

COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO COLLECTION OF ORAL HISTORY FOR DOCUMENTATION OF *KELA AKRÈ*, AN ANCIENT CITADEL IN KURDISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Many archaeological sites particularly in the mountainous areas of Kurdistan Region of Iraq have limited archaeological documentary records despite their historic significance. Among these is *KelaAkrè*, a local term for an ancient rocky hillfort dating back to the Assyrian Empire period. This pilot study aimed to document the history of *Kela Akrè* and its connection to the lower historical Akre town through collection of oral history from the local people in an attempt to establish a historical background research for this monument. Rare availability of literature about this site necessitates collection of oral history from the living memories especially of the elderly local people who have witnessed or remember the past events. Two approaches of oral history interviewing (rifle and shotgun) were used for collection of rich historical information that will serve as a helpful tool for documenting *KelaAkrè*. Narratives about this site and the historical Akre town explored not only the physical structures but also their functions and uses in addition to the relationships among the existing historical monuments. The community-based approach to collection of oral history about *Kela Akrè* has proved to be instrumental in compiling useful information that can be documented for future documentation purpose.

KEYWORDS: Oral history, , Kela Akrè, ancient citadel , Kurdistan, community based approach, cultural heritage

INTRODUCTION

Oral history: Concept, Significance and Collection Approaches

Oral history including oral tradition is defined as the collection of historical data and information especially by historians and archaeologist about the past - significant events, periods, individuals and places through people who experienced them. It was used since the Greek times to preserve records - oral histories from witnesses - in the absence of written histories. Oral history is an academic and systematic process of exploring, probing, gathering, and preserving testimonies and living memories of ordinary people about past events which they lived, experienced, or are familiar with, i.e. the historical information in a spoken form. The main purposes are historical documentation, reconstruction, and preservation. (Moss & Mazikana, 1986; Thompson, 1988; Counce, 1994; Marcus, 2008).

Oral history is rooted in the oral tradition; it is the "earliest forms of transmitting information about the past." (Thompson 1988). It is "more than a tool and less than a discipline" as it is usually conducted through (recorded)

interviewing. (Moss & Mazikana, 1986, pp. 71) In fact, oral history is often used especially by archaeologists and historical preservationists for documenting the history of events, people and places (e.g., historic buildings and sites) - physically, socially, spiritually and ritually, through capturing tangible and intangible aspects of elements, such as architectural or landscape features, time-series alterations, space uses, ways of life, cultural significance, and meaning. (Judith, 1993; Marcus, 2008)

Oral history plays an important role in the study of historical sites with limited data potential. It also plays a subservient role to visual and written sources in the documentation and research of cultural heritage. Once collected, preserved and shared, it can help transmit knowledge from one generation to another, and "enhance understanding of the past by illuminating personal experience." According to historian Alessandro Portelli (1991), oral history can "reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events." He claims that oral sources "tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did . . . Its

importance may lie not in its adherence to fact, but in its divergence from it as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge". However, oral history has drawbacks because of its potential unreliability—the fallibility of human memory. Although elderly people can have helpful recollections of past events which can be used to fill the gaps in the historical record, “it is wise not to take orally transmitted information as absolute fact unless it is substantiated by other sources” (Reed, 1982; Marcus, 2008)

Since 1940s, modern methods were introduced for collection of oral history, such as interviews especially to obtain information from different perspectives. Over the past two decades, effective methods and techniques have been used particularly in the fields of history and archaeology for studying historical and archaeological sites. Different methods are used

for historical preservation, such as recording spoken word using audio/visual equipment, transcripts, photographs or newer digital methods. (Counce, 1994; Worthington, 2003).

Oral history collection is a straightforward process that involves recalling an event by an interviewee for an interviewer who records it either through a written form or in an audio-visual form, and then creates a historical record (*Figure 1*). Usually the findings from the collected oral history are verified against folklore, gossip, hearsay or rumors, analyzed, placed into an accurate historical context, and stored for later use. (Judith, 1993) Oral tradition is usually recorded by a person, not necessarily an interviewer, from the source (interviewee) without using question-and-answer pattern and with minimum participation from the person. (Moss & Mazikana, 1986)

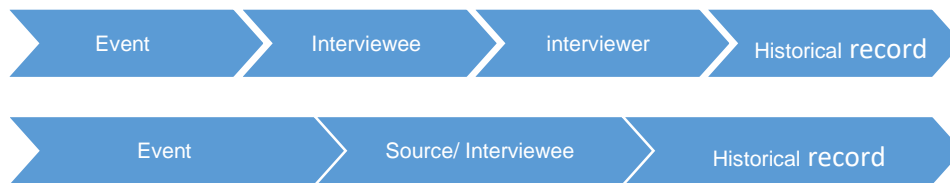


Fig.(1): - Oral history collection (above) versus oral tradition collection process (below

