

Gertrude Bell and the Formation of the Iraqi State

The Kurdish Dimension

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Abstract:

In the wake of the 1920 Mesopotamian uprisings, London decided to set up an Arab state in place of the British administration. The state-building process was not a straightforward matter, as very few British officials had experience in local Arab and Kurdish affairs. Many scholars agree that London's search for a state viable from the political, economic and strategic viewpoints, and for a proper Arab ruler, offered Gertrude Bell the chance to be of special importance to the establishment of a new Arab kingdom and to the selection of its first king. But it is little known that her ideas and activities had a fateful effect on the future of Southern Kurdistan (the present federal region of Iraqi Kurdistan). This explains why some political analysts attribute the present ethnic and religious troubles in Iraq to Bell's unrealistic ideas, hopes and ambitions.

This chapter will study Bell's attitudes to the Kurdish situation within the context of the formation of the Arab state. As the paper will show, her views on Southern Kurds' affairs were not accepted by her contemporaries, particularly T. E. Lawrence, Major Edward Noel and Major E. B. Soane. The principal objective of the chapter is to explain why Bell stood firmly against keeping Southern Kurdistan a separate entity, while working very hard to impose foreign Arab rule on reluctant Southern Kurds. Can this explain why Iraqi Arabs remember Bell with some affection, whereas Iraqi Kurds do not? Apart from political and strategic considerations, the chapter will shed light on other reasons that Bell insisted on subjecting Southern Kurds to Arab rule: notably, her personal ambitions, her sympathy and association with King Faisal and the pan-Arabists, her friendships with Sunni Arabs, and her appreciation of Arab culture, traditions and history.

Keywords: *Gertrude Bell, Kurdistan, Britain, Iraq, Cairo Conference.*

Section One: British policies towards Mesopotamia and Southern Kurdistan

Introduction:

Bell's frequent visits to Persia, Syria, Palestine, Arabia and Mesopotamia between 1892 and 1913 mirrored the extent to which Britain was extending its influence and control over the Middle East. Britain was still the greatest imperial power when Bell made her name as a respected orientalist. The outbreak of the First World War in Europe and its subsequent extension to the Middle Eastern region provided Bell with an exceptional opportunity to prove her talent and expertise on a much bigger stage. She joined the Arab Bureau in Cairo (November 1915) before arriving in Mesopotamia (March 1916), where she advised the Chief Political Officer, Percy Cox, on local Arab affairs.

In November 1918, the war came to an end. Though Britain had just experienced a great military victory, it encountered unprecedented political, economic and social problems. As a result of the long duration of the war, Britain lost many of its overseas markets. Moreover, it became one of the world's debtors, having previously been the world's largest overseas investor. The Dominions, Australia, New Zealand and Canada sought greater independence from London, whereas other colonies, particularly India and Nigeria, wanted more political rights as compensation for their participation in the First World War. In Ireland, the British faced an acute crisis that led to the outbreak of the War of Independence.

By contrast, Bell's star was rising, as she was playing a leading role in shaping British imperial policy in Mesopotamia, where British colonial authorities found themselves in an extremely delicate situation as a consequence of the outbreak of concurrent uprisings in 1920, which resulted in huge losses in men, money and credibility. It became extremely urgent for London to take immediate steps in light of the rapidly changing situation in Mesopotamia. Now, Britain had to substitute its costly offensive policy with a defensive one. This alone would enable the British to significantly minimize their military presence and to put an end to the huge financial costs of the direct British administration. Thus, the stage was set perfectly for Bell to influence the course of events that led to the establishment of modern Iraq and the subsequent annexation of Southern Kurdistan by the new Arab state.

It is imperative to note that Bell's contacts with local Kurds were very limited compared with her relations with the Arabs in Mesopotamia or in the Arab Peninsula. This factor partly influenced her views on the political future of the Kurds in the post-war period.

British choices for the future of Mesopotamia and Southern Kurdistan

British experts at the War Office, the India Office and the Colonial Office, as well as in Mesopotamia, were engaged in discussing three alternatives insofar as Britain's future relations with Mesopotamia were concerned. They were as follows:

First, Britain could confine its military and political control to Basra, in the far south. The latter was strategically vital for the security of British land and sea routes to India as well as the British political and military presence in the Persian Gulf. Second, Britain could keep its direct control over Baghdad and Basra Provinces, while leaving Southern Kurdistan (Mosul Province) to its own devices. Third, Britain could initiate the process of forming an Arab state in Baghdad and Basra Provinces under a League of Nations mandate.

Implementing the first alternative would have had the effect of leaving the door wide open for the Turks to reoccupy Baghdad and Southern Kurdistan. This prospect would inevitably constitute a serious threat to the British presence in Basra. Adopting the second alternative meant that nothing could be done to prevent the Turks from re-entering Southern Kurdistan, thereby threatening British interests in Baghdad. The British were aware of the implications of adopting the third alternative, which would inevitably entail a clear-cut decision on the future of Southern Kurdistan, either as a separate entity or as a part of an Arab state.

The three existing alternatives would require the British to define not only their relations with the Mesopotamian Arabs and the Southern Kurds, but also the future links between these two different ethnic communities. It was Bell who occupied herself more than anybody else with the task of shaping the relations among the three: the British, the Arabs and the Southern Kurds.

The Cairo Conference (12–30 March 1920) and Britain's new policy towards the would-be Arab state and Southern Kurdistan

The issue of Mesopotamia's future was debated by various British officials long before the holding of the Cairo Conference in March 1920. The course of the debates shows that the establishment of an Arab state was perceived as the favourite alternative by many British officials in London and on the ground. As one of her contemporaries noted, Bell was well known for her solid support of the formation of a native administration in Baghdad under the rule of a Sharifian Amir (Prince).⁽¹⁾ Soon, she drew her strength from the tacit support given by her superior, Percy Cox, who was appointed the first High Commissioner for Mesopotamia, having served British imperial interests in Persia and the Persian Gulf for many years. The fact that he had no deep experience in Mesopotamian affairs meant that he relied heavily on Bell's advice. She looked after the smallest details, such as arranging meetings with local notables and *effendis* (intellectuals), and was deeply involved in vital matters, such as sketching new boundaries for Iraq and organising elections. It was Cox's belief in her abilities, coupled with the complexity of the situation in Mesopotamia and the ambiguity of the true relations between the local Arabs and the Southern Kurds, that offered Bell an exceptional opportunity to have a decisive role in determining the course of events in a manner that went far beyond her official capacity as the Oriental Secretary.

At the Conference, 40 military and civilian experts on the Middle East participated. A seven-member Political Committee was formed which was presided over by Winston Churchill, the new State Secretary for Colonies. The main task of the Committee was to examine and resolve three closely related issues: the political future of Mesopotamia, the immediate reduction of British military commitments and Britain's future relations with Mesopotamia under the Mandate. The future of Southern Kurdistan came under special scrutiny when the scope of the discussions among the Committee's members was broadened.

