standard, English spelling for the village of سميل. This paper follows Sargon Donabed and most present day media sources in preferring the spelling of “Simele,” although Stafford, described *infra*, used “Simmel.” As a side note, this paper is using the convention of referring to the people in question as “Assyrian.” Mark Levene, states that the proper term is “Suraya,” another word for “Syrian,” and refers as much to the Nestorian denomination of Christianity as it does to general ethnicity, although this is a point of much contention among present-day Assyrian academics. Assyrians were and are a diverse group consisting of several churches and who lived in a wide geographic area before the war, including northern Iraq. Since the war, the Assyrian diaspora caused them to be spread widely across the world including in the United States and Australia. Mark Levene, “A Moving Target, the Usual Suspects and (Maybe) a Smoking Gun: The Problem of Pinning Blame in Modern Genocide,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 33 (1999): 3-24, 9.

Thanks to Nicholas Al-Jeloo, Ph.D., University of Melbourne, for the following explanation for the Arabic words for “Assyrian” and their origins:

“In Arabic, there are three ways of saying ‘Assyrian’:

“Ashuri (أشوري) = This is the direct translation of the word, and a cognate of Hebrew ‘Ashuri’ and Akkadian ‘Assurayu’. It is the only word for ‘Assyrian’ used in Arabic translations of the Bible, and refers directly to the ancient Assyrian empire and civilisation to its maximum extent.

“Athuri (أثوري) = This is more often used in the Middle Ages and is a development of Old Persian (Achaemenid) ‘Athura’ and Syriac ‘Athor,’ which referred to the province of Assyria under the Achaemenid Persian Empire. Later in the Islamic period, this was used exclusively for the city of Mosul and the area immediately surrounding it.

“Suryani (سرياني) = This word is an Arabic development of the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) ‘Asuriyan’ (آسوريان, i.e. Assyrians), and related to the Aramaic/Syriac words “Suryaya” or “Suraya” (Syrian, or rather Syriac, as developments from the word Assyrian). The Arabic word “Suryani” developed after the establishment of the Parthian and later Sassanian province of Asurestan/Asoristan (آسورستان, i.e. ‘Assyria’). The fact that the Arabs came into contact with the modern Assyrians during this period, is why they largely refer to them as ‘Suryan’ (سريان) during the Middle Ages. This is not the same as the Arabic word ‘Suri’ (سوري), which refers to a Levantine person from historical Syria (سوريا).”

That massacre coincided with a larger genocidal campaign in northern Iraq. The Iraqi nationalism was a unifying force for the nascent kingdom, but it excluded certain groups, especially Assyrians. While other writers have commented on the role of Iraqi nationalism in creating the conditions for genocide, this thesis makes the further point that the violent ethnic cleansing against Assyrians was necessary for Iraq's subsequent development as a nationalist militaristic state. The military state that rose in the late 1930s that overthrew the Hashemite monarchy, and continues to the present day is a direct consequence of Simele. In order to understand how genocide happens and, therefore, how to avoid it, one must understand how integral it is to nationalism, and especially the martial nationalism that existed in the Middle East after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Ethnic violence by state actors against the Assyrians was both a product of nationalism and a cause for the rise of the army as the central focus of nationalism in Iraq.

During the First World War and later in Hashemite Iraq, the Assyrian people of the Hakkari Mountains in what is now southeastern Turkey became victims of, for the purposes of this discussion, two campaigns of mass violence. This paper discusses the first for context and a second as the subject of this thesis. The first of the two occurred at the hands of the Ottoman state in 1915.² After the war, the British relocated the Hakkari Assyrians to the northern part of what became the Kingdom of Iraq, ostensibly for their own safety. There they suffered a second campaign of ethnic cleansing with its epicenter in the village of Simele, where the Iraqi army in August of 1933 perpetrated a massacre.

² Hannibal Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire, Iraq, and Sudan* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2010), 238.

The Simele massacre coincided with a larger campaign of ethnic cleansing in other Iraqi Assyrian villages.³

To appreciate the causes of the 1933 massacre, it is necessary to understand the major events leading to it. Mass violence is never inevitable and always contingent on specific events.⁴ One such historical contingency was the decision of the Assyrians' religious leader to fight for the Entente in 1915, providing a pretext to accelerate earlier ethnic cleansing, and making problematic a return to their original homeland in what had become the Republic of Turkey after the war. The patriarch made that decision in part as a response to the Sultan's declaration of *jihad* against the majority-Christian empires of the Entente. In turn, the Russian collapse after the 1917 revolution left the Assyrians at the mercy of Ottoman forces.⁵

First Ottoman and then Iraqi nationalism caused the Assyrian people to be a distrusted minority because of their apparent link to British imperialists. The Iraqi army was in the ascendancy in the 1930s, and its action against what many perceived as a foreign threat aided that rise to prominence. State-sponsored violence against Assyrians, especially on 11 August 1933, reinforced Iraqi nationalism. In 1933, after enduring genocide during the war, migration to Iraq, and pogroms there, a small expedition of armed Assyrian men attempted to emigrate to Syria in an act of apparent desperation. The

³ Sargon George Donabed, *Forging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century* (Croydon, UK: Edinburgh, 2015), 112, *et seq.*; The Assyrian people have lived in Anatolia, the Levant, and in Mesopotamia at least for hundreds of years. They are typified by their Syriac denominations of Christianity, their specific culture, and their use of non-Arabic, Semitic language.

⁴ See e.g., Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 71.

⁵ Donabed, *Forging a Forgotten History*, 93.

French authorities stopped them at the border and sent them back to their village of Simele, still fully armed.⁶

En route returning, they encountered Iraqi army regulars with British Royal Air Force aircraft in support. There was a skirmish, and the Assyrian survivors proceeded home. Hearing the news of the firefight, Feisal, the Iraqi King, directed Bekir Sidqi, a high-ranking army officer, to retaliate against the men of the village. On 11 August, the Iraqi army with the help of local police disarmed and then murdered most of the men of Simele. At the same time, Kurds and Arabs conducted a wider genocidal campaign against Assyrian villages in northern Iraq. Assyrian sources note that the murder and rape continued against the Assyrians in northern Iraq for a month.⁷

At the present time, the question of whether ethnic mass violence occurred at the relevant times and places is not at issue, as it is well established in the historical record and scholarship. Rather, this paper seeks to analyze the Simele Massacre and related events from the perspective of the Iraqi state, the Sunni Arab point of view, and examine how it became part of Iraqi nationalism. This necessarily means looking at the origins of the Arab nationalism that became the Iraqi state nationalism in Mesopotamia. This is, therefore, an effort to establish cause and effect rather than blame or fault, which has already been established by other scholars. State actors sought to use nationalism as a unifying and legitimizing force for their new and arguably artificial state. That vision, however, did not include everyone, and when the army crushed what many perceived as a foreign security threat within Iraq's borders, nationalist feelings coalesced around the

⁶ Donabed, 112, *et seq.*

⁷ Donabed, 110.

army, rather than the civil government, which had been held in low esteem by the public. The nature of Iraqi nationalism was such that the Simele Massacre was a necessary precondition for public support to solidify around the army as a uniting event.

Assyrians themselves had their own concept of nationalism that began in the nineteenth century. The Assyrians did not think of themselves in nationalist terms until the arrival of Christian missionaries from Europe and America in the mid-nineteenth century. They had, in fact, a largely confessional group identity, as they were Syriac Christians who used Aramaic in their church liturgy. Missionaries either created or revived the Assyrian national identity and romanticized the Assyrians as the beginning of a new Christian Middle East. These missionaries intended either to convert Assyrians from Syriac Christianity to Protestantism, or else to “educate” Assyrians about their own religion. They included many American Protestants and effectively invented the narrative that modern Assyrian Christians were the descendants and successors to the Bronze Age Assyrian Empire.⁸ As we shall see in the discussion of R.L. Stafford, a British army officer and political liaison to the Iraqi government, the Assyrians may have internalized these racist European and American attitudes. One aggravating factor was the alignment of Assyrians with Britain, a hostile, foreign empire with designs on the Middle East.⁹

⁸ Levene, “A Moving Target, the Usual Suspects and (Maybe) a Smoking Gun,” 10 *et seq.*; Vahram Petrosian, “Assyrians in Iraq,” *Iran & the Caucasus*, 10 (2006): 113-147, 119; Bülent Özdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War: Nestorian, Chaldean and Syrian Christians in the 20th Century*, trans. L.M.A. Gough (Caithness, Scotland; Whittles Publishing, 2012): pp. 5 *et seq.*

⁹ Thabit A.J. Abdullah, *A Short History of Iraq* (Pearson Education Ltd., 2003): 117; Stafford 1935, 25; Levene, 13.

Indeed, starting with the end of the war, the British considered the displaced Hakkari Assyrians to be a special problem requiring their direct intervention.¹⁰

2. *Terms and Definitions*

Genocide and lesser forms of ethnic mass violence were a defined crime against humanity since December 1948, and before that most people understood the massacre of unarmed persons to be an atrocity of war.¹¹ Mass violence is never inevitable and is always contingent on the decisions and actions of perpetrators, so for those involved with the advocacy of justice, there are numerous perpetrators, within and without the state apparatus, to share the guilt. Yet, historians must decide if their function is explanatory or accusatory, to find the causes and consequences of ethnic mass violence, or to assign outrage and blame, and to seek whatever justice may still be available to the victims.¹² In

¹⁰ *Iraq Administration Reports 1914-1932, vol.10* (n.c: Archive International Group, 1992): pp. 266-269.

¹¹ "Article II: In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

"(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.

"Article III: The following acts shall be punishable:

"(a) Genocide;

"(b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;

"(c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;

"(d) Attempt to commit genocide;

"(e) Complicity in genocide."

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Resolution 260 (III) A of the U.N. General Assembly on 9 December 1948, to be enforceable starting 12 January 1951.

¹² "Scholars in this field need to remain vigilant of the perilous slippage between undertaking delicate research into contingent 'truths' and mounting binding legal cases for the prosecution. Historians researching other projects are rarely required to produce such hard evidence of intention, which in effect must amount to finding overt, self-incriminating admissions of guilt upon preserved documentation, in order to construct plausible interpretations of past events. Rather they are meant to be skilled at the reproduction of time-faded scenarios and a subtle, empathetic appreciation of causation, motivation, and relational outcomes. They are not trained detectives or forensic experts nosing out corpses, clues, suspects, or 'smoking guns.' They are neither prosecuting attorneys preparing clinching legal indictments, nor jurists or judges convicting or passing sentence on apprehended criminal parties. The search for evidence of

examining the developing Iraqi nationalism, this paper seeks the former perspective. The object, then is to ascertain how nationalism caused state actors to construct the Assyrians as an Other, and then to see how the violent reaction to that imagined threat drove the subsequent unfolding of Iraqi nationalism.

“‘Genocide’ is the crime of destroying national, racial or religious groups,” according to Raphael Lemkin, in a 1946 article.¹³ Any attempt to eliminate a particular culture, which includes the constructed identities of nationality, race, religion, and ethnicity, under the United Nations’ definition of “genocide” is itself genocide. The events in Simele in August 1933 obviously occurred prior to World War II, so contemporary sources typically referred to mass killings as “massacres” rather than as “genocide.”¹⁴ Further, while it is important not to understate the suffering caused by any episode of mass violence, one should realize that ethnic cleansing is a spectrum of exclusionary actions ranging from language suppression or segregation to systematic mass murder. For the purposes of this paper, “massacre” refers to the specific violent

‘aforethought to commit a crime,’ especially when enunciated as official policy preserved somehow for posterity’s judgment, is by and large self-defeating. As far as colonial history is concerned, it also seems largely futile to be out there still looking for ‘smoking guns’ when these guns usually ceased smoking long ago and massacre scenes were rarely treated contemporaneously as crime scenes for the collection of incriminating evidence. In general, too, all the intellectual perils of constructing ‘advocacy histories’ are well known. The essential question, to put it bluntly, ought to be: ‘Are you catching a crook or writing a book?’,” Raymond Evans, “‘Crime Without a Name:’ Colonialism and the Case for ‘Indigenocide,’ ” *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, A. Dirk Moses, ed. (2008, 2010: Berghahn Books, New York), pp.137, 138.

¹³ Raphael Lemkin, “Genocide,” *American Scholar*, 15 (1946): 227-230.

¹⁴ Raphael Lemkin coined the word “genocide” after World War II. Stafford used the term “massacre” since he wrote this either late in 1934 or the beginning of 1935. Nevertheless, it is clear from Stafford’s account that the intention of the Iraqi Army leadership was to eliminate Assyrians in Iraq. Under the United Nations definition, the attempt at genocide is itself genocide. Consequently, the murderous actions of various officials and army personnel meet the legal definition of genocide. It is not clear, however, whether killing between six hundred and two thousand people out of an Iraqi Assyrian population of about forty thousand is really genocide in the minds of most scholars or people generally. For the sake of clarity, therefore, I use the term “massacre” to refer to the August 1933 mass killing at Simele, while the term “genocide” refers to the larger campaign by Iraqi state actors against numerous Assyrian communities, complicit non-state actors, and also the Ottoman mass killing of Assyrians during World War One.

campaign in Simele, while “genocide” means the wider, contemporaneous campaign of violence directed against Assyrians in Iraq. Michael Mann’s book, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, includes a chart illustrating a spectrum of ethnically exclusionary actions.¹⁵

For the purposes of this paper, “state actors” are those who perpetrate mass violence either as agents of the state government or at its direction. “Others” are groups of people who an imperialist or dominant group socially and intellectually constructs as being fundamentally different than the dominant group. Edward Said first articulated this concept, and I discuss it *infra*. Likewise, “marked citizens,” defined by Pandey and discussed *infra*, are residents of a state that the majority deems to be outsiders in their own community. “Nationalism” is a constructed narrative of common descent and ethnicity, shared values, common language, religion, or national mythology. Nationalists promote the creation and consolidation of a nation-state based on nationalism.

The term “Arab” is of course problematic. Nations, like all identities, are social constructs, so it is not always clear who belongs with the in-group. Al-Askari, a former officer in the Ottoman army, had little doubt about who was an Arab. He appears to have taken Arab identity for granted. Al-Husri, aware of the constructed nature of nationalism from his time promoting Ottomanism, attempted to fix Arab identity to the Arabic language. Even that is complicated since Arabic is not so much a single language as it is a family of languages, with the Asian varieties being significantly different from Egyptian and other North African dialects. Just who is an Arab remains an open question, though the reverse question seems to provide a clearer answer. Those who considered themselves

¹⁵ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 12; Appendix A.

Iraqi Arabs in the early twentieth century knew that they were not Kurds, Turks, Armenians, or Assyrians, based on a number of reasons that are important to specific Arab persons or groups. Typically, those reasons focused on specific religious practices, usually Islamic, social customs, and, of course, the Arabic language. Speakers of Arabic, regardless of the local dialect, knew they were not speaking Persian, Greek, Turkish, or the Assyrian languages.

3. *Historiography.*

There has been much scholarship on the social conditions that create mass violence. As previously noted, nationalism was one driving force that caused the massacres, and it also informed the particular track nationalism followed afterwards. In this case, the Assyrian people, a Christian community, or rather group of communities, suffered a genocidal campaign at the hands of Ottoman state actors before and during the war. After the war, the British moved one Assyrian community from the Hakkari Mountains to Simele in northern Iraq. While Assyrian people have long resided in what is now northern Iraq, the Hakkari group's close association with the British military, and the history of attempted agitation of Christian communities within the Ottoman Empire by foreign interests, considered together with the actions of a handful of Assyrian insurgents, all made the Assyrians easy for Arab nationalists to construct as a foreign threat. In the minds of the perpetrators, that imagined threat latter justified their violent campaign of ethnic cleansing.¹⁶

¹⁶ Donabed, 76, 77.

Secondary sources include a book and a chapter of a later book from Hannibal Travis,¹⁷ who argues that religious hatred caused violence. The Assyrian genocide in the First World War and the subsequent consolidation of Turkish control over Anatolia necessitated moving the surviving Hakkari Assyrians. The British moved them to Simele, just south of the border and the mountains where many of them had spent the winter months anyway. Since their presence there and continued association with the British were preconditions for the 1933 massacre, Travis's essay in *Forgotten Genocides* is relevant to the 1933 case. Travis's essay appears to be an effort to draw attention to an episode of murderous ethnic cleansing during the First World War that the world has largely forgotten, that is to say, to show that the genocidal campaign happened. Travis does not address the 1933 case, but he does discuss many of the events leading to it.¹⁸ As a side note, Travis's 2011 chapter follows his 2010 book on Middle Eastern genocide, which included the 1915 Assyrian genocide by the Ottomans.¹⁹ The British moved the Hakkari Assyrians to Simele after the war to escape from any continuation of the 1915 genocide by the new Turkish government.

Travis describes the nineteenth-century nationalistic campaign against the Assyrians and other groups, which often had the assistance of Kurdish paramilitary support. In 1914, half of a million Assyrians lived in the Ottoman territory. Following the Assyrian leadership's declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire on May 10, 1915, violent ethnic cleansing reached a crescendo that summer when Turks and Kurds

¹⁷ Hannibal Travis, "The Assyrian Genocide, a Tale of Oblivion and Denial," *Forgotten Genocides, Oblivion, Denial, and Memory*, ed. René Lemarchand (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

¹⁸ Travis, "The Assyrian Genocide," 123.

¹⁹ Hannibal Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire, Iraq, and Sudan* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2010).

massacred tens of thousands Assyrians in Siirt.²⁰ Ottoman authorities then deported Assyrians *en masse* to Iran. In 1915, the Turkish army attacked Assyrians in the Hakkari Mountains, burning villages as they went. With the help of Kurdish tribesmen and operating under an official *jihad*, the government deported Assyrians, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, and some Kurds (despite being Muslims themselves) from their homes, causing widespread starvation.²¹ During the war, about a quarter million Assyrians were murdered by Ottoman forces or died of starvation and exposure. Travis notes that figure doubles if one includes those killed during the 1890s.²²

Travis blames religion for the animosity between the Ottoman state and the Assyrians. He claims that by being a Christian minority in the Ottoman Empire, Assyrians were an Other to the majority Muslims. Levene, for example, acknowledges the second-class status of the Assyrians as “Suryani,” non-Muslim practitioners of an Abrahamic religion, but then notes that the Ottomans allowed extensive privileges for the Hakkari Assyrians, including practical autonomy and the right to their own militias.²³ That made the Hakkari Assyrians less of an Other than most non-Muslims within the Empire. So mere confessional differences alone could not have triggered the mass violence during the war. Likewise, in 1933 there were many non-Muslim groups in Iraq, including Yezidi, whom many erroneously believed to be devil-worshippers, and despite being targets of conversion and pogroms earlier, they were not the targets of state-

²⁰ Donabed, 62; Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East*, 245; Travis, “The Assyrian Genocide,” 126-129.