The significant of this study is the remarkable lack of published records and information about *Kela Akrè*. Literature and significant historical or research studies about *KelaAkrè* are limited. There is a number of references to this citadel within the context of larger Akre town or area in the publications (diaries and accounts) of foreign travelers, explorers, and historians particularly who visited this area, or the nearby places during the last two millenniums. Among those are: Yâqût al-Hamawî, Syrian biographer and geographer (in 1207); Balistani, a Kurdish traveler (in 1774 and 1786); Claudius James Rich, an English archaeologist and explorer (in 1820); James Baillie Fraser, a British traveler, writer and artist (in 1834); Austen Henry Layard, an English traveler, archaeologist, and diplomat (in 1845); Carsten Niebuhr, a French traveler (in 1766); and Wigram, W. A., & Wigram, E. T. A., British priests and authors (in 1905). (Niebuhr, 1792; Layard,

1920; Wigram & Wigram, 1922; Fraser, 1964; Rawoof, 2006; Rich, 2014)

Excavations in Kela Akrè

A historical account indicates that an excavation was made in the prison facility, a cave-like chamber with a network of tunnels, by

a British archaeological expedition during the period of the British rule in Iraq in early 1900s. (Wigram, 1922) In additions, there were signs of illegal excavations made at different places on the citadel in the past (Lombardi, Mohammed & Abdulkareem, 2015). The research also reveals that an archaeological excavation study was conducted on *KelaAkrè* in 2011 by the Directorate of Antiquities in Duhok Governorate with the results no published yet. This site was also surveyed under an archaeological expedition, which was conducted in Akre area from 2012-2014 under Settlement History of Iraqi Kurdistan - Upper Greater Zab Archaeological Reconnaissance (UGZAR) Project. (Koliński, 2013a)

Hence the importance of oral history collection comes to light as some oral information, stories and legends about the citadel exists with the local people. Therefore, this study is of considerable significance for the exploration of the history of *Kela Akrè* and also its relation to the historical Akre town especially that there are endeavors to protect and preserve the citadel after documentation of its history.

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on the collection of oral history and oral traditions about *Kela Akre* and the historical Akre town through rifle and shotgun approaches. These are two approaches usually used in the oral history collection, and both are based on the objectives of historical research. Rifle approach is used for very narrow limited objectives while shotgun for broader objectives, periods of time, or fields of human endeavour. Rifle approach means use of the oral history “in the service of very narrow, limited objectives of traditional historical research, often in the service of more typical research in written documents. Whereas shotgun approach means use of the oral history to “capture broad ranges of personal eye-witness testimony to cover whole periods of time or whole fields of human endeavor.” Each produces slightly different results. (Moss & Mazikana, 1986, pp. 24) Collections from the oral history can also be divided into single-purpose, which is narrower and related to the history of a person or an institution, and multi-purpose”, which is broader. (Nevins, 1938; Moss & Mazikana, 1986)

In this study which was carried out in 2016, the rifle approach involved recollections about persons or individual events relevant to the citadel and the historical town while the shotgun approach involved recollections about either or both sites throughout the history. Recollections about the past of the study area were made through use of three different methods:

- Twenty-five individual semi-structured interviews conducted particularly with the local elderly people who experienced or still hold memories of the past events that took place during their life period or passed to them by others. Other interview participants included directors of relevant departments such as Culture and Arts, politicians, veterans/*peshmergas*, clergymen, historians, writers, artists, craftsmen, and retired residents (men and women) (Table 1)
- One site walk to *Kela Akre* on 17/09/2016, involving academic specialists in local history,

archaeology and historic preservation, as well as individuals well versed with this site.

- One focus group discussion (FGD) on 15/10/2016 for diverse community members including selected local historians, intellectuals, artists, community leaders, and elderly persons, who have historical information about the citadel and the town.

The study involved probing memories of the respondents where a series of open-ended questions were used on hand-held checklists to obtain sufficient and more accurate recollections about the past events. Selective (purposive) and snowball sampling methods were used for selection of the interviews participants. Coordination with local actors namely director and seniors of the two departments of culture and arts, and archaeology in Akre district were helpful for obtaining an initial list of interview respondents.

