Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds[*]

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Abstract

The article presents a thorough review of nearly all relevant aspects of Kurdish Studies concerning the ethnic history, identity, religion, language, and literature of the Kurds. Elaborating upon the respective issues, the author makes extensive use of all available data and materials, including ancient and mediaeval, particularly those never previously examined with regard to related topics. The objective examination of most crucial problems of the field contributes to a better understanding of Kurdish prehistory, expanding, at the same time, the basic methodological concepts upon which further research should be grounded. Due to the politicised nature of Kurdological disciplines, many ideological elements of non-academic provenance, that have found their way into the scholarly milieu in recent decades and have become a constant set of stereotypes and clichés, have been highlighted in the paper.

Keywords

To the Memory of
Fridrik Thordarson and Karen Yuzbashian

INTRODUCTION: SOME METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

Hardly any other field of Near Eastern Studies has ever been so politicised as the study of the history and culture of the Kurds, having produced an industry of amateurs, with few rivals in other domains of Ori-

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entalistic knowledge.[1] In Oleg Vil'čevskij's view: "The Kurds were studied *inter alia* by everyone and, therefore, (seriously), by no one" (Vil'čevskij 1945: 13; also Arakelova 2006: 153). This statement formulated more than half a century ago, still holds validity, to a certain extent, although during the following period Kurdology has registered serious achievements, especially in the study of the social structure of Kurdish tribal society (see, e.g., Bruinessen 1992),[2] language and literature (see below), and ethnography (Nikitine 1956; Aristova 1990; etc.). Due to the highly politicised nature of the disciplines related to the Kurds, during recent decades many ideological elements of non-academic provenance have found their way into the academic milieu and created constant stereotypes and a set of clichés, which, in fact, have nothing to do with reality. In the course of examining the key points of Kurdish prehistory and culture, we attempt—in this introductory part and throughout the text— to cursorily highlight some of these elements.[3]

The term *Kurd*, as an ethnonym, is traditionally applied to an ethnic conglomeration whose various parts reside in the bordering areas of a number of Near Eastern countries. The approximate number of this great and—in many aspects—not homogeneous mass, featured, nonetheless, under the label of *Kurds*, constitutes around 20-23 million people.[4] The main areas of their habitat are: eastern parts of Turkey (7-8

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[1] Amateurs (dilettantes), or mere pundits (in Russian terminology "the lovers of the country", *lyubiteli kraya*), have always been an integral part of any scientific milieu, especially in the Humanities (history and linguistics in the first place). However, if this concomitant trend usually forms a separate genre with its own rules and methods (on the analysis of this phenomenon in the Transcaucasian countries, see Zekiyan 2008), the amateurish drift in Kurdology—due to its overwhelming political constituent—has become a dominant and, in many aspects, the mainstream factor determinig the intrusive atmosphere of the field, its objectives, stylistic, and even scale of values. This state of affairs has been, indeed, a constant stumbling-block for several generations of Kurdologists, who tried to follow academic principles and methodology of research. One of my teachers, the late Prof. Isaak Tsukerman, used to warn every beginner that Kurdology is a "difficult area of study". I duly understood what Isaak Iosifovich had in mind only decades later.

[2] The minor and less symptomatic publications are omitted.

[3] I have already discussed this problem, together with a brief critical history of Kurdology, including its so-called "political" constituent, in a paper published in Russian (see Asatrian 1998b).

[4] The heterogeneous nature of the Kurdish conglomeration is fairly manifested in its two almost equal divisions: the northern and southern, which speak different, mutually unintelligible dialects (see below, fn. 13), and have actually distinct cultural and sometimes even ethnic markers (for a common concept of Kurdish ethnicity, see Bruinessen 1989; Kurdish ethnicity and identity issues are discussed also

million),[5] Northern Iraq (4-5 million), western parts of Iran (5-6 million), and north and north-eastern parts of Syria (3-4 million). There are also Kurdish groups in the former USSR (around 60,000), concentrated mostly in Turkmenistan (for details, see Asatrian 2001: 41-42; also Vil'čevskij 1944; Minorsky 1945); and in the north-eastern regions of Iran, in Khorasan, having been forcibly settled there during the 17th-18th centuries (Madih 2007). In the beginning of the 20th century, there was a vast group of Kurds living in the territory of the present-day Azerbaijan Republic, assimilated later among the Azerbaijanis during the Soviet period (see Müller, D. 2000). At present, in Armenia and Georgia, there live respectively 52,000 and 26,000 Yezidis, who are, in fact, a separate ethno-religious entity, with their own identity and ethnic characteristics, though they speak a dialect of Kurdish, the so-called Kurmanji or Northern Kurdish (see Egiazarov 1891; Driver 1922a; Asatrian/Poladian 1989; Asatrian 1999-2000a; Asatrian/Arakelova 2002: 17-21; Arakelova/Davtyan 2009; etc.).[6]

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in Atabaki/Dorlejn 1990; Entessar 1991; idem 1992: 2-10). Although there is not yet any thorough research on the physical anthropology of the Kurds, the short study of Henry Field (1951), based on the data obtained from various Kurdish-inhabited areas, already shows that the anthropometric parameters of the Kurds (the stature, head measurements, cephalic index, and nasal profile and index) are different depending on the localities from which they hail. As comparative material, Field investigates in the same paper the Lurs, Bakhtiaris, and Assyrians. It is of interest that recently some Israeli anthropologists from Hebrew University in Jerusalem, applying new methods of analysis, point even to genetic affinities between a part of the Kurds and the Jews (see Oppenheim 2001; Traubman 2001; for a short survey of previous work on Kurdish physical anthropology, see Bois 1981: 446-447; on the recent studies in the genetic affiliation of the Kurds, see Pstrusińska 2004).

[5] The Kurdish ethnic component in Turkey, according to Servet Mutlu's meticulous research, constituted 7,046 million in 1990, i.e. 12,60 percent of the country's total population (Mutlu 1996: 532; for a detailed list of various estimations of the number of Kurds in Turkey, see ibid.: 534; also Andrews/Benninghaus 1989: 111ff.). Unfortunately, based upon a radically wrong view that "most Zaza-speakers regard themselves as Kurds" (ibid.: 519; on the Zaza identity, see Asatrian 1998a; Arakelova 1999-2000), the author qualifies them as Kurds, incorporating two different groups into one. The figure he gives for the Kurds, as a matter of fact, includes the Zazas as well (and, of course, the Yezidis who speak Kurdish).

[6] Despite the bedlam created by Kurdish and Kurdophile groups all over the world around the so-called Yezidi "separatism", the Yezidis possess a strong awareness of belonging to a closed and esoteric community, which excludes *eo ipso* any "Kurdishness". This intrinsic feeling of unity and closeness is conspicuously expressed in the following popular Yezidi saying: *Nāvina ēzdī, ēzdī ži dīyā xwa diva čāwa ēzdī; xūnā ēzdīya ži ēzdīāya*, i.e. "[There is no way to] become a Yezidi, a Yezidi is born from his mother as a Yezidi; the Yezidi blood is from the Yezidis". In order to dif-

Generally, the number of Kurds cannot be estimated with certainty, as the statistical data provided in various sources are deliberately inflated—in Kurdish publications—and diminished—by the respective states of their residence. Moreover, there is so far no proper census concerning the numerical aspect of the Kurdish presence in the areas of their habitation; such calculations have been carried out neither by the mentioned states nor by a non-governmental (Kurdish, or non-Kurdish) organisation (which is practically impossible as a private project). Usually 30, or even 40 million is the common figure for the total number of the Kurds, which is, certainly, an overestimation, vigorously promoted, however, in Kurdish political circles. In fact, all the figures concerning the Kurds circulated in relevant publications—first and foremost in the political ones—have an obvious speculative character. In this regard, the figures I presented above, seem more realistic, as they are based on an objective evaluation (as far as possible) of the ethno-linguistic and historico-cultural realities of the region. The problem is that many eth-

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ferentiate themselves from the Kurds, the Yezidis even name their language—often referred to as the main marker of the Yezidis' Kurdish affiliation—*Ēzdīkī* (i.e. the Yezidi language), not *Kurmānǰi*, which is a common term for this dialect (see below). The situation resembles much of what can be observed in the *Serbo-Croatian world*. In any case, the whole history of the Yezidis is the history of their struggle against the Kurds, and it would be extremely difficult to surmount the many psychological barriers and differences of relevant markers (either emic or etic) standing in the way of the unification of these two separate Kurdish-speaking groups. It is obvious that the hostility towards everything Kurdish is one of the main emic markers of Yezidi identity; and, as far as this traditional enmity is mutual, then it becomes an etic marker as well. The Kurds and Yezidis in relation to each-other are, in actual fact, in the state of a complementary distribution, using a linguistic definition. The internal processes concerning the identity problem within the Yezidi community, as well as the Yezidi perceptions of their own history are clearly traced in recent publications by the religious and secular leaders of the community (see, e.g., Šēx-K'alašē 1995; Ankosi 1996; Amar 2001; idem 2006; Polatov 2005). The famous spiritual leader of the Transcaucasian Yezidis, Sheikh Hasane Kalash, concludes his book on the Yezidi religious observances with the following admonishment to his compatriots, formulated in a straightforward Yezidi manner and simple stylistic: *Am milatakī čûkin, am bōrǰdārin milatē xwa, a'rf-a'datē milatē xwa h'izkin, wakī ǰima'tē māyīn ǰī ma bagamkin. Yānē nā, milatē bāšqa t'u waxtā ma nah'amlīnin, h'iz nākin ū ǰī nāna ma. Awē bēžna ma: "K'ā hūn sāvā xwa čibūna, wakī sāvā ma čivin?". Wī waxtī, ǰīē xavardānā ma wē t'unava, amē sarē xwa baržērkin, lē wē darangva*—"We are a small nation; we are obliged to love our nation, the traditions of our nation, in order to be loved by other peoples; or else, other nations will never respect and appreciate us, and [will never] give us a way (lit. "place"). They will tell us: 'What have you been for yourself that would be for us?'. Then, we will not have anything to tell them; we will lean our heads, but it would be already too late" (Šēx-K'alašē 1995: 45).

nic groups living as enclaves, or in the vicinity of the Kurds, are tradi-tionally considered part of the Kurdish conglomeration: the Zazas or Dimilis (see Asatrian 1995a; Kehl-Bodrogi 1999), a people numbering around 4-5 million—in Turkey; the Gurans, Awromans (see Asatrian 1995b), Lurs, Bakhtiaris, and Laks, total around 5-6 million—in Iran; and Assyro-Chaldaeans, Yezidis, and even Armenians—in Iraq and Syria. Here we witness a curious phenomenon: it seems almost all ethnic groups of the region—except Persians and Turkic-speaking elements—that turned out to be by God's will the neighbours of the Kurds, are tac-itly incorporated into the bulk of the Kurdish mass and, therefore, re-garded as Kurds. If such an approach is somehow justified for the Kurd-ish organisations pursuing political objectives, then for academic schol-arship and Western research centres (in the U.S., European countries, Russia), there is no ground for relying on deliberately inflated data.[7]

The language spoken by the Kurds belongs to the North-Western group of Iranian dialects. The languages of the Zazas in Dersim (Tunceli) and adjoining areas in Turkey, as well as those of Gurans, Awromans, and Bajalanis (dialects of Gurani) in Iran, are separate linguistic units (Mackenzie 1956; idem 1960; idem 1966; Asatrian 1990; idem 1995a and 1995b; Selcan 1998; Paul 1998; see also Blau 1989b). The same can be said about the Luri dialects (Luri, Bakhtiari, Mamasani, etc.), which, unlike Kurdish, Zaza, and Gurani, belong to another branch of New West Ira-nian, the South-Western group. The historical background of attribut-ing the dialects of Gurani and Luri a Kurdish origin was probably the fact that since the late mediaeval period they were the languages of communication and written cultic poetry (that of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq) in the Central and Southern Kurdish linguistic regions (see below).

The overwhelming majority of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims, the followers of the Shafi'i school of law. There are a considerable number of Twelver Imami Shi'as, as well as the adepts of Ahl-i Ḥaqq ("People of the Truth") sect among the Kurds living in the Kermanshah and Kurdis-tan provinces of Iran. The other extreme Sh'ia sects known as Alevis

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[7] In an analytic bulletin produced by a Russian research centre (*Centr strategičes-kogo razvitiya*) affiliated with the Government of Russia (see *Kurdskaya problema kak ob'ekt političeskogo vnimaniya Rosii*, December, 1996: 1), the number of Kurds is esti-mated at 35 million. The "35 million" is, likely, the favourite figure of Russian ex-perts as regards to the disputable ethno-demographic issues. Some years ago, a Rus-sian official, referring to their diplomatic mission in Tehran, seriously insisted on the number of the "Azerbaijanis" (in fact, Turkic-speaking Iranian ethnic elements) in Iran to be equally "35 million"! (on the Turkic-speaking groups in Iran, not ex-ceeding in reality 9-10 million, see Amanolahi 2005).

(Bektashi, etc.), also have many followers in the Kurdish-speaking areas of Turkey (on the religion of the Kurds, see in general Driver 1922a; Nikitine 1934; idem 1956: 207-255; Mackenzie 1962; Bois 1966; idem 1981: 474-476; Bruinessen 1991; idem 1992: 23-25; idem 1999; on the Alevis, see Müller, K. E. 1967; Olsson et al. 1998; White/Jongerden 2003; etc.).

The search for historical and cultural roots among the Kurdish elite—generally a normal phenomenon for ethnic groups during the stage of consolidation—resulted in the emergence of the so-called "pre-Islamic" religion of the Kurds, which has emanated predominantly from the Yezidi religion—as a matter of fact, a developed form of a mediaeval Sufi order (Asatrian 1999-2000a; Arakelova 2004).

The mystical halo over the Yezidi religion, references to its pre-Islamic past, as well as to the so-called devil worshipping and other esoteric legends—night orgies, etc.—became a fertile ground for fostering the Zoroastrian-Yezidi genetic continuity. In this regard, *Zardūšt*, or *Zōrdašt*, the Kurdish adaptation of the Prophet Zoroaster's Persian name, *Zardušt*, acquired a large popularity among the Kurdish educated elite. Consequently, the language of the Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrians, was declared to be "Old Kurdish". Many Kurdish men of the pen did not fail to waste ink and paper in creating a huge corpus of "Avestiana" in their mother tongue (cf., e.g., the late poet Cegerxūn's selected poetry in several volumes called "Zend Avesta"). The manipulations around Zoroastrianism and the Avesta with references to Yezidism became gradually a dominating view among the Kurdish intellectuals to such extent that they finally provoked the negative reaction of both the Zoroastrian clergy and many Yezidi spiritual leaders and sheikhs, who vehemently protested against the profanation of their faiths (see, e.g., Dadrawala, s.a.).[8]

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[8] It is interesting to note that declarative claims on Yezidism to be the pre-Islamic Kurdish religion by no means diminished the traditional enmity of the Kurds towards the genuine adepts of this religion, the Yezidis. During the last two-three decades almost all Yezidi settlements in Turkey (in Mardin, Diarbekir, etc.) were devastated by the neighbouring Kurds; under the severe oppression of the latter, the Yezidis were forced to leave their native soil and immigrate to Germany. The same can be said, incidentally, about the other minorities living in the Kurdish environment—the Armenians, Assyro-Chaldaeans, Jews, etc. All of the tribesmen of the *Ermenti Varto ešireti*, an Armenian kurdophone tribe, were ousted by the Kurds from their homeland and, suffering many hardships, eventually found refuge in the Netherlands. Usually, when describing this phenomenon, most authors use the term "Muslims"("persecutions by their Muslim neighbours", etc.) (see, e.g., Bruinessen 1992: 24), which is an apparent euphemism aimed at avoiding the mention of Kurds in this context. In reality, indeed, the Yezidis were evicted from their land by the

In point of fact, there is no evidence of any "Zoroastrian" vestiges in the Yezidi religion, which does not mean, however, that it is deprived of archaic ingredients (see Spät 2002; Arakelova 2004; eadem 2007a; Asatrian/Arakelova 2004; Asatrian 2007).