²¹ Travis, “The Assyrian Genocide,” 123, 125; Levene, “A Moving Target,” 5; *see generally*, Janet Klein, *The Margin of Empire*. For a discussion on the Ottoman government’s decision to call for a *jihad*, *see* Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²² Travis, “The Assyrian Genocide,” 126-129.

²³ Levene, 10.

directed ethnic cleansing, at least not until two years later when a group of them revolted over conscription.²⁴

Sectarianism was a fact of life in the Middle East, but it was an entirely modern phenomenon resulting from the modern nation-state. Like other land empires, the Ottomans were a sovereignty rather than a nationality, so there was no pretext of cultural or religious unity. The ruling dynasty was Muslim which gave that religion a privileged position in the Empire, but various confessional communities existed all over the Ottoman territory, which included Egypt, the multi-confessional Levant, and the largely Christian Balkans. Christine Philliou's book, *Biography of an Empire*, discusses the overlapping identities of various communities, especially Greek Christians during the late Ottoman Empire, and the important niches different groups occupied in the imperial power structure. This helps debunk the idea that ethnic mass violence, even on religious differences, has very much to do with ancient hatreds.²⁵ Similarly, Ussama Makdisi writes about the development of sectarianism in modern Lebanon, specifically, demonstrating that it is an entirely modern phenomenon.²⁶ Communities based on specific religious identities have existed since antiquity, but generally not religiously specific state identities that were hostile to religious or ethnic out-groups.

²⁴Stafford (1935), 15; *see e.g.*, Nelida Fuccaro (1997) "Ethnicity, State Formation and Conscription in Postcolonial Iraq: the Case of the Yazidi Kurds of Jabal Sinjar," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29 (4) (1997), 559-580.

²⁵ Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in the Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Donald Quataert. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), *see esp.* Ch.9.

²⁶ Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000): *see esp.* Ch.8.

Mark Levene wrote an important article arguing that nationalism requires an identified enemy to flourish.²⁷ Levene examines the 1933 massacre as a case study for ascertaining the causes of genocide. Levene considers the usual suspects of genocide: prejudice, intolerance, ethnic hatred, racism, xenophobia, ideology, and nationalism. Racism, xenophobia, and ethnic nationalism are generally assumed to be the main causes of genocidal actions to the point where doubt of this apparently self-evident fact is seen as a moral failing. The thinking is that denying racism or similar hatreds as the basis for genocide gives a free pass to racists. While accepting the harm caused by racism, Levene doubts it is the main cause of genocide. Levene concludes by admonishing readers not to assume genocide is caused by ancient, racial bigotry, but to recognize that it is a mainstream phenomenon. This paper goes further by taking the view that nationalism constructed the Assyrians as an Other. The resulting violence then reinforced the nationalist narrative.

Levene explains that the declaration of war against the Central Powers by Mar Shamun, the Assyrian religious leader until 1918, was a direct response to Russian and British coaxing, including promises of an independent Assyrian nation state. (British diplomatic records deny this, as one might expect).²⁸ This was in part a reaction to the increasingly harsh treatment of religious minorities by the Ottoman state, but also because of foreign interference, creating the perception of a threat to imperial security from within Ottoman territory.²⁹ Vahram Petrosian, writing in 2006, notes the interference of outside missionaries in particular. His is one of the few English language

²⁷ Mark Levene, "A Moving Target."

²⁸ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, "Memorandum on the Assyrian Question," 25 Aug. 1934, unsigned: 603 *et seq.*

²⁹ Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, *The Assyrian Tragedy* (n.p.; Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation, 2010): 4-10; Vahram Petrosian, "Assyrians in Iraq," *Iran & the Caucasus*, 10 (2006): 113-147, 120.

analyses not to use Stafford as a source. Petrosian's article explains the entire twentieth-century history of Assyrians in Iraq and, therefore, gives only a short narrative of the interbellum period.

For American scholars researching genocide against Assyrians, primary sources are scarce. English language sources tend to exist in London and represent the official British point of view. Arabic sources from Hashemite Iraq are scarce and to the degree that they exist require specialized knowledge and access to archives in England. Sadly, frequent conflict in Iraq has put that country's archives in disarray or else they are just lost to history. Orit Bashkin had access to numerous Arabic nationalist discourses, often in the form of literary journals, when writing *The Other Iraq*.³⁰ In it, she debunks the popularly held view that Iraq was always an authoritarian state, subject to frequent sectarian violence. Rather, she shows that there was a vibrant intellectual community, including an active Marxist movement, which stimulated discussion and encouraged national unity among religious groups during the 1920s and early 1930s. I read it for insight into how Iraqi civil society began to see the military as the focus of national unity.

Assyrian primary sources require knowledge of the Syriac language, a Semitic language like Aramaic, and also personal connections to the Assyrian diasporic community. Often memories exist as oral accounts of events. Sargon Donabed's 2015 book brings these sources to light and analyzes them in the context of Iraqi nationalism.³¹ His purpose is to show that the Assyrians were an integral part of Iraqi society during its history as an independent state and before that when it was still part of the Ottoman

³⁰ Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³¹ Donabed, *Forging a Forgotten History*.

Empire. He provides a detailed narrative of Assyrian involvement in Iraqi state building during the twentieth century, giving voices and agency to the Assyrian people, whose plight is not well known in the Western world. He argues that the martial nationalism in Iraq that began in the 1930s was a consequence of the mass violence against Assyrians in 1933. This paper uses his primary-source citations, which for practical purposes are unavailable anywhere else, and his analysis of militant nationalism to ascertain the Assyrian perspective and to present a more balanced version of the facts than British sources alone allow. It then takes the next logical step by arguing that Iraqi nationalism made the Assyrians a likely target, and that the Simele Massacre was a necessary precondition for the continued rise of nationalism in the form of the authoritarian, military state.

In Michael Mann's five-hundred-page book, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, he provides numerous modern case studies of ethnic cleansing in order to identify predictable stages in which mass violence becomes increasingly likely, although he does not mention either Ottoman or Iraqi mass violence against Assyrians. His larger argument is that ethnic cleansing is a likely consequence of the development of democracy, which he defines broadly. His examples include totalitarian states, which he asserts are based on an implicit national consensus rather than on parliamentary elections. Mann shares the view of Travis and Levene that genocide and its lesser manifestations are modern phenomena. This paper and Donabed's book, by contrast, take the view that genocidal campaigns are a by-product of nationalism, while this paper takes the additional step of

arguing that the Simele Massacre was necessary for Iraqi nationalism to have developed into an authoritarian state that was centered on the army.³²

Secondary sources on specific issues include Benjamin White and Gyanendra Pandey. Each of them argues that minority groups, and majorities for that matter, are constructed identities based on the decision to classify people according to skin color, religion, or other arbitrary criteria. White argues minority and majority populations only exist because the modern nation-states classified people as such. Christians could not be a minority group unless the society and especially the state divided people based on their affiliations with the numerous religious communities. Religion is an arbitrary criterion for classifying people, but for centuries, the Ottoman state classified people's specific rights and duties according to their religions. After the Empire dissolved, people and their leaders continued to accept the "natural" category of religious differences.³³

By the nineteenth century, the ruling class of the Ottoman Empire became increasingly convinced of a need to adopt many of the aspects of European nationalism in order to modernize (that is to say, industrialize) in order to compete with European economic and military encroachment. The Ottoman Empire had existed for centuries as a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional land empire. During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state attempted a series of modernizing reforms, partly along European lines.

"Modernizing" is a constructed term, of course, but in this context it was an effort to make the state more bureaucratic, more centrally controlled, and more uniform in

³² Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*.

³³ Benjamin White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 3; James Reilly, a review of *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East* by Benjamin White, *Syrian Studies Association Bulletin*, 17 (2012).

administration and culture. Modernization during the Tanzimat era was partly in response to economic, political, and military pressure from majority Christian empires, but it was also part of the imperial leadership's desire for liberalization. Specifically, in 1839, the Sultan announced generic rights for all subjects that did not privilege Islam or vary among religious communities, despite the fact that the announcement contained a religious justification for reform.³⁴

Hanioğlu characterized the consequences of modernization as a centripetal effect on the provinces by the central authority, which is to say ideas and policies about modernity begin in the capital cities and move into the periphery over time. Communities and regions that had long been under effective self-rule were forced to conform to new Imperial standards. The leadership of specific communities had privileges that other groups did not share, and there was resistance to losing them. Local communities, including Arabs, began to see the central government as an oppressive foreign power. Further, it was not simply a bilateral relationship between the central government and the periphery.³⁵ While the central government increasingly promoted Ottoman "nationalism," peripheral communities began to define themselves in opposition to the central government and to other peripheral groups. One example is the central state's creation and use of Kurdish militia to control both suspected Armenian revolutionaries and the border with Russia.

³⁴ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008): 1-5, 72-75

³⁵ Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 72-75.

Janet Klein's chapter in *Multiculturalism and Minority Rights in the Arab World*, likewise explains that minority is a constructed idea.³⁶ Klein's *The Margin of Empire* explains the construction of Armenian Christians within the Ottoman Empire as a minority. Specifically, it argues that the perception by state actors that Christian groups within the Empire constituted an internal threat to the state. It is useful to show how religious hatred was based on specific contingencies, and is not inevitable or based on ancient animosities.³⁷ Klein's book is more thoroughly discussed in Chapter III, which concerns the construction of the Other.

Arabic-language histories tend to read like epic poems pitting rescuer heroes against villains or at least chaos. This may be why contemporary criticisms of the state during the Hashemite period tended to appear in literary journals and other forms that were not overtly political.³⁸ A colorful example, and one of the few biographies of Bekir Sidqi available to me, is 'Amaal 'Abid Aalsalaam Ruu' waq's Arabic language biography, *Iraq between Eras* or *Iraq between Two Eras*.³⁹ There is no publication date in the title page, but the preface is dated 1989 by the author, which is well into the Ba'athist era and its ultra-nationalism and tight control over the press. It purports to tell the story of Yassin al-Hashemi and Bekir Sidqi. Sidqi was the military commander who orchestrated the Simele massacre and who later lead a *coup d'état* against the Hashemite monarchy in

³⁶ Benjamin White, 3-7, 21, 28; Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (Chicago: Stanford University Press, 2005); Janet Klein, "The Minority Question: A View From History and the Kurdish Periphery," Will Kymlicka, Eva Pfostl eds., *Multiculturalism and Minority Rights in the Arab World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁷ Janet Klein, *The Margin of Empire, Kurdish Militia in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

³⁸ Bashkin, 42, *et seq.*

³⁹ 'Amaal 'Abid Aalsalaam Ruu' waq, *Iraq between Two Eras: Yassin al-Hashemi and Bekr Sidqi* (n.p., n.y.). The title uses the dual form for the Arabic word for "eras" or "periods" (in the sense of a measure of time) rather than the word or numeral for "two."

1936. Hashemi was an Iraqi nationalist politician who became prime minister in 1935.

The eras in question are those of the Ottoman Empire and early Hashemite period in the beginning and of the republican period that followed the Bekir Sidqi era. The Sidqi era began with the 1936 *coup* and followed with Sidqi's assassination in 1937.

Chapter Two of *Iraq between Two Eras*, begins by describing Hashemi's rise to power, or rather his heroic rescue of Iraq from anarchy. The author begins with a formal verbal sentence (*jumla f'ali*) stating his intention for that chapter, and then continues with what in English would be a paragraph-length run-on sentence. In Arabic, however, such a sentence, containing numerous conjunctions, is a poetic art form. In the following sentence, parenthetical words indicate meanings implied by a word's consonant root and context. Additional contextual explanations are in brackets.

The reader will see the short period of history for this book does not lack importance, as is otherwise confirmed in many ways, first that these five years saw many important events in the history of Iraq until the modern Iraqi revolution on 31 July 1958, from where Yashin al-Hashimi from the (military) cohorts of the saviors of the great Arab Revolt [against the Ottomans], his (ministerial) advice led [the country through] tempestuous currents⁴⁰ of thought and the (chaotic) winds of passion and of personal interests, in order to achieve the goals of patriotism and pure nationalism, [for the purpose of] strengthening the army he enacted the first law for the the service of science, and supported the revolution in Palestine against the British occupation and the Zionist settlements, [and also] (violently) evicting the professional employees⁴¹ and English consultants from the Iraqi Ministry, and he respected the Constitution and the freedom of public elections, and a solution for the tribal problem left over from the era of the (British) occupation and mandate that was the impediment [preventing] the reaching for any forward thinking policies in the country.

⁴⁰ Here the word for "tempestuous," "*muTalaatema*," also means clashing personalities, strong currents, waves hitting rocks, or choppy in the sense of a rough sea, which makes the word consistent with the nautical theme of this part of the sentence. "Currents" likewise means either sea currents or currents of thought.

⁴¹ "Professional employees" means British civil servants.

The period described in *Iraq between Two Eras* begins two years after the Assyrian massacres in question, and does not mention them specifically or Assyrians generally. The “tribal problem” stated near the end of the sentence is likely the Shi’ite revolt, since there is a chapter on it later in the book. Granted, this book describes events shortly thereafter, but the fact is that Sidqi rose to national prominence as a result of directing the slaughter at Simele. This book about Sidqi and al-Hashemi does not mention the grisly rung to their future ascension, although it does mention British interference in the governance of Iraq and also the growing Jewish settler presence in Palestine.

In the foregoing example, al-Hashemi is portrayed as the protagonist who rescues the sinking or floundering state from a stormy sea of private concerns, as if he were a heroic sea captain.⁴² He comes from the already heroic background of the Arab revolt, which, as al-Askari notes, was seen by its participants as a defense against “foreign” Ottomans.⁴³ The author then uses a series of words evocative of a stormy sea to describe the political context, and finally points to a colonial power and its future settler state as a problem in need of a nationalist response. By 1989, when Ruu’waq wrote this book, Israel was an established state, and the United States and the Soviet Union were the colonial powers in the region, but the nationalist message in Iraq remained the same. He also had to comply with the censorship requirements of Saddam Hussein’s government.

Secondary sources also include some discussion of the contentious nature of Assyrian national identity. Racho Donef, a Turkish nationalist writer, in *Assyrians Post-*

⁴² Thanks to Fadi Dawood, for assistance with translation in context and for proving information concerning Arabic language histories generally.

⁴³ Jafar Pasha Al-Askari, *A Soldier’s Story, from Ottoman Rule to Independent Iraq: The Memoirs of Jafar Pasha Al-Askari*, Mustafa Tariq Al-Askari, trans. William Facey & Najdat Fathi Safwat, eds. (London: Arabian Publishing, 2003): 203.

Nineveh, explains that it is difficult to understand how diverse communities of various ecclesiastical denominations can all be labeled as “Assyrian.”⁴⁴ Granted, this is part of the debate on the nature of Assyrian culture and identity, and Turkish as well as Arab nationalists tend to be dismissive of Assyrian identity being anything more than a religious affiliation. Likewise, Petrosian notes that “Assyrian” is an umbrella term for “...Syrians, Chaldeans, Assyro-Chaldeans or Syro-Chaldeans (Chaldo-Assyrians) Nestorians, and Jacobites.” He states that differences in nomenclature reflect different ecclesiastical denominations among them. Assyrian national identity, especially among the Hakkari group, contributed to the Arab perception that the Assyrians were hostile outsiders.

Assyrians, Petrosian states, lived in nearly every modern country of the Near East, including Iran, and especially around Mosul in what is now Iraqi Kurdistan. Petrosian claims that the Assyrians are descended from those of the Bronze Age Assyrian Empire. Nevertheless, it is likely that this claim is an invented tradition, probably created by Christian missionaries from the United States and other places to create an Assyrian identity that was distinct from that of the largely Muslim Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵ Petrosian also explains that Kurds have not always been inimical to Assyrians, animosity between Hakkari Mountain Assyrians and Kurds did not begin until the 1840s with the arrival of Christian missionaries from Atlantic states. At that time, missionaries in contact with Assyrian communities provided a narrative that set them at odds with Muslim Kurds.

⁴⁴ Racho Donef, *Assyrians Post-Nineveh: Identity, Fragmentation, Conflict and Survival (672 BC—1920), A Study of Assyriogenous Communities* (Sydney: Tatavla Publishing, 2000).

⁴⁵ Petrosian, 113.

This is in agreement with Levene, who argues that religious differences were not the cause of animosity.

Finally, Taner Akçam's book on the official Turkish denial of the Armenian genocide provides a convincing argument that the denial of past horrors are a necessary part of nationalism founded on genocide.⁴⁶ In Turkey, he argues, the state actively suppresses any public discussion of mass violence against Armenians in order to protect the legitimacy of the state. This paper argues that similar suppression of discourse happened in Iraq after Simele, with the added proposition that suppression of information about mass violence is evidence that state actors knew about the genocide and were complicit in it. Akçam's book and specific primary sources that omit any mention of the 1933 genocide is discussed at length in Chapter IV.

4. *Primary Sources*

There is a dearth of primary source material for the subject of the Simele Massacre or its aftermath. Consequently, I used what few accessible sources there are to add authentic Arab voices to the discussion of genocide and mass violence and the mostly British primary sources who provided the factual narrative. I especially sought to discover whether or not the rise of the army as the principle embodiment of the state was at all based on its involvement in Simele. Finding that the massacres did in fact cause the army to rise in importance in Iraqi society, it was clear that, at least for this single case study, that ethnic mass violence was a necessary precondition to subsequent growth of Iraqi nationalism.

⁴⁶ Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*, (New York: Zed Books, 2004).

The primary sources for this paper are limited by the intentions of their writers. Stafford set out to make an account of the massacres based on his personal knowledge. He also made it a point to minimize any British responsibility for the violence. Primary sources are not windows into the past, but rather one reads what a specific author wanted a specific audience to know. Likewise, when al-Askari wrote his memoirs he was writing for an Arab nationalist audience and constructed a past that supported his vision of nationalism. Similarly, al-Husri wrote in an effort to shape the then-existing national discourse.