The interviews took place in the respondents' localities including their residences or public places like cafes to make them more comfortable in narrating and recounting their past recollections, and to avoid any external distractions or interruptions like noise. The interviewers were already trained in the basic of conducting interviews with more open ended questions. That means they were able to allow respondents thoughtfully and candidly narrate their recollections, know the best time to probe for further information, proceed in a non-biased manner, and retire from non-productive interviews without affecting the prestige and dignity of either side.

Attempts were also made to match the interviewers to the respondents to respect the cultural and social customs of the local community and to provide more privacy and freedom for soliciting the required information. Female interviewers were assigned to interview the (elderly) women while male interviewers to interview men. Small digital audio equipment were used with the consent of interviewees especially for the interviews that involved lengthy accounts of the past. Likewise the FGD was recorded and videotaped with the consent of participants.

Table (1):- List of interviews participants

| # | Name of interviewee | Gender | Occupation & Remarks |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Khaled Haji | Male | Retired teacher, writer |
| 2. | Ahmed Melo | Male | Veteran/ <i>Peshmerga</i> (1961-1974). He was not in Akre from 1974-1997 (in Iran). |
| 3. | Mohammed Rajab | Male | <i>Peshmerga</i> 4. |
| 5. | Ramadhan Sabri Abdal | Male | Tailor. He left for Iran in 1974, then to southern Iraq & Erbil. He returned to Akre n 1988. |
| 6. | Fatima Sadeeq | Female | Elderly |
| 7. | Gozel | Female | Elderly |
| 8. | Madina Abdel-rahman Abasi | Female | Elderly |
| 9. | Zeki | Male | The old Akre town |
| 10. | Kamal Ramadhan | Male | Director of Satellite Kurdistan TV, Akre office |
| 11. | Hazem Abo | Male | Ordinary resident |
| 12. | Barkhudan Akreì (Sa'dullah) | Male | Journalist, historian, drama director. He lived in Erbil & returned to Akre in 1982. He has background in historical studies & interest in archaeological collections. |
| 13. | Adnan Rasheed | Male | Former director of water in Akre, geologist |
| 14. | Anwer Sha'ban | Male | Writer, poet, holds bachelor in roads construction. In 1963, he left Akre for Tela'fer |
| 15. | Babir Ibrahim M. Almezob | Male | Clergyman, grandson of <i>Almezob</i> , Islamic scholar mentioned in the report |
| 16. | Sa'eed Sherif | Male | Writer , artist |
| 17. | Jawhar Ali | Male | Mayor of Duhok district, former Mayor of Akre district |
| # | Name of interviewee | Gender | Occupation & Remarks |
| 18. | Blend Mufti | Male | Electrical engineer, has interests in local culture, writing & historical collections. |
| 19. | Mala Ali | Male | Director of Culture & Arts, Akre |
| 20. | Diyar Kadhem | Male | Journalist/historian |
| 21. | Abdulaziz Moham-med Abdulaziz | Male | Member of Akre municipal council, Mukhtar, owner of <i>Sepe</i> summer resort in Akre |
| 22. | Tareq Aqrawi | Male | Retired diplomat; former ambassador of KRG to Vienna 2004-2011, hydropower engineer, PhD student |
| 23. | Ahmed Shareef | Male | Elderly, formerly masonry builder |
| 24. | Zahida Ali Bapeer | Female | Elderly |
| 25. | Sakna Ahmed Qader | Female | Elderly |



Author conducting an interview with an elderly man in old Akre town



Research assistant conducting an interview with an elderly woman in old Akre town



The author with a team of specialists & relevant individuals on a site walk to Kela Akre



Focus group discussion session conducted in Akre town

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History of the Study Area

“Upper” Akre town is a historic settlement dating back to 580 B.C. (History of Kurdish, 2018) and could be even earlier - the 7th Century B.C. Akre area includes remains belonging to the prehistoric periods, i.e. late 5th millennium BCE. (Koliński, 2013a) These periods are Hassuna, Samarra, Halaf, Ubaid, Uruk, Akkadian, Babylonia, Sumerian Bronze Age, Mitanni, (Neo)Assyrian, Medes, Iron Age, Achaemenid, Seleucid, Hellenistic, Parthian, Roman, Sassanian, and Islamic. Afterwards, it was ruled by the Ottomans and British empires. This study also reveals that *Kela Akre* was a settlement during the Neo-Late Assyrian, Iron Age, and Middle-Late Islamic periods.