The pursuit of "ancient" roots in Kurdish culture by local pundits—and now also by some representatives of Western scholarship—has always been limited to focusing on the universal elements found on the surface of many traditional Near Eastern cultures. The veneration of the sun and fire (a number of taboos against the pollution of the fireplace and fire in general)—a widespread element of primitive worship—became an "eloquent" testimony to the Zoroastrian religious background of the Yezidis (resp. Kurds); the bull sacrifice during festive events—again a common popular ritual among the peoples of the region—is evaluated as nothing less than a remnant of the Mithraic tauractony (Kreyenbroek 1995: 59-61).[9] The Kurds ("Proto-Kurds"!) in this regard

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Kurds, not by the Turkish Government, mythical "Muslims", or whoever (on the Kurdish threats to the Yezidis in general, see Ismail).

[9] Cf. (Arakelova 2002: 65) "In the Yezidi tradition, the bull-sacrifice takes place on the fifth day of *Jažnē ǰamā'īyya* (Arabic *'ayd al ǰamā'īyya*)—the feast of popular gathering, which is celebrated annually for a week starting from September 23, at Shaykh Shams' shrine in Lalesh. True, tauroctony is one of Mithra's main characteristics: he is over and again depicted as bull-slaying Mithra. However, we can hardly trace the Yezidi rite of the bull-sacrifice back to the Mithraic mysteries, or to the Old Iranian religious *Weltanschauung* in general. The analogy in such a multi-cultural ethnic-religious area as Northern Mesopotamia could be attributed to any indirect influence: the idea of the bull-sacrifice could have various roots, including, of course, the Old Iranian ones. A bull as a cultic animal could have become the object of various rites in many traditions; this requires a very fastidious approach while interpreting the given cases. Moreover, the myth about the sacrifice of a bull, carried over from one tradition to another, can acquire a principally new content. It is not the "iconography" of the bull-slaying idea that must come first here, but the idea of the sacrifice itself. As the "icon", the scene, the rite itself, can pass unchanged from one tradition to another, it is still usually filled with another content, which is closer and clearer to the mentality of a new culture. It is just the idea, which is being transformed, when it transcends the scope of the authentic culture". I am sure, however, that the bull-slaying in the modern traditions of the region is merely conditioned by reasons of convenience and social positioning: no one would kill a chicken for a crowd of people! In the Caucasus, to kill a bull, especially of a marked colour (black or white), during the festive events and mourning ceremonies and funerals, is a common practice (by the Armenians, e.g., see Xaṙatyan 1991) and also a matter of prestige. Deploringly, even such a great scholar as Wilhelm Eilers (1983: 501) qualifies the Yezidi bull-sacrifice as a remnant of the Iranian antiquity (cf. "The sacrifice of the white bullocks in honour of the rising and setting sun is reminiscent... of the Achaemenian era"), or, incidentally, the Peacock Angel—in fact, a sufi

are even declared to be the main bearers of the Mithraic tradition in the region (see Kreyenbroek 2006). All the more, in a quite fresh publication (Kreyenbroek/Rashow 2005: 221-222), we witness a deliberate interpolation of "Kurdish" terms into the archaic liturgical Yezidi poetry aimed at giving the text a "Kurdish" flavour. The editors, instead of *ēzdīxāna* (meaning "the Yezidi community") in the original text, introduced a geographic term, *Kurdistan*, referring by that to the so-called "Yezidi cultural memory", having allegedly kept the reminiscences about the primordial "homeland" of this people in its remote folders. The problem is that if the forgery of historical documents, various amulets and parchments in "Old Kurdish" (see below) have always been an inseparable part of the history of Kurdish Studies, and are, therefore, predictable for a student of Kurdology, such intrusion upon the Yezidi authentic tradition is an absolutely new, unprecedented phenomenon—also in terms of the involvement of Western scholarship in the falsification (a detailed analysis of this phenomenon, see Arakelova/Voskanian 2007).[10]

The ancient history of the Kurds, as in case of many other Iranian ethnic groups (Baluchis, etc.), can be reconstructed but in a very tentative and abstract form. Nothing is clearly known from the remote period of the history of the speakers of the proto-Kurdish dialects. As for the mediaeval period, an objective history of the Kurds will also entail

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element in Yezidism (see Asatrian/Arakelova 2003)—a manifestation of Ahriman (ibid.; see also Bivar 1998: 55ff.).

[10] One of the authors of the mentioned work, Mr. Khalil Jindy Rashow, a Germany-based kurdified Yezidi (who is, likely, the main "source" of all the Yezidi materials, translations, etc. published in the last decades by the same group), is the framer of this astonishing statement (I quote the original text as it is formulated): "Die Yezidi gehören zu den ältesten menschlichen Gruppierungen, die in den iranischen und indo-iranischen Gebieten wohnten. Das heißt sie sind eine der ältesten kurdischen Religionen, in der Region der großen Zivilisationen im Osten. Ihr Glaube ist älter als das Awesta und auch als der Veda" (Rashow 2003-2004: 123). It seems, however, that Mr. Rashow and, one may suppose his colleagues in Germany, are not alone in professing such a *Credo*. The "millennia long" history of the Yezidi religion and its "deeply rooted in Indo-Iranian antiquity" elements are also the basic idea of a Russian book on Yezidism published in 2005 by St. Petersburg University (for a detailed review of this book, see Arakelova 2007c; also for an English synopsis of it by the author, see Omarkhali 2004). In addition, the Oriental Faculty of the same University (once a renowned centre of Oriental Studies) has recently published another "magnum opus" of a Kurdish author—this time on the Proto-Indo-European (sic!) reflexes in the nominal system of Kurdish (see Mamoyan 2007). A Russian author from Moscow has just attempted "to reveal" even a number of Nostratic (!) roots in the so-called "substrate vocabulary" (in fact, late Armenian borrowings) of Kurdish (for a summary of his paper, see Basharin 2008).

great predicaments—first of all because of the ambivalent semantics of the term *Kurd* in historical documents (see below), complicating the definition of the proper Kurds from other elements featured under the label *Kurd* in the multi-ethnic mosaic of the region. Moreover, "there is nothing more naïve than the statement—very popular unfortunately not among the amateurs only—that a mention of whatever people in historical sources is *per se* the material for ethnic identification and for further ethnographic findings, and that the first attestation of an ethnic name in the relevant sources is an indication of the time of the formation of the given people" (D'yakonov 1981: 90). In other words, not every occurrence of the term *Kurd* in the historical sources—especially those of the early period—are an explicit indicator of the Kurdish ethnic element (see, e.g., Minorsky 1943: 75; also below). And even if, in certain contexts, this term reveals direct connotations of an ethnic name clearly denoting the ancestors of the contemporary Kurds, it does not mean yet that we are dealing with a well-shaped ethno-demographic factor in the given period of time and space. In this regard, the identification of the relevant sources is a prerequisite for any research in the history of the Kurds—of the mediaeval period in the first place (for a general survey of the later texts related to Kurdish history, see Mardukh 1992).

Neglecting this important methodological concept—deliberately or by ignorance—leads to the unavoidable failure of any scholarly research in the early history and culture of the Kurds.[11]

In the recent period of Kurdish history, a crucial point is defining the nature of the rebellions from the end of the 19th and up to the 20th century—from Sheikh Ubaydullah's revolt to Simko's (Simitko) mutiny. The overall labelling of these events as manifestations of the Kurdish national-liberation struggle against Turkish or Iranian suppressors is an essential element of the Kurdish identity-makers' ideology. The Soviet historiography of the Kurds is in the first place responsible for creating a common "national" characteristic for all these revolts, conditioned not only by the strivings of the Kurdish nationalist authors, but predominantly stimulated by the official Soviet ideology regarding every more or less notable ethnic minority violence outside the so-called Socialist camp as a prominent "national" upheaval against the ruling ma-

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[11] A vivid example is "The History of Kurdistan" by a group of authors from the Russian Academy of Sciences, published several years ago in Moscow (for a detailed review, see Asatrian/Margarian 2003). Among the compilations of this kind one can remember also the phantasmagoric "Handbook" of M. Izady published in 1992 by "Taylor and Francis" in London (see the review in Strohmeyer 1994).

jority, kind of a *nacional'no-osvoboditel'naya bor'ba*, or even *dviženie* (see, e.g., Xalfin 1963; Džalil 1966; Lazarev 1972; etc.; for a more substantiated view on some of these revolts, see Bruinessen 1981; idem 1983; idem 1984; see also Lundgren 2007, and a review on it in Arakelova 2007b).

With the Kurdish conglomeration, as I said above, far from being a homogeneous entity—either ethnically, culturally, or linguistically (see above, fn. 4; also fn. 13 below)—the basic component of the national doctrine of the Kurdish identity-makers has always remained the idea of the unified image of one nation, endowed respectively with one language and one culture.[12] The chimerical idea of this imagined unity has become further the fundament of Kurdish identity-making, resulting in the creation of fantastic ethnic and cultural prehistory, perversion of historical facts, falsification of linguistic data, etc. (for recent Western views on Kurdish identity, see Atabaki/Dorleijn 1990).[13]

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[12] Most of the issues concerning the history and processes of Kurdish identity-shaping are examined in the fundamental and highly illuminating monograph by Martin Strohmeier (2003), reviewed by Arakelova (2006).

[13] For depicting the picture of an allegedly unified language, the late Qanat Kurdoev, for instance, artificially introduced many lexemes from the Southern dialects—actually non-existent in the north—into his dictionary of Kurmanji (see Kurdoev 1960). The PhD thesis of Amir Hassanpour on the standardisation of the Kurdish language, defended at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (Hassanpour 1989), being, generally, a useful and informative work, still is not free of all defects typical of biased research: inclusion of Gurani, Zaza, and even Luri into the system of Kurdish dialects; presenting a map of the Kurdish-speaking areas, which covers the main part of the Near-Eastern region; repetition of all mythical information on the history and culture of the Kurds in the spirit of a staunch Kurdish nationalist pamphlet; etc. In examining the issue of the mutual intelligibility between the speakers of Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish) and Sorani (Southern Kurdish), the author states, for instance, that they "do communicate, with difficulty, in normal conversational situations" (ibid.: 24). Actually, the speakers of these dialects cannot communicate at all, even in "normal conversational situations". The mutual intelligibility degree between Kurmanji and Sorani is almost the same as between Persian and Pashto. In their turn, the speakers of these Kurdish dialects cannot converse with Zaza-speakers: for them the Zaza language sounds almost like Ossetic for a Persian-speaker (although to the ear of a Kurmanji-speaker Zaza is more familiar—due to the common vocabulary of Turkish and Kurdish origin). Gurani (with its dialects—Awromani, etc.) for a Kurmanji- or Sorani-speaker is again untelligible, but this time it is more recognisable for the speakers of Sorani, because of Persian borrowings occurring equally in both. On the whole, the speakers of all of these languages and dialects, when communicating, prefer to rely on a third language: be it Persian, Arabic, or Turkish. Generally, the role of language in ethnicity is selectively interpreted by Kurdish identity-makers: in case of the Yezidis who speak Kurdish (Kurmanji), they focus on the unity of language as the main marker of ethnicity; but with regard to the Zazas, Gurans, or Lurs, the significance of language is dwindled to

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The language of the Kurds belongs to the North-Western group of Iranian. In reality, it is a huge mass of related dialects, lacking an over-dialectal *κοίνη*, which impedes mutual intelligibility and communication between its various parts (see above, fn. 13). The literary languages on the bases of the so-called Northern and Southern dialects do not have a normative character and, in their turn, are fixations of different intermediate sub-dialects within both northern and southern areas. Kurdish authors usually enlarge this dialect continuum by including some other Iranian dialects—Zaza, Gurani, and Luri—into it (see, e.g., Smirnova/Ėyubi 1998; idem 1999; Yusupova 1998; eadem 2002; etc.[14]). There is no sound evidence, however, either linguistic or ethnographical, for expanding the Kurdish dialect area at the expense of other Iranian idioms—actually separate languages (see above). Zaza and Gurani constitute probably a part of the so-called Southern Caspian-Aturpatakan group of Iranian dialects, sort of a *Sprachbund* postulated by the author of this paper on the basis of a number of commonly shared exclusive—mostly lexical—isoglosses (see Asatrian 1990; see also below). As for Luri (Bakhtiari, etc.), generally regarded by Kurdish authors as a Kurdish dialect, it is related to the South-Western, "Persic" group and is a radically different dialect, rather close to New Persian (see Vahman/Asatrian 1995: 8-13).

The classification of the Kurdish dialects is not an easy task, despite the fact that there have been numerous attempts—mostly by Kurdish authors—to put them into a system. However, for the time being the commonly accepted classification of the Kurdish dialects is that of the late Prof. D. N. Mackenzie, the author of fundamental works in Kurdish dialectology (see Mackenzie 1961; idem 1961-1962; idem 1963a; idem 1981), who distinguished three groups of dialects: Northern, Central, and Southern. More conservative, preserving a number of archaic features, is the first group represented, according to Mackenzie, by two sub-groups: North-Eastern and North-Western. The first includes dialects of Eastern Turkey, Hakkari, and Behdinan; the second—those of Bohtan, Diarbekir, and Sinjar. In the North-Eastern dialects, the *iḍāfa* formant features as *-ēd*, and in the North-Western as *-ēn.* The former is

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a secondary or even tertiary factor (if, of course, the Kurdish affiliation of these ethnic groups is not taken for granted).

[14] These people think that if they put the adjective *kurdskij* (i.e. "Kurdish") before the name of a dialect, then it automatically becomes "Kurdish" (see the Bibliography).

derived from older *-*ēndi* consisting of –*ēn*, the oblique form of the plural suffix –*ān*, and the prepositional element –*di*, which is, probably, of Aramaic origin (see Cabolov 1978: 9; Asatrian 1989b: 303).

The Central Kurdish dialects embrace Mukri, which is spoken in Iran, to the south of Lake Urmiya, and Sorani, to the west of Mukri, in the province of Erbil, in Iraq.

The South Kurdish dialect group includes Kermanshahi, Ardalani, and Laki (Mackenzie 1963a; idem 1981; also Oranskij 1979: 35-36). However, the characterisation of Laki as a Kurdish dialect raises serious objections: having, indeed, a number of typical Kurdish features, it possesses at the same time not less pronounced characteristics of Luri dialects. Presumably, we are dealing here with a mixed language forming a transitional link between the dialects of Kurdish and Luri.

The Northern Kurdish dialects are usually given the term Kurmanji (*kurmānǰī*), an adjective from the ethnic name of the speakers of these dialects (see below). The Central and Southern Kurdish dialects are called Sorani (*sōrānī*), which is actually the name of a Central Kurdish dialect, derived from the name of the former principality of Sōrān (on the origin of this toponym, see Nawabi 1994). Another collective term for the latter groups is Kurdi (*kurdī*).