Sunni Arab intellectuals, including army officers, led the nationalist discourse of the time. Former Ottoman soldiers like Jafar Pasha Al-Askari agitated for Arab independence before the war from various places within the Empire. In the 1930s, he wrote a series of memoirs describing how he became an army officer, an Arab nationalist, and eventually prime minister of Iraq. Unfortunately for historians, he died in 1936, so his memoirs remain incomplete. He also left an unfinished essay on Arab nationalism that provides some understanding of his perception of it. Al-Askari's memoirs, therefore, consist of his memories recorded sometimes decades after the fact from the position of an Iraqi governor or prime minister. Given the nature of Arab histories, one must assume some artistic license in his narrative. He did not mention the Assyrians or the 1933 massacre at all, yet it is clear from the writing of al-Husri's son, whose article was published forty-one years after the fact, that the mass murder of Assyrians had the effect of solidifying the nationalist narrative, if not the governance of

Iraq or its population.⁴⁷ Indeed, the Simele Massacre facilitated the downfall of the monarchy and the establishment of the military state.

Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī was an educator and occasionally a government minister, and he theorized at length about the nature of Arab nationalism. His memoirs consist of two densely-written, Arabic language volumes of essays and speeches designed to persuade contemporary audiences of the need to pursue his vision of a secular, culturally based vision of nationalism. Fortunately, William Cleveland summarized those memoirs in English in 1972.⁴⁸ Al-Husri began as an Ottoman nationalist before becoming an Arab nationalist. He chose common language as the primary marker of Arab identity, implicitly acknowledging the artificiality of nationalism. For him, words were tools for shaping public perception and the national destiny. Despite the voluminous writings he left behind, al-Husri barely mentions the Assyrians. This omission by al-Husri, and also al-Askari, is itself evidence of knowledge of the events and denial of them.

By far the most important single primary source, the only one directly concerning the Simele massacre itself, is Stafford's book. Many of the writers of secondary sources rely on Stafford for the basic narrative of events. As noted previously, Stafford was a British army officer and liaison between the British and Iraqi governments. His book is an effort to preserve a memory of the massacre, but also to avoid any responsibility the British had in bringing it. The Cambridge *Records of Iraq*, the British diplomatic letters

⁴⁷ In this paper, "al-Husri" indicates Sati' al-Husri, the educator and nationalist intellectual. "Husry" refers to his son, Khaldun Husry, the Arab historian who wrote an English-language article about the Simele massacre in 1974. "Husry" is the spelling on the article.

⁴⁸ Sati' al-Husri abu Khaldun, *Selected National Research, Which Was Written and Published by the Author on Different Dates, 1923-1963* (Dar Jerusalem: Beirut, n.d.); William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' Al-Husri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

from Iraq, supplement Stafford's account and share his British bias, while the highly edited letters of Mar Eshai Shimun attempted to debunk some of the British claims.⁴⁹

Analysis of these primary sources and the secondary sources of this specific case of genocide, and other cases with similar incidences of ethnic cleansing, strongly suggest that nationalism in Iraq created Other groups, including the Assyrians, and also that the presence of an Other group increased the likelihood that its members would be victims of mass violence. None of the sources suggest that the genocide is inevitable, since the decision to proceed is always the product of human decisions. The lack of any real mention of Simele or the larger anti-Assyrian campaign by Arab sources probably means that those writers knew about it and were suppressing information about it to protect themselves personally and the legitimacy of the state. This paper then makes the additional argument that the nature of Iraqi nationalism was such that the Simele Massacre was a necessary precondition for public support to solidify around the army as a uniting event. Suggesting alternative avenues to national unity is counter-factual, speculative, and beyond the scope of this paper.

Chapter II deconstructs the nationalist narrative and argues that nationalism fueled religious hatred, which in turn facilitated the further development of Iraqi nationalism. Nation-states are artificial constructs that create majorities and Othered communities. The Iraqi hegemonic culture grew to perceive the Assyrians as an internal threat to the state. Nationalism and violence, therefore, fed each other. Chapter III contains the narrative of the events leading to the Simele it from various sources, especially the memoir of R.S.

⁴⁹ *Records of Iraq, 1914-1966, v.7: 1932-1936*, Alan de L. Rush & Jane Priestland, eds., (n.p.: Archive Editions Limited, 2001); Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, *The Assyrian Tragedy* (n.p.; Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation, 2010); N.B.: In this context, the Syriac word "mar" means "patriarch" or "bishop."

Stafford, a British army officer. In 1933, an armed group of Assyrian men had unsuccessful tried to emigrate to Syria, and engaged part of the Iraqi army on their return. The fear Iraqi officials felt caused them to authorize the massacre at Simele. Chapter IV discusses the creation of the Other, specifically how Sunni Arabs and Kurds saw the native Assyrian population as a foreign threat to security. In Chapter V, there is a discussion of how the massacres informed Iraqi nationalism and led to an official and popular denial of the genocidal past. Denial of historically-documented mass violence is evidence of knowledge of and perhaps complicity in such violence.

CHAPTER II

DECONSTRUCTING NATIONALIST NARRATIVES

The existence of an Iraqi nationalist narrative was necessary to have defined the Assyrians in opposition to that, and that Othering was a precondition to the state-sponsored violence. To a large degree, Iraqi nationalism arose from the perceived threat of the Assyrians, and solidified around the army as the instrument of the people. A precondition for that was a belief that Iraq was a nation and that the Assyrians were dangerous interlopers. Despite being native to the general area, many Sunni Arabs and Kurds saw the Hakkari Assyrians in particular as a foreign threat to the fledgling nation. The close association of the Assyrians with the British and their use of Assyrian soldiers to suppress Kurdish unrest reinforced the preconception.

1. Nationalism is not naturally occurring.

Nationalism is based on constructed narratives, usually of recent creation, that project a national existence backward in time into an imaginary and idealized past. It is, in large measure, an assumption that modern nation-states are somehow the naturally occurring, inevitable, end result of social evolution, to which one owes his or her primary loyalty, and from which one receives her or his primary identity. In this, Iraqi nationalism

is a case in point. To understand how Iraqi nationalism made the Assyrians into a Saidian Other, it is necessary to deconstruct the national narrative.

In order to understand nationalist thinking, one must first understand what nationalism is not, and what it is not is either inevitable or natural. Present-day persons, especially those who grew up in the twentieth century in majority white English or French-speaking countries, with tales of heroics and sacrifice in defense of the nation in two world wars, tend to regard the nation and the nation-state as an assumed reality. For the nationalist narrative, the nation and the state are one and the same, and with exceptions, those with citizenship are all of the same nationality. Likewise, “nation,” “country,” and “state” (when not used to mean “province”) are synonymous in modern, nationalist thought. Nationalism is so accepted as normal that even ostensibly post-nationalist revolutionary states have followed the nationalist global norm. Even racially and linguistically diverse empires such as the United States and the antebellum Ottoman Empire have used nationalism to cement control over its people and territories, and to exclude those who do not fit the nationalist model.¹ Likewise, Ottoman successor states promoted their own nationalist narratives following the Ottoman period while under direct European control, and then after nominal independence.

Despite nationalism’s modernity, the non-historian public does not give a second thought to fictional film portrayals of a thirteenth-century Scottish nationalist movement or of Iron Age warriors fighting for Greece, as if such a nation could have existed then,

¹ Consider, at the turning point of the American Civil War, Lincoln during his Gettysburg address claiming that the United States were a “new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” The nationalist narrative naturalized the consolidation of federal, which is to say national, power over what had recently been United States territory.

against Eastern aggression.² Nation is a natural condition for non-historians, as well as for previous generations of modern historians, and is easily projected backward in time to connect present day conditions to those in a mostly imagined past. Sadly for those seeking neat social categories, none of the assumptions of nationalism is true in any objective sense. Like all social identities, nations, nation-states, and nationalities are constructed social entities. Further, to a large degree they are not merely artificially constructed, but deliberately so for purposes advanced by those who controlled and continue to control the national narrative.

Imagined Communities and *The Invention of Tradition* deconstruct nationalist norms and common national identities. Of particular importance is the revelation in *The Invention of Tradition* of the artificiality of these national traditions, especially in colonized countries.³ The British invention and manipulation of ceremony and nationalist symbols for their own imperial benefit illustrates the point starkly. Colonizers fabricated a national tradition for colonized people. Likewise, first Ottoman and then Arab nationalism were deliberate creations to achieve certain political and social goals. The British as colonizers used these techniques in creating the modern state of Iraq. The establishment of the Iraqi monarchy based on a transplanted Arabian prince is one such example. Likewise, Iraq as an Arab Sunni state, independent from both the Ottomans and the British, at least nominally, was an imagined community. Despite nationalist narratives that created a past for the Iraqi nation, it remained the heterogeneous creation of Sykes-

² For a discussion on the modernity of post-Ottoman successor states, see, Imad El-Anis, "(Dis) Integration and the Emergence of the State System in the Middle East," *Journal of Global Analysis* (July 2011) 11-28.

³ Terrance Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," *The Invention of Traditions*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., 211.

Picot, the post war agreement between the British and the French to divide the Middle East between them.

Present-day historians, of course, realize that the nation is a constructed identity based on a narrative of common descent, culture, religion, and language. People who fit the description provided by the national narrative are nationals, while those who do not become “marked citizens” or Saidian Others.⁴ A marked citizen is one whose acceptance in society is always qualified as being somehow atypical of the “normal,” generic citizen in color, language, religion, or some other characteristic, which may include gender.⁵ An unmarked citizen has a position of relative privilege in society. That person’s loyalty is assumed and his or her actions reflect only on the individual in question. By contrast, a marked citizen must continuously justify his or her place in society, and the majority views a marked citizen’s actions as reflective of his or her whole race, religion, or ethnicity.⁶ The construction of majorities and minorities and the relegation of minorities into the role of marked citizens are means of allocating political power within a society. States marginalize minorities to produce the “core” unmarked citizen majorities.⁷ Minorities, like Assyrians in Iraq, are necessarily excluded in this view.

2. *Early Twentieth-Century Egypt Is an Example of Arab Nationalism.*

Egypt is an illustrative example of Arab nationalism as a tool of resistance to European colonialism. In the early twentieth century, Egyptian elites developed their own

⁴ Pandey, *Routine Violence*, 129-133.

⁵ In orientalist analysis often characterized Middle Eastern and Indian men as effeminate, a sign of backwardness when compared to the masculine European norms of the day.

⁶ Pandey, *Routine Violence*, 129-133.

⁷ Pandey, *Routine Violence*, 130.

nationalism in part to counter the colonial narrative from Britain, which included the European rationale that colonialism was necessary in order to modernize and civilize the Egyptians. The Egyptian nationalist narrative of the time saw Sudan as an inferior people in terms of race, religion, and degree of being civilized. This allowed Egyptian elites a pretext for colonizing Sudan. Egyptians, they believed, needed to colonize Sudan in order to civilize them and to impart what they saw as the correct form of Islam onto the Sudanese. Being Saharan Africans, Egyptians tended to be lighter in skin color than Sudanese people. This gave the Egyptian elites a sense of racial superiority over those from Sudan, a racist ideology they shared with the British colonizers. Troutt Powell includes cartoons of the time that illustrate these racist attitudes.⁸

Egyptian elites bought and keep Sudanese persons as slaves, both under the pretense of educating them in the proper practice of Islam and as an exercise in agency in opposition to their anti-slavery British colonizers. Consequently, Egyptian nationalism of the early twentieth-century was an alternative narrative to the British Orientalist rationale for its continued occupation of Egypt. If Egypt can behave as a colonizing power, it undermined the argument that there was moral superiority on the part of the British to justify their continued colonization of Egypt. Likewise during the last few decades of the Ottoman Empire, Arab nationalists constructed their own narratives as resistance to Ottoman imperial rule. By claiming the attributes of a nation-state, the Iraqi leadership resisted British domination both during and immediately following the mandate period.

⁸ Eve M. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 1-25, 214, 215, 218.

That included reprisals against unpopular minority groups with ties to the British in order to create a nation-state of a homogenous nationality.⁹

3. *Debunking the East-Versus-West Dichotomy.*

In addition to the nationalist narratives, there is also a broader East-versus-West narrative that imagines a contest between the values and norms of the Middle East against those of Europe.¹⁰ This narrative states that the conflict began in the Bronze Age and included the basis for the story of the Trojan War, if such a thing ever actually happened, continued through the Greco-Persian wars, the Alexandrian Empire, the Crusades, the Ottoman conquest of Byzantium, and into modern times. Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis, among others, typify this type of narrative.¹¹ The shortcomings of this train of thought are numerous, but the two most significant are that they are entirely teleological, measuring past events—the distant past in some cases—by modern standards, and that they completely ignore the effects of colonialism and imperialism. Those effects included the post-war creation of new states based on the aspirations of French and British imperialists, and the decision to move the Hakkari Assyrians south of the new border of Turkey and Iraq.

Nothing in history is inevitable, and all events turn on the contingencies of their times, including genocide. For instance, Lewis wrote *What Went Wrong?*, in which he

⁹ Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 1-25.

Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (Chicago: Stanford University Press, 2005) 129-133.

¹⁰ For the purpose of this discussion, “Europe” includes former European settler colonies.

¹¹ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2002).

Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

eponymously introduces the premise that something “went wrong” with Middle Eastern civilization, inevitably causing it to develop into a backward abnormality. He selectively examines the evidence to provide a narrative that supports his premise, and yet ignore European colonialism as a cause of any real or imagined dysfunction. His thesis is, in fact, a conclusion in search of an argument. He and Huntington assume that there is a specific, normal course of history that is typified by Western Europe and the United States, and that the Islamic world deviated from that otherwise inevitable and desirous outcome. Islam, Huntington in particular argues, rejects the supposed rationality of the West, and poses an existential threat to it. The entire East-versus-West argument appears, at least, to have been designed to justify Western control of the Middle East. Whatever the subjective motivation, Lewis’s and Huntington’s views represent the reversal of a proper historical analysis where the evidence informs the conclusion and not the other way around.

Orientalism is the system of thought where Westerners measure the “Orient,” colonized territory that includes the Middle East, against the assumed superiority of the Western model. The imagined superiority of European civilization over that of the Middle East provided the British and French with an intellectual justification for the continued domination of the Middle East long after the First World War, a necessary precondition to the genocide of Assyrians in Iraq. Orientalism looks for differences between civilizations, preferably outlandish and lurid differences, and uses them to justify Western control over the Orient. The Orient is classified as emotional, while the West is rational, superstitious versus pious, tribal versus bureaucratic, and in a state of decay versus modernity.

In short, Orientalism formed a moral rationale for colonialism. Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 began to expose and debunk this perspective.¹² Since then, decades of scholarship have deconstructed various aspects of orientalism. While generally accepted by historians, examples like Huntington and Lewis show that "Saidianism" is not without its dissenting voices. That perspective limits agency since the narrative makes conflict inevitable without an opportunity to improve relations between East and West. Said also developed the concept of "Othering," which is similar to the construction of marked citizens, later described by Pandey. Others are defined based on differences from hegemonic culture, and by focusing on odd, lurid differences between cultures while ignoring more typical similarities. The Iraqi Arabs and Kurds saw the Assyrians as an Other, which make it easy to believe that they were a threat to the state, justifying mass violence.

4. *Mass Violence Is the Result of Constructed Identities.*

The relevance of this discussion to the present case is that all identity, including nationalism, is constructed, often by reading non-native assumptions into the historical record. Promoting the idea that the Ottomans founded their empire on religious fervency in the fourteenth century provides a precedent and normalization for "continuing" that mission through *jihad* (in the violent sense of the word) in 1914. We are necessarily influenced by our own subjective identity and cultural norms. States, nation-states and otherwise, are power structures that can exist because individuals normalize their power. People construct narratives to explain the origins of their societies and their place in it.

¹² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism, 25th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978, 1994).

People accept and perpetuate the national narrative, and enforce their own compliance with it. This, of course, is the nature of Foucauldian power.¹³

Rather than emanating from powerful institutions, power exists because people believe it exists and accept it as normal. The nationalist narrative, therefore, provides a rhetorical vehicle for self-reinforcement and reproduction of the nationalist state. While the society, including the nation-state apparatus creates individuals, those individuals also create the state. The constructed national majority tends to accept the contrived status of Saidian others as “marked citizens,” those who do not fit the preconceived norms of the hegemonic culture, making them easy targets for discrimination and pogroms. As a result, the majority, which is as much of a social construct as minorities, tends to view non-conforming persons as a foreign element within the society.

If some members of an Othered community really did come from outside the state, then it impugns the whole group. If that group has connections, real or imagined, to foreign powers, especially powers hostile to the state, then it is easy to naturalize the idea that the Othered group is a dangerous subversive element within society. The Armenians and Assyrians experienced that social and political perception, and in the nineteenth century, and especially during World War I, both groups suffered severely at the hands of state actors as a result. In the 1930s, nationalism created “majorities” out of Arab

¹³ Foucault explained this in an interview with J.L. Brochier: “When I think of the mechanics of power, I think of its capillary form of existence, of the extent to which power seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies, permeates their gestures, their posture, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people.” Biddy Martin, “Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault,” *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, Northeastern University Press, 1988, 7.

Sunnis.¹⁴ That allowed the majority to construct the Assyrians as Others. Ethnic cleansing then reinforced the nationalist narratives by allowing the army to grow in importance in the national identity.

Assyrians for their part, and contrary to the Arab perception that they were foreigners, are indigenous to present day Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. As with Armenians, what distinguishes Assyrians in Middle Eastern nationalist thought is religious identity. “Assyrians” is a blanket term for the various communities of Syriac Christians. Their sectarian denominations were native to the area and used Aramaic, an ancient Semitic language, for their liturgy. Stafford, relying on the constructed racialized identities of his time, claimed that in terms of common descent, the Assyrians were Semitic people, like Arabs, while the neighboring Kurds were “Aryan,” that is to say Indo-European, like the Persians. More importantly, Stafford noted that the Assyrians who were the focus of his attention lived in the mountains during the summer, often at altitudes of 8000 feet (2400 meters), and descended during the winter, suggesting that some of them must have lived part of the year in what is now Iraq. He also noted other Assyrian communities who did not live in the mountains were subjects of the Kurdish tribal leaders. The appendix of Stafford’s book containing various maps gives some idea to how diverse the Assyrian people were at the time, with many villages across northern Iraq.¹⁵ This, along with the British diplomatic sources, show that the mass violence was not directed toward Simele

¹⁴ “*** According to Yusuf Malek, (then working for the secretary to 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 massacre of the Assyrians. As the attempt initially gained little support, officials began to play on religious animosities and a more assertive call for a general massacre of Christians was announced. This call appealed to fundamentalist religious convictions, bridging the gap between Kurd and Arab. ***” [Underscore added.] Donabed, 92.

¹⁵ Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, 10, 11, fn.1.

or Hakkari Assyrians alone, but was part of campaign against a larger Assyrian community.