Insofar as the issue of Southern Kurdistan's future was concerned, the members of the Committee found themselves sharply divided. The first group comprised Cox and Bell, who both viewed the future of Southern Kurdistan from an Arabist perspective, espousing the territorial claims of the Sharifian family and their Sunni Arab followers on Southern Kurdistan. These territorial claims went back to the First World War, when Sharif Husain, the Ruler of Mecca, exchanged several letters with Henry McMahon,

the British High Commissioner for Egypt (1915–16). Husain's letters show that he demanded the inclusion of a large portion of Ottoman Kurdistan in

his proposed Arab state after the war and wanted Britain to acknowledge this in advance.⁽²⁾ The Sharif based his claim to Kurdish areas on historical and sentimental arguments.⁽³⁾ In a very similar manner, Cox and Bell argued that Southern Kurdistan was an integral part of Mesopotamia and that all Southern Kurds wanted to join Arab Iraq, with the exception of the people of Sulaimaniya Division. They also claimed that Southern Kurds were aware of being economically linked with Iraq and that the revenue that came from Southern Kurdistan would not be enough to cover the cost of its administration, if it were to be separated.⁽⁴⁾ It was Bell's own idea to bring Ja'far al-'Askari, a former Ottoman officer and a die-hard Sharifian, and Sasun Hasqail, a financial expert of Jewish origins, to Cairo, in the hope that they could reinforce her arguments politically, militarily and financially. But Churchill was not interested in hearing their views.

The second group was a mixture of Arabophile and Kurdophile officials. It included Hubert Young, the Assistant Secretary to the Middle East Department, Major Edward Noel,⁽⁵⁾ the former Political Officer for

Sulaimaniya, and T. E. Lawrence, the Political Adviser to the Middle East Department. They advocated the idea of immediately establishing Southern Kurdistan as a separate state, so that it could function as a strategic buffer against any future Turkish nationalist threat to the Arab state. Indeed, the first Kurdish autonomous rule under the leadership of Shaikh Mahmud and under Major Noel's political supervision (December 1918–May 1919) showed that reinforcing a sense of Kurdish nationality facilitated the restoration of security and stability to Southern Kurdistan without incurring huge British financial expenses, administrative burdens or military obligations.

The second group won the support of Churchill, who, himself, did not hide his fears about ignoring Kurdish wishes and the prospect that the Kurdish minority might in future be oppressed by a Sharifian ruler with the support of his Arab army.⁽⁶⁾ Moreover, the prospect of imposing Arab rule on reluctant Southern Kurds could cause more political instability and thus force Britain to make unwelcome political and military commitments towards the security of Mesopotamia, especially when the Turkish nationalists were not hiding their burning desire to advance southwards towards Mesopotamia.

The option of establishing a separate Southern Kurdistan would avert, in the eyes of the second group, any future Kurdish–Turkish alliance against both the British and the Arab state. Churchill hoped that British officers would supervise the formation of inexpensive Kurdish military units to take the place of the existing British garrison, with a view to assuming full responsibility for the defence of Mesopotamia.⁽⁷⁾ Five months after the end of the Conference, the

State Secretary for Colonies reiterated to Cox his argument about the military value of the Kurdish military units to the defence of Mesopotamia.⁽⁸⁾

It became evident at the end of the Cairo Conference that four of the Political Committee's members supported the alternative of a separate Southern Kurdistan, not subordinate to Arab rule. They were Churchill, Young, Noel and Lawrence. Cox and Bell found themselves alone in their opposition to keeping Southern Kurdistan separate from the future Arab state.⁽⁹⁾ Finally, the Conference was emphatic in rejecting the incorporation alternative, unless the Southern Kurds were to ask for it. In other words, the Southern Kurds should not be forced to come under the future Arab state and it should be left to them to decide whether to stay separate or to join the Arab state. Thus, keeping Southern Kurdistan a separate buffer entity emerged as the favourite option insofar as the Colonial Office's post-Cairo Conference Mesopotamian policy was concerned.⁽¹⁰⁾

Bell, the Southern Kurds and the 1921 referendum in Mesopotamia

To lend some legitimacy to their selection of Faisal as the king of the would-be Iraqi state, the British viewed it necessary to hold a referendum. Cox and Bell saw the referendum of August 1921 as an opportunity to support their argument that the Southern Kurds would vote in favour of Faisal and his Arab rule. In her letter dated 22 January 1921, Bell wrote that: 'Major Longrigg from Kirkuk ... thinks the Kurds on our Mesopotamian border will come in quite willingly under an Arab Government, if they are properly handled and I know Col. Nalder thinks the same'.⁽¹¹⁾

In line with Faisal's wishes, the High Commission in Baghdad persuaded the Colonial Office to allow the three predominantly Kurdish divisions of Sulaimaniya, Kirkuk and Mosul to take part in the referendum, claiming that the local Kurds expressed such wishes. The referendum was by no means an exercise in democracy. The British had already taken the decision to impose Faisal as king of a state the nature and function of which they had already determined. The direct intervention of British political officers and their assistants turned the referendum into a fraudulent experiment, as they were the ones who in practice expressed the opinion of most divisions, selected the representatives of the local people, summoned meetings and declared the results. These British officials, with the help of some pro-British *mutassarifs* (heads of provinces), made sure that Faisal would emerge victorious regardless of the true wishes of the locals. Gerald de Gaury, one of Bell's contemporaries, admitted that the Referendum was 'uncertain business and without the British political officers' supervision and management it would have gone otherwise'.⁽¹²⁾

The simplicity of the referendum rules was striking. It took the shape of a petition (*madhbata*) in which the residents of an urban or a rural area would express their support or rejection of the Council of Ministers' resolution on Faisal's candidacy for the Iraqi throne.⁽¹³⁾ It was in the presence of British officials that the opinions of the carefully selected representatives of the locals were declared.⁽¹⁴⁾ Often the representatives had two petitions: one was in favour of Faisal, the other against. Thus the British officials could select the petition they wanted. Moreover, the referendum was held amidst an open Shi'a boycott.

The Sulaimaniya division

In the Sulaimaniya division, stronghold of the Kurdish nationalists, the local Kurds unanimously rejected the idea of participation, let alone voting in favour of Faisal and Arab rule. Thus, one third of Southern Kurds did not take part in the referendum. Bell attributed continuing British troubles in the Sulaimaniya division to Major Soane, who served as Political Officer of Sulaimaniya between early 1919 and early 1921. According to Bell, Soane turned down 'all idea of native institution ... Some sort of local Kurdish government we must have, preferably connected with Mesopotamia, for the advantage of all concerned'.⁽¹⁵⁾

It did not take long for Bell to change her mind after Sulaimaniya emphatically refused to be under Arab rule in a plebiscite organised by the High Commission in May 1921. Despite her disappointment, she still hoped that Sulaimaniya 'will eventually drop in to Iraq'.⁽¹⁶⁾ Bell's views on Sulaimaniya hardened after the referendum and the imposition of Faisal as King of Iraq. She now objected to any form of local autonomy for any Kurdish division or district. Bell particularly opposed the formation of a second Kurdish government under Shaikh Mahmud, as the Colonial Office wanted in 1922. Cox, Bell and other like-minded officials drew attention to the dangers that autonomous Kurdish rule would pose to the unity of the newly born Iraqi state.⁽¹⁷⁾ Bell wanted no less than to bring all of Southern Kurdistan under direct Arab rule, as demanded by King Faisal and his pan-Arab supporters.