Because of the considerable differences between Kurmanji and Sorani (or Kurdi), particularly the lack of mutual intelligibility (see above, fn. 13), some authors prefer to consider them as two separate, though closely related, languages with transitional dialects (see, e.g., Vil'čevskij 1944: 57; on language situation in the Kurdish-speaking region, see Cabolov 1986; Mackenzie 1989).

Northern Kurdish, otherwise Kurmanji, possesses a more archaic and authentic nature than the other dialects, which underwent considerable changes due to long-standing influence of Persian, Gurani, and Luri, and, maybe, the absorption of a certain Iranian substrate, as Mackenzie (1981: 479) suggests. Kurmanji preserves the case system (nominative/oblique), category of gender (masculine/feminine) in nouns and pronouns and a possessive, or pseudo-ergative, construction of the past tenses with transitive verbs (see, e.g., Bynon 1979; for a historical survey of this syntactic device in Iranian, see Asatrian 1989a: 25ff.). Both case and gender have been lost in Southern Kurdish; instead there are pronominal suffixes, lacking in Kurmanji, which are used in forming case relations. In the phonetic system an important distinctive feature is the phonological opposition of *v* and *w* in Kurmanji, while in Central and Southern Kurdish it is lost in favour of *w* (for more details on the

differences between the dialects of Kurdish, see Mackenzie 1981; Asatrian 2001: 44).

The Armenian Traces in Kurmanji Phonetics

The striking peculiarity of Northern Kurdish, more precisely of its North-Eastern sub-group spoken primarily in the former Armenian territories of the Ottoman Empire, is the emergence of a new series of unaspirated phonemes (i.e. *p, t, k, ĉ*) phonologically opposed to the related aspirated series (i.e. *p'* [*p^h*], *t'* [*t^h*], *k'* [*k^h*], *č* [*č^h*]) common for all Kurdish dialects (including those of Northern Kurdish, outside the borders of Historical Armenia), as well as the distinction between ordinary *r* and rolled *ř* [*rr*] in such pairs as *kařī* "deafness"/ *karī* "piece; herd", *kirin* "to do"/ *k'iřīn* "to buy", etc. This phenomenon is conditioned by the influence of the Armenian substrate, which was a constant element during the whole period of the formation of the mentioned Kurdish dialects after the penetration of the Kurds into Armenia (cf. Arm. unaspirated պ, տ, կ, ծ, against aspirated փ, թ, ք, ց, and ռ vs. ր). The divergent evolution or splitting of phonemes, leading to further phonemicisation of the variants of a phoneme, occurs as a rule under the influence of an alien substrate. In Ossetic, for instance, the Caucasian substrate accounts for the appearance of three separate phonemic reflexes of the OIran. **k*, i.e. the aspirated *k'*, ejective *k'*, and fricative *x* (see Bailey 1963: 74; also Thordarson 1973: 87ff.; on the typologically similar phenomena, see Schmidt 1966: 13-14).

The Suffix *-ōx/γ*

The Armenian trace on this group of Kurdish dialects is found in morphology as well —although not as visible as in phonetical system, or in vocabulary (see below). The suffix *-ōγ/x* forming *nomina agentis* with the past stems of verbs, is certainly the Armenian formant *-oγ* (Classical Arm. *-awł*), which has the same function in literary Armenian and dialects (see Schmitt 1981: 85). I first encountered the verbal nouns with this suffix in the Kurdish rendering of the Gospels,[15] where they reveal a very high frequency of occurrence. The text is a literal, nearly verbatim copy of the Western Armenian version of the Gospels, although the translators, in effect, had a masterly command of Kurdish and its vocabulary. Moreover, almost all the forms with *-ōγ* in the Kurdish translation correspond to the similar forms with *-oγ* in the Western Armenian original, and to the descriptive phrases in the Classical Armenian

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[15] Published in Armenian script in 1857 and 1911 in Constantinople (on the translators, see Mackenzie 1959: 355, fn. 2).

version. Cf., e.g., *Tōvā qanǰ āžōt-ōγ* (lit. "sower", *āžōtin* "lead; sow") *kuřē miřōva = Bari serm c'anoɣə ordin mardoy ē*; but in Classical Arm.: *Or sermanē zsermn bari, ē ordi mardoy* – "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man" (Matt. 13,37); *Li tarīdā řōništ-ōγ* (lit. "the one who sits", *řō/ūništin* "sit") *ǰimat mazin řōhnī dī = Xawari mēǰ nstoγ žoγovurdə mec luys tesaw*; in Class. Arm.: *Žołovurd or nster i xawari, etes loys mec* — "The people which sat in darkness saw great light" (ibid. 4,16); or *Wī žī wiřā gōtōγ-řā* (lit. "speaker, the one who speaks", *gōtin* = New Western Arm. *asoγin* = Class. Arm. *asac'n c'na*) *ǰivāb dā ū gō* — "But he answered and said unto him that told him" (ibid. 12.48); etc.

The ample use of forms with *–ōγ*, coinciding with those in the New Armenian original, along with the complete lack of any previous information about the existence of this suffix in Kurdish, makes an initial impression that it must be a fabricated Armenism aimed at avoiding descriptive phrases.[16] I thought it was an artificial innovation introduced by the Armenian translators. Later inquiry, however, has revealed a living usage of this formant—though sporadic and in a very limited zone—in some modern Kurdish publications originating presumably from the area around Lake Van. Cf., e.g. *Xwadī ū čēkir-ōxē* ("author", lit. "builder, constructer", *čēkirin* "build, construct") *wē* [*k'itēbē*], *Mīr Šaraf-xānē Badlīsī, dī sālā 1599-da nivīsīya* — "The owner and author of that [book], MŠB, wrote [it] in the year of 1599" (*Berbang* [a Kurdish journal], N 3, 1984: 17); cf. also *gōt-ōx* "speaker" (*gōtin* "speak") = Zaza *vāt-ōx* 'id.', translated by Turkish *söyleyici* in a bilingual Zaza-Kurdish periodical (see *Hêvî I*: 121).

To my knowledge, among hundreds of Kurmanji grammars, essays and manuals published since Garzoni (1787), there is only one describing this suffix, though as a variant of the genuine Kurdish *–ōk* (see Bedir Khan/Lescot 1970: 29).[17] The suffix *-ōx/γ* in Kurmanji, actually, cannot have any bearing upon the original *–ōk*, as it forms *nomina agentis* from the past stem, while the latter functions with the present stem of a verb[18] and has a different origin, coming from OIran. **-āka-* (for a detailed account, see Asatrian/Muradyan 1985: 143). Moreover, *-ōx/γ* is also found, with the same function, in Zaza, but, unlike in Kurmanji, it is an active morphological element here. Cf. *šiyāyōγ* "the one who goes"

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[16] I.e. *āžōt-ōγ* instead of *aw ku dāžō*; *řōništ-ōγ* instead of *aw ku řō/ūdinē*; *gōt-ōγ* for *aw ku dibēža* (or *awī ku gō(t)*); etc.

[17] It is documented by a single example, *čēkirōx* "faiseur, fabriquant, auteur" (ibid), just mentioned above.

[18] Cf. *gaz-ōk* "biter" (*gastin* "bite"), *gař-ōk* "wanderer, vagrant" (*gařīn* "wander, walk around"), *bēž-ōk* "speaker" (vs. *gōt-ōx/γ*, see above), etc.

(*šiyāyīš* "to go"), *vātōx* "speaker" (*vātīš* "speak"), *ku/ištōx* "killer" (*ku/ištīš* "to kill"), *wandōx* "reader" (*wandīš* "to read"), *kardōx* "doer" (*kardīš* "to do"), etc. (for details, see Hadank 1932: 89, 92; Asatrian 1987: 169; idem 1995a: 408; for more examples, see *Tîrêj* [a Zaza periodical], N 4, 1981: passim).

Distinctive Features of Kurdish

In the face of a number of important factors, like the wider geographical expansion of Kurdish dialects; their intensive interactions with closely-related neighbouring Iranian idioms and languages; and in the situation of the absence of relevant extralinguistical criteria (such as a state, a common cultural heritage and literary tradition, and even, to a certain extent, a collective identity, etc.), etc., a principal question arises with regard to the possible linguistic definition of the Kurdish dialect group. In other words, how do the Kurdish dialects connect with each other, or are there any reliable criteria, a sort of "touchstone", for distinguishing dialects of Kurdish from those in the same region, having non-Kurdish affiliation? Mackenzie formulated four distinctive markers in historical phonology (see Mackenzie 1961: 70-71; idem 1963a: 163-164; also Blau 1989a: 329), which are, indeed, shared as a system only by Kurdish dialects. These are: the transition of OIran. intervocalic **-m-* to *-v-/-w-* (for details, see Asatrian/Livshits 1994: § XIX, 2); the loss of the initial consonants of the OIran. clusters **-šm-* and **-xm-*, resulting in a further development of *-m-* to *-v-/-w-* (ibid.: §X, 5, XIV, 2); Old Iran. initial **x-* gives regularly in Kurdish *k'* or *k* (ibid.: §X, 1); and the initial *č-* in the verb *čūn* "to go", which is derived from Old Western-Iranian **šyaw-* (ibid.: §XI, 4).[19] We can also add the change of the OIran. intervocalic **-š-* to *-h-/-ø-*, an exclusively Kurdish phonetic peculiarity passed over by Mackenzie (see Asatrian/Livshits 1994: §XIV, 2).

LITERATURE

The earliest written record in Kurdish (Kurmanji) is a small monophysite liturgical prayer in Armenian script, attested in an Armenian manuscript from the Collection of Matanadaran in Yerevan (No 7117, folio 144b) and copied between 1430 and 1446 from a presumably older

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[19] Hardly is it a case of the preservation of the initial **č-* (cf. OIran. **čyaw-*), as Mackenzie believes. I am more than sure that the initial *č-* in *čūn* is the result of a further emphatisation of *š-* in early Kurdish **šūn*, a phonetic phenomenon attested in New Iranian (cf. Asatrian/Livshits 1994: §XI, 4), as well as in Parthian (see Sims-Williams 1979: 136).

original (about the manuscript, see Ačaṙean 1984: 679-680; also Bailey 1943: 4-5; Minorsky 1950; Henning 1958: 78; Mackenzie 1959; Jndi 1962: 67; Asatrian 2001: 45). Mackenzie's (1959: 355) reconstruction of the text reads: *Pākiž xudē, pākiž zahm, pākiž vēmarg, kōy hātī xāčē iž kir ma, řah'matē ma*—"Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, who was crucified for us, show mercy to us (= *ἐλέησον ἡμάς*)". The text is, likely, translated from Greek, as the Classical Arm. version has a conjunction before "Holy" and "strong"/"immortal" (cf. *Surb Astuac, surb ew yzawr, surb ew anmah*, etc.), lacking in the Kurdish rendering. Otherwise, we would have (...) **pākiž ū zahm, pākiž ū vēmarg (...)*.

These few words constitute all we have from the earliest periods of Kurdish, for the first Kurdish texts in Arabic script—mainly poetry—date back to the 16th-17th centuries (see Mackenzie 1969; Nebez 1975: 98).

Several small textual pieces, again in Kurmanji, are found in the oldest copy of the 17th century Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi's *Seyāḥatnāme* (presumably his autograph) (Bruinessen 1988), which reflect the spoken Kurmanji of the period (unlike the Kurdish poetry influenced by Classical Persian literature and abounding with Arabo-Persian borrowings). Of utmost interest is the sample of the so-called Rozhki dialect in the *Seyāḥatnāme*, which appeared to be a mixed Turkish-Armenian-Kurdish vernacular of Bitlis (Dankoff 1990: 18ff).

Kurdish written literature emerged on the basis of Kurmanji and is manifested by such authors as Malaye Djiziri (circa 1570-1640), Faqiye Tayran (circa 1590-1660) (Mackenzie 1969; Rudenko 1965), 'Ali Teremakhi (16th-beginning of the 17th c.), as well as Ahmade Khani (1650-1707), the author of the famous love poem "Mam and Zin" (see Rudenko 1960; idem 1962; Bois 1981: 481-482; Khaznadar 1971; Nebez 1975).

Already from the end of the 14th century, among the speakers of the Central and Southern Kurdish dialects, poetry—mostly of a religious nature—in Luri and later in Gurani, acquired widespread popularity. The Awromani dialect of Gurani became the sacral language of the Ahl-i-Ḥaqq sect and was functioning as sort of a written language in the Southern Kurdish linguistic region. Sometimes, the whole sect was characterised by the term *gōrān*, as in case of Turkish-speaking Ahl-i-Ḥaqqs in Azerbaijan (cf. Adjaryan 1998). The terms *gōrānī* and *Hawrāmī* even now designate specific songs and a certain genre in poetry; also, probably, *hū/ōra*, meaning tragic songs or mourning poetry (see Ṣafīzā-

deh-Borakeyī 1998: 53-54, 94-98), must be a dialectal form of *hawrāmī*.[20]
Many Kurdish poets of the 17th–19th centuries, speakers of the Central
and Southern Kurdish dialects, such as Male Mistafae Baserani (1641-
1702), Khanae Qubadi (1700-1759), Mavlavi Tavgozi (1806-1882), and
Vali Devana (1826-1881) wrote in Gurani (Nebez 1975: 100-101).

The written literature in Sorani developed mainly during the 19th
and flourished in the 20th century, especially in the Kurdish areas of
Iraq (see Xaznadar 1967).

Pseudoprotokurdica
One of the most interesting products of Kurdish identity-makers in con-
structing an ancient historical and cultural background for the Kurds is
the famous "Suleimaniye Parchment of the 7th Century in Old Kurdish",
a forged literary piece written allegedly in Pahlavi script and relating
the hardships of the Arab invasion. It is said to have been found in
Suleimaniye in Iraq. This poetic text, composed of four couplets, and its
French translation were first brought to light by B. Nikitine with refer-
ence to Sureya Bedr Khan (Nikitine 1934: 125, fn. 18). Later, the full text
was published in Persian script by Rašīd Yāsamī (1940: 119). From then
onward, the legend about this "ancient Kurdish text" became a favour-
ite motif in all the publications on Kurdish literature, including aca-
demic writings (cf., e.g., Rudenko 1960: 434; Akopov 1968). Even after
Mackenzie (1963b) had shown that this is a typical fake evoked by the
discovery of the Avroman documents (see Nyberg 1923; Edmonds 1925;
idem 1952; Henning 1958: 28-30), still the "Suleimaniye Parchment" re-
mains a living artefact of "Kurdish antiquity", a permanent point of re-
turn for all Kurdish authors trying to widen the recorded time-span of
Kurdish history and culture (see, e.g., Xamoyan 1972).

RELIGION

As mentioned in the introductory part of this writing, Kurds are Sunni
Muslims of the Shafi'i *mazhab*, with a part following Twelver Imami and
extreme Shi'a doctrines. The Yezidis are a different ethno-religious en-
tity, and their religion, as was also discussed above, cannot be consid-
ered within the framework of Kurdish religious and cultural realities.

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[20] The term *gōrānī* penetrated also into the Northern dialects and denotes a lyri-
cal genre in folk music and poetry; and through Kurmanji this term found its way to
the Armenian folk culture as the name of a local musical genre called *gorani* or
gyorani. Incidentally, the term *gōrān* in Southern Kurdish dialects currently in some
contexts simply means "song" or "melody".