CHAPTER III

SETTING THE STAGE FOR GENOCIDE

This chapter examines primary sources that describe the events leading to the massacre at Simele. Of particular importance is the narrative of R.S. Stafford, who wrote from his own knowledge of the relevant political and social events, much of it from personal experience. These sources argue that events involving a small group of Assyrian men created an international incident, followed by an armed conflict with an Iraqi army unit, exacerbating governmental distrust of the Assyrians. These events established the conditions for the Iraqi government to direct a campaign of ethnic cleansing against them. The military campaign against the Assyrians at Simele, together with other anti-Assyrian pogroms around Northern Iraq, reinforced the nationalist narrative, especially concerning the use of the army as a unifying force of the nation.

What these sources make clear is that violence against religious minorities was not the result of doctrinal differences or ancient hatreds, but rather of contemporary events and perceptions concerning the material security of the kingdom. As explained by Pandey and others in Chapter III, the majority views the Other as a threat, often in collaboration with foreign powers. That perception of a foreign threat provides a rationale for state-sanctioned violence against the minority group. That violence in turn reinforces the nationalist narrative. Here, growing governmental irritation and distrust of the

Assyrians caused state actors to view them as a foreign threat acting on behalf of British interests. The Iraqi government reacted as if facing a foreign, military threat, despite the unarmed and unorganized nature of their victims. The successful suppression of an apparent, but non-existent, threat reproduced the nationalist narrative and cemented the army as the embodiment of Iraqi nationalism.

1. *Lt. Col. R.S. Stafford and The Tragedy of the Assyrians.*

Ronald Sempill Stafford was a British Army officer and advisor to the Iraqi crown serving in Mesopotamia during the relevant events (though he is barely mentioned in the British diplomatic record). Consequently, his book has its shortcomings. It is essentially an official, Orientalist narrative that offered the pretense of authoritative objectivity while, at the same time, it attempted to justify the actions of the British government, as well as his own actions. Stafford's effort to absolve the British government and himself of any responsibility in the World War I genocide or the 1933 massacre mirrors the diplomatic record. An unsigned report by "Eastern Department, Foreign Office," dated August 25, 1934 and marked "strictly confidential," denies any effort by the British government to entice Ottoman Assyrians to fight for the Entente during the war along with Britain, France, and Russia, but against the Ottomans, but implausibly claims that Britain was doing her best to accommodate the Assyrians out of sympathy.¹

Stafford, for his part, was making a reasonably honest effort in this regard since not all of his statements were self-serving. However, one might view his omissions as

¹ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 603-607.

misleading the reader. Consider his explanation of his involvement in sending the Iraqi Army after Malik Yacu, the man Stafford viewed as a chief instigator of dissatisfaction among Assyrian settlers, and his followers.

I must admit that it was with very considerable misgivings that, when consulted in Bagdad, I agreed to the employment of the Army. The Army officers were known to hate the Assyrians and in particular Bekir Sidqi, who was in command in the north, had openly stated what he would do to them if the opportunity occurred.²

Stafford then explained that the clash of personalities he described was one of the triggering events of the Assyrian genocide in Iraq. Clearly he is cognizant of his own involvement in the situation, but claims at each step as events unfolded that it was his aim and that of the British and the Iraqi governments to avoid bloodshed. That claim by Stafford was either an uninformed opinion or a lie, since Feisal had authorized the massacre and various Iraqi ministries had been circulating leaflets among the Kurdish population calling them to massacre Assyrians as early as 1929.³

Stafford efforts to justify the premature end of the British mandate in Iraq with little more than Feisal's word that the Assyrians would be treated well seem unconvincing. Mar Eshai Shimun, XXIII, the Assyrian religious patriarch at the time, referred to such assurances dismissively as "scraps of paper."⁴ The Assyrians having suffered a campaign of political assassination at the behest of state actors in the late 1920s and into 1930, Mar Shimun's apprehension was understandable.⁵ For their part,

² Stafford (1934), 128.

³ Donabed, 93, 94, citing oral accounts and the story of Ezra Warda (Effendi) of Baz and his interception of the government telegram calling for an Assyrian massacre in 'Abdyešu' Barzana, *Šinnē d-'Asqūtā: Qrābā d-Dayrabūn w-Gunhā d-Simele* ["Years of Hardship: The Battle of Dayrabūn and the Simele Massacre"] (Chicago: Assyrian Academic Society, 2003), 212-220.

⁴ Stafford 1935, 89-91; Mar Eshai Shimun, 16, 17; *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 604-605.

⁵ Donabed, 94, citing the same sources as in footnote 48.

Iraqi intellectuals saw Feisal as an extension of British power, while in the British diplomatic record the Iraqi king was often depicted as a weak leader, anxious to leave the country during a time of crisis in order to seek treatment at a Swiss Spa.⁶

The careful justifications Stafford afforded his own government did not extend to the League of Nations commissioners, whom he came close to castigating for ignorance and a double standard between Assyrians and Arabs. The commissioners criticized the Assyrians for causing their own inability to return home by rebelling against the Ottoman state in the first place, ignoring the call to *jihad* against non-Muslims and the pernicious persecution before the war. At the same time, they rewarded the Arabs for doing the exact same thing. The League's recommendation for the Assyrian "problem" was for the Assyrians simply to move back to Turkey and to submit to Turkish authority after losing a quarter of a million of their people to ethnic cleansing during the war. Stafford seems implicitly critical of the Entente's exclusion of the Assyrians from representation at negotiations for the settling of affairs in the post-Ottoman Middle East. For their part, the British were willing to admit Iraq into the League of Nations as a sovereign state, provided that Iraq protect British oil interests.⁷

Nevertheless, Stafford's sympathy for the Assyrians did not prevent him from being highly critical of many of them, especially their leaders. He notes the condescension the Assyrians had for Arabs. "The Assyrians considered that culturally

⁶ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, "Rumored Forthcoming Abdication of King Faisal in Favor of Son Ghazi." 30 Aug. 1933, to U.S. Secretary of State, unsigned, 65, "Sir F. Humphreys to Sir John Simon," 19 Sept. 1933, 68. As a side note, the king's need for the treatment appears to have been genuine, since he died of tuberculosis shortly thereafter.

⁷ Stafford 1935, 70, 81; Donabed, 94, citing oral accounts and the story of Ezra Warda (Effendi) of Baz, 324-325, and *Report to the UK to the League of Nations on the Administration of 'Iraq for the Year 1930*, Colonial No. 62 (London: 1931), 29.

they were more advanced than the Arabs, and they resented being put under the rule of a people to whom they felt themselves superior.” If true, then Christian missionaries and then British officials working with the Assyrian levies created this attitude in the first place. As tensions mounted during the “Syrian adventure” (discussed below) and despite the apparent efforts of the British, French, and Iraqi governments to mollify those tensions, Stafford wrote in exasperation, “The Assyrians are, admittedly, a difficult people to handle. They have a veritable genius for irritating even those who are most sympathetic towards them.” The point here is that despite his biases and prejudices, Stafford appears to have done his best to be even handed in his reporting of events, even if he failed to see his own condescension in assuming that the Assyrians needed to be handled and that the British were the ones to do it.⁸ Unfortunately, his reading of events leaves out some important facts, especially those that illustrate British involvement in the massacre.

Stafford’s listed sources are thin. While the book has numerous footnotes, they are of an explanatory nature rather than ones that provide references for his factual assertions. Stafford added a bibliography of thirteen sources that include contemporary official reports and a few geographical and historical references. Those sources were not reprinted in his book, at least not in the twenty-first century reprints. Stafford is, after all, telling the story of the Assyrians in Iraq as a witness to the events in question. Consequently, most of his narrative has to be considered a primary source. In fairness to the author, he was an army officer and administrator, not a historian.

⁸ Stafford (1935), 104, 105.

Nevertheless, having the report of a British officer and the diplomatic records as among the few English language sources is problematic. Khaldun Husry, writing in 1974, cites Stafford extensively, yet offers a rebuttal to the pro-British bias. Husry blames the constant interference in Assyrian affairs by the British who were using Assyrian soldiers against their Kurdish neighbors.⁹ The Assyrian levies were, in fact, acting as an agency of a foreign power, and others viewed them as such. That collusion between the British and Assyrians exacerbated animosity among Kurds and Arabs against the Assyrians. The relationship between Arabs and Kurds was complicated by British interference.

In 1934, Mar Eshai Shimun, the Hikkari Assyrians' ecclesiastical leader, compiled excerpts of official correspondences and deliberations along with a brief narrative of events that strongly suggested the only reason the Assyrians ever aligned themselves with the Entente was because of specific, British promises of military support during the war and territory afterwards. Neither of those claimed promises materialized.¹⁰ Unfortunately, this thin book's excerpts may be taken out of context, and there is no way to verify Mar Shimun's sketchy version of the facts. Fortunately, Donabed's new book supplements the otherwise sparse information with references to numerous Assyrian primary sources.

The British narratives tend to blame Shimun for provoking the state. One of his persistent demands to the Entente, League of Nations, and Iraqi crown was that he be allowed to act as both spiritual and temporal leader of the displaced Assyrians, a

⁹Khaldun S. Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5 (1974): 161-176; Khaldun S. Husry, "The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (II)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5 (1974): 344-360.

¹⁰ Mar Eshai Shimun, 4-10.

condition that the Iraqi government found unacceptable, but one that was consistent with pre-war norms. The diplomatic record reveals the frustration of British officials in their dealings with Shimun and his influential mother.¹¹ Shimun's intransigence on this issue may have impeded efforts at a cooperative settlement. Shimun spent an entire chapter of his thin book justifying the claimed necessity of his insistence on ruling the Assyrian community. The patriarchy continued airing their personal grievances publicly well after the massacre as a reprinted issue of *Church Times* shows.¹²

As a side note to avoid confusion, it is necessary to know that Shimun did not become patriarch until March 1918 when the Kurdish leader, Simko, murdered Mar Eshai Shimun's predecessor, Mar Shimun Benjamin.¹³ Donabed's sources indicate that ecclesiastical authority governed the local Assyrian communities for as long as anyone remembered, and that their own local governance and autonomy was necessary to protect them from the already hostile Arab and Kurdish neighbors, to say nothing about the state.¹⁴ On 23 October 1931, Eshai Shimun wrote to the League of Nations high commissioner in Geneva, beseeching him to allow his community to relocate to some other place, because he was afraid the transplanted community had no future in Iraq.¹⁵

Without the forced relocation of Ottoman Assyrians to Northern Iraq among the Kurds, the 1933 massacre could not have happened, at least not as it did. In the 1920s,

¹¹ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, letter from King Feisal to Sir. F. Humphreys, 27 July 1933, p.555, Ogilvie Forbes, 3 Aug. 1933, 558.

¹² *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 698.

¹³ Mar Eshai Shimun, 36.

¹⁴ Donabed, 95, *citing* "Memorandum from Air Headquarters, Iraq to secretary to high commissioner, Baghdad, 2 October 1923, enclosing secret report from Major J.M.S. Renton, Headquarters, Iraq Levies, Mosul to officer commanding, Iraq Levies, Mosul, 12 September 1923, AIR 23/449."

¹⁵ Donabed, 95, 96, *quoting* "Letter to the Mandates Commission, By The Mar Shimun et al, Mosul, October 23rd, 1931."

Iraq was a new state, a kingdom under the Hashemite dynasty, and under the protection and oversight of the British government pursuant to a mandate from the League of Nations. The Iraqi government was reticent to allow a discontented, Christian minority into its country,¹⁶ despite the fact that many of them already had spent winters in low lands on what became the area just south of the Turkish border. Since the Iraqi leaders were beholden to the British, they had no real choice but to comply with the British plan.

Once the Assyrians relocated to Iraq, the British conscripted most of their young men¹⁷ and used those Assyrian levies “in subduing the Kurdish tribes of the north and in checking the Turks and recovering Rawanduz from them in 1923.”¹⁸ That caused Muslim Arabs and Kurds to view the Assyrians as an appendage of British colonialism and a dangerous foreign element within the Iraqi state. The fact that the British used Assyrian soldiers to guard their military assets in northern Iraq exacerbated that feeling.¹⁹ For details on the Assyrian levies, Husry refers to an official report written by Stafford on August 3, 1933, the day before Assyrians attacked an army unit at “Dayrbaun.”²⁰

Stafford observed that British favoritism of Assyrian soldiers caused them to think of themselves as “first-class troops” and to increase their “natural conceit” that “has no bounds.” The Assyrian refugees were unhappy with their situation upon arriving in Iraq and wished to return to the Hakkari Mountains to live under British protection. They wanted the map redrawn to prevent the Hakkari region from being under Turkish

¹⁶ See e.g., Stafford 1935, 34.

¹⁷ Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq, Contriving King and Country* (New York: Columbia University Press 2007): 154; Mar Eshai Shimun, 17; Donabed, 72, citing “Firas Jatou (grandson of Jatou), interview with the author [Donabed], San Jose, CA, 5 July 2012.”

¹⁸ Husry (I), 165.

¹⁹ Husry (I), 165, 166; Levene, 14; *Records of Iraq*, v.7, Sir F. Humphreys to Sir R. Vansittart, 24 Aug. 1933, 583; Donabed, 71, 73.

²⁰ There appears to be no standard, English spelling for Iraqi or Assyrian proper nouns.

control.²¹ Further, they felt surrounded by unsympathetic Muslim neighbors, especially the Kurds, despite the fact that they were not the same Kurds who participated in the 1915 genocide. The Assyrians were worried that once the British mandate ended they would be subjected to genocidal violence of the kind they had just escaped. Unfortunately for them, the power and willingness of the Entente nations to redraw Turkish borders had diminished significantly since the end of the war. With the rise of Mustafa Kemal, Turkish authorities solidified their control over Anatolia. There was no way that the Hakkari Assyrians could return to their former homes unless it was under Turkish rule, rather than as an autonomous enclave as Mar Shimun wanted.²² Some in the Assyrian community favored emigration to Syria. Yaku Ismael, an Assyrian official who was involved in the Assyrian resettlement, obtained leave from Mekki Beg al-Sherbiti, the local sub-governor of Dohuk, on 31 March 1933 to either emigrate or become integrated into Iraqi society.²³

Stafford spent much of his narrative describing how various efforts of the Iraqi government to provide settlement options for the Assyrians met with their disapproval. He also described a certain degree of callousness toward Assyrian complaints, such as unhealthy living conditions, for example. As noted, the Assyrians were not invited to participate in the 1919 League of Nations settlement of the Middle East conference and instead had to rely on their British patrons to speak for them.²⁴ In response to the Assyrian suggestion that they be allowed to settle with other Assyrians living in the

²¹ This was at the same time the Republic of Turkey was attempting to gain control over the Mosul region for access to its mineral resources. Mar Eshai Shimun, 9.

²² Stafford 1935, 45.

²³ Donabed, 99, *citing* “Malik Yaqo Ismael, Aturaye w-tre plashe tibilaye [‘Assyrians and the Two World Wars’] (Tehran: Assyrian Writer’s Board, 1964), 37, 214-15.”

²⁴ Stafford 1935, 55-57, 70 et seq.

French sphere of influence, particularly Syria, Stafford explained that it was not politically feasible. The British government, who felt free to interfere in the internal affairs of so many countries including Iraq, was nevertheless unwilling to challenge French rights under the Sykes-Picot agreement. In fact, the League of Nations (which at this time amounted to the Entente powers sitting as a committee) did not even address Assyrian concerns until 1924, and even then the asserted needs of the Assyrians were answered in the negative.²⁵

Even this did not have to be catastrophic except for the fact that the British terminated their mandate early, possibly in response to financial pressures caused by the global economic depression.²⁶ With no foreign protection or territory of their own, the Assyrians were left relying on internal Iraqi law. This made them afraid of continuing ethnic violence, and that fear that provoked some Assyrians into what Stafford seems to have considered to be rashness. In response to Britain's failure to secure a semi-autonomous enclave for the Assyrians, the levy troops mutinied in June 1932. Despite these problems, Husry notes the government's apparent good faith in at least enacting various laws to protect minorities, the "scraps of paper" of which Eshai Shimun complained. In addition to fear of violence, the Great Depression likely made refugee conditions even more unbearable than they otherwise would have been.²⁷

In analyzing what the British and Iraqi government sources considered Assyrian provocation of Arab wrath, Stafford named two men for special consideration. The first,

²⁵ Stafford 1935, 73, 74, 77.

²⁶ *See generally*, Stafford 1935, ch. VIII.

²⁷ Mar Eshai Shimun, 16, 17; Husry (I), 164.

in Chapter VII, is Eshai Mar Shimun, the ecclesiastical leader of the Assyrians in Iraq.²⁸ In 1933, Shimun had authority over about 27,500 Assyrians, which included 3500 families from the Hikkari region.²⁹ Stafford considered “Ishai” to be arrogant and fanatical. He stated that Shimun actively exacerbated tensions between the Assyrian community near Mosul and the government in Bagdad. Stafford reproduced numerous correspondences sent from Shimun to the government asking, ostensibly on behalf of the Assyrian people, for the return of their previous homes in Turkey and to continue the temporal as well as religious authority of the Mar Shimun. As previously noted, Shimun may well have been motivated by the continuing ethnic violence against Assyrians all over Northern Iraq and the memories of the First World War.

Attempts by King Feisal to assure the Assyrians of their position in Iraqi society had little effect on them, since on 29 June 1933, members of the Iraqi parliament made speeches stirring up Arab hatred of Assyrians. The newspaper *al-Istiqlal*, *inter alia*, published them.³⁰ Shimun continued to obstruct efforts to settle Assyrians permanently. As Stafford repeatedly notes, returning to the Hakkari area was flat out impossible without accepting Turkish rule, and King Feisal, a new monarch trying to consolidate rule over a new kingdom, was simply unwilling to grant the patriarch any political power. According to Stafford, therefore, Shimun pursued a policy of non-cooperation with any government initiatives to the point of discouraging Assyrians from applying for Iraqi citizenship. The Arab government found Shimun to be insolent and, on 22 May 1933,

²⁸ Stafford (1935), 93.

²⁹ Donabed, 100, citing “ ‘Letter and Report from Major Thompson,’ 1841.”