The Mosul division:

In the predominantly Kurdish districts of Mosul, where the activities of the Kurdish nationalists were increasingly circumscribed, the British Political Officer of the division and his assistants in the districts exercised considerable influence. These British officials were mostly loyal to Cox's and Bell's line and therefore gave the Sharifians a free hand to propagate their cause. It is worth noting that Colonel Wilson held a plebiscite in 1918–19 which showed that the local population in the Mosul division voted overwhelmingly against Arab rule.⁽¹⁸⁾

The local Kurds living within the districts of the Mosul division, such as Amadia, Sinjar, Aqra, Dohuk, Zakho and Erbil, were reported to have voted in favour of Faisal and Iraq on condition that they would enjoy autonomous status in the fields of administration, education, custom and legislation and that they would retain the right to join Northern Kurdistan if it became an independent state. These local Kurds were not fully aware of the fact that they were deciding their own fate once and for all, and that the true purpose of holding the referendum at that critical point was to immediately incorporate Southern Kurdistan into an Arab state with no guarantee that the minimum of their rights would be respected. It is worth noting that the Kurds had not been under Arab rule since the mid-10th-century. Moreover, Kurdish notables in towns and tribal chiefs in rural areas were under great British pressure not to show public opposition to the policy adopted by the High Commission. As the Political Officer of the Mosul

Division admitted in his comment on the referendum, if the vast majority of the people under his control, notably the Kurds, the Yazidis, the Christians and Arab peasants, had been allowed to express freely their true opinion, they would have rejected Faisal and his Arab state.⁽¹⁹⁾ Bell interpreted the way in which local Kurds voted in a totally different way: 'Erbil and all the Kurdish districts round Mosul have come in, realising that their political and economic welfare is bound up with Mosul. They have bargained for and will obtain certain privileges, such as Kurdish officials.'⁽²⁰⁾

Just two weeks later, Bell showed no interest whatsoever in turning these 'certain privileges' into reality. When asked by the Kurdish delegation which had been invited by the High Commissioner to Baghdad to attend Faisal's coronation about Kurdish local administrative autonomy, Bell advised these Kurds to talk it over with the new King, and all she offered in this regard was a willingness to arrange an appointment.⁽²¹⁾ Not only that, but she also discouraged the Kurds from demanding education in the Kurdish language. Her justification was that 'there was not a single school book – nor any other – written in Kurdish'.⁽²²⁾

Bell's claim about the Kurdish language was not entirely true and it exposes her ignorance of both Kurdish history and Kurdish literature. At the time, there were books and periodicals published in the two main Kurdish literary dialects used in Southern Kurdistan, i.e. Sorani and Kermanji. These books and periodicals were published inside and outside Kurdistan. They covered diverse topics, including politics, history, religion and culture. During the First World War, the British published a Kurdish paper, entitled *Understanding the Truth*. Major Soane was the editor and was helped by a number of Kurdish intellectuals.⁽²³⁾

The Kirkuk division

The Kurdish and the Turkmen population of the Kirkuk division were reported to have voted against both Faisal and the incorporation of their division into Arab Iraq. Only 261 out of 31,269 of the selected representatives of the districts of the Kirkuk division voted in favour of Faisal and inclusion into Iraq.⁽²⁴⁾ Kurdish petitions mostly stated that they were signed by people who emphasised that they were 'not Arabs', and that they wanted to 'wait and see what independent Kurdistan is going to be like'.⁽²⁵⁾ In their meetings, the local Kurds did hide their true political aspirations, which was 'union with Kurdistan', if Faisal was elected as King of Arab Iraq.⁽²⁶⁾ Even some Arab notables said in a private conversation with some British officials that they wanted neither Faisal as a king nor Arab rule.⁽²⁷⁾ It is noteworthy, however, that the High Commission in Baghdad informed London in an assertive manner that, with the exception of the people of Sulaimaniya, all other Southern Kurds were in favour of coming under foreign Arab rule and that 96 per cent of those who participated voted in Faisal's favour.⁽²⁸⁾

During the Referendum period and the coronation of Faisal, political tension reached a critical point in many parts of Southern Kurdistan. Kurdish demands for the re-establishment of Kurdish self-rule and for the return of Shaikh Mahmud were heard even by British officials in London. This state of affairs prompted the Colonial Office to quickly send Major Noel to Sulaimaniya with the sole task of forming a second Kurdish government under the leadership of Shaikh Mahmud, who was brought back from exile.

The formation of the Conservative government in London in October 1922 was a turning point as far as the fate of Southern Kurdistan was concerned. It gave Cox, Bell and Faisal the opportunity to work together freely for the immediate incorporation of all Kurdish areas into the Arab state, even though the Southern Kurds were promised local autonomy within Iraq according to the December 1922 Declaration issued jointly by Cox and Faisal.⁽²⁹⁾ Subsequent events demonstrated that neither Cox and his Oriental Secretary nor Faisal and the new ruling Arab class were truly interested in fulfilling their promise of Kurdish autonomy. They all wanted a unitary state and a highly centralized authority throughout Iraq, including Southern Kurdistan. To consolidate the foundation of the new state, Bell showed no hesitation in supporting the use of military methods to suppress Kurdish revolts in the 1920s.

Section Two: Gertrude Bell and the Southern Kurds

Introduction

Any debate about Bell's attitudes towards the future of the Southern Kurds has to be placed into a broader context, including the political ambitions of the Sharifians, the sectarian division between Sunni Arabs and Shi'a Arabs, and the fate of both the native Christian community and Assyrian refugees. The Sharifian movement emerged as a political factor during the First World War, as a result of British military and political support for Sharif Husain, who led an anti-Turkish revolt in the Arab Peninsula. The Sharifian revolt won the support of army officers and intellectuals from Arab Mesopotamia. These pro Sharifian Arabs, whom Bell befriended, sought to bring the three Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul under Arab rule. In deciding Southern Kurdistan's future, Bell had to take into consideration Sharifian territorial demands, especially when the success of British post-war policy in Mesopotamia depended, in her eyes, on maintaining a permanent partnership with pro-British Sunni officers.

In Arab Mesopotamia itself, local Arabs were deeply divided along religious lines. The Shi'a majority had resented Sunni political domination for centuries, whereas the Sunni minority was determined to maintain its political and social hegemony under British occupation. Soon, the Sunnis formed a popular base for the Sharifian movement, for it was Sunni in its outlook, despite its ethno-nationalistic rhetoric. To consolidate British interests, it was important for Bell and some other like-minded British officials on the ground to readdress the numerical imbalance between the Shi'a majority, which resisted British influence, and the Sunni minority, which was willing to cooperate with Britain. The sectarian imbalance highlighted the importance of Southern Kurdistan to the future of British interests, as the local Kurds were mostly Sunni. Both sides – Faisal and his Sunni officers and Bell and her British colleagues – needed to change the sectarian imbalance by bringing the Southern Kurds under Arab-Sharifian rule.

In their post-war policy, the British had to consider the future of native Christian communities that were distributed between Southern Kurdistan and Arab Mesopotamia. As a result of the First World War, hundreds of Assyrian refugees were brought from Persia to Mesopotamia by the British authorities.

As they formed huge financial and political burdens, the British resettled these refugees in Northern Mesopotamia and in Southern Kurdistan, where other native Christian communities had lived for centuries. Thus, it was vital to the British, including Bell and Cox and other like-minded British officials, to think of ways to keep the Turks, who were considered to be the arch enemy of the Christians, out of Southern Kurdistan. It was thought that only by bringing Southern Kurdistan under Arab rule could both native Christians and Assyrian refugees be kept under British protection.