However, leaving aside permanent claims on Yezidism to be the so-called pre-Islamic religion of the Kurds (see above), the latter—because of its esoterism—also sometimes becomes a source of eccentric and far-fetched theories and ideas (allegations about night orgies and promiscuous relations, devil worshipping, incestuous habits, etc.). Most of these fantastic conjectures later proved to be false and have been abandoned (see Arakelova 2008).[21]

Nonetheless, a curious story about the traces of donkey-worship amongst the Yezidis (meant as Kurds) is still haunting the thoughts of Kurdologists. The authors of this theory were J. Przyluski and B. Nikitine. The whole idea is formulated by the latter in his book on the Kurds (Nikitine 1956: 252-254).

Once Przyluski, Nikitine says, visited a Yezidi sanctuary in a village near Malatia, where on the walls of the house he saw depictions of a hippocephalic creature and a bird, which was identified later by Nikitine as Malak-Tawus, the supreme deity of the Yezidis. Later on, Przyluski found in Jaba/Justi (1879: 330) a word-entry, *k'arnāmūt*, explained as "*l'âne ne meurt pas*, a feast, celebrated by the Kurds on the 20th of March (i.e. "Nawruz")", and commented as *k'ar-nā-mūt* "immortal donkey". These became the basic arguments in favour of *le culte de l'âne*, the donkey-worshipping tradition alledgedly once practiced by the Kurds. Moreover, Przyluski tried to substantiate his theory by tracing etymological parallels between the ethnonym *Kurd* and the Sanskrit and Dravidian terms for "ass, donkey", *garda(bha)*, *gadaboī*, *karuda*, *kadi*, etc. Nikitine, in his turn, adds the name of a Kurdish mosque near Ushnu in Iran, *K'ar-xōrān*, as if meaning "donkey-eaters" and alluding by that to a certain reverence towards this useful beast of burden.

As a matter of fact, however, the donkey has always been a despised animal among the Kurds, a *terminus comparationis* for illogical behaviour and feeble-mindedness. Actually, this whole set of conjectures is a mere fantasy and misunderstanding, as there is no Yezidi sanctuary outside Lalish; depiction of Malak-Tawus and even its name, are strictly taboo; *k'arnāmūt* is an Armenian borrowing in Kurdish, from Arm. dial. *k'arnamut* (literary *garnanamut*) "the advent of spring"; *K'ar-xōrān* is a derogatory label given not to the mosque, but to the inhabitants of the village itself; etc.

There are also rumours about the "Christian Kurds". G. R. Driver (1922a: 197; cf. also idem 1921: 567) wrote: "... few Kurds belong to either

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[21] However, such presumptions still were alive in the beginnings of the 20th century, advocated even by such higher rank academic as G. R. Driver, a renowned Semitologist (see Driver 1922a: 198).

the Armenian or the Jacobite Church. It is the Nestorian branch, which embraces the largest number of Kurds; ... when a Kurd adopts Christianity, it is to the Church of Nestorius that he usually turns".

The reality, however, is that there have never been Christian groups among the ethnic Kurds, and no Kurd has ever adopted Christianity either through the Nestorian Church or other confessions. Actually, all the so-called "Christian Kurds" mentioned by travellers and accidental observers, were Assyrians of different confessions, or kurdophone Armenians. The same can be said about the "Kurds professing Christianity" found near Mosul, who were described by the 10th century Arab geographer Mas'ūdī (Schwarz 1929: 865) and the 13th century Italian traveller Marco Polo (Marko Polo 1955: 58). According to Schwarz (ibid.), the Kurds of Jūzaqān[22] tribe, who lived in Ḥulwān, were also Christians. However, Marco Polo (ibid.) clearly notes that the so-called "Christian Kurds" of Mosul were Nestorians and Jacobites (for a comprehensive bibliography on the religion of the Kurds, see above).

KURDISTAN—AN IMAGINED LAND?

The term *Kurdistan* (*Kurdistān*) belongs to the category of geographical names formed with the NPers. suffix *-stān* and an ethnonym, widely attested in the Near Eastern region and Central Asia, including the Indian subcontinent (cf. Luristān, Balūčistān, Turkistān, Hindūstān, etc.). It has always been a pure ethnographical attribute of various territories inhabited by the Kurds, without a political connotation and clearly defined geographical coordinates (see Qazvīnī 1999: passim; Le Strange 1915: 108; Bartol'd 1971: 189-197; Bois 1981: 440ff.; Asatrian 2001: 55-56).

It is usually believed that Ḥamd-allāh Mustaufī Qazvīnī was the first who made use of the term *Kurdistan* in his *Nuzhat-al-qulūb* (1340). However, the earliest occurrences of this geographical name in historical sources date back to the 12th century and are attested in Armenian texts. Matt'eos Uṙhayec'i (d. 1138 or 1144), describing the events related to the end of the 11th century, writes: *Yaysm ami žołov arareal omn Yehnuk anun, 5000 arambk' gnac'eal i veray **K'rdstanac'** i gavaṙn Amt'ay i tełin,*

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[22] The arabicised form of the original **gōzakān*, from *gōz* "walnut", with the adj. suffix *–akān*, used also as patronymic formant. There are many New Iranian, including Kurdish, tribal names derived from botanic terms. Cf., e.g., Kurdish *Zīlī* (or *Zīlānlī*), from *zīl* "sprout" (< Arm. dial. *jil*, Class. *cil* 'id.'; see below); *Pīvazī*, from *pivāz* "onion"; *Sīpkī* (or *Sīpkānlī*), from *siping* (< **sipik*) "meadow salsify"; *Mandikī*, from *mandik* "watercress" (see below); *P'āzūkī*, from *p'āzūk* "an edible herb" (Arm. dial. *p'azuk*; see below); etc.

or *Čepu-šahar koč'i; ew aŕeal bazum ew ant'iw awar—oč'xars ew paxrēs, jis ew caŕays ew ayl bazum awars; ew gayr i berdn, or koč'i Sewerak. Ew hasanēr i het, or awag ēr k'rdac'n, orum anun Xalt' asēin, ink'n ew iwr erek' ordik'n; ew teseal Yehnukn ew iwr zōrk'n i p'axust darjan* — "In the same year (1062-1063), a certain Yehnuk conscripted 5000 men [and] went [with them] to Kurdistans (sic!), in the district of Amid in a locality called Jebu-shahar; and taking a huge and countless booty—small and neat cattle, horses and servants and many other trophies, [he] came to a fortress called Sewerak. Soon [however], the leader of the Kurds whom [they] called Khalt, he himself and his three sons, overtook [Yehnuk]; and having seen them, Yehnuk and his army took to flight" (Uŕhayec'i 1991: 156).

The toponyms mentioned in the above passage—*Amid*, near Diyarbakır, and *Sewerak* (modern Siverek) to the south of Diyarbakır and to the north of Urfa (the ancient city of Edessa = Arm. Uŕha)—point to the fact that under the term Kurdistan the Armenian author in the 12th century implied an area between Urfa and Diarbekir. Moreover, as indicates the plural form of the name (*Kurdistans!*), it could not be a toponym in the strict sense of the word, but, rather, a conventional attribute of the demographic situation of the given territory. The plural forms of the georgraphical terms with the suffix *–stan* in Armenian, as well as the names of bigger units, even now show the indefinite and vague spatial dimensions. For instance, *Rusastanner* (pl. form of Russia in Armenian) does not mean Russia, but an area to the North of Armenia; or *Parskastanner* (pl. form of Persia in Arm.) indicates the south; *Miǰin Asianer* (pl. of Central Asia)—the East; *Evropaner* (pl. of Europe)—the West (like *Farang* in Persian), etc. Therefore, Uŕhayec'i's *K'rdstanac'* (acc. pl.) could simply be an *ad hoc* formation by analogy and not an established term.

Chronologically the second occurrence of the term Kurdistan is attested in the colophon of an Armenian manuscript of the Gospels, written in 1200. Cf. *K'rsitos Astuac awrhnē z-xoǰay Yovhanes mułdusin, z-**K'rdstanin**, or stnc'aw z-surb Avetarans i jeŕac' aylazgac'* — "[Let] Christ-God bless Khoja Hovhanes Mughdusi (the one who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem) from Kurdistan, who took the Holy Gospels from the aliens" (Mat'evosyan 1988: 307). Here *Kurdistan* features in acc. sg. (*z-K'rdstanin*), which does not fit with the context; it must have been, rather, **z-K'rdstanc'in* ("Kurdistanian, from Kurdistan"), as an attribute to *xoǰay Yovhanes.*

In the later periods, from Qazvīni's *Nuzhat-al-qulūb* onward, the term Kurdistan occurs in many sources with different contents and geographical parameters—more often without a historical basis and demographic validity.

In modern usage—for the most part in the publications of Kurdish authors—the term *Kurdistan* covers a substantial portion of the Near East: the whole eastern and central parts of the Republic of Turkey; the entire Western Iran—from the north to the south up to the Persian Gulf; the northern areas of Iraq and Syria. Sometimes even the western regions of the Armenian Republic and Georgia are also included into this phantom land.

"MEDIANS" OF THE ARMENIAN SOURCES

The view on the Median origin of the Kurds has been an important element of the Kurdish social and political discourse since their national awakening. The genetic affiliation between the Kurds and their language and the ancient Medians has always been regarded as an absolute and incontestable truth for most Kurdish authors (cf., e.g., Wahby 1964; Vanly 1988; and many others). In the academic scholarship, as far as I know, V. Minorsky was the only adept of this theory (see Minorsky 1940: 152; on this paper of Minorsky, see Vil'čevskij 1961: 73-79): "L'unité du kurde—he says—doit s'expliquer par sa base médique", or, more categorically: "C'est seulement par la base médique qu'on arrive à expliquer l'unité du kurde" (ibid.: 152; see also below, fn. 33).

Meanwhile, there is no serious ground to suggest a special genetic affinity—within North-Western Iranian—between this ancient language and Kurdish. The latter does not share even the generally ephemeric peculiarity of Median, i.e. *hw- > f- development (see Lecoq 1983; Skjærvø 1983; Lubotsky 2002: 191ff.).[23] The Central Iranian dialects, and primarily those of the Kashan area in the first place, as well as the Azari dialects (otherwise called Southern Tati) are probably the only Iranian dialects, which can pretend to be the direct offshoots of Median (on the Medians and their language, see D'yakonov 1956; idem 1993; Mayrhofer 1968; Schmitt 1967; also Asatrian 2009).

In general, the relationship between Kurdish and Median are not closer than the affinities between the latter and other North Western dialects—Baluchi, Talishi, South Caspian, Zaza, Gurani, etc.

Then, what is the main argument or reason on which the idea of the Median origin of the Kurds and their language is based? Supposedly, the initial incentives for the emergence of such an idea were *inter alia* substantiated by the fact that in the late Armenian sources, especially in the colophons of the manuscripts, the Kurds are sometimes referred to

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[23] The *-f-* from *-*hw*- in Kurd. *āfir* "stable, feeding trough" (< *$ā$-*xwar-ana*-) is due to a secondary development in intervocalic position.

as *mark'* "Medians" or *azgn marac'* "the tribe of the Medians".[24] Namely this phenomenon in the Armenian written tradition is declared by the protagonists of the mentioned idea (cf., e.g., Minorsky 1940: 151; idem 1965: 159, fn. 22; Vanly 1988: 48-49; see also Wahby 1964) as the *Argumentatum primarium* in favour of the Median provenance of the Kurds (see also below, fn. 33).

However, the labelling of the Kurds as Medians by the Armenian chroniclers is a mere literary device within the tradition of identifying the contemporary ethnic units with the ancient peoples, known throughout the Classical literature. Tatars, e.g., were identified with the Persians, *azgn parsic'*; Kara-qoyunlu Turkmens were called "the tribe of the Scythians", *azgn skiwt'ac'woc'*, etc. (see Xač'ikyan 1955: 3, 469, 532).

Incidentally, realising that such a naming system can create dubious interpretations, the Armenian authors mention, in many cases, the authentic name of the given ethnos as a supplement to its so-called "Classical" version. Cf. *azgn parsic', or koč'i čałat'ay*—"The Persian tribe, which is called Chagatay" (ibid.: 419); *azgn marac', or k'urt' koč'i*—"The tribe of the Medians, which is called Kurd" (ibid.: 332); or *t'ołum asel z-marac' azgac'n, or en k'rdac'*—"I will not speak about the tribes of the Medians, which are [those of] the Kurds" (Daranałc'i 1915: 298); etc.

It is obvious that by qualifying the Kurds as Medians the late mediaeval Armenian chroniclers simply paid a tribute to Classical literature sanctified by the tradition.

A similar practice of using the ancient ethnica with reference to the later communities of different origin has been observed in other traditions as well—from the Akkadian (cf. *gimirri* "Cymmerians", denoting Scythians and Sakas) to Byzantine (cf. Bibikov 1982).

ETHNIC NAMES OF THE KURDS

a) *Kurd*

As is well-known, the term *Kurd* had a rather indiscriminate use in the early mediaeval Arabo-Persian historiography and literature, with an explicit social connotation, meaning "nomad, tent-dweller, shepherd" (Minorsky 1931: 294; idem 1940: 144-145; idem 1943: 75; Izady 1986: 16;

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[24] The common denominations of the Kurds in the mediaeval Armenian sources are *k'urd* (*k'urt'*) and *azgn k'rdac'* ("the tribe of the Kurds"). In the later texts, the Kurds feature also under the names of their tribal groups. Cf., e.g., *yetoy ev ink'n srov katarec'aw i jeṙac' anawrinac', aniceal azgin aṙoškanic'*—"And then, he himself fell by the sword in the hands of the infidels, the accursed tribe of the Roshkans (i.e. the *Rōžkī*, *Rōžkān(l)ī*, or *Rūzakī*, etc. tribal confederation)" (Xač'ikyan 1955: 593).

Asatrian 2001: 47ff.), as well as "robber, highwayman, oppressor of the weak and treacherer" (Driver 1922b: 498ff).

The earliest occurrence of this term in written sources is attested in the form of *kurt* (*kwrt-*) in the Middle Persian treatise (*Kārnāmak ī Artax-šīr ī Pābakān*), compiled presumably in the second half of the 6th century A.D. It occurs four times in the text (Kn. I, 6; VIII, 1; IX 1, 2) in plural form, *kurtān*[25]—twice in conjunction with *šāh* "chieftain, ruler" (*kurtān šāh*), once with *šupānān* "shepherds" (*kurtān šupānān*), and only once in a bare form, without a supplement. The chieftain or ruler of these "Kurds" features as *Mādīk*, which means "Median" (MPers. *Mād*, or *Māh/ *Māy* "Media"). It is clear that *kurt* in all the contexts has a distinct social sense, "nomad, tent-dweller".[26] It could equally be an attribute for any Iranian ethnic group having similar characteristics. To look for a particular ethnic sense here would be a futile exercise. As far as the name of the chieftain, *Mādīk*, concerned, it can, to a certain extent, reflect the same narrative device as we observed above when discussing the "Medians" in the Armenian sources.

Chronologically the next appearance of *Kurd* is again found in Pahlavi literature, in the well-known "Sassanian Lawbook", *Mātakdān ī hazār dātastān*, written, according to its editor (Perixanyan 1973: XII-XIII), around 620 A.D. in Fars, possibly in the city of Gōr (now Fīrūzābād).