³⁰ Stafford (1935), 108.

summoned him to Bagdad. There, Hikmat Sulayman arrested Shimun and refused to let him return to Mosul for a short time.³¹

As obstructionist as Shimun was, in Stafford's view, the more serious provocation came from an agitator named Malik Yacu.³² Yacu was from a prominent Assyrian family and, at the urging of Mar Shimun's mother, used his personal connections to raise a band of armed men. Stafford states that beginning 1932, Yacu engaged in a violent campaign of propaganda against Iraqi officials, while those officials spread anti-Shimun propaganda. Stafford did not explain what the violence was. With the end of the mandate eminent, this exacerbated tensions, while causing government officials to harden their views of the Assyrians. Yacu's actions divided the Assyrian community prompting some to disclaim publicly any sympathy for him.³³ The police wanted Yacu for questioning, but would only surrender to Stafford, who drove Yacu to Mosul by automobile. After much discussion among officials (including Stafford) and the leaders of various Assyrians factions, Yacu and many armed men left for French-controlled Syria without notifying anyone in authority. Husry states that an internal British report blames Eshai Shimun for supporting the expedition to Syria.³⁴

Raising about eight hundred men, Yacu led them across what they believed to be the Syrian border at the Tigris. The French, who did not welcome Yacu's group as he had claimed, disarmed the men and detained them. It soon became clear, however, that confusion over where exactly the border was located meant that most of Yacu's party was

³¹ Stafford (1935), 116, 118; *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 558;

³² Stafford (1935), 123-126.

³³ Stafford (1935), 113, 116, 123, 126.

³⁴ Stafford (1935), 129.

still in what was temporarily part of Iraq. Consequently, French officials sent them away. By now most of the party had realized that Yacu had deceived them, according to Stafford, and were ready to settle in Iraq.³⁵

While informing the British and Iraqi governments that Yacu's group was returning, according to Stafford, the French failed to mention that they returned the Assyrian party's rifles to them. This fact later was the focus of much consternation by the Iraqi government. On 4 August 1933, part of the Iraqi Army confronted Yacu's men in what was more of a skirmish than a battle. After a standoff, Stafford believed that a nervous Assyrian shot an Iraqi and a general engagement ensued, but soon stopped with the Assyrian group in flight. Unlike Stafford, Husry blames Yacu's men for attacking the Iraqis. He refers to a note written by Stafford three days after the altercation concluding that the Assyrians fired first, which is consistent with what Stafford wrote in his book.³⁶

2. *The August Massacres*

Stafford stated that the escalating events, previously discussed, occurred in front of a "black background of fear" that magnified the perception of the threat that a few of the Assyrians posed. In the government, officials began to urge the crown to kill Assyrian men wholesale. The otherwise divided Arab society (Shi'ite versus Sunni) consolidated in response to the perceived Assyrian threat. According to Stafford, the situation was exacerbated by the fact that the army deliberately kept the civil authorities ignorant about its intentions.³⁷ This prevented any peaceful intervention by the government. Other

³⁵ Stafford 1935, 137, *et seq.*

³⁶ Stafford 1935, 137, 139, 142, 143, 147; Husry (I), 175.

³⁷ Stafford 1935, 149, 150.

sources make it clear that Sulaiman was directly involved in the ensuing violence, though subsequent British diplomatic reports deny such claims.³⁸ Reports of dubious veracity reached Iraqi authorities in Mosul of looting and atrocities by armed, Assyrian men. Obviously, the Iraqi government saw the agitation by discontented Assyrians, the Syrian adventure, the refusal of Assyrian leaders to deal with the new government, and finally the direct confrontation with government troops, as threats to national unity and sovereignty that the Iraqi crown could not ignore. By August 9, 1933, the army and government officials decided to exterminate the Assyrians.³⁹

On August 15, Stafford learned from Hikmet Beg that the Assyrian village of Simele, located near Dohuk, overcrowded with refugees from Kurdish and Syrian-Arab raids, was in a state of starvation following ethnic cleansing. Earlier on August 11, 1933, just after midnight, after many Assyrians in Simele surrendered their arms to police on the promise of safety, the army began killing unarmed civilians. "A cold-blooded and methodical massacre of all the men in the village then followed, a massacre which for 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 in the bloodstained annals of the Middle East." Here, Stafford lost his veneer of objective indifference. Simmering with rage, his narration reads like that of an indictment. It is likely that the moral outrage caused by this event was the motivation for writing his book. Writing fifteen years after Armistice Day,

³⁸ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, to Lancelot Oliphant, stamped 31 Dec. 1936, 593-599.

³⁹ Stafford (1935), 168.

he stated that the appearance of the surviving women and children on August 17, 1933 had a worse effect on him than anything he saw in three years in the trenches of France.⁴⁰

Stafford described the murderous details known to him. The massacre was methodical and time-consuming. The army, with the help of the local police chief, killed hundreds of civilian men after disarming them. (Other accounts exonerate the police chief, stating that there was little the police could do in opposition to the army). Stafford claimed that those who said the incident never happened or that the proper army had no part in the massacre were liars.⁴¹ Stafford fails to mention the active role the British Royal Air Force played in the massacre, which was at the disposal of the Iraqi military.⁴²

Simele was the epicenter of violence, but the army, with the complicity of civil authorities, killed Assyrians wherever they found them. According to Stafford, Iraqi soldiers killed six hundred, almost all being non-combatants. That figure is probably limited to the victims at Simele, which was in addition to large-scale looting that destroyed whole villages and the economic underpinnings of Assyrian life. The *Records of Iraq* includes a list of affected villages (but not Simele itself) and the degrees to which each was damaged. Donabed lists five pages of villages that suffered from the genocidal campaign against Assyrians.⁴³ Dispossessed villagers gravitated to Alqosh and were reluctant to return home and rebuild, despite the approaching winter planting season. Even with admonitions by Stafford and other officials, most villagers would not return

⁴⁰ Stafford (1935), 157, 160, 161.

⁴¹ Stafford (1935), 162; *Records of Iraq*, v.7, "Information about Hikmat Sulaiman and Bekr Sidqi." stamped 31 Dec. 1936, 591, 592.

⁴² Donabed, 110, citing Yusuf Malek, *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians* (Chicago: Assyrian National Federation/Assyrian League of America, 1935).

⁴³ Stafford (1935), 164; *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 590; Donabed, 112-116, citing "Paul Knabenshue, US ambassador to Iraq, to Secretary of State, 'Suppression of Assyrian Revolt,' (no. 165), 23 August 1933, 890g.4016 Assyrians/82;" Appendix "D."

home to begin planting. Stafford concluded his book by noting charitable efforts made for the surviving Assyrians and discussing their possible relocation outside of Iraq. As of the end of 1934 or the beginning of 1935, no one made such arrangements, though Iraqi officials insisted to British advisors that such efforts were underway by 1935.⁴⁴

The sources show that the violence against Assyrians in Simele and in other Assyrian villages at that time was genocide, authorized by the king himself as discussed in the following chapter. The ethnic cleansing in Iraq was the continuation of a state-sponsored practice that began under the Ottomans antebellum and became substantial worse during the First World War. Already under suspicion due to their association with the British military, the Assyrians became an easy target for mass violence at the direction of the new state. After the dissolution of the Empire, the Iraqi government followed a nationalist agenda to solidify support for the new Sunni Arab regime and to resist British imperialist efforts. Through the lens of nationalism, Iraqi state leaders and others constructed the Assyrians into an internal threat and instituted a campaign of mass violence against them, principally at Simele, but also in villages across Northern Iraq. I discuss the creation of the perception that the Assyrians were an internal threat to state security in Chapter IV.

⁴⁴ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 304, 573, *et seq.*

CHAPTER IV

CONSTRUCTING THE OTHER

Examining how the imperial government made Armenians into an Other is instructive for understanding how nationalism creates out-groups that become the subjects of mass violence. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Armenians, but also Assyrian Christians, were the targets of agitation efforts by foreign, Christian-majority empires. These efforts were largely unsuccessful, but they did support limited revolutionary movements by supplying materials and nationalist literature. European powers, and especially missionaries from the United States, encouraged revolt against the Ottoman state. Janet Klein explains that the war between the Ottomans and Russia, beginning in 1876, caused great damage to eastern Anatolia, and exacerbated the fear for foreign agitation of Armenians. Kurdish chiefs of the region rose in revolt, fearing that the Armenians, or Europeans backing them, would assume control of area, and in particular that Article 6 of the Treaty of Berlin, designed to protect Armenians aggression by Kurds and Circassians, would become effective.¹

The Sultan gave certain Kurdish tribal chiefs the task of forming militias under Kurdish control. There were three main purposes for the Kurdish militias. One was to keep Armenian communities near the Russian border under control. While revolutionary

¹ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 20-23.

movements among Armenians were limited, and with limited goals ranging from independence to greater local autonomy, after 1890, the Sultan increasingly saw them as a significant threat to imperial stability and control. In addition, the militias were designed to reinforce the military security of the border between Russia and Ottoman Anatolia where it was weak. The remaining purpose was to Ottomanize the tribal Kurds. The region was not well organized, and both taxes and conscription was below imperial standards. Part of the Ottomanization was to strengthen Kurdish ties to Sunni Islam, the state, and to the Sultan himself. The state invented traditions for that purpose. Naming these militias after himself, calling them the Hamidiye, was calculated to aid in strengthening those cultural ties.²

In addition, there were also economic reasons for this policy, the author notes, as much of the territory in question was being used as pasture land for sheep and goats. The Ottoman Empire was under military and commercial pressure from wealthier and better-armed majority-Christian empires and, consequently, felt a need to increase productivity, including agricultural productivity. Herding is far less productive per acre than actual agriculture. By giving the Kurdish militia control over the area, the state hoped to pressure residents to use stationary farming rather than semi-nomadic herding.³

The result of the foregoing arrangement is a case study in unintended consequences. Klein shows that by using one ethnic out-group, tribal Kurds, to shore up Ottoman political unity against divisive agitation from another out-group, Armenians, the state had effectively caused both groups, as well as others, to become increasingly insular

² Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 22, 23.

³ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 67.

and suspicious of both the state and their neighbors. The militia leadership acted as if it had *carte blanche* from the sultan for its conduct. Rather than suppressing insurrection, the Kurdish militia plundered not only Armenian villages, but also those of other Christian groups and even of other Muslim Kurds. Through extortion and outright force, the militia leaders took possession of land, effectively making locals share croppers on what recently had been their own farms. Klein notes that decentralization had served the Ottoman state well in the past, but as the nineteenth century came to a close, the state seemed to lack the ability to impose its law in outlying areas. The result was chaos rather than consolidation.⁴

The Kurdish regimental commanders had little loyalty to the sultan, an observation reflected in British correspondence, and any attachment the Armenians felt toward the Empire was greatly strained. One is tempted to take the teleological approach and see all this as background for the Armenian genocide that would eventually be perpetrated by the Young Turks, but of course those involved in the last years of the nineteenth century had no such eventuality in mind, as they did not foresee an end to the sultanate, let alone the Empire. Interestingly, the reasons for the creation of the Hamidiye units continued to seem sufficiently compelling in the twentieth century that the Young Turk regime declined to disband or even to curb the Kurdish militias, despite promises to do so.⁵

This example of Ottoman “modernization” illustrates is how the Other is constructed. Foreign agitation and its support of a marginal revolutionary movement

⁴ Klein, 58-94.

⁵ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 94 *et seq.*

created suspicion in the minds of central state rules. As explained by Pandey, “marked citizens” are ones whose loyalty and acceptance by the larger community is not assumed. Armenians had long been part of normal Ottoman society, but in the late nineteenth century, their Christian identity made them into a minority and marked citizens.⁶ While their threat to political stability was exaggerated, the danger of losing territory occupied by Christian populations was quite real. The Empire lost much of its Christian-majority territory in the Balkan Wars. This was not the result of any theological differences with the Muslim state, but rather the perception that Christian majority empires were attempting to agitate the Armenians against the Ottomans. The suspicion of a fifth column within the Ottoman citizenry turned the Armenians into an Other. Assyrians became marked citizens in a similar manner, as a Christian community that became the target of foreign agitation.⁷

What seems to be clear not only about the Simele Massacre, but of the Ottoman genocide against Armenian and Assyrian Christians generally, is that religious doctrinal differences between Muslim perpetrators and Christian communities were irrelevant to the violence. Arabs and Kurds perceived the Assyrians, especially the Hakkari group, as foreigners, and given their political connections to the British, as enforcers of the British colonizers. That perception allowed the state construct the Assyrians into a threat to domestic stability and a source of sedition, creating an apparent justification for ethnic cleansing.

⁶ Janet Klein, “The Minority Question,” 42 *et seq.*

⁷ Donabed, 118.

CHAPTER V

IRAQI NATIONALISM AND THE DENIAL OF MASS VIOLENCE

1. *Discussion of Nationalism.*

The “Assyrian affair,” as British sources called it, implicitly understating its scope and the violence, served as a catalyst to a program of militarization along the Turkish and German models that began before 1933. Arab and Kurdish Iraqis saw the Assyrians and particularly those drafted, trained, and equipped by the British as a dangerous, foreign element within society and provided a useful catalyst for Iraqi nationalist militarism. Soldiers and officers who participated in the massacre were treated to a triumphal procession in Mosul.¹ The crown promoted the official who may have planned the massacre, Bekir Sidqi. In 1936, he and Hikmat Sulaiman conducted a *coup d’etat* against Feisal’s successor.² Not only did nationalism drive fear and anger over a perceived internal threat, but the resulting genocidal campaign in turn drove Iraqi nationalism, causing a reproduction of the dominant narrative. The state and the army in particular demonstrated an ability to respond to an internal, but seemingly foreign, “threat,” elevating the army’s standing in the public perception.

¹ Eric Davis, *Memories of State* (Los Angeles: University of California Press 2005): 62; *Records of Iraq*, v.7, Consul Monypenny to Mr. Ogilvie-Forbes, 21 Aug. 1933, 580.

² Husry (II), 352; Kanan Makiya (a.k.a. Samir al-Khalil), *Republic of Fear, The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989): 167-169.

Levene speculates that an enemy is needed for nascent nationalism to flourish.³ At the very least, nationalist movements tend to create Others as scapegoats for national problems and often resort to ethnic cleansing as an expedient. The examples are too numerous to list here, but the Armenian genocide is too close in geography and time not to mention. While the events leading to Armenian persecution and genocide are complex and contingent, Christian empires had been in contact with Armenians for decades. That interaction with a Christian community on the Russian border created the impression in the minds of Ottoman rulers like Envar Pasha that Christian communities, and the Armenians and Assyrians in particular, posed an internal threat. Eliminating it was part of the burgeoning Turkish nationalism. One writer suggests that nationalist agitation of anti-Assyrian feelings in northern Iraq may have been for the purpose of distracting the national attention from Shiites who were revolting in the south.⁴

Travis discusses in his chapter in *Forgotten Genocides* the unwillingness of scholars to acknowledge the Assyrian genocides of World War One during the twentieth century. As late as 2004, scholars of the Armenian genocide seemed to have been barely aware of the fate of the Assyrians.⁵ For the part of Turkish authorities, the Assyrians are in the same position as the Armenians. Hoping to conceal the horrible truth that lies at the heart of the founding of the Turkish state, the government denies the existence of an Assyrian genocide and suppresses discussion of the same.⁶ In the 1980s, the Turkish authorities paid foreigners to libel the Assyrians, and to claim that Turkish culture is the only valid culture of Asia Minor. Since then, however, there has been some effort on the

³ Levene, 10.

⁴ Makiya, p.169.

⁵ Travis, 127, 128.

⁶ Akçam, *From Empire to Republic*, 211 *et seq.*

part of the Turkish authorities to recognize the role of their predecessors in ethnic cleansing.⁷

In order for Western scholars to explore fully these matters, they need a command of the Arabic language and access to records possibly located in Mosul and Bagdad. Only then is it possible to examine the causes of violence from an Iraqi point of view and to appreciate fully the degree to which mass violence contributed to the establishment of Iraqi nationalism. One such scholar is Orit Bashkin, who, in writing *The Other Iraq*, relied on Arabic newspapers and literary sources, archived in London, to trace the Iraqi culture of pluralism during the Hashemite monarchy and into the 1950s. Of particular interest here is her chapter on Iraqis who were not Sunni Arabs, entitled “Strangers in Our Midst.”⁸ Intellectuals in Iraq, she explains, had spent the 1920s emphasizing the unity of the Iraqi nation while at the same time criticizing the Iraqi government, and especially the British-appointed king, to the degree censorship allowed.⁹ That rhetorical approach, with the people of various descriptions on one side and the colonial powers on the other, formed the basis of public discussion during the mandate period, and afterwards when Iraq was nominally an independent kingdom, but in fact still under British control. The treaty of 1930 allowed the British the appearance of withdrawal, at least to the outside world, while maintaining British control over security and oil.¹⁰

⁷ Travis 2011, 129, 135.

⁸ Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, 157-193.

⁹ See e.g.: *Records of Iraq*, v.7, noting that the newspaper *Al Ahali* had been critical of the government, 111.

¹⁰ See e.g., *Records of Iraq*, v.7, “Sir F. Humphrys to Sir John Simon,” 3 Apr. 1933, 31.

Avenues of resistance included the popular boycott of Baghdad Light and Power, which was a British-operated utility.¹¹

The 1930 treaty arrangement fooled almost no one in Iraq, and intellectuals resorted to publishing poetic criticism in literary journals rather than directly complaining in newspapers in prose. Given limited literacy, this was a discussion among elites, though literate people tended to read newspapers and poems aloud in coffee shops. Into the 1930s, literary sources emphasized national unity despite sectarian divides. A cartoon in the British diplomatic record, and reprinted on the cover of Bashkin's book, depicts a rabbi, a mullah, and a Christian priest with the declaration that all are brothers in Iraq.¹² That may have been the aspiration, but society was divided among sectarian lines, although the real issue was resource control and not doctrinal differences. For example, among Arabs, Sunnis tended to be the educated, urban elites, while Shiites were usually poor farmers.¹³ Since the post-war borders divided Kurdistan among four states, the British recognized a need to integrate them into society. The British were, of course, the foreign colonizers, together with the Arabian king they selected, possibly as a consolation prize for Feisal's help in the war after the Syrians rejected him in their country.

The Arab vision of Iraqi nationalism did not leave much room for a non-Muslim group with perceived foreign imperial connections like the Assyrians. First, there were never enough Assyrians in Iraq to be a major population, especially after their numbers had been reduced by the 1915 genocide, and after some had been forced to flee from their former homes in the Hakkari Mountains. Arab nationalists identified the Assyrians with

¹¹ See e.g., *Records of Iraq*, v.7, unsigned description of boycott, 12 Jan. 1934, 94-98.

¹² *Records of Iraq*, vol. 7, " 'Habasbuz' dated 10th November, 1936," 645; Bashkin, cover.

¹³ Bashkin, 170.

the British colonizers. The British had brought them into Iraqi Kurdistan as a necessary expediency and eventually exhausted other options for relocation. Simply put, the British inquired to countries as far away as South America for a permanent home, but most other states simply did not want them.¹⁴ The diplomatic record is not clear on the reasons for refusal, but it is possible that after rebelling against the Ottomans, whatever the justification, no one trusted them.