(Koliński, 2013b) In addition, a number of research participants believed that the excavations conducted on this site in 2011 provided clues that it was a Sumerian settlement. (Madi, 1986; Neely, 2011; Shengo, 2013; Koliński, 2014)

These findings are evidenced by the existence of numerous archaeological sites including rocky caves in Akre area and in *Kela Akre*, as indicated by a number of research participants and supported by literature. In addition, discovery, by the local people, of fossils of sea animals, exotic plants and dinosaurs especially on the northern mountains of the town and existence of a number of ancient caves led many research participants to believe that Akre area existed during the prehistoric periods probably the Cretaceous period, an assumption that is also supported by literature. It is believed that Akre town was originally formed as a result of the collision of the Arabian plate with the Eurasian plate and disappearance of the Tethys Ocean 420

million years ago. (Mahdi, 1986; Akrei, 1999; Kaki, 2011; Zebari, 2013; Koliński, 2014; Oil Search, 2014)

The historical information gap has resulted in creating controversies in the existing literature and the research oral findings about the exact history of *Kela Akre*. While there are no official historical records about the exact history of this citadel, majority of research participants, supported by local publications, point out that *Kela Akre* has a history dating back to the period of Zoroastrian *Mir* (prince) *Zend*, a local nickname for Arizent Patishi (540-700 BCE), who is believed to have developed and fortified the site in 533 BCE (Wigram, 1922; Shakir, 1957; Akrei, 1999).

Citadel Establishment Purposes and Uses

According to the research findings, the initial purposes behind establishment of *Kela Akre* and its ancient uses are controversial and not clear. On one hand it is believed that this hillfort was initially a religious temple, probably of Sumerians, Mithraists or Zoroastrians, but it was later adapted for other uses including governing and military headquarters. Located about 450m above sea level, *Kela Akre* was used as the center of power by the rulers and the invaders. (Fraser, 1964)

This is reportedly evident from the existence of rock sculpting and structures, such as fire pits on the rocks. In addition, establishment of the citadel on such a high place could have roots in the Zoroastrianism for a belief that the higher the person is the more close he will be to God. (Mary, 1982) This assumption evidently supports the use of this hillfort as fortification and protection of the rulers, their entrees and families especially because of its elevated, fortified and formidable location (Al-Hamawi,

1957; Jabo, 2013). The citadel is defined in the Glossary of Countries as “a fortified castle on Mosul mountains” (Al-Hamawi, 1977), which is accessible through rugged mountainous paths. It is also described as “a special place for creating mighty people in earliest times.”(Eroğlu, Babuçoğlu & Özdiil, 2012)

This may account for the failure of numerous attacks on the citadel during different historical periods. This fort was believed to be often formidable and impenetrable but it was captured and completely demolished in 1133 and 1842 – with the latter because of a treachery of some local warriors. (Shukri, 2008; Akrawi, 2015)

Public celebrations and picnics have been the major uses of *KelaAkrè* following its demolition in 1842 and until very recent times. Despite its archaeological significance and vulnerability to human encroachment, this site has still been destined by local people for picnics and for *Nawroz* celebrations.

Military Ruling and Settlement Center

Existence of life-support, urban, ruling and governance facilities reportedly contributed to the use of the hillfort as a military, governing or a settlement center. Among those facilities are the three chambers which were excavated in 2011, underground cells and caves, worship structures (temples), the rocky prison facility and sophisticated network of tunnels, 11 water and crop storage cisterns/wells, rocky structures including pits which are believed to be used for food processing, such as oil and juices, in addition to arable lands at the south west of the site. It is said that *KelaAkrè* was used for execution of criminals and convicted people through tying them to a 2-way death rope extended to an opposite lower hill. It is believed that the speed at which the person was sent down was sufficient to cause a deadly injury by colliding with the rocky cliff.

Attacks by Invaders

KelaAkrè was repeatedly attacked by external armies and invaders throughout the history. Existence of the building structure remains including the perimeter wall and the guard posts could service as an indicator of the damages sustained by the site due to the invasions and associated destructions. The citadel deplorable status was witnessed by Wigram, W. A., & Wigram, E. T. A. when they visited Akre in 1907 saying “...across this saddle are hung the houses of Akra, with the ruined fragments of its ancient citadel crowning the highest point of the rocky ridge above.”

There are several stories and legends about the battles that took place in Akre. A yard located about 150 m to the north of the citadel contains a rock relief with a sword engraving, which is believed by the research participants to represent the symbol of the end of the Battle of Gaugamela that took place between the two invading forces led by Alexander, the Great, and the Persian Darius III in 331 BCE.