The juridical clause (99.8,13) in which the term *kurt* (*kwrt*) appears twice (once with *martōhm* "people"), concerns the regulation of norms with regard to the transhumant cattle-breeders, who arrive in a new locality (or a new pasture, *viδānmānīh*). It would be strange for a legal document of common character, where there is no other ethnonym, to include a special clause for a particular ethnic group. Therefore, *kurt* in the mentioned text must be interpreted as "nomad, tent-dweller", and *martōhm ī kurt* respectively as "a nomadic group or populace".

In a later Pahlavi apocalyptic text, an epitome of the Avestan Bahman Yasht, compiled long after the Arab invasion, probably in the 11th or 12th century (see West 1880: L ff.), the Kurds are mentioned—together with the leathern-belted Turks, Arabs, and Romans—among the hordes of demon-races or idolators "with dishevelled hair" (III, 20, also, 6, 8—West, ibid.: 217-223). But, again, there is no way to attribute here a certain ethnic affiliation to these "Kurds". Most probably, the term *Kurd*

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[25] H. S. Nyberg (1974: 120-121) proposed for *kwrt'n'* (*kwrtyk'n'*) the reading *kurtī-kān* and translates it as "slaves; gang of slaves".

[26] Recently, a Polish author (cf. Gacek 2004), analysing the same *loci* in *Kārnāmak*, has come generally to a similar conclusion, although with a very limited knowledge of the subject and relevant bibliography.

must indicate in this text generally hostile and warlike groups like, in a way, in the Muslim literature of the time.

The Pahlavi materials clearly show that *kurd* in pre-Islamic Iran was a social label, still a long way off from becoming an ethnonym or a term denoting a distinct group of people. The semantic aspect of its further evolution from a social characteristic to an ethnic name is exactly the same as in case of many ethnonyms derived from negative markers, at least with regard to the later period of the history of this term—since mediaeval times till its final crystallisation as an ethnonym.[27]

Along with the narrative Arabo-Persian sources analysed by V. Minorsky, the term *kurd* as a common denomination for "nomad, cattle-breeder, shepherd" is found in the Classical New Persian poetry. Cf. (Dehxodā 1993, sv. *kurd*):

<div dir="rtl">

در مصیبت ناله کم کن کین جزع ماند بدان

بره را می برد گرگ و اشتلم می کرد کرد

عاقبت خواهد فتاد آن بره در چنگال گرگ

گر چه بسیاری نگهبانیش خواهد کرد کرد.

</div>

"Do not complain in distress, since bring to mind the case,
When the shepherd (lit. *Kurd*) was just crying when seeing the wolf,
                              who carried away the lamb.
At the end this lamb would remain in the claws of the wolf,
If the shepherd (lit. *Kurd*) would protect it (in such a manner)".

These lines belong to Ibn Yamin, a 13-14th century Persian poet from Sabzavar (see Xekmat 1965: 17-52).

It is also worthy of mention that *kurd* (*kord*) in the Caspian dialects still in our times is used as "shepherd of small cattle". Cf. the following quatrain from a folk song recorded in Marzkūh in the south-western shore of the Caspian Sea, near Gorgan:

Az īnǰe tā pīšet dūr bimāndom,
Ze bas kī girya kardom kūr bimāndom;

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[27] Cf. the ethnonym of *Mards* (or *Amards*), which was, likely, a derogatory term before becoming an ethnic name (cf. Av. *marəδā-* "plague", lit. "killer, destroyer"), if, of course, the etymology of W. Geiger (1882: 203) is correct. Mards (Amards) lived in various parts of Iranian plateau and Central Asia, including Margiana (Geiger, ibid.: 203-204). However, it is obvious that they were not a homogeneous people: the Mards inhabiting, for instance, Hyrcania (*Vṛkāna-* of OPers. inscriptions) and those living in Central Asia or elsewhere might have been of different origin—the common ethnonym (μάρδοι) seems to have reflected their similar lifestyle and habits (see also below, fn. 33).

Bide dasmāl dabandom dīdagūnom,
Misāl-e kord-e bīmozdūr bimāndom.

"I was left (and stayed) far from you,
I cried so much that I got blind;
Give me a kerchief, I will tie my eyes,
I am (left) like a shepherd (lit. *Kurd*), who has not received his wages"
(Pūr-karīm 1969: 46).

Kord (*kurd*) in the South Caspian area seems to denote exclusively "shepherd of small cattle" in semantic opposition to *gāleš*, "shepherd of neat cattle", a fact, which is emphasised almost by all native observers.[28]

The documented history of the term *Kurd*, as was shown above, starts from the 6th-7th centuries A.D. Before that period, there is little reliable evidence of its earlier forms.[29] Generally, the etymons and primary meanings of tribal names or ethnonyms, as well as place names, are often irrecoverable; *Kurd* is also an obscurity. Its possible connection to Xenephon's καρδόυχοι must be considered now as obsolete (cf. Paulys Realencyclopädie, Bd X/2: 1933-1938, s.v.; Mackenzie 1963a: 164, fn. 4; Vil'čevskij 1961: 112). This view was thoroughly discussed and rejected by Th. Nöldeke just on the threshold of the 20th century (Nöldeke 1898; see also Hübschmann 1904: 334). And though some two decades later G. R. Driver (1921: 563 ff.; also idem 1923) had attempted to revive the *Kurd*/καρδόυχοι (Arm. *Kordu-kʻ*) correlation, nonetheless, it was not accepted within iranological academic circles for phonetic and historical reasons.[30]

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[28] Cf. "I must say that in the whole area at the northern foothills of Alborz mountain—from Gorgan and Mazandaran till Gilan—the people who are engaged in pasturing neat cattle and live by producing milk product, usually are called *gāleš*. But the shepherds who are occupied in pasturing sheep and goat and making milk products from them, are called *kord*. Therefore, *kord* and *gāleš* are two separate terms for two separate occupations" (Pūr-karīm 1969: 46). The term *gāleš* must be of Iranian origin, possibly from OIran. **gāwa-raxšaka-* "protector of cows" (Asatrian 2002: 82-83).

[29] There is no need, I think, of mentioning numerous attempts of tracing this term to the names of various ancient Near Eastern peoples, having *-k-*, *-g-*, *-t-*, or *-d-* in different combinations.

[30] Strangely enough, some authors of the *Cambridge History of Iran* (see Cook 1985: 257, fn. 1; and Burn 1985: 354) again maintain the view that the *Karduchoi* were the ancestors of the Kurds. The latter (Burn, ibid.) does not even mention *Karduchoi* when describing the March of "Ten Thousand", using instead just "Kurds" and "Kurdestan" (!).

Evidently, the most reasonable explanation of this ethnonym must be sought for in its possible connections with the *Cyrtii* (*Cyrtaei*)/κύρτοι of the Classical authors (cf. *Cyrtii* – Liv., XLII, 58, 13; *Cyrtaei* – Liv. XXXVII, 40, 9.14; Polyb., V, 52, 5; κύρτιοι – Strabo, XI, 13.3, XV, 3.1), which is the name of an ancient and warlike people famous as mercenary slingers (μετανάσται και ληστρικοί). They dwelt in Persia, near Mount Zagros, alongside the Mards, and like the latter, lived by robbery. The κύρτιοι, according to Strabo, were of the same race (τῆς αὐτῆς εἰσὶν ἰδέας) as the Mards and (the inhabitants) of Armenia. The Cyrtii are first mentioned by Polyb. (ibid.) in 220 B.C. as mercenaries in the service of Molon, the ruler of Media, who fought against the Seleucid king Antiochus III (see Reinach 1909: 115-119).

The great German scholar of Armenian origin F. C. Andreas, to whom we owe a good many discoveries in Iranian Studies (linguistic attribution of the Turfan texts, definition of the Zazas as descendents of the ancient Dailamites, etc.), as far as I know, was the first also who proposed the *Kurd/Cyrtii* (κύρτιοι) correspondence (Andreas 1894: 1493; idem, apud Hartmann 1896: 96; see also Weissbach 1924; Mackenzie 1961: 68). This view was supported later by Th. Nöldeke who suggested **kurt-* (perhaps, **kurti-*) as a common proto-form for these two names.[31]

The ethnic territory of the *Cyrtii* F. C. Andreas localised within the borders of the Armenian historical province *Korčayk'*. The name of this province, as he says, is derived from **korti-ayk'* (**korti-* < **kurti-*); the palatalisation of *–t–*, according to him, is due to the influence of the following *–i*: **kurti- > *korti- > *korč-* (Hartmann, ibid.; also Minorsky 1940: 150).

The theory of F. C. Andreas has been adopted also by Nicolas Adonts, who wrote: "Cyrtii lived, together with the Mards, between Mount Zagros and Nifat; they inhabited the frontier areas of Armenia to the south of the Mards, in the region, which was called later after their name, Korčayk' (Korček'). The *Cyrtii* are the ancestors of modern Kurds, and they must not be confused with the *Karduchoi*, a people of alien origin. The country of the latter was known among the Armenians as Korduk', denoting, unlike Korček' (the homeland of the *Cyrtii*), according to P'awstos Buzand, the region of Salmas" (Adonc 1908: 418).[32]

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[31] Cf. "*Kurd* ist also aus einer älteren Form *kurt* entstanden, die uns in der griechischen Form, κύρτιοι begegnet" (Nöldeke 1898: 98).

[32] N. Adonts, however, like Hübschmann (1904: 259), does not accept the etymology of *Korčayk'*, suggested by Andreas. He thinks, it comes from **kortič-ayk'* like *atrpat-ič*, *baγhas-ič-k'*, etc. (ibid., fn. 2; cf. also Hübschmann 1904: 255-259).

In any case, if *kurd* represents, indeed, the later variant of **kurt(i)*
(concealed under κύρτιοι), then it would be normal to posit the ques-
tion of the Kyrtian (κύρτιοι)-Kurdish genetic affinity. However, it is be-
yond doubt that the Kyrtians, as well as the Karduchs and other autoch-
thonous peoples of the region, were not Iranians (Indo-Europeans) at
all, having inhabited the Iranian plateau long before the Aryan migra-
tion. In other words, it is unlikely that the Kyritians of Classic sources
were somatic ancestors of the contemporary Kurds.[33] In addition, the
ethnic territory of the speakers of Proto-Kurdish dialects lay in the
south-east (see below), fairly far from the Kyrtians' area of habitation.

Now, then, how can the genetic continuity between the ethnic
names **kurt(i)* and *Kurd* be interpreted? I suppose, after the Kyrtians
disappeared from the historical arena—supposedly at the turn of the
Christian era—their ethnic name, already an appellative meaning "rob-
ber, brigand, nomad, warrior, cattle-breeder", continued to exist in the
lingual landscape of the region.[34] It would already have sounded in the
Middle Iranian dialects of the time as **kurt* (or *kurd*), as we witness its
rare occurrences in the 6th-7th centuries Pahlavi writings (see above).
Seemingly, up to the 11th-12th centuries, *Kurd* was predominantly a so-
cial characteristic with a certain pejorative connotation, applied gener-
ally to the transhumant cattle-breeders and tent-dwellers. The question
when it finally became attached to the forefathers of the contemporary
Kurds as their ethnonym or a term of collective identity does not have a
clear answer. At any rate, at least until the 17th century, *Kurd* had not
yet become a real term of collective identity, being, rather, a name
given to the Kurdish-speaking mass (possibly, to non-Kurdish-speaking
similar groups as well) by the Arabs, Turks, Persians, and Armenians.
The main markers of identity for this mass were clan affiliation and

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[33] È. Grantovskij (1970: 63) believes that the Kyrtians and Karduchs spoke similar
Iranian dialects close to Median, though there is no serious reason for such a state-
ment. Moreover, the ethnonyms of these two peoples escape any interpretation on
Indo-European (Iranian) linguistic grounds. Minorsky also considers the Kyrtians a
Median-speaking tribe, but closer to Mards (see above, fn. 27). He asserts: "... il est
très probable que la nation kurde se soit formée de l'amalgame des deux tribus con-
génèrs, les Mardoi et les Kyrtioi qui parlaient des dialects médiques très rappro-
chés" (Minorsky 1940: 151-152).

[34] The semantic evolution of **kurt(i)* to "robber, nomad, shepherd, etc." resem-
bles much the history of the term *Vandal* (Latin *Vandalus*), which was the name of an
East Germanic tribal group (*Vandali*, lit. "wanderers") famous for their warlike spirit
and aggressive character. Such a phenomenon, though of much later period, can be
observed with regard to the term *kurd* (already an ethnonym) in Modern Georgian,
where it (as *kurdi*) simply means "thief, highwayman, robber".

tribal belonging (see, e.g., Özoğlu 1996: 8-10). It seems, the social aspect of the term *Kurd* was prevalent even in the times of Sharaf Khan (16th century), who used the *ṭāyefe-ye akrād* ("race of Kurds") to imply ethnic groups of different kinds but with similar lifestyles and social and economic setups. The Kurds, according to him, "are of four kinds (*qism*), and their language(s) and habits are different from each other: first, the *Kurmānǰ*; second, the *Lur*; third, the *Kalhor*; [and] fourth, the *Gūrān*" (Scheref 1862: 13). One thing, however, is certain: the process of the evolution of this social term into an ethnonym took, no doubt, a long time-span (see Graph 1), going through different peripeteia of semantic crystallisation and choice of the relevant *denotatum* or referent.

κύρτιοι/Cyrtii (μετανάσται και ληστρικοί) "an ethnic group famous as mercenary slingers and robbers" **kurt(i)* | ⌄	Last centuries preceding Christian Era
kurt(ān) "shepherds, nomads, tent-dwellers" *martōhm-ī kurtān* "nomadic group, transhumant populace" | ⌄	6th-7th centuries A.D. (Pahlavi texts)
kurd(ān), *akrād* "nomads, cattle-breeders, brigands, robbers, highwaymen"	8th-11/12th centuries A.D. (Arabo-Persian texts)

Graph 1

b) *Kurmanǰ*

The origin of the Northern Kurds' ethnic name, Kurmanǰ (*kurmānǰ*), is again a puzzle. All hitherto proposed etymologies (Minorsky 1940: 151; Eilers 1954: 310-311, also 268-269; Kapancyan 1956: 140, fn. 1; Nikitine 1956: 12-15; etc.) are equally unacceptable. It has been suggested, for instance, that *kurmānǰ* may combine *Kurd* and *Māda* "Median" (see Mackenzie 1981: 479-480); some Kurdish authors even detach the second part of the word (-*mānǰ*, or -*māǰ*) as "the ancient name of the Kurds" and give it as a separate entry in dictionaries (see, e.g., Hažār 1997: 788, s.v.

māǰ). Judging by the outer form of this term, it is, certainly, a compound the first part of which can, indeed, be *kurd*, but the second component (-*māǰ*) defies reliable interpretation (see below, fn. 35).

The earliest written evidence of *kurmānǰ* goes back to Sharaf Khan Bitlisi's *Šaraf-nāmeh*, compiled at the end of the 16th century. It does not occur in the early Armenian texts; we encounter this term in Armenian literature only from the 19th century onward.