The Iraqi leadership and the British, including Stafford, believed that the ecclesiastical leader of the Assyrians was making it difficult to arrange an accommodation by pursuing a plan of non-cooperation with the Iraqi state. Further, the British used this apparently (but not actually) foreign Christian community as a source of soldiers against local Kurds.¹⁵ Most significantly, the Yacu fiasco, or “Syrian adventure,” happened shortly before the Simele massacre. An active engagement between the Assyrian men of the Yacu party and Iraqi regulars exacerbated the feeling that the British, through their lackeys, were attacking the fragile state from within.¹⁶ Indeed, while in progress, the Syrian adventure was a source of great anxiety for Feisal and the members of the Iraqi cabinet, who fretted about how the French returned the Assyrians’ rifles to them. There was genuine concern that the well-trained and well-armed returning Assyrian men might find and overpower regular army detachments in detail and then cause a general revolt among Assyrians in an area already unstable due to “tribal” Bedouin and Kurdish discontent.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, “Memorandum on the Assyrian Question,” 25 Aug. 1934, 603.

¹⁵ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 583.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, British reports of conversations with King Feisal, 573-584.

Volume seven of the *Records of Iraq* covers 1932 to 1936 and is subtitled *The Rise of the Army*. Bashkin explains in her book that Iraqis who were disillusioned with the monarchy and the continuing colonialism even after nominal independence came to see the army as the most representative and perhaps even democratic institution in the country, since men of all sects and regions served.¹⁸ Democracy has different meanings to different people and not everyone sees the formalized, liberal institutions of Western Europe or America as the best examples. Further, colonized people are understandably suspicious of the efforts of their Western-educated elites to duplicate the systems of the colonizers in their own country. It was also clear to many that the Western liberal system was somewhat of a sham in Iraq as in much of the interbellum Middle East, because the colonizers still held final power. The army, by contrast, consisted of ordinary people and possessed real power that could act against foreign imperialists and their apparent collaborators.

In his book, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, Michael Mann defines “democracy” broadly to include governance based on an ethnic, communal consensus that may or may not include formal elections. The premise of his book is that such nationalist movements tend to turn into ethnic mass violence campaigns in predictable stages. Examples include the Armenian genocide in response to Ottoman and then Turkish feelings that the Christian Armenians, with their imaged ties to Christian Russia, represented an enemy from within. Invariably, Mann argues, ethnic cleansers see themselves as victims of aggression and use that perception to justify ethnic cleansing.¹⁹ In the case of the Armenians, the threat was largely imaginary, while the Assyrians in World War One,

¹⁸ Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 70, 71.

¹⁹ Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 1-33, 55, 61, 63.

who Mann does not address, declared war against the Ottomans, which made the threat real. It was, of course, a very limited threat, and the excessive response was unnecessary. This paper, however, argues that nationalism, and not necessarily democracy, no matter how broadly one defines the term, was the driving force for genocide in Iraq, even though it was ostensibly based on religious distinctions.

It is especially true that people see institutions like the army as democratic when people are living under a tyrannical, colonial rule, while the colonial powers promote increasing liberalization in their home countries. Edward Said explained in *Orientalism* that the dominant culture defines itself in opposition to the Other. Similarly, the colonial power becomes the Other in the eyes of the native population, with the colonized people defining themselves in opposition to it. Despite this, Dr. Bashkin notes that the delineation between colonized and colonizer is never clearly defined.²⁰ Iraqi people observed that British military power kept them in control of Iraq and its government. While some continued to clamor for liberalization, many others rejected it as a form of Westernization and put their hope in the army to depose the foreigners and their puppet king as well.

Similarly, Egyptian nationalism around that time also expressed itself by the Arab elites participating in their own variety of colonialism. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Sudan had fought for and won its independence from Egypt. British occupation reversed that outcome, reattaching Sudan to Egyptian rule. Paradoxically, Egyptian elites insisted that they had a civilizing mission in Sudan, not

²⁰ Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 3.

unlike the Orientalist justification the British used to colonize Iraq and Egypt, and used its control of Sudan to illustrate to Lord Cromer that Egypt was sufficiently civilized, since it too was then a colonial power. While the British appointed an abundance of officials to Cairo—something about which the Iraqis would complain in their own country—in part to crush the Sudanese slave trade, Egyptian elites secretly imported slaves from their southern neighbor as an expression of their Muslim and imperial prerogatives in resistance to British demands.²¹

Husry, in the second part of his 1974 article, makes an important point about Iraqis defining themselves in opposition to the perceived foreign threat. Husry states, “It is impossible to exaggerate the popular indignation in the country following the Assyrian attack on the army.”²² Husry is a rare voice of an Iraqi writing about the massacre in English. To the Iraqi crown and the population near the Assyrian village in Simele, near Mosul, the Assyrians had been a source of irritation since the group arrived immediately after the war. Simply stated, the Arabs, the Kurds, and, after the armed engagement with the army, Feisal himself, increasingly saw the Assyrians as threat to the new nation. While Husry disputes that Bakir Sidqi initiated the killing, it is clear that responding to the perceived threat of the Assyrians elevated Bakir Sidqi and also the army in the public mind. The army took recruits from all over Iraq, so to many it represented the embodiment of the Iraqi nation. Feisal’s short speech on 9 March 1933, as reported in the English-language *Iraq Times*, specifically mentioned plans to enlarge the army.²³

²¹ See generally, Troutt-Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*.

²² Husry, “The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (II),” 344-360.

²³ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 28.

King Feisal, for his part, was a far more complex figure than the popular press or the British diplomats understood. For one thing, one probably reliable report from Hikmat Sulaiman in 1935 stated that, after the time Yacu's Assyrians had engaged the Iraqi army detachment, but before the Simele massacre, it was Feisal himself that—playing the part of Henry Plantagenet—wished aloud that someone would kill the Assyrian men so that they could not cause anymore damage. That, of course, happened under the command of Col. Bakr Sidqi on August 11, since the perpetrators of Simele massacre targeted men almost exclusively. Between the July skirmish of Assyrians and Iraqi regulars and the August 11 massacre, Kurdish raiders began an apparently organized campaign of looting against Assyrian villages, which included theft of crops. Fleeing their homes, Assyrian villagers sought refuge in Simele, where they were subjected to further violence from raiders. For his part, Bakir Sidqi was in command of the soldiers who arrived in Simele during the night of August 10 and 11. Nevertheless, he was not actually traveling with them and was many miles away when the massacre happened. There is, therefore, some dispute in the diplomatic record concerning Bakir Sidqi's own level of responsibility for the violence.

While during his life many nationalists and the British tended to view Feisal as a puppet for Anglo imperialism, he seems to have walked a fine line, promoting nationalism and Iraqi self-rule where possible, and deferring to the British when necessary. British advisors constantly meddled in Iraqi affairs, both internally and in Iraq's relationship with the United Kingdom's ally and rival, France, for example by dissuading the king from formally complaining about the French decision to rearm the

Assyrians during the Syrian Adventure.²⁴ The king appointed numerous cabinets during his reign, which often dissolved shortly after their formation, leaving the king as the last man standing—so to speak—in government. The public never trusted any of the high-ranking politicians, and one British diplomatic note states that the popularly used Arabic expression for a cabinet debate was that of passing gas in the noisy copper market.²⁵ By default, then, Feisal was the one indispensable Iraqi government official.

At the time of Simele Massacre, the British officials, especially Sir Francis Humphreys, who seems to have had a close working relationship with Feisal, were very concerned that northern Iraq would erupt into chaos, threatening not only national unity, but also British assets in the area. In particular, the British were worried that Feisal would leave the country, as he had planned to do for some time for health reasons, and create the impression that the state was without a leader. At least one diplomat remarked that Feisal was being cowardly in wanting to leave the country at its moment of crisis. Humphreys himself was in Oslo when the crisis began, and from there he rushed to Baghdad, an arduous journey today to say nothing of how it was in 1933, to prevent the king from leaving. Feisal did stay until the end of the crisis and only then left for a clinic in Switzerland. It seems clear, therefore, that whatever inflammatory language the British officials used in their confidential, English-language telegrams to each other, they considered Feisal's presence in the country to be vital for national order.

When Feisal died in Switzerland shortly after the Assyrian affair, he became the focus of Iraqi nationalist feeling. As with deceased entertainers, a king may be more

²⁴ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 561, 582.

²⁵ *Records of Iraq*, v.7, 297, 298.

popular when he is dead than when he was alive. One aspect of the nationalist feeling surrounding Feisal's death was a rumor that he was poisoned. While one cannot be certain that he was not, British diplomatic documents convey reports from Feisal's doctor in Switzerland that he died of tuberculosis. A high ranking Iraqi official, Hikmat Sulaiman, the same man who would later tell the British that Feisal authorized the Simele Massacre, openly lamented the loss of the king, saying that it was an insurmountable obstacle to Iraqi national unity.

Hikmat Sulaiman apparently regarded Feisal as irreplaceable, so much so that, along with Bakr Sidqi, he participated in a military *coup d'etat* three years later. Bakir Sidqi led the *coup* against the successor of the late King Feisel. While Sidqi's term of office was short—he himself was assassinated by his successor—his actions laid a path for the future. As the 1930s wore on, National Socialism and fascism became influential in some Iraqi intellectual circles. While it is important not to overstate their appeal, such views did support the concept of the army as the principal instrument of state and source of political legitimacy. Even this was short-lived, however. Fearing Nazi influence in the region, the British reoccupied Iraq in 1941 and held it until the end of the war.²⁶

2. *Evidence of Consciousness of Guilt.*

Arabic sources on the Assyrian genocide in Iraq are scarce. The reason for this is two-fold. First, Arabic sources generally do not mention the massacres. Al-Askari and al-Husri barely wrote anything about Christians generally, and did not mention Assyrians with more than a passing reference for al-Husri and not at all for al-Askari. The

²⁶ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 213.

unwillingness of Arab nationalists to discuss Assyrians can mean one of two things. The first possibility is that Assyrians and the ethnic cleansing of them simply are not relevant to Iraqi nationalism. The violence may simply have been a tragic, but unrelated footnote to the development of the modern Iraqi state. This may have been the perspective of historians before the advent of post-modernism and Saidianism, that is to say, before the advent of historical methodology that requires a reader to consider the values, norms, and prejudices of the writer and that of his or her intended audience. One might simply read the official sources and take them at their word.

As a skeptic and a former prosecutor, I find the more likely explanation by far is something lawyers call “evidence of consciousness of guilt.” Simply put, the attempt to hide evidence demonstrates that those who are concealing it know that there is something in the evidence worth hiding.²⁷ They must know or at least have some idea of the nature of the evidence, otherwise, they would have no reason to conceal it. As a side note, this realization is merely a tool for explaining why a particular topic is apparently absent from the writings of a prolific Iraqi nationalist writer in the case of al-Husri and from the writings of a nationalist army officer and administrator in the case of al-Askari. It should not be read as a return to prosecution school of history. The facts behind the establishment of a nation-state from what was previously part of a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional empire appear to be too terrible to remember, and any effort to expose that past disturbs the official narrative and is threatening to those whose power is based on it.

²⁷ See e.g., United States v. Mokol, 939 F.2d 436 (7th Cir. 1991), holding that the defendant’s attempts to intimidate a witness is admissible as evidence of consciousness of guilt.

Of course, this phenomenon has occurred outside of Arab countries. The newly created Republic of Turkey consolidated its power on a nationalist narrative.²⁸ Turkey was the land of the Turks, and anyone who did not fit that description was repressed. For instance, the state suppressed Kurdish national identity, instead insisting that they were “mountain Turks.”²⁹ One such group, Armenians, who, like the Assyrians, were another non-Turkish minority distinguished primarily by their denomination of Christianity, which, like that of the Assyrians, predated the establishment of the Byzantine Empire in the fourth century. As previously noted, the Armenians had been subjected to pogroms since at least the last quarter of the nineteenth century by the increasingly nationalistic Ottoman state. Beginning in World War One, the state, under the direction of Enver Pasha, deported Armenians *en masse*. The ones who survived the journey found themselves in a desolate land that could not possibly support them. Unsurprisingly, most died. Consequently, the national uniformity claimed by the Turkish state is based largely on the wholesale murder of ethnic and especially religious minorities.

The concept of minority is even more problematic in mandate countries than it is elsewhere since colonial rulers impose their own rigid classifications on the various colonized peoples.³⁰ For instance the British saw Christians and Jews as advanced peoples and treated them as allies to the colonial cause. They went so far as to enlist Assyrians as a kind of British army auxiliary corps and used them to guard airbases and to conduct raids on Muslim Kurds. The British saw the Muslim people as backward and worthy of disregard. The colonizers especially distrusted the Shia, whom they saw as a

²⁸ Mann, 120-124.

²⁹ Thanks to Erdal Ciftci, Bilkent Üniversitesi, for this information.

³⁰ White, “Constructing Minorities,” 47 *et seq.*

foreign presence connected to Iran. In fact, British activists like Gertrude Bell pressed for the inclusion of Mosul in the largely Kurdish territory as a means of increasing the number of Iraqi Sunnis in relation to the numbers of Shia in the south.³¹

However artificially the Arab “majority” was created in Iraq, state actors felt a need to conform to this colonial identity and to create a national mythology in order to make their own need to consolidate state power legitimate. Given the unsettled affairs of the region, the state also felt it necessary to assert their status as a nation-state to discourage aggression from other states on its borders. The Simele massacre further reinforced the idea of an Arab Sunni majority in the government and popular perception. Klein explains that the colonizers not only created the Arab-Iraqi national identity, but also defined non-conforming groups as “minorities,” thus deciding who belongs in Iraq and who is what Pandey described as a “marked citizen.” For Iraq, the British thus set the terms of the debate. There was no inevitability that Arabs would constitute the hegemonic culture or that Kurds, or other groups, would become minorities. Rather, the colonizers created these categories for their own purposes. The British created the discourse, and went so far as to identify which aspects of local society were problematic and needing reform on European lines.³²

The difference between the majority and the marked citizens is that for Sunni Arabs, in this case, loyalty to the new state was presumed, while marked citizens had a burden to prove loyalty and that they belonged where they were, even if their community had been in that location for centuries. Klein explains that these groups represented a

³¹ Janet Klein, “The Minority Question,” 42.

³² Klein, “The Minority Question,” 37, 44.

threat to the consolidation of state power, especially if that group had some connection to outside colonial powers. She notes the 1933 Simele massacre as a case in point. The Iraqi state viewed the Assyrians as an internal threat because of their association with the British. Both the Assyrians and the British were majority-Christian peoples. While the state did not construct the Assyrians into an Other because of theological differences of opinion, the common religion of British colonizers and Assyrians allowed the state to cast the mostly native Assyrians as foreign agitators. Further, the British colonizers created this sectarian divide by assuming that Christians were the natural choice for British efforts at destabilizing the Empire and then as a source for soldiers to use against local Muslims.³³

Taner Akçam, a Turkish historian who is not a genocide denier, calls attention to the suppression of knowledge of the Armenian genocide. After the First World War, the Turkish state actively punished scholarly and journalistic efforts to discuss the genocide.³⁴ The state is highly selective to whom it grants access to its extensive national archives. As recently as this century, they have allowed foreign scholars to do everything necessary to come to Turkey for research, only to bar them at the door of the archives. State leaders were afraid that any information concerning the violent reality behind Turkish nationalism would undermine their legitimacy by questioning the narrative on which the nationalist state was built. Nation-states are artificial constructs, which means that they only exist because their inhabitants and the international community believe they exist. People internalize and naturalize the national narrative, and reproduce it. The

³³ Klein, "The Minority Question," 44; Donabed, 71.

³⁴ Akçam, *From Empire to Republic*, 209.

legitimacy of state power, therefore, is dependent on the general acceptance of the national narrative.

The reasons for suppressing evidence of the Iraqi Assyrian genocide are similar to those of Turkey in suppressing evidence of the Armenian holocaust. The motives of the Turkish state in hiding evidence and squelching discussion, therefore, are not merely an overreaction based on imagined threats, as was the motivation for committing genocide in the first place, but rather a real apprehension of the fragility of power, especially during the early years of the new republic. Akçam explains that denial of history is a psychological defense mechanism to avoid psychological, moral, and emotional consequences of the past.³⁵ Much of his explanation is speculative and based on modern psychology, and with no clear indication of its applicability to large population group dynamics. Interestingly, Akçam acknowledges that state memory and societal memory are not the same, concerning the question of genocide denial. Nevertheless, the threat to the legitimacy of the new social order is likely the driving cause for denial of the genocide, or alternatively, blaming the victims for making the genocide necessary. While the state insists on suppressing any memory of the Armenian genocide, the fact remains that individuals are still aware of it, and occasionally discuss the matter in private.³⁶ It seems clear, therefore, that those who promote nationalism use narrative, not to make people accept a purported truth, but to construct a public space free from dangerous facts.

As in Turkey, the new Kingdom and then Republic of Iraq suppressed evidence of the Assyrian genocide. Further, it is an unfortunate fact that scholars in the Middle

³⁵ Akçam, 211.

³⁶ Akçam, 211, 229.

East usually do not have much academic freedom to explore the origins of the nation-state and society. Consequently, Arabic secondary sources as a rule tend not contain any real methodology or efforts to deconstruct the official assumptions concerning the founding or legitimacy of the state. Again, speaking in generalities, they are more concerned with presenting a poetic recitation of the national narrative than with examination of sources and critical analysis.

Despite the use of omission as a basis for inferring knowledge of mass violence and its role in state-building, one need not rely solely on circumstantial evidence to demonstrate denial. As explained by Donabed, on 28 August 1933, Paul Knabenshue, United States ambassador to Iraq, sent this message to the American State Department based in information from the Iraqi government:

The Iraqi 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.

The ambassador complained about the lack of any reliable information concerning the Simele massacre. Firstly, the Iraqi government denies that a massacre occurred. It either never happened, or else state officials had no knowledge of it. Secondly, the aforementioned nonexistent massacre was justified, because it was for the purpose of suppressing a rebellion. Taner Akçam made a similar point regarding the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide. He summarized the formulaic denial as, “Nothing has happened, but others are guilty.” The ambassador clearly doubted the veracity of the

report and stated that the Iraqi government would doubtlessly suppress any evidence that did exist.³⁷

For their part, the British also participated in a cover-up of the genocide because of their own role in creating the circumstances that led to the violence. Donabed quotes Peter Sluglett to illustrate the British efforts to obstruct an international investigation of the Assyrian genocide in Iraq.