In 115 AD, Akre town including *KelaAkrè* was taken by Roman under the command of the Emperor Trajan who destroyed its defense wall. It was also invaded during the Islamic period particularly in 1218, 1132, 1508, 1833 and 1836. (Al Sayegh, 1928; Zakho Beg, 1936;Khalil, 1985; Al-Badlisi, 2007)

Fire and Wednesday Rituals

Wednesday and fire are two interlinked terms that have special meanings for the people of Akretown and area. Fire and other rituals on Wednesday are mostly believed to be attributed to Zoroastrianism, which was reportedly a predominant religion in the Akre area - an assumption which is supported by the existence of *Shkefta Mariama* (Cave of Mary), with a rocky chair and a water spring, located about 220 m to the south of the citadel, which is believed to be a Zoroastrian temple although *Mariama* refers to the Virgin which is connected to Christianity. See *Table 2* for the list of locations in Akre town and their association with fire and Wednesday and also *Figure 2*.

Wednesday has still been considered since ancient times as a symbol of both optimism and pessimism - as a holy, sacred, blessed, and rather a religious holiday and a fortune day where many actions were preferably made. Meanwhile it has also been considered as an ominous day where certain practices or taboos were avoided like hair cutting. Wednesday has been widely perceived as the symbol of holiness and as the most suitable day of the week for conducting a number of practices and traditions especially on its eve, such as:

traditional healing of sick people especially through religious people and old-aged practitioners with the use of religious recitals, native herbs, and fire torches in cemeteries, or through bathing in the water of certain springs especially *Kani Zerek*, a sulfur local spring which is believed to be hosting in its vicinity one of the main four Zoroastrian temples in the region;

- conducting public celebrations or weddings usually in the public yards. This practice is believed to be stemmed from the victory over the invading Roman leader Antonius VII army which attacked *Kela Akre* in 129 BCE (a local historian/ research participant);
- traveling outside the town or going on picnics to certain locations around or outside Akre town;
- conducting baptism with the use of water especially in Shkefta Mariama and Kani Zerek.
- purifying houses from evils with the use of flames and smoke;
- visiting graveyards to pay respect to the dead;
- making wishes through clergymen or visiting the shrines of holy people to bring good luck and fortune;
- offering food for the public in honor of the dead people;
- setting fire as a common practice in Akre on (the eve of) Wednesday for purposes, such as glorification and healing.

Meanwhile certain taboos were avoided on (the eve of) Wednesday, such as taking showers, pouring water on the floor and going outside the house as it could 'bring omens'. A number of these practices and traditions are still followed by a few people in Akre area.

Fire has a special significance for the people of Akre. It is believed that the fire rituals were practiced in Akre town based on the assumption that the residents were lighting fire on the northern mountains and hills for three consecutive days and nights in celebration of *Zoroaster* (the spiritual leader of Zoroastrianism) who visited the town in 533 BCE to inaugurate establishment of *Kela Akre* by *Mir Zend*. Fire is believed to be the symbol of perfectness in Zoroastrianism and is one of the four sacred pillars alongside with sun, water and soil in the religion.

In the ancient times, candle or torch fire was used for worshiping and as a religious ritual particularly in the temples in the historical Akre town and in *Kela Akre* where there are 24 small rocky pits and a rocky structure with niches which is believed to be a Zoroastrian temple. It is also said that fire resembles the symbol of victory over the invading Sargon of Akkad II army, which was defeated in *Kela Akre* in 716 BCE.

The most reported historical uses of fire in Akre town are as follows:

- Use of candle or torch fire (until 1970s) on (the eve of) Wednesday for different purposes, as a ritual for the advent of a holiday – in the households, and for glorification and healing – in the cemeteries;
- Use of fire (until 2000s) for fumigation and purification of houses through smoldering torches to evict evil spirits and protect from disease outbreaks;
- Use of fire including torches particularly in *Kela Akre* on the eve of Nawroz day (still common today);
- Fire is still considered as a symbol of local identity and character for Akre people. It is glorified and sanctified by many local people; even some people still swear in fire.

Fire as a Symbol of Local Identify and Character

Locally, the term Akre is associated with the historical town of Akre including *Kela Akre*. Many local people proudly show a high sense attachment to this citadel especially being as a symbol for their identity and character. This sense of attachment is higher particularly on the eve of Nawroz when the people march up the citadel and back down carrying torches of fire. This is why many research participants recognized significance of this site and the need to preserve it.