Bell, the Sharifian cause and the expectations of the Southern Kurds

Bell's reactions to Kurdish affairs sprang from her basic ideas of the ethnic, religious and ideological characteristics of the Arab state she desired to see. A combination of her personal ambitions, travels, friendships and work experience before, during and after the First World War turned Bell into an Arabist. She shared with T. E. Lawrence his idealism, Arabism and sympathy with the Sharifian family. It was only in relation to Mesopotamia's future that Lawrence had a different perspective from Bell's. He was not sure about the viability of Iraq as a new state. Lawrence wrote upon Bell's death that *'That Irak [sic] state is a fine monument, even if it only lasts a few more years, as I often fear and sometimes hope'*.⁽³⁰⁾

Bell, Lawrence and other British civilian and military officials serving in the Middle East presented a distinctive post-war imperial way of thinking, in that they believed in the prospect of reconciling British imperial interests with Arab nationalist aspirations through the formation of an Arab state under close British supervision. This imperial way of thinking was termed 'the Cairo School' at the time.⁽³¹⁾ Insofar as the post-war territorial settlement was concerned, Bell and Lawrence strongly advocated what was known as 'the Sharifian solution', i.e. selecting native rulers from the Hashemite princely family for new states in the Arab parts of the Ottoman Empire. In Arab Mesopotamia, Bell devoted her time and efforts to the creation of an Arab state ruled by a Sharifian prince. In her letter dated 12 April 1921, Bell showed her wholehearted sympathy with the efforts of the well-known pro-Sharifian Naji Swaidi to propagate Faisal's candidacy for Iraq's throne and said: *'he will get all the help from me that I can give and one way and another I can give a good deal without departing from an outward neutrality'*.⁽³²⁾

In regard to Southern Kurdistan's future, Bell's views underwent some modifications in parallel with the changes in the British Mesopotamian policy. A clear distinction can be made between her views before the Cairo Conference and the period that followed. In the first period, Bell's official reports and letters

show that she favoured a form of 'local Kurdish autonomy' within the general administration of Mesopotamia. She was particularly critical of the direct British rule adopted by Colonel A. T. Wilson, the Acting

Civil Commissioner in Arab Mesopotamia (1918–20) and by Major Soane, the Political Officer of Sulaimaniya.⁽³³⁾ She attributed all British troubles in both Arab and Kurdish regions to Wilson's and Soane's policies, which she regarded as insensitive to local wishes.

The shift in the British imperial policy from direct rule to the newly invented mandate system with respect to Mesopotamia had an immediate effect on Bell's view. Under the impact of new political, strategic and economic requirements, she revised her position on Southern Kurdistan in general and Sulaimaniya in particular. Now, Bell wanted Britain to consider the Kurdish situation in the context of the newly developing British–Arab relations in Mesopotamia. She and Cox agreed above all that any successful implementation of the new British imperial policy would solely depend on fulfilling the military, economic and political needs of the new Arab state, as defined by the newly emerged Arab ruling class in Mesopotamia, who were Sunni.

In Bell's eyes, Britain had to be exceptionally sensitive to Arab wishes in relation to Southern Kurdistan's future. She and Cox agreed that encouraging Arab nationalism in the shape of sponsoring Arab territorial claims on Southern Kurdistan was the viable option for the containment of Turkish nationalists' and Bolsheviks' threats to British interests in Mesopotamia.⁽³⁴⁾ What Bell promoted was a continuation of the old wartime policy in the Arab Middle East, under which Britain had successfully driven a wedge between the subjugated Arabs and their Turkish rulers through its backing of the political aspirations of the Sharifian movement.

In spite of describing Major Noel as possessing 'an immense understanding of the Kurds',⁽³⁵⁾ Bell firmly opposed his promotion of political self-rule and cultural autonomy in Southern Kurdistan and his support for Shaikh Mahmud's leadership. Her rejection of Kurdish political aspirations can be attributed to her concept of what the Arab state should be like. Her concept was a manifestation of her Arabist political and cultural tendencies. Bell was not much different from Faisal or his close Sharifian circle in believing that the new state had to be based solely on Arab ethnicity and secular Arab culture. Her official communications and personal writings show neither a criticism of the manner in which successive Arab governments resisted the introduction of Kurdish education, nor an expression of any sympathy with the idea of minimal political rights for the Southern Kurds between 1921 and 1926.

Bell's opposition to an autonomous Southern Kurdistan increased in parallel with her growing friendship with King Faisal and admiration of his inner circle of former Baghdadi officers, whom she first met in Syria. Bell felt strongly about offering British support for these pro-Faisal officers, who did not want 'shake loose from British help and control'.⁽³⁶⁾ It was with her 'young nationalist friends', as Bell put it, that she wanted to work and to co-ordinate in relation to the cultural, political, ethnic and religious characteristics of the Arab state in Mesopotamia and its boundaries. It was not a coincidence then that the two parties, Bell and the former officers, found themselves in agreement over bringing Southern Kurdistan under Arab rule in Mesopotamia.

It was intentional that Cox and Bell overlooked the recommendations of the Political Committee at the Cairo Conference on keeping Southern Kurdistan separate from the proposed Arab state by resorting to different kinds of manoeuvres. Instead of fostering the existing sense of separateness among the

Southern Kurds and allaying their growing fears of the imposition of foreign rule against their will, the High Commission suggested various schemes for the incorporation of Kurdish provinces and districts into the Arab state during the period May 1921–December 1922. Cox and Bell were not willing to regard the Southern Kurdish areas as a distinct territorial unit, even for administrative or cultural purposes, within the Arab state. They feared that keeping an autonomous Sulaimaniya outside Iraq would inevitably encourage the remaining Kurdish provinces and districts to demand the same treatment.³⁷ As a consequence, the whole scheme for the annexation of Southern Kurdistan by Arab Iraq would fail. Cox and Bell worked hard to prevent Sulaimaniya from being the focus of growing Kurdish nationalism. For this very reason, they both expressed their opposition to the return of Shaikh Mahmud to Sulaimaniya from exile. Bell never wanted Shaikh Mahmud to be looked upon or treated as a nationalist leader or even as an influential figure. In effect, what Cox and Bell advocated insofar as Southern Kurdistan was concerned was a form of Arab imperialism, not much different from the old British and Ottoman direct rule.

Bell, sectarian politics and the annexation of Southern Kurdistan

The peoples of the three Ottoman *Vilayets* of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul shared few common political aspirations and little economic interdependency or cultural homogeneity under Turkish rule. All the three *Vilayets* were distinct in terms of their ethnic-religious compositions and social structures. The effects of the First World War and the British occupation were to accentuate rather than weaken these divergent economic, cultural, ethnic and religious features among the communities of the three *Vilayets* and, as a consequence, contradictory political, social and cultural aspirations surfaced.

It is imperative to note that Southern Kurdistan did not have a direct geographical connection with the predominantly Shi'a region in Arab Mesopotamia. This may explain why there was no history of enmity between Southern Kurds and Shi'a Arabs. What separated the two Shi'a and Kurdish regions from each other was a broad region populated by Sunni Arabs and Turkmen. The absence of land connection between Shi'a Arabs and the Kurds had political significance, for it did not help create direct contacts, let alone co-ordination or co-operation, between the leaders of the Shi'a and Kurdish communities during a highly fateful period in which the future of Arab Mesopotamia and Southern Kurdistan was debated and decided upon by the British officials on the ground and in London. The absence of any contact between the Southern Kurds and Shi'a Arabs was something that Faisal and his Sunni followers and Bell and her like-minded British officials on the ground could capitalise upon when initiating an imposed state-building process.