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.³⁸

Even a scholar like Khaldun Husry ‘ibn Sati’, writing in 1974, tries to minimize the official responsibility for Simele and to shift at least some of responsibility to the Assyrians themselves, claiming they were engaged in sedition at Simele. Unfortunately for his explanation, the balance of the evidence suggests, including pogroms and racist agitation that began well before either the Simele Massacre or the “Syrian adventure,” prove that the violence was, in fact, deliberate on the part of the ranking state actors.³⁹

King Feisal himself denied that there was any massacre, but he too gave an oddly qualified response, stating that no women had been killed or sexually assaulted. What limited comfort there may have been in promising that, at most, the violence had come to merely half of the Assyrians was even more diluted by the record showing that Feisal’s assurance was actually false. Barclay Acheson, executive secretary for the Near East

³⁷ Donabed, 118; Taner Akçam, 208.

³⁸ Donabed, 123, *quoting* Sluglett, 212.

³⁹ Husry (II), 345.

Foundation, writing to the Division of Near Eastern Affairs on 13 September 1933, and cited by Donabed, relayed accounts by witnesses of numerous atrocities perpetrated by Arabs and Kurds on Assyrian women, and noted in particular that they repeatedly raped the wife of Yacu. Yacu, of course, led the Syrian adventure and had fought with Iraqi troops on the return journey.

Nationalists had many tools at their disposal to create a nationalist mythology, and public education was one of the most useful. Orit Bashkin discusses the role of the educational system in reinforcing nationalism during Hashemite Iraq. She notes that the goal of nationalists was to have a uniform ethnic or cultural composition. Indigenous groups, with culture, language, religion, and identity distinct from the majority culture, posed an obstacle to national uniformity. King Feisel said as much, stating that differences in race and religion were the primary impediments to the formation of an independent Iraq. He claimed that Iraq was a Sunni, Arab country, but that Kurdish, Yazidi, and Shi'ite tribes threatened it. Bashkin also refers to Sati' al-Husri, a prominent educator discussed below, and another influential educator, Fadhil al-Jamali, who promoted secular education. They believed that sectarian education provided a basis for disunity on religious lines.⁴⁰ Religious division was especially problematic for Iraqi nationalists, since Iraq consisted of numerous religious communities, and religious differences and their association with foreign powers provided the pretext for the Simele Massacre.

⁴⁰ Orit Bashkin, "'When Mu'awiya Entered the Curriculum'—Some Comments on the Iraqi Education System in the Interwar Period," *Comparative Education Review*, 50 (Aug. 2006): 346-366, 348, 349.

3. *The Memoires of Jafar Pasha Al-Askari*

Jafar Pasha al-Askari was a career soldier first for the Ottomans and then for the Arab revolts. He became a ranking administrator for the Arab revolt, serving as governor of Aleppo, and eventually as prime minister of Iraq. He wrote his memoirs in the 1930s, after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and during the militarized nationalism following the war. Consequently, he does not write about the events as they happened, but rather what he remembered happened. Even his essay on Iraqi nationalism was unfinished when he died in 1936. Also, as a founding member of the new Arab nationalist state, one may expect him to put his efforts and those of his fellow officers and officials in the best possible light, or to omit embarrassing details. In point of fact he does not mention the Assyrians or the 1933 Simele massacre at all.

Al-Askari echos the military origins of Arab and Iraqi nationalism, but like ‘Abid Aalsalaam Ruu’waq’s narrative, he does not mention the Assyrian genocide. He wrote his memoirs retrospectively, but no later than 1936 when someone assassinated him. Al-Askari begins his memoir by recalling his trip from Mosul with his brother on a flimsy raft while navigating the flood-swollen Tigris in 1897. They were taking their father, who suffered from a skin disease, to *Hammam* [bath] ‘*Ali*, a mineral-rich spring near Tikrit known for its purported healing properties.’⁴¹ One cannot know for certain whether or not this river scene is a metaphor for the social and political currents of the time, as they were in *Iraq between Two Eras* example, but expressions like “[d]rift[ing] with the current”

⁴¹ al-Askari, 15-17.

suggest it, especially since the following chapter describes al-Askari enrolling in military school in Baghdad.

From Baghdad, al-Askari traveled to Istanbul for his studies. He noted that on arrival, he and the other students were under the surveillance of “Sultan Abdullamid’s notoriously suspicious spies,” who even monitored what they read.⁴² This is al-Askari’s first indication that there may have been problems in the relationship between Arab army officers and the central government. He noted that the Arab students received no instruction in leadership skill and were not permitted to train with live firearms. Clearly, he and the Arab officer students knew that the Ottoman command structure did not trust them and considered them to be inferior, provincial soldiers. He explains with apparent disgust that his army career showed him that the Ottoman administration was corrupt and ineffective in the provinces, stating that the Sultan never cared about the welfare of the public, but instead was completely self-serving while viewing the people as adversaries.

Retrospectively, al-Askari is effectively arguing that the Ottoman state did not deserve his continued loyalty, which justified his shift of duty of loyalty from the sultan to the Arab cause. Neither the soldiers, who were rarely paid, nor the tradesmen had any real respect for the state. Interestingly, he describes resistance by locals to tax collection. Al-Askari and some soldiers went to a town to collect overdue taxes. While very hospitable, the locals invariably pled poverty, claiming they did not have the livestock on which the state assessed taxes. He also noted petty bribery by merchants in order to avoid the army commandeering their conveyances for military purposes.⁴³ The point of all this

⁴² al-Askari, 19.

⁴³ al-Askari, 19-21.

seems to be to illustrate that the general population, not merely the army, felt alienated from the state. Al-Askari wrote decades after the fact. Having participated in the Arab Revolt during the war, he must have felt it necessary to demonstrate the necessity of the revolt.

In 1910, al-Askari traveled to Berlin to observe their military operations and was thoroughly impressed, not only with the efficiency of the German army, but also of Berlin society. While there, he also met Envar Bey, who would later orchestrate the Armenian and Assyrian genocides during the war. The description of his impression of the Germans is a stereotypical view of Germans as efficient, tidy, and driven by attention to detail. He noted how accepting and helpful the German officers were, as contrasted with the elitist Turkish Ottoman officers, and especially the army's familial environment. He noted that the Kaiser personally exercised control over the army and military affairs. This may be significant, because it anticipates the development of the Iraqi army as the main instrument of state control and legitimacy, with a nominally republican ruler exercising personal control. Even still, al-Askari complained of pervasive socialist propaganda among the soldiers, and found it odd that officers tended to be from the nobility and believed in the divine right of their positions.⁴⁴ Such an arrangement, of course, would have precluded promotion by merit from which he, Bakir Sidqi, and others benefited.

Al-Askari fought in the Balkan Wars starting in 1912 and gave a broad overview of his campaigning. In Chapter 4, he begins his discussion of the Gallipoli campaign

⁴⁴ al-Askari, 28-35.

noting that the Balkan War had consumed the best men and material resources of the Ottoman army, necessitating it to begin the First World War somewhat unprepared. It is worth noting that the Balkans were a majority Christian part of the Empire before the Ottomans lost them in 1913. One can imagine that Ottoman soldiers who fought for union may have come to view Ottoman Christians generally as disloyal to the Empire, a perspective that may have later informed their views about Armenians and Assyrians. From that perspective, it would have been a short step to generalize their antagonism toward Balkan Christians and apply them to Christian communities generally.

Following the Gallipoli campaign, al-Askari described a dangerous covert mission through the desert to the west of British-occupied Egypt. There he encountered an Islamist nationalist movement and attempted to incite them against the British, which he and his men failed to do, showing that not all nationalist movements necessarily had the same goals, and perhaps that Islamism was incompatible with nationalism. He notes that this mission included Nuri Bey al-Said, and that its purpose was to bring al-Askari to Constantinople to confer with Envar Pasha, with whom he had a personal relationship from his time in Berlin.⁴⁵ Al-Said is another soldier who would later become a high-ranking official in post-mandate Iraq, again showing the military roots of Iraqi nationalism.

As an interesting side note, al-Askari recounted a narrative from his brother, Tahsin, about a battle between Ottoman and Italian forces in Libya. Mustafa Kemal, the future Atatürk, was in overall command, but constant interference and recklessness by

⁴⁵ al-Askari, 65-69, 71.

Enver Bey caused the Ottomans great losses with nothing gained. In the debriefing that followed a disastrous Ottoman attack, Enver was dismissive of the loss of Arab life and suggested that Arab soldiers were somehow disposable. Naturally, this caused a great degree of alienation of the Arab soldiers from Enver.⁴⁶ Episodes like this are significant in examining the causes of Arab nationalism, since a large part of the Arab and later Iraqi nationalist movement began with the army and its officer corps, which was comprised primarily of former Ottoman officers.

Again writing retrospectively, al-Askari shows a degree of admiration of Kemal, who became Turkey's militaristic national leader after the war. Al-Askari and others followed a similar path for Iraq after the war. At the same time, he had little use for Enver, the officer who would become the Committee of Union and Progress's military chief during the war and who represented the old-guard Ottoman elites. The nationalist feelings of Arab soldiers started with anti-Ottoman sentiments, who they saw as foreign occupiers, and continued in opposition to the British imperialists. Finally, they turned those xenophobic assumptions against the Assyrians, whom many saw as foreign collaborators, especially those in Simele who actually provided the British with soldiers. Being already prejudiced against the Balkan Christians, against whom the Ottomans were obliged to expend resources that would not be available to them during the Great War, it would not have been much of a leap to redirect that animosity toward the Assyrians.

Al-Askari is vague about the specific dates on which events occurred, indeed he may have forgotten, but the British eventually captured him sometime after June of 1915.

⁴⁶ al-Askari, 73, 74.

After that, he met with Arab nationalists in prison where they discussed the future of the Arab cause without Ottoman interference. There he learned that the new government of the Ottoman state, the Committee of Union and Progress, the C.U.P., and their Ottoman military commander in Syria, Jamal Pasha, had embarked on a campaign of locating Arab nationalists there and of torturing and hanging them.⁴⁷ While in British captivity, he had occasion to discuss the future of the Arab lands with Nuri al-Said, T.E. Lawrence, and the British Col. Clayton. The British officers assured the two Arabs that Britain had no plans for imposing colonial control over the Arab territories.⁴⁸

We know from subsequent events that this representation by the British was a lie designed to encourage an Arab separatist movement against the Ottoman Turks. To that end, Amir Feisal, the future king of Iraq, sent Sharif al-Faruqi to Cairo, where al-Askari was, to recruit for the Arab Army. The Sharif hesitated in accepting al-Askari at first, because of his personal association with Enver, but eventually approved him. He left Cairo for the Hijaz in early 1917.⁴⁹ Much of the rest of his narrative concerns his involvement in the Arab revolt against the Ottomans during World War One, the details of which are not relevant to this discussion. Eventually, al-Askari rose to the rank of Pasha, governor, of Aleppo in 1919.

In Chapter 8, al-Askari discussed Christians for the first time and without animosity, but rather with a great deal of pity. He noted the Christian inhabitants of Madaba and Mt. Nebo, where Moses is believed to have looked beyond the Jordan River. He explained that the Caliph ‘Umar, from the founding generation of Islam, ordered that

⁴⁷ al-Askari, 103-105.

⁴⁸ al-Askari, 106.

⁴⁹ al-Askari, 108-112.

anyone who murdered the any Christian living in the area at the time must pay twice the usually blood price to the surviving family. Al-Askari explained that this enhanced penalty for what today is considered to be a “hate crime” existed to discourage Muslim “bigots and fanatics” from harassing local non-Muslims.⁵⁰ One can only speculate, but it is possible that al-Askari included this section with Simele and the wider genocidal campaign against Assyrians in mind in order to show that religious hatred was not the motivation for the mass violence, but rather legitimate security concerns drove the decision. Christians who were not seen as instigators of violence, al-Askari seems to have suggested, had nothing to fear from the Iraqi state.

As governor, al-Askari encountered Armenian refugees and discussed their plight, explaining with apparent disgust how the Ottomans had treated them, calling the Armenians the victims of “atrocities and cruelties.” His perspective on the displaced Christians was entirely sympathetic to the extent that he was willing to overlook a violent incident that a traumatized Armenian man had caused when he was haggling with a local Muslim merchant.⁵¹ Of course, this account is according to Al-Askari’s own memoirs, but had it not been so, he may have simply omitted the reference from his book. The Ottoman government perpetrated the Armenian genocide, not the Arabs, who also had cause for anger with the Committee of Union and Progress. Arab observers could easily see both themselves and the Armenians as victims of “foreign” Ottoman oppression. Despite his concern for their safety, al-Askari noted concern that Christians might be a target for foreign agitation. He noted that during his tenure of about a year as governor of Aleppo, we worked to ensure that the Christian community, including Syriacs and

⁵⁰ al-Askari, 159.

⁵¹ al-Askari, 162, 163, 166, 171.

Chaldeans, was happy with the administration, specifically so that they would not be drawn to foreign entreaties. Apparently, French propagandists in particular were trying to influence the local Christians, although al-Askari did not state what the French and other foreign agitators were trying to accomplish.⁵²

Al-Askari's observations about Christians in Aleppo underscores what Mark Levene wrote in his "Smoking Gun" article in *Patterns of Prejudice*, specifically that mass violence by Muslims against Christians in Hashemite Iraq was not caused by sectarian hatred. This conclusion, incidentally, is contrary to Hannibal Travis's argument that the animosity came from sectarian hatred. Rather than disputes over doctrine or even religious identities, Sunni Arabs and Kurds turned against Assyrian Christians because they came to believe that the Assyrians were foreign collaborators and an extension of British imperialism. Further, nationalism presupposes a homogeneous society, which is naturally hostile to non-conforming cultures within that society. The British had used Assyrian levies for punitive campaigns against Kurds, so the animosity was not limited to Arabs. As seems clear in Husry's article, the institutional wrath against the Assyrians was over what perpetrators thought were practical considerations and an irrational, but real fear of subversion from within the nation. It had nothing to do with the theological disagreement about whether God was singular or triune in nature.

Unfortunately, Al-Askari's memoirs end in 1920. According to an epilogue by Najdat Fathi Safwat, after spending 1919 and 1920 as military governor of Aleppo, al-Askari travelled to Damascus to serve as a military advisor to King Feisel, who, together

⁵² al-Askari, 171.

with the British, was then in the process of suppressing a revolt in Syria. He returned to Baghdad in October of 1920 with the new king of the new Iraq. Al-Askari served as prime minister for nine months in 1923 and 1924, as well as ambassador to Britain and then Iran thereafter. He was assassinated while intervening on behalf of the crown and Prime Minister al-Hashimi during the Bekir Sidqi *coup d'état* in 1936.⁵³

The English translation of al-Askari's incomplete memoirs includes an unpublished, undated draft manuscript on Arab nationalism. Its working title is "The Modern Arab Awakening and Its Causes." He began his narrative with the founding generation of Islam, and imagined an idealized past invented to construct legitimacy for modern nationalism. He stated that Islam acted as a beneficial and unifying force for the Arab people. He traced the politics of medieval Islam and the Arab involvement in it from the Sunni perspective until the acquisition of the Arab lands by the Ottomans. In the nineteenth century, he explained, some Turkish scholars began to racialize non-Turks, including Arabs, as inferior people to Turks. That idea spread until it became institutionalized in the Young Turks and the C.U.P. This Turkish nationalist movement in turn suppressed nationalism among other "races." The Pasha, therefore, assumed the Arab race as a natural reality without any attempt to define it.⁵⁴

Al-Askari recalled that before the Balkan War, Talaat Pasha derisively said that Arab nationalism would never succeed until Arab nationalists resorted to violence. Al-Askari stated the remarks had the effect of encouraging such violence. He described Arab nationalist officers being sent to the far corners of the empire. Beginning in 1914, Arab

⁵³ al-Askari, 179-191

⁵⁴ al-Askari, 203-205

officers began to join the nationalist Covenant Party, or '*Ahd*, founded by Col. Aziz Ali al-Masri to promote "...manly virtues and strive to create a political entity for the Arab Nation...." In Aleppo, al-Askari was an officer-training instructor and found it to be an environment conducive for spreading nationalist ideas. He noted that '*Ahd* established branches all over the Arab part of the Empire. He also acknowledged that other national parties were active at the time too, which made the nationalist movement increasingly broad-based.

Before the First World War, al-Askari explained that irritation at arbitrarily being transferred around the Empire caused him to compare the Ottomans to prison wardens, capriciously enforcing their will. He wrote of a conversation he had with a nationalist sympathizer who counseled al-Askari to start a revolt by taking over the barracks and locking up dissenters, suggesting an undemocratic attitude by some nationalists. Once the war began, outrageous conduct of the C.U.P., especially that of Jamal Pasha in Syria, caused nationalist sympathies to rise among the Arab soldiers. So the aim of the nationalist movement was for Arabs to see themselves as the natural possessors and presumably rulers of Arab land with the Ottomans constructed as a foreign oppressor.⁵⁵

Finally, al-Askari made it clear that the Arab revolt under the leadership of the Sharif of Mecca during the war was not motivated by either money or the promises of military assistance from the British, but merely from a patriotic desire to see the various Arab peoples united under a national rule. He made it clear that, like al-Husri, he was defining "Arab" based primarily on language, which, as previously noted, is actually a

⁵⁵ al-Askari, 209-214.

family of languages. He stated that he did not mean only “the Arabian Peninsula, Syria and Iraq,” but also all of North Africa. He envisioned a modern education system, at least for boys, that would indoctrinate future generations with Arabism and federal governance politically connecting the various individual countries.⁵⁶ He does not mention any role for religious or ethnic minorities like Assyrians.

We can see, therefore, from the soldier’s perspective, that Arab and then Iraqi nationalism began in the Arab army units of the Ottoman Empire as a reaction to unfair and capricious discrimination by the state against Arabs and especially Arab soldiers. That resentment eventually flared into a full nationalist revolt against the Ottomans during the war and cooperation with the British for the promise of independence, a promise that we now know never materialized. Further, it is clear that the Arab nationalism, while Sunni in character, was not based on religious doctrine, but rather the sense that Arabs were treated as foreigners in their own countries, thereby creating a sense of victimization and a desire to expel the oppressors in favor of Arab national rule, based on the imagined community of the Arab nation.⁵⁷

4. *The Memoires of Sati’ al-Husri*

Interestingly, the intellectual approach to Iraqi nationalism, as typified in the writings of al-Husri, follows a line of thinking very similar to al-Askari. Cleveland’s

⁵⁶ al-Askari, 214, 215. One should note that the plural for “boys” or “sons” (‘awlad) can also mean “children” of both sexes, so it is not clear if al-Askari is advocating education for boys or for children generally.