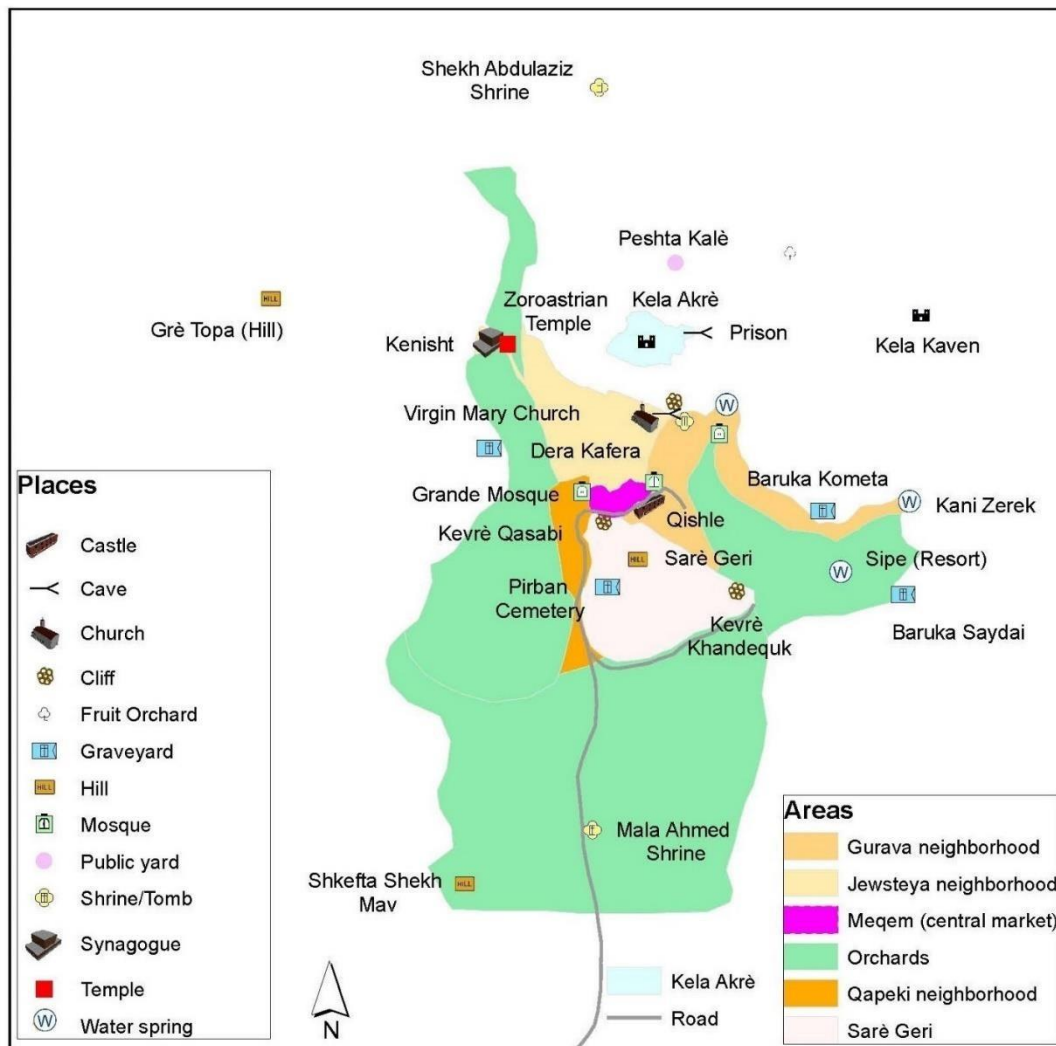


Fig. (2):- Historical Map of Akre Town

Zoroastrianism, Rituals and Legends

As indicated earlier, there are many sites, structural remains, and rituals in Akre town and *Kela Akre* that denote existence of Zoroastrianism in this area. According to the research findings, the local people in Akre used to believe in the legends or the power of the unknown. For example, the local households used until 1960s to set candle fire in *Kevrè Qasabi*, a rock structure, where the shrine of *Wusta Rajab* (a local Zoroastrian religious person), was believed to be located (Figure 2 & Table 2). This was reportedly a good local tailor and the people believed that by setting candle fire would enable him “his soul” to work till late night. For many intellectuals, this was a myth practiced by the laypersons in the past, but it was simply a Zoroastrian practice.