It seems, the term *kurmānǰ* is a later product, emerging in the northern areas of Kurdish habitat, in the historical Armenian provinces, after the mass penetration of the Kurds to the north, or during their *Aufenthalt* at the southern borders of Armenia. Therefore, I assume that the second component of this compound name is possibly of Armenian derivation (the first being *kurd*), although I am in a predicament to explain it.[35] Anyway, as a matter of fact, *kurmānǰ* seems to have been initially also a social characteristic meaning "non-tribal peasant; servant; shepherd; vagabond; poor person". Cf. the Kurdish saying: *Az na kurmānǰē bāve tama,/az na mōt'āǰē mālā tama* — "I am not a servant (*kurmānǰ*) of your father,/ I am not in need of your wealth" (Jindî 1985: 200); or *K'ē dītya lāw bagzāda bi kaĉ kurmānǰā* — "Who has (ever) seen a noble guy (lit. "son of a *Bag*") with the girl of a peasant (*kurmānǰ*)" (Musaelyan 1985: 200).

More typical is the following example from a folk song:

> *Qīzē, r̄ōžā ta bi xēr, 'aydā ta binbārak!*
> *Min sah kirī ta di sar mirā girtī yārak.*
> *Agar ži min čētira, li ta binbārak,...*
> *Agar millāya, bi sardā hilša dīwārak,..*
> *Agar kurmānǰa di mālī nāmīna barx ū kārak,* etc.

"O girl, good day, a happy fest!
As I see, you took, except me, another lover.
If he is better than me, (then I) congratulate you...
If he is a Mulla, let a wall collapse on him...
If he is a shepherd (*kurmānǰ*), let his house be deprived of a single
                         lamb and sheep" (Musaelyan, ibid.: 34).

I suspect the same semantics for *kurmānǰ(ān)* in the famous hemistich of Ahmede Khani, which is usually used as an epigraph in Kurdish patriotic publications. Cf.:

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[35] From Arm. **k'urd-manč'*, or **k'u/ərdi-manč'* "Kurdish kids -> Kurds" (Arm. *manč'* "child, boy, kid") ?!

Min av nivīsī na ži bō ṣāhibrawāǰān,
Balk'ī ži bō biĉūkēd kurmānǰān.

"I composed (this poem) not for wealthy people,
But for the children of the poor".[36]

It is obvious that *kurmānǰ(ān)* here is clearly opposed to *ṣāhibra-wāǰ(ān)* "wealthy (people)", implying "the poor" and is devoid of any ethnic sense.[37]

In any case, *kurmānj*, unlike *kurd*, has no prehistorical background; it must be, rather, a later term begotten, likely, by an Armenian-Kurdish social environment.

ETHNIC TERRITORY OF THE KURDS

The present state of Kurdological knowledge allows, at least roughly, drawing the approximate borders of the areas where the main ethnic core of the speakers of the contemporary Kurdish dialects was formed. The most argued hypothesis on the localisation of the ethnic territory of the Kurds remains D. N. Mackenzie's theory, proposed in the early 1960s (Mackenzie 1961). Developing the ideas of P. Tedesco (1921: 255) and regarding the common phonetic isoglosses shared by Kurdish, Persian, and Baluchi (*-θr- > -s-, *dw- > d-, *y- > ǰ-, *w- > b-/g-), D. N. Mackenzie concluded that the speakers of these three languages may have once been in closer contact. He has tried to reconstruct the alleged Persian-Kurdish-Baluchi linguistic unity presumably in the central parts of Iran. According to his theory, the Persians (or Proto-Persians) occupied the province of Fars in the south-west (proceeding from the assumption that the Achaemenids spoke Persian), the Baluchis (Proto-Baluchis) inhabited the central areas of Western Iran, and the Kurds (Proto-Kurds), in the wording of G. Windfuhr (1975: 459), lived either in north-west Luristan or in the province of Isfahan.[38]

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[36] I was not able to locate this place in M. Rudenko's (1962) edition of "Mam and Zin".

[37] It is interesting that in the South Kurdish linguistic area, *kurmānǰ* is used to designate a segment of the tribal elite.

[38] G. Windfuhr himself tries to localise the Persian-Baluchi-Kurdish triangle of contacts in the north-east, in Parthia (ibid.: 465, 467, fn. 11). However, there is no authentic evidence of the existence of the Kurds in the north-eastern parts of Iran, particularly in Khorasan, before the Safavid period and the times of Nadir Shah.

In a later publication, we added some other isoglosses, at least as concerns Kurdish-Persian correspondencies: *-nd- (> *-nn-) > -n- (in detail Asatrian/Livshits 1994: 96, § XX, 3); *-g- > -w-, a typical South-Western phonetic peculiarity (ibid.: 87, § VIII, 3; 101; fn. 16); and *-rd/z- > -l- (ibid.: 81, 97-98, § XXI, 9, 10). An eloquent testimony of old Proto-Kurdish-Persian contacts is the word *t'ēr* "satisfied, replete" in Kurdish, which is obviously an old borrowing from a "Persic" dialect (ibid.: 85, § VI, 1).[39]

The formation of the ethnic core of the speakers of Proto-Kurdish dialects in a predominantly "Persic" environment[40] can be further substantiated by other linguistic evidence. Generally, there is a considerable number of South-Western characteristics in the intrinsic structure of the Kurdish language, which cannot be considered simply a result of mere borrowing. Cf., e.g., the development of OIran. *-ϑr- > -s- vs. "genuine" *-ϑr- > *-hr- > -r-/-r̄- (it concerns also North-West Iranian Baluchi, which has also its "own" –s- from *-ϑr-: *ās* "fire" < *āϑr-). The conditions leading to the appearance of a series of evidently original forms, though few in number, with *-ϑr- > -s-, alongside with "normal" *-ϑr- > -r-/-r̄-, are not yet clear: perhaps, there is more than just a dialect admixture within Kurdish, or mere borrowing from South-Western group. The most symptomatic example is Kurdish *pis* "son" derived, no doubt, from *puϑra-, as MPers. *pus* (NPers. *pu/isar*), but, in any case, it is hardly an ordinary loan-word from (Middle)-Persian. The picture does not even change the fact that we have also (*b/pis-)pōr* < *(wisa(h)-)puϑra-, and that the current word for "son" in Kurdish is *kuř*, from OIran. *kura- (Asatrian/Livshits 1994: § VI, 4a, b).

Almost the same must be said about the transition of the OIran. consonant group *-rd/z- to –l-, more characteristic for Kurdish than its retention, which would have been historically justified for a North-West-

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[39] For the interpretation of the initial *t'-* (vs. NPers. *s-*) one can propose an old fricative *ϑ- as a reflex of IE *k̂-, thus reconstructing a hypothetic OPers. form *ϑagra- (< IE *k̂egro-). It is, probably, the only way to explain the Kurdish initial *t'-* in this lexeme (for all the cases of the development of OIran. *ϑ in Kurdish, see Asatrian/Livshits, ibid.: 85-86, §VI, 1, 2, 3, 4). Indo-European palatal *k̂, as is known, is represented in genuine Old Persian vocabulary by the fricative *ϑ: *ϑata- < IE *k̂m̥tó-m "hundred" (Av. *satəm*), *viϑ- < *uik̂-s "house", etc. Such a phonetic feature appears also in the old dialect of Shiraz (see Windfuhr 1999: 365).

[40] Windfuhr's statement that "there is no evidence that there was at any time... a wide-spread Kurdish-speaking area near Fars" is questionable if we bear in mind the whole corpus of the attestations of the term *Kurd* in Pahlavi and Arabo-Persian narrative sources—even in case of the indiscriminate use of the term *Kurd* and the prevalence of a social aspect over its ethnic denotation (see, e.g., Driver 1921: 570).

ern dialect. In fact, there are only three forms in Kurdish dialects with an authentic *-rz- cluster: *barz* "high" (*barzāy* "height") <*barz-, *bižū* "mane" < *biržū- (on *-rz- > *-rž- > *-ž-, see Christensen/Barr 1939: 395), and *harzin* "millet" < *h(a)rzana-. The last, by that, may be even a borrowing from North-Western lexical elements of New Persian (cf. NPers. *arzan* 'id.'): the "Persic" form is attested in Bakhtiari *halum*, where the suffix –*um* is the result of an analogy with *gandum* "wheat".

At the same time thirteen lexemes in Kurdish reveal *-l- from OIran. *-rd/z- (Asatrian/Livshits 1994: 81, also § XXI, 9, 10).[41]

Thus, the main distinctive phonetic features of the Kurdish dialect conglomeration, being definitely North-Western, were, likely, shaped within a South-Western milieu. Moreover, the formation of Kurdish has, probably, taken place at a far distance from the Caspian region; as we have shown elsewhere (Asatrian 1990; idem 1995a: 410), it does not share any common isogloss with the dialects of the so-called Caspian-Aturpatakan *Sprachbund* within North-West Iranian (postulated by us in the mentioned work), including Talishi, Harzan(d)i, Semnani, Zaza, Gurani, Mazandarani, Gilaki, and the Azari dialects (Southern Tati). Cf.

1) OIran. *arma- "forearm": Zaza *ā/arm*, *harma(y)*, Talishi *ām* 'id.' – vs. Kurd. *a'nīšk*, *balačaq*, NPers. *ārinĵ*.

2) OIran. *auš- (< IE *eus-) "burn": Zaza *vəš-*, *vəs-*, *vaš-*, Harzan(d)i *vaš-*, Takestani (and other Azari dialects) *vaš*, *veš*, Talishi, Vafsi *vaš-*. A very rare base in Iranian (cf. Bailey 1967: 263; Schmitt 1971: 54). Armenian has *atrušan* "fire-place", from a MIran. *ātrōšān (< OIran. *ātar- + *-aušāna). Kurdish and Persian forms for "burn" go back to *sauk- (*sōtin*, *sūxtan*).

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[41] Kurd. *pārzinīn* (*pārzin*) "to filter, strain" may not be original as Mackenzie (1961: 77) thinks; it is an obvious loan from Arm. *parz-el* 'id.' (< Parth. *parz-, cf. Khwarezmian *pžy-/pažiy-/* "to purify, clean"). Kurd. *pārzūn* "strainer, filter" is also an Armenism (< Arm. dial. *parzu/on* 'id.'). These forms are attested only in Kurmanji; in Southern Kurdish we have *pālāwtin*, a parallel to Kurmanji *pālīn* (*pālāndin*)—both from OIran. *pari-dāwaya-. The long –*ā*- in Kurd. *pārz*- is the main indicator of its Armenian origin (Arm. –*a*- normaly gives in Kurdish –*ā*-, and the palatal –*ä*- is reflected as short –*a*-), while as an Iranian form it cannot be justified: *parz- would simply give *parz*- in Kurdish, *vs.* *pard- (in case of *pālīn*), which is regularly resulted in *pāl*-, unlike *pṛd/t- yielding *pir*- (cf. *p'iṟ* "bridge" < *pṛϑu-). This conclusion cannot be altered even if we adduce Semnani *parīžön* "strainer" (with a short –*a*- in the first syllable). An illustrative example of another pseudo-original word in Kurmanji is *šāpik* "shirt", which comes from Arm. dial. *šapək* (literary *šapik* 'id.' < MPers. *šapīk*). The genuine Kurdish form would have sounded as **šavī*, cf. Semnani *šavī*, Vafsi *šey* "shirt".

As for Kurm. *gāzī* (*kīrīn*) "to call", its derivation from *garz- (Mackenzie, ibid.: 78) is also disputable.

3) OIran. **bram-* "cry, weep" (Parth. *bram-*): Zaza *barm/v-*, Mazandarani *barm-*, Gilaki *barma*, Harzan(d)i *beram*, Talishi *bāme*, and Semnani *burme*—vs. Kurd. *girī*; NPers. *girya*.

4) OIran. **kanyā-* "woman, girl" (Av. *kaniyā-*, *kainī*, Skr. *kanyā/a*, MPers. *kanīčak*, NPers. *kanīz*): Zaza *čēnē*, *kēynā/a*, *kayna*, Azari dialects *kīna*, *čīna*, Gurani *kīn(a)*, and Talishi *kaynā*, *kīna*—vs. Kurd. *qīz*, *kač/ĉ*, *kiĉ*, *dō(t)*, *žin*;[42] NPers. *zan*, *duxtar*.

5) OIran. **ragu-* "quick, swift" (Parth. *raγ*, Arm. *a-rag*): Zaza *ṝau*, Harzan(d)i and other Azari dialects *rav*, Talishi *ra*, and Semnani *rayk* (cf. Ossetic *räw*, *rog* "light")—vs. Kurd. *zū*; NPers. *zūd*.

6) OIran. **kata-* "home, house": Zaza *ka*, *čē*, *kaya*, *kē*, Talishi *ka*, Gurani *ka*, Azari dialects *kar*, *kā*, *čār*, and Semnani *kīya*—vs. Kurd. *māl*; NPers. *xāna* (*kada*).

7) OIran. **upa-sar(a)daka-* "spring(time)" (MPers. *āpsālān*, Class. NPers. *ābsālān*): Zaza *ūsāṝ(ō)*, *vazārī*, Talishi *āvāsōr*, Azari dialects *āvāsōr*, etc.—vs. Kurd., NPers. *bahār*.

8) OIran. **uz-ayara-* "yesterday" (Av. *uz-aiiara-* "afternoon"): Zaza *vīžēr(ī)*, *vīzēr*, Azari dialects *zīr*, Gurani *hīzī*, Talishi *azīra*, and Semnani *uzza*, *izī*—vs. Kurd. *duh* (< **dauša-*); NPers. *dīrūz* (< **dīna-rūz*); Tajiki *dīna* (< **ud-ayana-*); cf. also Sogd.*’py’r* /əpyār/ (VJ, 3) < **upa-yāra-*.

9) OIran. **xšwipta-* "milk" (Av. *xšuuipta-*, Parth. *šift*): Zaza *šit*, *sit*, Gurani *šit*, *šifta*, Talishi *šit*, Azari dialects *šet/še(r)t*, and Semnani *še/at*—vs. Kurd., NPers. *šīr* (< **xšīra-*).[43]

10) OIran. **warša-* "grass" (Av. *varəša-* "plant", Aramaic *wrš-(br)*, Parth. *vāš* "fodder"): Zaza *vāš/s*, Talish, Mazandarani *vāš*, Azari dialects *vāš*, and Semnani *vāš(t)*, *vōš*—vs. Kurd. *gīhā*; NPers. *giyāh* (or Arab. *ʿalaf*).

11) OIran. **spaka-* "dog": in the Azari dialects and Semnani *esba*, *esbe*, *asba*, etc.; Gurani (Awromani) *sipa*, etc.—vs. Kurd. *sa* (despite the preservation of **-sp-* cluster in Kurdish, cf. Asatrian/Livshits 1994: 91, §XIII.5); NPers. *sag* (< **saka-*); also in Kurdish *kūtik* (< **kuti*).

12) OIran. **čit-nai-* (a negative particle): Zaza *činyō/ā*, Azari dialects *čini(ya)*, and *čynyh* in Azari *fahlavīyyāt*.

13) An important grammatical isogloss—the present participle with the suffix **-nt-* as the basic element of the present forms of the verb—is observed in almost all the dialects of this inner-Iranian linguistic union.

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[42] Kurdish *kinik*, used in some Kurmanji dialects as a pejorative term for "woman", is an adaptation of Arm. dial. *kənik* 'id.' (*-ik*, with short *-i-*, instead of **-īk*: Arm. *-i-* and *-ə-* give in Kurdish respectively *-ī-* and *-i-*).