The pragmatic representatives of Sunni Arabs found in ethno-nationalism (pan-Arabism) a means to political ascendancy, whereas for the Shi'a, sectarian-religious affiliations had far more weight than any ethnic factor. Bell described the famous Shi'a Sadr family as 'bitterly pan-Islamic, anti-British "et tout le bataclan"''.⁽³⁸⁾ The traditional Shi'a elite, which came from different ethnic backgrounds, showed no interest in the Sharifian revolt. In general, it was the Shi'a areas which put up notable resistance to the invading British and afterwards were the main scene of the anti-British uprisings in 1920. Bell always found it extremely difficult to establish direct communication with the Shi'a community, particularly:

the grimly devout citizens of the holy towns and more especially the leaders of religious opinion, the Mujtahids, who can loose and bind with a word by authority

which rests on an intimate acquaintance with accumulated knowledge entirely irrelevant to human affairs and worthless in any branch of human activity.⁽³⁹⁾

It is no wonder that Bell did not think about, let alone nominate, Shi'a figures as candidates for the throne of Iraq.

By contrast, secular and traditional Sunni notables in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul did not hesitate to deal with the British and confined their opposition to any political arrangement which might put their community under the rule of the Shi'a majority. Bell was fully aware of how the Sunnis were seriously 'afraid of being swamped by the Shi'ahs'.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Sunni notables preferred either the continuation of the British administration, with which they expressed explicit willingness to cooperate, or the establishment of an Arab state under a Sunni ruler, regardless of his ethnic background, such as Prince Burhan al-Din, the son

of Abdul Hamid.⁽⁴¹⁾ In this respect, Abdul Rahman al-Gailani, the Naqib al-Ashraf and thus the religious head of Baghdadi Sunnis, made it clear that he '*would never consent to the appointment of the Sharif or of his son as Amir*', for he mistakenly thought that the Sharifians would tolerate Shi'a hegemony. According to Bell, he 'would rather a thousand times have the Turks back in Iraq than see the Sharif or his sons installed' in Baghdad.⁽⁴²⁾ By contrast, the leading Sunni figure in Basra, Said Talib al-Naqib, opted for the continuation of British rule as the safest option.

Despite their secular and pan-Arab rhetoric, the former Baghdad officers, who formed the nucleus of the new native ruling class, showed extreme Sunni prejudice in their determination not to share, let alone to allow Shi'a figures to play a leading role in any native administration that would replace British colonial rule. With tacit backing from the British administration, the ex-officers found natural allies in the Sunni traditional leadership and other local Sunni *effendis*. Soon, a powerful Sunni bloc came into being, whose aim was to establish a Sunni-dominated state headed by Faisal and under the auspices of the British. The ex-officers succeeded in forging pragmatic connections between the interests of the local Sunnis and those of the Sharifians on the one hand, and between the Faisal-Sunni bloc and British authorities in Baghdad on the other.

These Sunnis wasted no time in realising their objectives. Ja'far Pasha, the first Acting Defence Minister, at the first Council of Ministers, pressed the British High Commission for the exclusion of the mostly Shi'i tribal shaikhs from administrative posts in their localities, except in the holy towns of Najaf and Karbala.⁽⁴³⁾ Moreover, Sunni politicians prevented the creation of separate representation for the tribes in the would-be National Assembly, for it would grant the Shi'a shaikhs significant political weight. Bell agreed that 'it would be disastrous if the tribesmen were to swamp the townsmen'.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Certain political arrangements were invented to ensure that Sunni figures, traditionalists and *effendis* alike, would dominate all Iraqi governments, the army and the civil services. Moreover, non-Mesopotamian Arabs were imported to fill important posts in the state. These Arabs were both Sunni and Sharifian, such as Sati'al-Husry, whose ideas considerably shaped the government's educational and cultural policies during the 1920s and 1930s.

To create a misleading impression of neutrality, the High Commission pressed the Sunnis to include one or two Shi'a ministers in the Council of Ministers and to appoint one or two Shi'a Kaimmakams (governors) in the provinces. Such measures did not change the attitudes of Shi'a secular and religious leaders towards the political process initiated by the British and dominated by the Sunnis. Faisal also failed in his efforts to win the support of the Shi'a religious establishment in the holy cities. He was not really in a position to offer the Shi'a *effendis* real political influence, fearing a strong

reaction from his Sunni supporters. In the end, he had no choice but to remain a symbol of Sunni political hegemony.

Bell worked hard for the consolidation of Sunni sectarian domination. In a letter dated 3 October 1920, she wrote that *'if you are going to have anything like really representative institutions you would have a majority of Shi'ahs ... The final authority must be in the hands of the Sunnis, in spite of their numerical inferiority'*.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Bell knew, as her administrative report in 1920 shows, that the Shi'a would strongly oppose any political arrangement which would put them under a Sharifian prince.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Bell firmly believed in the growing value of the expatriate officers to the future of British interests in Mesopotamia. She viewed them as a strong reliable ally with whom the British could work for the establishment of an Arab state in Mesopotamia. In Baghdad, Sunni figures, traditional and secular

like, formed the bulk of Bell's social circles. Some of these figures were won over to the Sharifian cause, such as Muzahim al-Pachachi, who became Prime Minister in the 1940s.

Bell, the Sunni expatriates and the Sunni notables in Baghdad and Basra found themselves in agreement that the new state in Mesopotamia had to be pan-Arabist in its ideological orientation, Arab in its ethnic identity and Sunni in its religious character. Indeed, at the first Council of Ministers headed by the Naqib al-Ashraf of Baghdad, the Sunnis, pan-Arabist and traditionalist alike, were predominant. In the provinces, the appointed *mutasarrifs* were mostly Sunnis. Thus, by tolerating Sunni actions and respecting their wishes, Cox and Bell knowingly helped create a covert sectarian state in Mesopotamia.

Bell attempted to justify Sunni political hegemony in the state and in government by repeating the point that many prominent Shi'a figures were Persian subjects.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Bell's claim might be true of a number of Shi'a religious leaders, but it was not true of Shi'a notables and *effendis*. Bell, who admitted that she found it 'very difficult to maintain impartiality and patience' in dealing with Mesopotamian affairs,⁽⁴⁸⁾ adopted a sectarian tone in her personal letters and diary, as a reaction to Shi'a opposition to British post-war plans for the future of Mesopotamia. Bell described Shi'a religious and secular leaders alike as 'extremists'.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Regarding those Shi'a who opposed British plans, Bell wrote that *'I expect they are all in the pay of that wicked old hobgoblin, Shaikh Mahdi al-Khalisi, one of the turbaned [sic] lot whom I want to seal into a bottle. He's not even an Arab; he's a Persian'*.⁽⁵⁰⁾ She described the most respected and popular politician during the 1920s and 1930s, Ja'far Abu Timman, as 'the villain' for opposing the British-Iraqi treaty.⁽⁵¹⁾

It was not so difficult for Bell to find out that the sectarian balance in the new state was significantly in favour of the Shi'a. The ensuing sectarian imbalance constituted a political challenge of great magnitude for both the Sunnis, who were not willing to share power, and their British mentors, who were afraid of losing their political control. For both sides, this type of imbalance would stand in the way of establishing a native state along distinctive ideological, ethnic and religious lines. Bell used the expressions '*the Shi'ah situation*' and '*the Shi'ah problem*'⁽⁵²⁾ to emphasise not only the explicit Shi'a opposition to British influence but also their numerical superiority over the Sunnis. The sectarian proportion between Shi'a and Sunni was two to one in both Baghdad and Basra. This meant that the new state was being built on a shaky foundation. Thus, the sectarian imbalance emerged as a source of considerable anxiety for both parties, the ruling Sunnis and their British mentors.