The local people also used to believe in the power of healing from diseases or fulfilling wishes possessed by clergymen or female practitioners, and available at the shrines of well-

known (religious) individuals, at the rocky sites such as *Kevrè Khendequk* or *Shkefta Sheikh Mave*, or at the water springs including *Kani Zerek* especially if the practice was conducted on Wednesdays (Figure 2 & Table 2).

Tekya (Devish lodge) *Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Gailani*, a shrine of a Muslim clergyman who died in 1205, still hosts some of the religious rituals practiced by the followers of Qadiriyyah Sunni Sufi Order of Islam (Table 2). These rituals are believed to be Zoroastrian in origin, and include dervish circle dancing, *Mawleed* (public food offering), etc. It is believed that the circle dancing and playing melodies with *daf* and *zurna* (frame drum and reed pipe wind instrument) were the arts of Zoroastrians and part of their heritage. Several other rituals and practices that are believed to be rooted in Zoroastrianism are still followed not only in Akre town but also in some rural areas of Duhok province. Among them are:

- human body cleansing or purification and body care practices like disposal of cut hair, beard or nails in wall seams and cracks, i.e. underground, which are still common in Akre town until a few decades ago;
- tying and untying a cloth robe with three knots three times around the waist of a bride when taken out of her family's house at the wedding day. It is believed that this practice signals the beginning of a new responsible age for a person who is given more responsibilities and duties in Zoroastrianism. (Al San'ani, 1987)

Water, Irrigation and Sanitation Systems

There are no water sources on Kela Akre site. However, a water spring, *Kanya Pasha*, is located about 400 m to the east of the citadel. It has been used for irrigation of a number of orchards. Both spring and orchards are believed to be existing since ancient times. Controversy existed over extension of the water system from a water source which is believed to be the origin of *Kanya Pasha* to the north of the citadel, through a canal up to the plateau on *Kela Akre*. A number of research participants believed that water was extended up to the citadel through a well-shaped cylindrical structure carved out of rock at the northern edge of the site. This structure, excavated by a research participant in 1960s, was believed to function as a junction of water up to the citadel and partly include pottery pipes. Remains of this structure including the rocky canal ditch and shreds of pottery vessels are still available on site.

Controversies also existed over the historical existence of water, irrigation and sanitation systems in *Kela Akre* and the historical town. As signs of irregularly-shaped, rugged rocky ditches could be seen on the citadel, it was not clear when whether these structures were used for water conveyance, drainage, or any other purpose. The same applies for water, irrigation and sanitation systems in the historical town. Signs of underground rocky culvert-shaped systems could be seen in different locations of the historical town, parts of which are still used as part of a modern concrete sewerage system. Remains of an ancient sewerage system were recently discovered during maintenance of the town sewerage system, and it is believed that this system was designed and established by a local craftsman during *Mir Zend* time.

Akre town is also recognized for existence of a highly organized ancient irrigation system which is still used for distribution of spring

water for the irrigation of fruit orchards downstream. It is believed that distribution of water is based on the orchard area and the solar system, i.e. position of the sun and sunlight to the landmarks in the town, such as rocky structures. More clearly, each time period of the water distribution which is assigned for an orchard is named after the position of the sun. Structurally, this system is based on the ancient traditional network of (under)ground system in the old town.

Arts

A number of research participants believed that arts existed in *Kela Akre* since ancient times. This is evident in the architectural designs of the rocky structures, for example the southern and western gates, the pottery vessels used in the northern water canal. Until 2010, *Kela Akre* was used to hold dramas and other arts in certain occasions.

CONCLUSION

This study utilized oral history as an approach to collecting historical data about the *Kela Akre* and its connection to the lower historical Akre town. Although this is a traditional approach used for documentation and conservation of heritage and archaeological sites, this was a unique research conducted in this area. In addition, the community-based and the citadel-focused (rifle) approaches acted as a motivation of the local people to provide available oral information about the study area.

According to the study findings, *Kela Akre* was established in 530 BCE primarily as a settlement with multi-functions including habitation, protection, religious, governing and administration. These assumptions are supported by the archaeological structural remains on the site.

The study resulted in collection of valuable information especially about the history and uses of *Kela Akre*, and its relationship to the lower historical Akre town. This information, supported by scarcely available literature, can build up the basis for documentation and preservation of this ancient site, which has great potential for the development of Akre town especially in terms of culture and tourism.