[43] Classical NPers. *šift*, the name of a juicy fruit, as well as the same form in several fruit- and plant-names (*šift-ālū*, *šift-(t)arak*, *šift-rang*) belongs to the North-Western (Parthian) lexical elements of New Persian, and its primary meaning was "milk".

Cf. Zaza *bannān* "I bring", *kannān* "I do", Mazandarani *kamma* "I do", Gilaki *duznīm* "we steal", Semnani *xosennī* "I sleep", *vanni* "I speak", *ānnī* "I go", etc.

At the same time, Kurdish has several areal characteristics, which are not shared by the dialects of the Caspian-Aturpatakan group. Cf., e.g., the development of intervocalic *-š- to –h-/-Ø-* (cf. *guh* "ear" < **gauša-*, *duh* "yesterday" < **dauša-* etc., see Asatrian/Livshits 1994: 92, § XIV. 2); using a unique lexeme for "black", *ṛaš* (< **raxša-*), *vs.* Zaza, Talishi *ša*, Semnani *syā* (< **syāwa-*), etc.[44] Also such an important form as the numeral "three", in all Kurdish dialects represents NPers. *se*, while most of the dialects of the mentioned group have pure NW Iran. forms (*hirē*, *yarē*, *hara*, *hayra*, etc.).

Thus, it is beyond doubt that, as was noted above, Kurdish, as a North-Western dialect, has been shaped in a South-Western environment and, what is more important, the area of its formation was situated in a far geographical distance from the Caspian region and Aturpatakan. In other words, the most probable option for an ethnic territory of the speakers of Kurdish remains the northern areas of Fars in Iran, as suggested by Mackenzie. But when did the Kurdish migrations to the north begin, particularly to the territories they currently occupy? And what were the *peripéteia* of this demographic displacement?

KURDS IN ARMENIA. THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW ETHNO-DEMOGRAPHIC REALITY

In all likelihood, the first waves of the northward movement of the Kurdish-speaking ethnic mass took place soon after the Arab conquest of Iran, in the 8th-9th centuries. Possibly, at the end of the first millennium and the first centuries of the second millennium A.D., the Kurds were already in the north-west of Iran, Āturpātakān, and the Northern Mesopotamia, at the borders of Southern Armenia, which is manifested by a number of early Armenisms in Kurdish (see below). Kurdish and the Caspian-Aturpatakan dialect group (see above) reveal a common lexical isogloss, which can be dated by this period of symbiosis (9th-12th centuries), namely the term for the "moon" in Kurmanji, *hayv* (*hīv*) (in South-Kurdish, the "moon" is commonly denoted by *māng(a)*, which sporadically occurs also in Kurmanji). It belongs to a group of words

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[44] The Azari dialects (Southern Tati) currently use NPers. *syāh* "black". However, in some ancient place-names, like *šāmaspi* (the name of a small village near Ardabīl), we see the reflexes of the OIran. **syāma-*. This toponym is derived, possibly, from MIran. **šāmaspīk* (an adj. with *-īk* from *šāmasp* "the one having black horses") = Arm. *šawasp*.

widely used, with the same meaning, in Zaza (*āšmi*, *āsmi*, *ašmā*, *asma*, and *āšmā*), Azari dialects (*öšma*, *ušmā*), and Talishi *ovšim*, etc.—all going back, probably, to OIran. **waxša-/uxšya-māhka-* "the full moon". Among the Middle Iranian dialects, this term is attested only in Pahlavi (Psalms) as *āyišm*. The change of the **-šm-* cluster to **-(h)v-*, based on the Armenian early borrowings in Kurdish (see below), can be dated to the 11th-12th centuries. After that period this phonetic rule was already extinct.

Mackenzie (1961: 86) believes that the displacement of the Zazas from their homeland in Dēlam (Arab. *Dailam*, on the southern shore of the Caspian) to the west, the areas of their present habitation in Central Anatolia, occurred under the pressure of the northward drive of the Kurds on their route to Armenia.[45]

Actually, it is possible to assume that a considerable part of the Kurdish-speaking elements was concentrated at the frontier zones of Southern Armenia (Northern Iraq, Hakkari, southern shore of Lake Van, etc.) already in the 10th-12th centuries (for the dispersion of the ethnic elements labelled by the Arab geographers of the 10th-14th centuries as Kurds, see Driver 1921). Yet, the mass inundation of the territories to the north, including Armenia, by them took place later—starting from the first decades of the 16th century, conditioned mainly by the specific policy of the Ottoman Government aimed at the creation of an anti-Safavid stronghold at the eastern borders of the Empire. The resettlement of the warlike Kurdish tribes was an idea conceived by Mullah Idris Bitlisi who himself coordinated the process in the first stages of its realisation (in particular, see Nikitine 1956: 161 ff.; Asatrian 1986: 168). Nicolas Adonts, in one of his important articles (Adonz 1922: 5), formulated these events in the following way: "The Kurds had not existed in Armenia from immemorial times, but were driven there by the Turkish authorities. The Turks took possession of Armenia after the battle of Chaldiran in the year 1514, defeating the troops of Shah Isma'il of Persia thanks to their artillery, which was employed for the first time. The Persians and the Turks continued to contend for Armenia, but in the end, the frontiers remained the same as they are today. Mullah Idris, a Kurd from Bitlis, who as a native of the country was well-acquainted with the local conditions, took an active part in the military operations

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[45] Minorsky (1932), however, conditioned the migrations of the Dailamites by the demographic processes occurring within Dēlam proper. The Armenian historiography of the 11th-13th century (Aristakēs Lastivertc'i, Asołik, Matt'eos Uṙhayec'i, and Vardan Barjraberdc'i) provides interesting evidence on the active participation of Dailamites (*delmikk'*) in the historical events of the time in Armenia and Āturpātakān (see Šaldžyan 1941; Yuzbašyan 1962).

of Sultan Selim... (He) supported the interests of the petty chiefs of the Kurdish tribes". According to Adonts (ibid.), the Turks, unlike the Persians—who used to brutally suppress the centrifugal tendencies of the Kurds—maintained the policy of ceding the Western Armenian lands to Kurdish tribal aristocracy in order to involve their military force against the Persians.[46]

This was, in fact, the real picture of the initial stage of the total Kurdisation of Western Armenia or Turkish Kurdistan,[47] as it is often called now, finally resulting in the extermination of the entire indigenous population of the area at the end of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century.

The term *Kurd* was unknown to 5th century Armenian historiography, as well as to the authors of the 7th-8th centuries (Sebēos, Łevond); and even the chroniclers of the 10th-11th centuries, Hovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i, Asołik, Tovmay Arcruni, and Aristakēs Lastivertc'i, do not have any information about the Kurds. In the case of the appearance of any, even a tiny number of the Kurds in Armenia, the Armenian historiographers—very sensitive towards alien ethnic elements—surely would have recorded them in one form or another, even without any political event connected with them or in which Kurds were involved.[48] The Kurds (termed as *k'urd*, *k'urt'*, or *mark'*), started to appear in Armenian historical annals later—since the 12th-14th centuries—mostly in the specimens of a minor literary genre, in the colophons of manuscripts reflecting political events of a local character (see above).

On the whole, there are no written sources on the early history of Kurdish-Armenian relations, particularly concerning the gradual movement of the Kurds to the north. However, linguistic materials offer a bulk of reliable data, making it possible to reconstruct a more or less

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[46] On the expansion of the Kurds in Armenia, see also Nikitine 1956: 161: "Les Kurdes s'emparaient ainsi, peu à peu de certaines parties du royaume arménien qui finit son existence au XIe siècle. Dans beaucoup d'endroits, les Kurdes ne sont donc pas en Arménie sur leur sol natal, mais il s'agit là d'un processus historique qui se poursuivit depuis de longs sièles" (for some notes on this issue, see also Mokri 1970: 103-104).

[47] The beginning of this process may be illustrated by the case of the Rozhikis, a tribal confederation in Bitlis, whose language (or, rather, that of a group of them), as recorded by the 17th century Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi, represented an admixture of Armenian, Turkish, and Kurdish words (see above, sub "Literature").

[48] The alleged presence in the 10th century of the Rāvandī tribe in Dvin, who are said to have been the ancestors of the famous Ṣalāḥ-al-dīn al-Ayyūbī, has, most likely, been a sporadic and insignificant demographic phenomenon, having left no trace in the Armenian annals of the time.

clear account of the historical realities of the period—at least as a general outline.

LINGUISTIC DATA AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

As is well-known, contacts of peoples are usually mirrored in linguistic evidence of various types: lexical borrowings, change of phonetic systems, adoption of new grammatical forms (very often syntactic constructions), etc. However, for a historian, the lexical aspect of linguistic interrelations is of main interest.

The entire history of Armenian-Kurdish relations—from its very beginning in the 11th-12th centuries up to the 19th century—is consequently reflected in the lexicon of Kurdish (Kurmanji) in accordance with the intensivity and character of the contacts. From the early period we have only 13 reliable Armenian loanwords in Kurmanji—6 plant-names and 7 appellativa (see below); but the later epoch of Kurdish-Armenian common history (16th-19th centuries)—the time of most intensive contacts—is manifested by more than 300 items (for a comprehensive study of the Armenian vocabulary in Kurdish, see Asatrian, "Kurdish and Armenian", forthcoming). The Armenian words of Kurdish origin (only in Western Armenian dialects) are relatively few in number—not more than 100, and all of them, except one, belong to the later period (see Asatrian 1992).

The single Kurdism of the earlier period in Armenian, *gyäv* "step, pace" (< Kurd. *gāv/w* < OIran. **gāman-*), is found in the southern dialects of Kurmanji (Shatakh, Van, and Moks), in the area around Lake Van. The factor indicating its old age is the quality of the radical vowel. Kurdish long *–ā-* is regularly featured in Kurdish loan-words as *-a-*, while the short *-a-* is reflected as *-ä-* (cf., e.g., Arm. dial. *kavər* < Kurd. *kāvir* "two year old ram", but *bäž(n)* < Kurd. *bažn* "stature", etc.). This phonetic rule has no exclusions. The palatalisation of *–ä-* in the above form can be interpreted only in terms of the "Acharian's Law", which was in effect during the 11th-12th centuries (Ačařean 1952: 16-27; also Muradyan 1973). The "Law" purports that in the position after the voiced plosives (from the Classical Arm. respective phonemes), or voiceless plosives (again from the corresponding Class. Arm. voiced plosives), *-a-* has been palatalised in Armenian dialects, mostly in those near Lake Van. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that Kurd. *gāv* could become *gyäv* in Armenian—instead of expected **gav*—only during the period of the 11th-12th centuries when the "Acharian's Law" was a functioning phonetic rule.

The evidence obtained from the above analysis enables us to define the relative chronology of an important phonetic peculiarity of Kurdish, namely the change of the OIran. intervocalic *-m- to -v-/-w- (see above), which helps, in its turn, to date a number of early Armenisms in Kurdish (see below). This phonetic rule was markedly active in the period following the Arab conquest of Iran until, at least, the 12th century (as we see in Kurd. *gāv* > Arm. *gyäv*), and influenced all Arabic loan-words entering Kurdish during that period (cf. *hav/wīr* "dough" < Arab. *xamīr*, *ǰīvāt* "assembly" < Arab. *ǰamā'at*, *tawāw* "full, complete" < Arab. *tamām*, etc.). The Arabic or Armenian elements borrowed after the 12th century retain intervocalic *-m-* (cf. Kurd. *tamām* < Arab. *tamām*; *ǰamidīn* "suffer from the cold" < Arab. *ǰamada-* "to freeze"; *kām* "an agricultural instrument" < Arm. *kām(n)*; *āmān* "vessel, pot" < Arm. *aman*, etc.). The same concerns Persian loan-words (cf. Kurd. *zavī* "sown field, soil, land"[49] < NPers. *zamīñ*; *zīv* "silver" < NPers. *sīm*; etc.). There are also doublets of the original (or early borrowings from NPers.?) and later Persian variants of the same lexeme in Kurdish (cf., e.g., *siwūrī*, *sivōra* "squirrel", *vs. simōra* 'id.', MPers., NPers. *samōr* "sable (marten)", Arm. *samoyr* 'id.'; *xāv* "unripe", *vs. xām*, NPers. *xām*; etc.). Doublets of Armenian loan-words of earlier and later periods, too, can be found in Kurdish (e.g., *gōv/gōm*; see below). It is highly symptomatic that among the Turkic borrowings in Kurdish no single form revealing the *-m- > -v-/-w-* change is seen, which means that the Kurds came into closer contacts with the Turks in a period when this phonetic rule was already extinct, i.e. in a time-span following the 12th century.

The Names of Wild Flora

A considerable number of lexical items (35 units) in the corpus of Armenisms in Kurmanji constitute the plant-names, borrowed either through direct contacts or as a result of the assimilation of the local population into the Kurdish new-comers. Actually, these terms represent, as a whole, a lion's share in the botanical nomenclature of Northern Kurmanji. And in this respect, we come to an interesting finding. The names of wild plants, unlike those of cultural herbs, are an inseparable part of the physical and linguistic landscape of a given locality, like place-names, oronyms, and hydronyms. It is not accidental that in most living languages of the world the names of plants—mainly wild

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[49] The original Kurdish synonyms of this form are *xwalī*, *xōl* (< OIran. **hwarda-*) and *āx* (< **āika-*; cf. Av. *āi*, Parth. *āyāg*, and NPers. *xāk*).

growing ones—belong to the substrate vocabulary.[50] Nothing can be more effective for defining the ancient ethno-linguistic affiliation of a given territory than the study of the toponymical system and the names of wild flora in the language of its inhabitants.[51]

The majority of Armenian phytonyms found in Kurmanji can be dated back to not earlier than the 16th century. Only six names are manifestly of older age.

a) Early Borrowings

1) *tirī* is the only term for "grapes" in Kurmanji dialects, attested also in Sorani, *tirē*, though, in the latter, with a limited usage compared to *hangūr*.—From Arm. **təli*; cf. Middle Armenian *toli* (*toyli*) 'vine'. The modern dialects of Armenian use this term in the meaning of "bottle gourd (Lagenaria sp.)", from which we have *tōlik* "mallow" (see the next item). Arm. *toli* is, likely, a substrate word; cf. Urartian *uduli* "grapes" (Łap'anc'yan 1961: 330); also ^(GIŠ)*tillatu* "vine" in Akkadian (Mkrtčyan 1983: 35). The Udi *tal* 'id.' comes, probably, from Armenian.

In the 16th-17th centuries, *tirī* was already a widespread lexeme in Kurmanji, attested also in the poetry of Faqiye Tayran, a prominent author of that time (see above). Cf.: *Bihōrīya li ta **tirī** (ži) razī*—"(The time of taking) grapes from the vine is (already) passed for you" (Rudenko 1965: 49). Therefore, it seems the word to have been borrowed before the mentioned period, at least one or two centuries earlier.

2) *tōlik* "mallow (Malva sylvestris L.)"; also in the Southern dialects *tōlaka* 'id.'; cf. the Kurm. saying: *Mīnā a'rabē ĉav tōlikē k'ava* = "to look at something with greed or passion", lit. "Like an Arab (when he) looks at the mallow".[52]—Is taken from the Middle Armenian *toli* (see the previous item) probably during the 14th-15th centuries, for in New Armenian dialects it has different phonetic manifestations. The semantic aspect, however, is not clear: in Middle Armenian, *toli* meant "vine"—according to a 13th century text, in which it is attested (Ačařean 1979: 416). We can assume then that in the Armenian dialects of the time, from which the word has penetrated into Kurmanji, it was used in other meanings as well, including "mallow" and "bottle gourd".