This imbalance was alarmingly felt with the approach of the elections for the first National Assembly. King Faisal tried to persuade Cox and Bell of the sectarian value of Southern Kurdistan if it were brought under his rule. He wanted the Southern Kurds, who were mostly Sunni, to take part in the elections. Otherwise, the elections 'would place Shi'ahs in a very strong position'. This prospect 'filled him with misgivings'.⁽⁵³⁾ Bell agreed that 'Sunni Mosul must be retained as part of the Mesopotamian state in order to adjust the balance'.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The Shi'a formed only 5 per cent of the population in the Mosul division.⁽⁵⁵⁾

The sectarian importance of Southern Kurdistan rapidly grew in proportion to the rise in the tension between the Faisal-Sunni bloc and their patron the High Commission, and the religious Shi'a leaders and *effendis*. The sectarian tension resulted later in the expulsion of Shaikh al-Khalisi, the supreme Shi'a *mujtahid*, from the country, probably to weaken Shi'a opposition to the terms of the British-Iraqi treaty. The practice of sectarian deportations that was first invented by the Sunni politicians with British blessing was continued as a political tool of suppression throughout the Monarchical period.⁽⁵⁶⁾

It was partially the imperative of sectarian political considerations for British interests which pushed the High Commission to get the approval of the Colonial Office in relation to the participation of Kurdish districts in the elections for the Iraqi National Assembly.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Indeed, Kurdish participation helped to create some kind of sectarian balance at the National Assembly throughout the Monarchical era (1921-58).

Bell, the use of force and the annexation of Southern Kurdistan

It was inevitable that British strategic interests would be closely tied up with the military viability of the new Arab state. A feasible formula was needed to enable Britain to withdraw its ground forces, and the Arab state to build its army. The key objective of any form of British–Arab partnership, from Bell’s and Cox’s viewpoint, would be based on containing outside military threats and suppressing internal opposition in Arab and Kurdish areas.

On the one side, there were unceasing Turkish territorial claims on Southern Kurdistan. These claims, which were accompanied by frequent military incursions and relentless propaganda activities, could impede the formation process of a viable Arab state. This state of affairs helped to accentuate even more than before the strategic importance of Southern Kurdistan to British long-term military interests in Mesopotamia. Southern Kurdistan formed a natural defensive zone that was inexpensive for the British to defend owing to its geographical characteristics, i.e. high mountains and river systems. Moreover, it would have been possible for the British to replace their imperial forces with local Kurdish recruits to defend the northern boundaries of country. In order to consolidate the Arab state’s security, Bell showed some interest in extending Faisal’s rule to certain Kurdish areas located north of Southern Kurdistan.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The British needed also to think of methods to keep the situation in Southern Kurdistan under control, until the time when a new Turkish peace settlement could be reached. The promises of local autonomy to Southern Kurds made by the High Commission (Cox and Bell) and by the Arab government (King Faisal and his Sharifian followers) between 1921 and 1922 were mere ink on paper, as neither side was truly interested in initiating a political process in that direction. British and Arab officials believed that outright incorporation of Southern Kurdistan into the Arab state was the only way to protect their interests and cement their partnership. But the question was how to realise this objective militarily.

British experiences in suppressing Kurdish revolts demonstrated that resorting to ground actions was very costly, both in terms of men and money.

Using the air force emerged as the cheapest and speediest tool to pacify Southern Kurdistan. Bell praised what was known as the Scheme of Air Control, perceiving it as the perfect method to safeguard the Arab state’s long-term security. She especially emphasised the role of the Royal Air Force (RAF) in assisting the Arab Army in suppressing Kurdish revolts. On 25 September 1921, Bell wrote, after the RAF bombed Rowanduz and Rania where the insurgents were active, that ‘It is of very good omen for the Arab Army when it is left with

little but aeroplane help from us, as it soon will be'.⁽⁵⁹⁾ She wrote ten months later that 'the RAF has done wonders bombing insurgent villages in extremely difficult country, but it takes them all their time to keep a sufficient number of machines in the air'.⁽⁶⁰⁾

The Scheme of Air Control was based on extensive use of the RAF in support of ground actions taken by the Arab Army against rebellious Kurdish areas. It was the use of this Scheme which really made the incorporation of Southern Kurdistan into King Faisal's Arab state feasible. Bell showed no reaction in her official communications, letters or diary to the consideration that was given to the use of gas bombs by the RAF against civilian targets in Mesopotamia and Kurdistan. Although there is no evidence that poison gas was ever used, Britain did consider and approve its use in order to suppress internal rebellions in Southern Kurdistan, Mesopotamia and Afghanistan.⁽⁶¹⁾

Bell, local Christians and the annexation of Southern Kurdistan

Like other British officials, Bell was concerned about the fate of the Christian Assyrian refugees, who, for religious reasons, had sided with the Allies against the Islamic Ottoman Empire during the First World War. These Christians had fled their villages in the Hakkari region in Northern Kurdistan (Turkish

Kurdistan) to Urmia in Eastern Kurdistan (Iranian Kurdistan), which was under the control of the Russian army. The withdrawal of the Russian army from the war in the wake of the October Revolution in 1917 forced these refugees to leave Urmia for Mesopotamia with British assistance.

Bell believed that the Kurds should be punished for their alleged role in the massacres of Ottoman Christians during the First World War. But Britain was 'powerless to enforce justice', according to her.⁽⁶²⁾ It seems that Bell's views on Kurdish-Christian relations were influenced by the claims of her old friend the missionary Dr William Ainger Wigram (1872–1953), who was an English Church of England priest and author, notable for his work with and writings on the Assyrians and their separate church. His confidential wartime reports to British intelligence and his writings show that Wigram did not like the Kurds, holding them responsible for the misfortune that befell the Ottoman Christians before and during the First World War.⁽⁶³⁾

In Arab Mesopotamia, the Assyrian refugees became political, financial and moral burdens on the British administration. The locals did not welcome the Assyrian presence. As a solution, the British decided to resettle the refugees in Southern Kurdistan, where they created a new ally. The resettlement was carried

out against the wishes of local Kurds. Moreover, to strengthen their own influence, the British resorted to a divide-and-rule method by exploiting the old antagonism between the Muslim Kurds and the Christian Assyrians.

In his historical summary of Bell's service in Mesopotamia, Cox wrote that: *numbers of them [Assyrians] had, from 1921 onwards, entered the British service as Levies and had displayed magnificent fighting qualities, helping in the suppression of sporadic Kurdish insurrections and in the expulsion from Ruwanduz in 1923 of the Turkish irregulars.*⁽⁶⁴⁾

Indeed, throughout the 1920s and the early 1930s, the Assyrian Levies were used frequently to fight the Kurds and raid their villages.

The British initiative in bringing the Assyrian refugees to Mesopotamia unintentionally accentuated the connection between their fate and the future of Southern Kurds. A separate Southern Kurdistan or its re-subjection to Turkish rule would definitely force the Christians to leave their areas. In this context,

Bell wrote: 'If we withdraw our troops from Mosul, we must either send the Assyrian refugees to Basrah ahead of us or be prepared for their following headlong on our heels, of their own initiative'.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Bell was in no doubt that losing Southern Kurdistan to the Turks would be followed by massacres of local Christian communities.⁽⁶⁶⁾ In this manner, the British would inevitably face political, financial and moral dilemmas. It was therefore important for the British, and Bell in particular, that the areas where the Christians lived should be within the boundaries of Iraq and thus under close British supervision.