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Table (2):- Historical locations in Akre area & their associated uses, purposes & significance

| Fire use/purpose | Wednesday use/significance | Others |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Akre area | | |
| <i>Advent of Kurdish/ local holiday; holiday / special, blessed/ religious day, in different locations, until 1970s</i> | | |
| | Healing, in different locations/ water springs | |
| | Hunting by <i>Mirs</i> (princes), in different locations – in the past | |
| | <i>Mawleed</i> (food offering) for dead persons, until 1980s | |
| Sare Akre Mountains | | |
| <i>Public fire (torch/ wooden), on the eve of Nawroz</i> | Healing/ making wishes through <i>Mullahs</i> (Islamic clergymen) | |
| Akre town, as whole | | |
| <i>Symbol of local identity & character</i> | Sanctified day by a family | |
| <i>Glorification/ swearing</i> | Visit of graves, until a few decades ago | |
| <i>Candle fire, in houses, until 1970s</i> | Sanctified day, in households, on its eve omens should be avoided - taboos/ optimism, until a few decades ago | |
| Torch fire - ritual, in different cemeteries, until 2000s | | |
| <i>Public (torch/ wooden) fire, in houses, on the eve of Nawroz</i> | Blessed day, in households, fortune/ pessimism, until a few decades ago | |
| Heated baking paddle, by women practitioners, for healing, until a few years ago | | |
| Fumigation/ purification of houses through smoldering wooden torches to evict evil spirits & avoid disease outbreaks (until 2000s) | | |
| Maidan Hassan Beg (yard) | | |
| Fire bows, in school parades, until 1960s | | |
| Reze Miri (grapevine of the Mir) | | |
| | Picnics/ celebrations, until 1480 | Picnics/ celebrations, especially during spring, until several years ago |
| Shkafta Mariama (cave) | | |
| Candle fire - ritual (ancient) | Baptism/ purification, till several decades ago | |
| Cham Saqi (location not confirmed) | | |
| Candle/ torch fire, ritual, weekly holiday | | |
| Kevrè Qasabi (cliff) / Shekh Rajab Zeradeshti (shrine) | | |
| Candle/torch fire; for glorification (myth), until 1960s | | |
| Kevrè Khendequk (cliff) | | |
| | Healing, until several years ago | |
| Shrines of holy persons | | |
| | Healing | |
| Shekh Abdulaziz Al-Gailani (Tekya/ shrine/ cemetery) | | |
| | | Healing/ making wishes |
| | <i>Mawleed</i> (food offering) for dead persons, until 1980s | Religious rituals (<i>Derwish</i> dancing) |
| Shkefta Shekh Mav (cave/ spring) | | |
| | Healing/ making wishes | |
| Shekh Mohammed Fadhil (shrine) | | |
| | Healing, until a few decades ago | Healing/ making wishes |
| Khushka Shahida (shrine) | | |

| Fire use/purpose | Wednesday use/significance | Others |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| | Healing, until a few decades ago | |
| <i>Gurestana Neri (shrine/ cemetery)</i> | | |
| <i>Torch fire; ritual, until 1900s</i> | | |
| <i>Kani Zerek (spring)</i> | | |
| | Picnics/ celebrations, until a few decades ago | |
| | Healing through bathing | |
| | Zoroastrian worship, secret, not confirmed | |
| <i>Kani Mamkeruk (spring)</i> | | |
| | Zoroastrian worship (not confirmed) | |
| <i>Kanya Mamiye (spring)</i> | | |
| | Picnics/ celebrations, until a few decades ago | |
| <i>Kanya Telita (spring)</i> | | |
| | Picnics/ celebrations, until a few decades ago | Healing, until a few decades ago |
| <i>Mala Ahmed shrine/ cemetery</i> | | |
| | Picnics/ celebrations, until a few decades ago | Picnics/ celebrations, on Fridays until 1974 |
| <i>Public yards (e.g. Mahate yard)</i> | | |
| | Picnics/ celebrations, until a few decades ago | |
| <i>Kela Akre</i> | | |
| <i>Torch fire, symbol of victory over invading</i> | | |
| <i>Sargon of Akkad II army in 716 BCE (ancient)</i> | | <i>Nawroz celebration</i> |
| | Picnics (until 1970s) | Picnics most times of the year (until now) |
| | Picnics/ celebrations, until a few decades ago | Spring celebration, until 1980s. |
| <i>Kela Akre (24 small rocky pits)</i> | | |
| <i>Worship (could be for Zoroastrians in ancient times)</i> | | |
| <i>Peshita Kelè (yard)</i> | | |
| | Celebration for victory over invading Roman leader Antonius VII army in 129 BCE | <i>Nawroz celebration (until a few decades ago)</i> |
| | Public celebrations/ dancing, until a few decades ago | |

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