⁵⁷ As an interesting side note, al-Askari’s vision of Iraqi nationalism still appears to have its admirers. The title page of my second-hand copy includes the following hand-written inscription from an apparent relative of the late Pasha: “To Anne and bint [daughter], with hopes for a better Iraq—Love, Guida Al-Askari December, 2007.”

English analysis of al-Husri's memoirs provides a helpful summation of an influential intellectual. Al-Husri explained that he started as an Ottomanist, that is to say, one who supported the nationalist movement within the Ottoman Empire to create a single Ottoman national identity. Historically, the Empire was not a nation, but a diverse collection of local ethnic and religious groups, loosely administered by the central government in Istanbul. Individual identity was based on one's locality and religious identity rather than any empire-wide "national" identity. This Ottomanist movement was in response to European nationalism, which projected European power and social norms to colonized peoples. The governing Ottomans believed that some kind of Ottoman nationalism was necessary to act as a barrier to encroaching European colonialism.⁵⁸

Cleveland explains that al-Husri made the transition to be an Arab nationalist after the war. His main goal in writing his nationalist theories was to propagate sentiments necessary to normalize nationalist assumption. He defined the nation as a cultural identity, as the Germans did, rather than as political identity. Al-Husri argued that a nation was a naturally occurring, living, spiritual entity. Cleveland explains that al-Husri used historical examples as a propaganda device, in order to naturalize nationalist ideas and to create invented traditions.⁵⁹ His ability to pursue Ottomanism, then to abandon it in favor of Arab nationalism, and also to admit that propaganda was necessary to further the goal of nationalism, shows that al-Husri was well aware of the of its artificiality.

⁵⁸ Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist*, 86.

⁵⁹ Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist*, xiii, 86-90.

Indeed, as Bashkin explains in the introduction to *The Other Iraq*, intellectuals like al-Husri created discursive space in society for the construction of the nation.⁶⁰

Of course, Iraqi nationalists are not alone in harnessing the power of propaganda in order to make people think of themselves as a nation. In another Arab country, Egypt, nationalists like Qasim Amin and Huda Sharawi used feminist ideas to promote independence from Britain.⁶¹ Leila Ahmed argues that the British had appropriated the language of feminism and used women's rights as a justification for imposing colonial rule while opposing the liberation of women in Britain in order to undermine local norms and customs, thereby framing the debate on women's rights. Simply put, Lord Cromer and others used the subjugation of Egyptian women as a justification to exert paternalistic control over the colonized people. Arguably, if Egyptians could be convinced to adopt what the British saw as feminist norms, then it would make one fewer reasons for the British to continue their colonial rule. At least that seems to be the reasoning advanced by Amin in 1900 and Sharawi in the 1920s.⁶²

Commenting on a 1923 lecture al-Husri gave on Arab nationalism, Cleveland explains that al-Husri argued that what all Arabs have in common is language. Arabic, as previously noted, is not one language, but a family of languages using a common grammatical structure and alphabet in writing, although not necessarily in speaking. The most well-known deviations in the alphabet are *jiim*, which sounds like an English "j" in

⁶⁰ Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 1-3.

⁶¹ Qasim Amin, *Tahrir al-mar'a (The Liberation of Women)*, 1899; *al-Mar'a al-jadida (The New Woman)*, 1900; both reprinted in English (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000). Huda Shaarawi, *Harem Years, The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*, Margot Badran, trans. ed. (n.c.: The Feminist Press, 1987).

⁶² Janet Klein, "The Minority Question," 42, *quoting* Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992): 152.

Asia, but like a hard English “g” in North Africa. In Egypt and among the Levantine Druze, the letter *qaaf* is not pronounced at all. In Northwest Africa, short vowels do not seem to exist. That does not begin to address significant differences in vocabulary between the various regions. Nevertheless, Cleveland observes that al-Husri rejected these distinctions as being indicative of separate Arabic languages, although he did warn against reliance on dialect, which he saw as a divisive force.⁶³

Al-Husri always rejected the idea that Islam and its common culture were the bedrock of Arab national identity. He observed that some Arabs were not Muslims, but rather Christians, Jews, or Druze. He also noted, as Bashkin did in *The Other Iraq*, that many Arab intellectuals were Marxists, at least during the 1920s, presumably rejecting all religion. In fact, Cleveland argues that al-Husri consistently held that language was the singular basis of nationalism, rejecting not only religion as a foundation, but also common descent. He noted that Christian Arabs in particular are part of the Arab nation because of language, and in fact he claims that Arabic-speaking Christians made the first real progress in Arab nationalism, because they were a connection to Europe in the nineteenth century. This, of course, did not include Assyrians, who did not speak Arabic and did not consider themselves to be Arabs. Cleveland explains that while al-Husri did not believe religion was part of nationalism, he did credit the Quran with preserving the Arabic language over time.⁶⁴

⁶³ Cleveland, 118, 119

⁶⁴ Cleveland, 122, 123, 127.

Al-Husri compared the Arab world to countries like France, where there was no common descent, but where, he insisted, a nation certainly existed.⁶⁵ In that example, he appears to have overlooked the fact that medieval France had four distinct language groups and did not develop a common vernacular and written language until the invention of print. Similarly, he considered Greece to be a nation, despite its fractured past, because of linguistic unity. Bulgaria, he argued, only became a nation after ejecting the Greek language and churches. By contrast, al-Husri did not consider either Belgium or Switzerland to be nations because of the lack of uniform language. That a state may become a nation by deporting others is, of course, an ominous assumption that drove the post-war Assyrian genocide. As an interesting side note, Cleveland explains that al-Husri saw Arab nationalism as a movement affecting the Arab world as a collective. He did not approve of localized Arab movements, such as those in Egypt and especially the 1919 revolt in Cairo, since they were counter-productive to the goal of Arab unity.⁶⁶

Having written for the purpose of influencing Iraqi nationalism rather than remembering it after the fact, al-Husri made it clear that Iraq was an Arab nation-state, and he did not seem to care that the British engineered that country to be majority Arab. His memoirs barely mentioned the Assyrians and, like al-Askari, he discounted by omission any role the post-war Assyrian genocide had in the developing Iraqi nationalist military state, or even that it ever happened. Again, one may accept that the massacre was irrelevant to Iraqi nationalism, or one may accept the silence as evidence that those writing memoirs knew how important the mass violence was, but who chose to remain

⁶⁵ Cleveland, 98, 99, 102, 117, 121.

⁶⁶ Cleveland, 132-136.

mum because of the effect such knowledge would have on the stability of the power structures they created.

It is clear that both authors, and especially al-Askari, considered Iraq an Arab and Sunni state, despite the large Kurdish area, the numerous Shiite Muslims, and the significant Christian and Jewish communities. Such people became Others and marked citizens with the establishment of Arab nationalism. Since they avoid the subject of Assyrians, they left no direct indication that the new state was not for non-Arabic-speaking Christians with some ties, however limited, to British colonizers. Nevertheless, their failure to comment on one of the most significant events of their tenure as Iraqi officials is itself significant.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The three-consonant root of the word “Iraq,” ق-ر-ع , means “root” or “vein” in the physiological sense of the word. An experienced Arabic language professor from Cairo once observed that the “veins” of Iraq are analogous to blood vessels in one’s wrist, separate conveyances for blood all working for a common purpose.¹ One may, therefore, imagine the borders of present-day Iraq as a hand with the thumb at Rutba, the folded fingers around Mosul, and the wrist in the southwest. There, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are the veins that sustain the separate fingers that one may suppose held a common identity and national purpose. Such was the aspiration of Arab nationalists in the years following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Yet the reality was that the new Iraqi government and the British had the task of creating a single nation from a diverse population whose constituent members were separated by ethnic, religious, and cultural divisions. Iraqi Arabs included Sunni, Shia, Christians, and Jews, in addition to a large Kurdish population and the semi-nomadic Syriac Christians, who included Assyrians.

Sargon Donabed’s book, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, limns the Assyrian experience in Iraq for twentieth century. He provides sources and analysis of the aftermath of the Simele Massacre and the other pogroms against Iraqi Assyrians. He also

¹ Thanks to Dr. Heba Salam, American University of Cairo and the University of Maryland for this insight.

describes the subsequent course of Iraqi nationalism and state-building. Donabed notes specifically that Simele became a “blueprint” for subsequent Iraqi governments for dealing with minorities.² So from an Iraqi nationalist perspective, the massacre was a success, although not from the perspective of avoiding future violent campaigns. According to Donabed and Husry, the latter being a witness as a child, the soldiers returned to a triumphal procession in Mosul following the massacre.³

Among Assyrians, there was a general feeling of betrayal towards the British who promised to press the Assyrian case at the League of Nations, only to cause delays to facilitate a concealment of the genocide. Quoting William Yale, a historian from the mid-twentieth century, Donabed notes, “These valiant and stubborn people had come to the end of their long and tempestuous history, victims of hatreds engendered by the clash between Western imperialism and the rising nationalism of Near Eastern peoples.”⁴ Assyrian history, however, did not end after Simele. Eventually, Lemkin used the Assyrian genocide to help formulate his definition of mass murder. His efforts immediately after Simele came to naught, but after the Second World War, his ideas and influence led to the United Nations definition of “genocide.”⁵

The Assyrian culture continues in diasporic form in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and Australia, among other places. After 1940, most Assyrians in Iraq who were not part of the British levy force pursued a policy of integration into the Arab-dominated society. Those in the northern part of Iraq near Dohuk and Zakho areas,

² Donabed, 122, 124.

³ Donabed, 122; Husry (II), 352.

⁴ Donabed, 123, *quoting* William Yale, *The Near East: A Modern History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 326.

⁵ Donabed, 123.

including the Hakkari group, were less prone to integration because of a low Arab presence there. In 1946, Donabed states, Iraqi government publications described the Assyrians as foreigners, denying that they were native to Iraq. For the most part, cultural and religious fragmentation left Iraqi Assyrian communities with little agency in the Iraqi state, with the exception of involvement, along with other minority groups, in the Iraqi Communist Party.⁶

Simele put the Iraqi army at the center of public and governmental life. Between 1933 and 1940, there were several short-lived military *coups d'état*, including one led by Bekir Sidqi, who was regarded as the hero after ordering the massacre at Simele. In April 1941, Iraqis laid siege to the RAF base near Baghdad. The British responded to that latest *coup* with an attempt to restore the Hashemite monarchy by using Indian soldiers to suppress the Iraqi army.⁷ It is clear, therefore, that the Simele Massacre contributed directly to the Iraqi nationalist movement, which after the mass violence became a militaristic nationalism. The army rose in importance because of its role in the mass murder of Assyrians, and that rise continued following World War Two and into the Ba'athist era. Donabed describes how the genocide help propel the nationalistic military state, but the conclusion of this paper is that the violence was necessary for the militant nationalism that followed. For nationalist thought to coalesce around the army, the army had to do something to ensure its esteem in the eyes of the public and of the state. Victory over the Assyrians, constructed as a foreign threat by propaganda, provided that rise in prominence. The increasingly influential army, therefore, was able to direct state policy

⁶ Donabed, 123-127.

⁷ Donabed, 125.

after the end of the Hashemite monarchy in 1941 and the British withdrawal after the Second World War.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MANN, *THE DARK SIDE OF DEMOCRACY*, P.12.

TABLE 1.1 Types of Violence and Cleansing in Intergroup Relations

Types of Violence	Types of Cleansing		
	None	Partial	Total
1. None	1. Multiculturalism/tolerance 2. Consociational/confederalism	Partial abandoning of identity, e.g., through voluntary official language adoption	Voluntary assimilation
2. Institutional coercion	Discrimination	1. Official language restrictions 2. Segregation	Cultural suppression
3. Policed repression	Selective policed repression	1. Policed partial repression of out-group's language and culture 2. Policed out-group settlement/ displacement	1. Policed total suppression of out-group's language and culture 2. Population exchanges 3. Policed deportations and pressured emigration
4. Violent repression	Generalized policed repression	1. Pogroms, communal riots, some forms of rape 2. Violent settlement/ displacement	1. Wild deportation and emigration 2. Biological: sterilization, forced marriage, some forms of rape Ethnocide
5. Unpremeditated mass deaths	Mistaken war, civil war and revolutionary projects, fratricide	Callous war, civil war, and revolutionary projects	
6. Premeditated mass killing	Exemplary and civil war repression, systematic reprisals	1. Forced conversion 2. Politicide 3. Classicide →	Genocide

Note: Darker shading indicates the core of the zone of murderous cleansing discussed in this book; lighter shading indicates a borderline zone in which it may occasionally occur.

APPENDIX B

SELECTION FROM *IRAQ BETWEEN TWO ERAS*.


٢. الكتاب

ينطوي هذا الكتاب على وصف وتقويم لحقبة قصيرة من تاريخ العراق القريب ، شملت السنين ١٩٣٥-١٩٤٠ ، مع مقدمات تصل بها الى بداية تأسيس الدولة العراقية. وسيرى القارئ ان قصر المدة التي يؤرخ لها الكتاب لا تقلل من اهميته ، وانما تؤكد من وجوه عدة ، أولها ان هذه السنين الخمس شهدت اكثر الاحداث أهمية في تاريخ العراق المعاصر حتى قيام ثورة ١٤ تموز ١٩٥٨ ، ففيها شكل ياسين الهاشمي ، من رعييل الثورة العربية الكبرى المخلصين ، وزارته التي قادها في بحر متلاطم التيارات والاهواء والمصالح ، لتحقيق اهداف وطنية وقومية نبيلة ، منها تقوية الجيش بسن أول قانون لخدمة العلم ، ومساندة الثورة في فلسطين ضد الاستعمار البريطاني والمستعمرات الصهيونية ، واقصاء الموظفين والمستشارين الانكليز عن الوزارات العراقية ، واحترام الدستور وحرية الانتخابات العامة ، ومعالجة المشاكل القبلية المتراكمة منذ عهد الاحتلال والانتداب بما يمنع اتخاذها معوقاً لأي سياسة تقدمية في البلاد.

APPENDIX C

RECORDS OF IRAQ, VOL. VII, P. 645


"Habashus" dated 10th November, 1936.

السنة الخامسة	نحو النسخة عمة فلوس	العدد - ٢٢٩
مدير ادارة الجريدة ناصر مريسي الاعلالت يتفق عليها مع الادارة لا تعتبر الوصولات ما لم تحتوي على بتم الادارة .		الرسائل لا تعاد لامصحابها نشرت او لم تنشر العنوان : بغداد - شارع النخيل جريدة « هبشوس » رقم التذوق ٧٣١ (مطبعة الرشيد - بغداد)
الوافق ٢٦ شبان ١٣٥٥	بغداد : (الثلاثاء) ١٠ تشرين الثاني ١٩٣٦	مسجلة في دائرة البريد رقم ٢٤


The Iraqis are brothers.

اما العراقيون اخوة !


The Rabbi



The Mulla



The Priest



الذين - لا فرق بيننا وبينكم ايها الاخوان !

انفس - متى كان الفرق ونحن اخوان فليس نبينا الى جنب منذ آلاف السنين ؟

الحاخام - وي ... ملقت عينو الى يقول اكو فرق بين العراقيين ... ما احسن اولاد وطن كركك فليس اخوان !:

سيزبون - هذا انتمو من ابناء الوطن البررة ، برك الله فيكم على اختلاف ملحم وتعلمكم ...

The Mulla : There is no difference between us O brethren !

The Priest: Since when has there been any difference? Have we not lived side by side for centuries ?

The Rabbi : May the eye of him explode who says that any difference exists between Iraqis. Are we not sons of one country, and as such should we not live together like brothers ?

Habashus : Such is what loyal sons of the country are expected to feel like. May God bless you to whatever creed or sect you belong.

APPENDIX D

Records of Iraq, vol. VII, page 590
 "List of Villages Damaged During Assyrian Operations"

LIST OF VILLAGES DAMAGED DURING ASSYRIAN OPERATIONS			
Photo. No.	Name.	Co-ordinates.	Remarks.
1.	AMIRI.	137.L/NE.24d.98.	Destroyed and burned.
2.	AIN BAQRAH.	137.P/NW.21c.72.	Destroyed, burned & looted.
4.	AIN HALSA.	137.P/NW.19c.77.	Village burned, houses destroyed.
5.	BADALIYAH.	137.L/NE.9.d.81.	Partially destroyed by fire.
6.	BUQAQ.	137.L/NE.24c.55.	Grain intact. Destroyed and burned.
7.	BANDOWATYAH.	137.P/NW.19a.96.	Destroyed and burned.
8.	BEWIRISIAN.	137.L/NE.24d.59.	Destroyed and burned.
9.	BELBAN.	137.P/NW.20d.55.	Destroyed and burned.
10.	DARI.	137.L/NE.10b.89.	Large house in centre destroyed.
11.	DAHKAN SAGHIR.	137.L/NE.24b.19.	One house wrecked.
13.	GIR-I-FIL.	137.L/NE.4.d.35.	Partially wrecked.
14.	GIR-I-GAUR.	137.L/NE.10c.05.	Wrecked, burned & looted.
15.	HASSANIYAH.	137.P/NW.21d.93.	Partially wrecked (?).
16.	JARAHYAH.	137.P/NW.21d.28.	One house wrecked and burned.
18.	KARRAWAN.	137.L/NE.24a.56.	Grain intact. Partially wrecked & burned.
19.	MARYUN.	137.L/NE.10a.64.	Village burned and looted.
20.	MILL (village).	137.P/NW.19a.64.	Village burned and looted.
21.	MANSURIYAH.	137.L/NE.10d.56.	Partially damaged.
22.	NISEIRI.	137.P/NW.21d.37.	Partly destroyed.
23.	PIRZAWAH.	137.P/NW.27b.88.	Partially wrecked & burned.
24.	QASR-I-YAZIDIN.	137.L/NE.16b.47.	Destroyed, burned and looted.
25.	RUBAIBIYAH.	137.L/NE.16d.99.	Almost completely wrecked and burned.
32.	SAIYID ZAHIR.	137.L/NE.10c.96.	Partially wrecked & burned.
33.	SAIYID DAHIR.	137.L/NE.10c.50.	Burned.
34.	TERPESPI.	137.L/NE.24d.41.	Half of village destroyed.
35.	Unmarked.	137.P/NW.19c.34.	Burned out and looted.
36.	Unmarked.	137.P/NW.21d.32.	Burned out.
38.	Unmarked.	137.L/NE.10b.23.	Burned, looted and deserted.
39.	Unmarked.	137.L/NE.10c.49.	Burned and deserted.
40.	ZAWAH.	137.L/NE.18a.76.	Looted & deserted, but not burned.