Conclusion:

The key point which this study has sought to underline is that by playing a leading role in the developments that led to the formation of an Arab state in Mesopotamia, Bell influenced to a large extent the political fate of Southern Kurdistan. Although admitting that 'the Kurds were not anti-British',⁽⁶⁷⁾ Bell firmly opposed the realisation of their political aspirations, insisting on the annexation of their land by an artificial state she worked hard to create. Her position on Kurdish affairs was largely a reflection of pragmatic considerations and personal ambitions, rather than the outcome of objective assessments of the political, economic or strategic realities of the period 1920–6.

It was imperative, from Bell's viewpoint, to bring the Southern Kurds under Arab rule so that the sectarian imbalance could be altered in the interest of Britain's allies: the Sunni Arabs and King Faisal. Moreover, Bell viewed the annexation of Southern Kurdistan by Arab Iraq as a means to consolidate the credibility and influence of King Faisal and the new ruling Sunnis. The annexation would cement further the relations between the British High

Commission and the new ruling political class. For the British, the annexation would enable the Assyrian refugees to settle in Iraq on a permanent basis, without incurring political commitments, administrative burdens or financial costs. In addition, the Assyrian refugees would continue to fight Kurdish insurgents in the interests of the new Iraqi state and Britain. In sum, for Bell the annexation of Southern Kurdistan was a task that had to be accomplished by whatever political and military means possible and regardless of the true wishes of its population.

Notes:

- (1) Gerald de Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad: The Tragedy of Iraq's Monarchy*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2008, p. 22.
- (2) Letter No.1, from Amir Abdullah to Ronald Storrs, correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, His Majesty's High Commissioner at Cairo, and the Sharif Husain of Mecca, July 1915–March 1916, Cmd 5957. National Archives, Kew.
- (3) Letter No. 5, from Sharif Husain, 5 November 1915, correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, His Majesty's High Commissioner at Cairo, and the Sharif Husain of Mecca, July 1915–March 1916, Cmd 5957. National Archives, Kew.
- (4) Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, 12–30 March 1921, F0371/6343. National Archives, Kew.
- (5) Noel was well liked among Kurdish intellectuals and traditional figures in Kurdistan, Istanbul and Europe. He was well known among British officials in the Middle East and in London for his tacit support of Kurdish political aspirations. It was with his support that Shaikh Mahmud formed the first Kurdish autonomous entity within the general framework of the British administration in Mesopotamia. Noel wrote a 77-page report on his experience in Kurdistan, entitled 'Diary of Major Noel on Special Duty in Kurdistan, from 14th June to September 1919'. A copy of the report can be

found in FO371/5068, PRO.

- (6) Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, 12–30 March 1921, FO371/6343.
National Archives, Kew.
- (7) Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, 12–30 March 1921, FO371/6343.
National Archives, Kew.
- (8) Churchill to Cox, 18 June 1921, CO730/2. National Archives, Kew.
- (9) The seventh member of the Committee, Maj. R. D. Babcock, did not express any views on the issues under discussion, acting as its Secretary.
- (10) Young, Colonial Office Minute of 20 June 1923 and H. Read, Colonial Office Minute of 21 June 1923, CO730/40. National Archives, Kew.
- (11) Gertrude Bell, letters, 22 January 1921. Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk.
- (12) de Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad*, p. 34.
- (13) Mesopotamian Intelligence Report (MIR) No. 18, 1 August 1921, CO730/4. National Archives, Kew.
- (14) Philip Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1937, p. 332.
- (15) Bell, letters, 22 January 1921. Bell.
- (16) Bell, letters, 29 May 1921. Bell Archive.
- (17) High Commissioner for Mesopotamia to State Secretary for the Colonies, 5 June 1921, CO730/2.
National Archives, Kew.
- (18) Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development*, pp. 202–3.
- (19) Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development*, p. 168.
- (20) Bell, letters, 14 August 1921. Bell Archive.
- (21) Bell, letters, 28 August 1921. Bell Archive.
- (22) Bell, letters, 28 August 1921. Bell Archive.
- (23) The Iraq National Library and Archives (INLA) has the complete issues of the paper. A full digitalised copy of the paper can be found on INLA's own page at the World Digital Library website,

www.wdl.org/en/search/?institution=iraqi-national-library-and-archives
(accessed 15 July 2016).

- (24) For more details of the 1921 referendum, see Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development*, p. 332.
- (25) Iraq Intelligence Report (IIR), No. 19, 15 August 1921, FO371/63531. National Archives, Kew.
- (26) IIR, No.19, 15 August 1921, FO371/63531. National Archives, Kew.
- (27) IIR, No.19, 15 August 1921, FO371/63531. National Archives, Kew.
- (28) de Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad*, p. 33.
- (29) IIR, No. 1, 1 January 1923, FO371/7772. National Archives, Kew.
- (30) Christopher Hitchens, 'The Woman Who Made Iraq', *The Atlantic* (June 2007), www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007 (accessed 15 July 2016).
- (31) The other traditional school of imperial thinking was known as 'the India School', which was represented by the British colonial authorities in Delhi and British officials in the Persian Gulf who sought to turn newly conquered Mesopotamia into a colony, directly connected to India. Percy Cox and Arnold Wilson were exponents of this school. Seemingly, Cox changed his former position after being entrusted with the task of replacing direct British rule with a native administration in Mesopotamia.
- (32) Bell, letters, 12 April 1921. Bell Archive.
- (33) Bell, letters, 8 February 1920, 10 January 1921 and 22 January 1921. Bell Archive.
- (34) Cox to Churchill, 21 June 1921, CO730/2. National Archives, Kew.
- (35) Bell to H. B., letters, 8 October 1922. Bell Archive.
- (36) Bell, letters, 5 October 1921. Bell Archive.
- (37) High Commissioner for Mesopotamia to State Secretary for the Colonies, 5 June 1921, CO730/2. National Archives, Kew.
- (38) Bell to F. B., letters, 14 March 1920. Bell Archive.
- (39) Bell to F. B., letters, 14 March 1920. Bell Archive.
- (40) Bell to H. B., letters, 22 January 1921. Bell Archive.
- (41) R. W. Bullard, Colonial Office Minute No. 14659, 4 April 1921; Notes on MIR, No. 6, 31 January

- 1921, CO730/1. National Archives, Kew.
- (42) Elizabeth Burgoyne, *Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers, 1914–1926*, London, Ernest Benn, 1961, p. 10.
- (43) Saad B. Eskander, *From Planning to Partition: Great Britain's Policy towards the Future of Kurdistan, 1915–1923*, Hawler, General Directorate of Information, Printing and Publishing, 2012, p. 173.
- (44) Bell to H. B., Baghdad, letters, 18 December 1920. Bell Archive.
- (45) Burgoyne, *Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers*, p. 169.
- (46) de Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad*, p. 23.
- (47) Bell to F. B., letters, 13 March 1920 and 7 November 1920. Bell Archive. During the Monarchical and the Republican eras, the Sunni ruling class accused all Shi'a who opposed the political regime of being disloyal Persians.
- (48) Bell, letters, 6 July 1922. Bell Archive.
- (49) Bell to F. B., letters, 14 March 1920. Bell Archive.
- (50) Bell, letters, 22 June 1922. Bell Archive.
- (51) Bell, letters, 22 June 1922. Bell Archive.
- (52) Bell, letters, 10 October 1920 and 7 November 1920. Bell Archive.
- (53) High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 September 1921, FO371/6347. National Archives, Kew.
- (54) Burgoyne, *Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers*, p. 169.
- (55) Philip Ireland, *Al-Iraq Dirasah fi Tatawwurihi al-Siyasi*, Baghdad, Mesopotamia House, 2013, p. 203, fn. 1.
- The Saddam regime turned this practice into a law.
- (57) High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 September 1921, FO371/6347. National Archives, Kew.
- (58) Bell, letters, 17 September 1921. Bell Archive.
- (59) Bell, letters, 25 September 1921. Bell Archive.
- (60) Bell, letters, 6 July 1922. Bell Archive.
- (61) R. M. Douglas, 'Did Britain Use Chemical Weapons in Mandatory Iraq?', *Journal of Modern History*

81/4 (December 2009): 859–87.

(62) Bell, letters, 12 January 1920. Bell Archive.

(63) See, for example, William A. Wigram, and Edgar T. A. Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind: Life in Eastern Kurdistan*, London, A. & C. Black, 1914.

(64) See Sir Percy Cox's historical summary of the years during which Gertrude Bell worked under him

in Lady Florence Bell, ed., *The Letters of Gertrude Bell*, Vol. 2, New York, Boni and Liveright, 1927,

pp. 504–41.

(65) Bell, letters, 10 January 1922. Bell Archive.

(66) Bell, letters, 24 October 1922. Bell Archive.

(67) Bell, letters, 14 August 1921. Bell Archive.

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William A. Wigram and Edgar T. A Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind: Life in Eastern Kurdistan*, London, A. & C. Black, 1914.

غيرترود بل وتشكيل الدولة العراقية: البُعد الكوردي

الملخص:

تشكلت الخريطة السياسية الحديثة للشرق الاوسط في اعقاب الحرب العالمية الاولى (١٩١٤ - ١٩١٨) نتيجة للتدخلات المباشرة والحاسمة للقوى الكبرى المنتصرة في الحرب، خاصة بريطانيا العظمى. على النقيض مما يعتقد البعض، لعب بعض الموظفون البريطانيون ممن عملوا ميدانيا دورا مؤثرا في رسم تلك الخريطة الجديدة. بقدر ما يتعلق الامر بكوردستان الجنوبية والعراق، ادت بل غرتروود، السكرتيرة الشرقية في المندوبية السامية البريطانية في بغداد، دورا مؤثرا في قيام دولة العراق وفي تأسيس طبقته السياسية الحاكمة ورسم حدوده الجنوبية والغربية، وفي وقت لاحق، ضم المناطق الجنوبية من كوردستان العثمانية اليها، على الضد من رغبات سكانها ونخبها وكذلك توجهات وزارة المستعمرات البريطانية بين عامي ١٩٢١ و ١٩٢٢.

تنقسم هذه المقالة البحثية الى قسمين رئيسيين. في القسم الاول، يركز البحث على البدائل المتوفرة لدى البريطانيين بالنسبة الى رسم مستقبل كوردستان الجنوبية في ضوء تقرير مصير مناطق مسوبوتاميا العربية. جاء تحليل مواقف بل غيرترود وتصوراتها السياسية تجاه مصير الكورد وكوردستان الجنوبية ضمن هذا السياق التاريخي، سواء خلال مؤتمر القاهرة (آذار - نيسان ١٩٢١) او في اعقابها او خلال اجراء الاستفتاء بشأن تنصيب الامير فيصل بن حسين ملكا على العراق. اما القسم الثاني فيسلط الضوء على عوامل مختلفة أثّرت في طريقة تفكير بل غرتروود وفي المواقف غير المتفهمة التي اتخذتها تجاه ورغبات سكان كوردستان الجنوبية وتطلعات وجهائها ومثقفها، من ابرز تلك العوامل كانت هي المسألة الشريفيه الممتثلة في ترضية الامير حسين، شريف مكة، والمتطلبات التوازن الطائفي بين الخصم (العرب الشيعة) والحليف (العرب السنة)، وتوطيد العلاقة الاستراتيجية بين الطبقة السياسية العربية الحاكمة الجديدة وحكومة لندن ومصير الجماعات المسيحية خاصة المهاجرة منها الى المناطق الكوردستانية بعد انتهاء الحرب العالمية الاولى

الكلمات الدالة: غيرترود بل، كردستان، بريطانيا، العراق، مؤتمر القاهرة.

گروترو د بیل و دروستکرنا وهلاتی ئیراقی

پوخته:

نهخشی سیاسی یی نوی یی روزههلاتا ناڤین هاته دروستکرنا بشتی جهنگی جیهانیی ئیکئی (۱۹۱۴ - ۱۹۱۸) ژ تهگهري دهست و مردانی ئیکسهر وئیکلاکهر یا وهلاتین زلهیز ین سههرکهفتی د جهنگی داووتاییهت بریتانیا و بهروفاژی هزرکرنا هندک لایا ژماریهک ژ فهرمانبهترین بریتانی ین مهیدانی کاردکرنا رولهکی مهزن گیران د دروستکرنا نهخشی سیاسی یی نوی و دمریاری کوردستانا باشور وئیراقی سکریترا روزههلاتی یا نوینهراتیا بریتانی ل بهغدا رولهکی مهزن گیرا د دامهزراندنا ئیراقی دا و دیارکرنا سنورین وی ین باشور وروژناڤای و یاشان پیشههیلا نا بهشین باشور ژ کوردستانا ئوسمانی ب ئیراقی فه دژی ههزا خه لکی وی وومزارهتا موستهعمهراتین بریتانی دناف بهرا سالی ۱۹۲۱ - ۱۹۲۲.

ئهف فهکولینه دابهش دبت بو دوو بهشین سههرکی دبهشی ئیکئی دا فهکولین دراوستت لسهر گهورکهترین لبه دهست بریتانیان دمریاری دانانا ئایندهیی کوردستانا باشور د چارچوڤی ئیکلاکرن و دیارکرنا چارمنقیسی دهقهرین میسوبوتامیا یا عهرهیی و تیدا ههلوپستین بیل گرودی دمریاری چارمنقیسی کوردان و کوردستانا باشور چ ل کونگری قاهره (نادارا - نیسان ۱۹۲۱). یان ژی بشتی ریفرا ندوما دانانا پادشا فیصلی کوری حوسینی لسهر ئیراقی. و بهشی دووی ژ فهکولینی ئامازی ددت گهلهک فاکتهترین کاتیکرن کرین لسهر ههزا بیل گرودی دمریاری ههلوپستین وی ین نه ریک و پیک بهرامبهر ههزین خه لکی کوردستانی وروشهنبیرین وی وژ وانا بابتهی رازی کرنا میر حوسینی شهریفی مهککه و بابتهی به لانسکرنا دوژمنان (عهربین شیع) وههفهیمانان (عهربین سونه) و خورتکرنا په یوه ندین سیاسی دناف بهرا چینا سیاسی یا عهرهیی یا نوی و حکومهتا لهندهن و چارمنقیسی مهسیحیان و بتاییهت ین کوچهر بو دهقهرین کوردستانی بشتی شهري جیهانیی ئیکئی.

په یقین سههرکی: گروترو دبیل، کوردستان، بریتانیا، عیراق، کونگری قاهره.