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[50] For instance, in Armenian, many of floristic names come from the Hurro-Urartian lexical ingredient of this language, or have no etymology at all (see, e.g., Mkrtčyan 1983)

[51] Most toponyms of the former Turkish Armenian provinces are of Armenian origin (except for a part of micro-toponymy of apparently later period).

[52] The Kurds generally believe that the Arabs are great fans of the mallow.

3) *p'inǰār* "a common term for wild edible plants (raw or cooked)"—
a wide-spread lexeme in Kurmanji, also attested in many Turkish dia-
lects, including Ottoman Turkish (Pedersen 1904: 463; Dankoff 1995: 26),
as well as in Georgian.—From Arm. dial. *p'ənǰar* (Class. Arm. *banǰar*) 'id.'.
Lacks an etymology (see Ačaŕean 1971: 409).

The reason why *p'inǰār* is regarded as a pre-16th century Arm. loan-
word in Kurmanji is that it presently has a fairly wide occurrence in
Khorasani Kurmanji in the form of *p'enǰōr* "spinach" (from my field
notes). The main part of the Kurdish population of Khorasan, as is
known (cf. Madih 2007), was relocated there at the very end of the 16th-
beginning of the 17th century from an area covering the Lake Van basin
(ibid.: 15). We may assume, therefore, that this lexeme, already at that
time, had an established usage in Kurmanji with, possibly, two-three
century-long historical background of borrowing.

4) *ānēx* "mint" is attested only in Khorasani Kurmanji (the author's
notes) being, probably, lost in other dialects of Kurmanji.[53]—From Arm.
dial. *anex* (Class. Arm. *ananux*) 'id.' (Ačaŕean 1971: 180). According to
Igor' D'yakonov (Diakonoff 1985: 599), Arm. *ananux* is a Hurrian sub-
strate element: from **an-an-uḫḫə*.

5) *p'āzūk* "an edible herb"; also in Turkish *pazuk* "beet" (Dankoff
1995: 23).—Arm. dial. *p'azuk* (cf. Middle Arm. *bazuk*) "beet"; in Classical
Arm. *bazuk* means "arm, forearm" (Benveniste 1959: 62-72). The tribal
name *Pāzūkī* (see above, fn. 22), already attested in the Šaraf-nāmeh by
Sharaf Khan Bitlisi (Scheref 1862: 328 ff.), is a direct testimony to the
earlier period of the borrowing of this Armenian form in Kurdish.

6) *zīl(ik)* "sprout, scion".—Arm. dial. *jil* (Class. Arm. *cil*) < IE **ĝēi̯-/*ĝī-*
"keimen, sich spalten, aufblühen" (Pokorny 1959: 355; see also above, fn.
22). Its earliest occurrence seems to have been found in a Kurdish
compound, *ǰāǰē-zīl* ("sort of a cheese made with wild herbs"), which is
recorded by the 17th century Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi in his
Seyāḥatnāme (see Safrastyan 1967: 188). The first part of the compound
is Kurd. *ǰāǰī(k)/žāžī(k)* "curds, cottage cheese" < OIran. **γžāračī-* (**γžar-*
"flow (about milk)"), cf. *šār* (*šārē šīr* "spurt of milk from cow's teat") <
*xšārya-.

b) Later Borrowings

The rest of the Armenian plant-names in Kurdish are of evidently
later origin—borrowed, presumably, during a time-span between the
17th and 19th centuries. The list includes 29 items.

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[53] But widely occurs in Turkish dialects (see Bläsing 1992: 28).

1) *āĉār* "spelt, dinkel wheat"; *nānē āĉār* "spelt bread".—From Arm. dial. *ačar* 'id.', Class. Arm. *hačar* "sort of grain". Etymology unknown; probably, a substrate word in Armenian; cf. Abkhaz *ačaraj*, Abazin *hažr-rü*, Laz *čuari*—all denoting "grain".

2) *čīl(ō)*, *ǰīl(ik)* "bough, branch, scion".—Arm. dial. *čil*, *ǰil* "reed; vine; sinew". Arm. *čil* is from Georg. *čili*, contaminated subsequently with the original Arm. *ǰil/ł* "sinew, tendon" (< IE *$g^u islo$-).

3) *čimērūk* "sort of winter pear".—Arm. dial. *cəmeruk* (*jməṙnuk*) 'id.', a suffixal form of *jmeṙn* "winter", with *–uk* (see below, No 12).

4) *dārēgān* "rye".—Arm. dial. *daregan* 'id.', from *tari* "year" + the Iran. suffix *–akan*.

5) *gīnz* "coriander".—Arm. *ginj* 'id.' (see Henning 1963; Benveniste 1970: 21) with the regular Arm. *-j-* > Kurd. *-z-* development (see below, No 16).

6) *kākāĉ* "poppy".—Arm. *kakač'* 'id.'. No etymology.

7) *kōrēk*, *kōrik*, *kūrīk* "millet". —Arm. dial. *korek* 'id.', Class. Arm. *koreak*. The origin remains obscure.

8) *kuri/īngān* "alfalfa (Medicago sativa L.)".—Arm. dial. *kürə/ingan* 'id.'. No etymology.

9) *māmūr* "moss".—Arm. *mamuṙ* "id." < IE *$m(e)us$-? (Gamkrelidze/ Ivanov 1984: 663-664).

10) *mandak*, *mandik* "kind of edible herb, sort of watercress" (see above, fn. 22); also in Southern Kurdish *mandē*, *mandūk* "type of grass, provender", and in the dialects of Turkish *mandik, mande/o*.—Arm. dial. *mändäk* (also *mandak*) "bulbous chervil, parsnip chervil (Chaerophyllum bulbosum L.)". The etymology is unknown, though there is no reason to separate it from Ossetic *mäntäg*, *mänt*, Balkar *mant*, and Svan *mant*—all meaning edible wild plants. Here also, probably, Arm. *matatuk* "liquorice (Glycyrrhiza L.)", Ossetic *mätatyk* "Meadow Gras, Kentucky Blue Grass (Poa pratensis L.)", and Georg. *mat'it'ela* "Knotweed (Polygonum aviculare L.)". Probably a regional lexeme; cf. Latin *menta*, Greek μίνϑη, regarded by Ernout/Meillet (2001: 398) as a Mediterranean lexical remnant.

11) *marx* "juniper tree".—Arm. dial. *marx* (Class. Arm. *maxr*) "resinous conifer, pine", from Hurrian *maḫri* "fir, juniper" (Greppin/Diakonoff 1991: 725).

12) *māzmāzuk* "a fibrous edible plant", possibly "Adiantum sp.".—Arm. dial. *mazmazük* 'id.', a reduplicated form of Arm. *maz* "hair", with the suffix *–uk*, a general marker of plant-names in Armenian (see Asatrian 1999-2000b).

13) *ōsūzāɣīg* "gentian".—From Arm. dial. *oc'ujaɣig* 'id.', lit. "snake flower" (cf. *oji deɣ* 'id.', lit. "snake medicine").

14) *pôĉik* "rye", or "oats".—Arm. dial. *poč'uk* "type of wild plant", from *poč* "tail" + *-uk* (see above No 12).

15) *p'ūš* "thorn, firewood".—From Arm. *p'uš* 'id.'. The genuine Kurdish terms for "thorn" are *strī* < **sru-* (Asatrian/Livshits 1994: § XIII, 6), and *zīwān* < OIran. **uz-wāna-* (Vahman/Asatrian 2004: 240-241).

16) *sāv*/wār, *zāvār* "wheat-meal"; widely occurs in all Kurdish dialects, as well as in Turkish (Dankoff 1995: 93-94).—Arm. *javar*, dial. *c'avar* 'id.'; possibly from IE **i̯eu̯o-* (Džahukyan 1967: 263-264).

17) *k'ārnūk* "a wild edible plant used in cheese-making".—Arm. dial. *k'aṙnuk* 'id.', lit. "lamb" (*gaṙnuk*).

18) *māsūr* "rosehip".—Arm. *masur* 'id'. No etymology.

19) *sīnz* "goat's beard (Tragopogon sp.)".—Arm. *sinj* 'id.'. The Arm. word must be considered in a group of similar forms in Iranian: Ossetic *sin(j)ä* "thorn, thorny plant", Baluchi *šinž* "bush", Kurd. *s(i)ping* "type of wild plant, meadow salsity", Semnani *šenga* "garlic-like plant", Savei *šang* "an edible herb", Sorani Kurdish *šing* "goat's bird", and, possibly, NPers. *esfenāx/ǰ* "spinach", etc. A regional lexeme, or from OIran. **spinti*? NPers. *esfenāx/ǰ* (Arm. *spanax*) < MIran. **spināk*?

20) *halandōr* "type of wild plant used in food"; recorded also in Talishi *halendōr* 'id.'.—From Arm. *häländor*, also *xələndor*, etc. 'id.'. Most probably a Hurrian word, as the ending shows (cf. Hurr. *–uri/-ori/*, attested in Arm. *xnjor*, *salor*, etc.; see below, No 24).

21) *kākil*, *kākēl* "kernel of a nut, walnut".—Arm. dial. *kakel*, *kakəl* 'id.'. An Arm. ideophone.

22) *sōɣīk* "ramson (Allium ursinum L.)".—From Arm. dial. *sox-ik*(*-uk*) "type of herb" (cf. Arm. *sox* "onion"). The Arm. *-x-* > Kurd. *-ɣ-* change has, probably, taken place under the influence of Turk. *soğan* "onion".

23) *spīdak* "kind of wild plant".—Arm. dial. *spidäk* 'id.'; cf. *spitak banǰar* "sort of edible herb of white colour" (Arm. *spitak* "white").

24) *šilōr* "plum".—Arm. dial. *šəlor*, Classical Arm. *salor*). A typical Hurrian form with the ending *–uri/-ori* (see Mkrtčyan 1983: 33-34).

25) *xāvēzīl(ān)* "rhubarb".—Arm. dial. *xavərcil* 'id.', Class. Arm. *xawarci* (for details, see Ačaṙean 1973: 351-352).

26) *xirpūk* "oats".—Arm. dial. *xərpuk*.

27) *xūng* "incense".—Arm. dial. *xung*, Class. Arm. *xunk* (< Iran).

28) *xīrū*, *hīrō*, *hīrū* "ox-eye, mallow-flower".—Cf. Arm. dial. *xiru*, *heryu*, *həru*, *hir(ik)*—all are the names of various flowers.

29) *halhalōk* "type of red colour berry".—Cf. Arm. dial. *halkolik* "seeds", *halori* "mandrake", *haliz* and *halinč*—unidentified plant-names.

Appellativa

Along with the numerous Armenian loan-words of later origin (see above), as well as the plant-names just mentioned, Kurmanji vocabulary reveals a number of other Armenian terms dating from the 11th-12th centuries (5 items) and 15th-17th centuries (2 items).

1) Kurd. *gōv/w*, *gūv/w* "cattle-shed, sheepfold, sheep-cote, stable"; also Turkish *köm*, *kon* 'id.' (Tietze 1981: 181; Dankoff 1995: 37); Georgian *gomi*, *gomuri*, as well as Ossetic *gom/n* 'id.' (Miller 1927: 397-398; Abaev 1958: 523-524).—From Arm. *gom*, dial. *gum*, with regular Kurdish change of *-m-* to *-v-/-w-* in the lexemes of the earlier periods—either original or borrowed (see above). Kurd. *gōv/w* is found in the southern Kurmanji-speaking area; in the north, the latter variant of the same lexeme, *gōm*, prevails. This lexeme (*gōv/gōm*) appears to be a common isogloss for the entire dialect continuum of Kurmanji, for in the Southern dialects (Sorani), no trace of it has ever been recorded.

Arm. *gom* is derived, most likely, from IE **ghomo-*. S. Wikander (1960: 9, fn. 3) believes that Arm. *gom* and the respective form in Georgian come from Kurd. *gōv/m*, which is, of course, untenable.

2) *dirāv* "coin".—Arm. *dram/dəram/*, with *-m-* > *-v-* development (see the previous item). Armenian form is from MPers. *drahm* (NPers. *dirham*). If the word was borrowed from Persian, it would have been **dirav*, or **diram* (if taken later). The long *-ā-* in the second syllable markedly points to the Armenian source, as Arm. *-a-*, as was already discussed above (see above, fn. 42), gives long *-ā-* in all positions in Kurdish (cf. *āg* "wheel" < Arm. dial. *ag* (*ak*); *āgōs* "furrow, trench" < Arm. dial. *agos* (*akos*), *sāvār* < *c'avar* (*javar*); etc.). The NPers. short *-a-*, as the Arm. dial. *-ä-*, is normally reflected in Kurdish as short *-a-/-ä-/*.

3) *di/urūw* "sign, mark; omen".—Arm. dial. *dərušm*, *dərošm*, etc. (Class. Arm. *drošm*) 'id.', with the regular *-šm-* > *-v-/-w-* development in Kurdish (Asatrian/Livshits 1994: §§ X, 5, XIV, 2, XIX, 3). Hardly from NPers. *dirafš* (or *dirōš*), otherwise the Kurdish form would have been **di/urō(h)* (Asatrian/Livshits, ibid.: §XIV, 2). Another variant of the same Arm. lexeme, *dirušm*, borrowed later, is attested in the dialect of Suleimaniye, Iraq (Mackenzie 1967: 413).

4) *k'ūl(ik)* "hut, shack".—The word is taken from Arm. *xuł* 'id.', with the development of the initial *x-* to *k'-*, during a period when the Class. Arm. *ł* had not yet changed to fricative γ, i.e. before the 12th century (see Ačaṙean 1979: 648-654). Thus, in addition, we can attest that the regular transformation of OIran. initial **x-* to *k-/k'-* (Asatrian/Livshits 1994: §X, 1) in Kurdish was still active in the 11th century.

5) *k'ōl* "female hair necklace".—From Arm. *k'oł* (modern dial. *k'oγ*) "cover, hairnet; mesh". Based on the Arm. dial. *ł* = Kurd. *–l* correspondence, the borrowing, it may be concluded, must have taken place before the 12th century (see the preceding item).

Two more terms—the names of Christian artefacts—*xāč/ĉ* "cross" (< Arm. *xač'*) and *k'ingōx* (*k'ink'ōγ*) "headgear of Armenian monks" (< Arm. *knguł/kənguγ/*) have attestations in the literary monuments in Kurmanji and are still in use, particularly in folklore (for details, see Asatrian 1986: 173-174; idem 2001: 65-66).

<small>CONCLUDING REMARKS</small>

The thorough review of nearly all relevant aspects of the field elucidates a number of important issues concerning the ethnic history, identity, religion, language, and literature of the Kurds, simultaneously expanding the basic methodological concepts upon which further research should be grounded. The linguistic findings and evidence of historical sources—though fragmentary—particularly contribute to a more authentic understanding of Kurdish prehistory and related topics.

The ethnic territory of the Kurds turns out to have been much further south than the present geography of their habitation.

The term *Kurd*, in a closer scrutiny, appears to have been initially a social label, although originating from an ancient ethnonym. As for the ethnonym *Kurmanj* (*kurmānĵ*), it becomes apparent that it must be regarded as a later product emerging from a Kurdish-Armenian social milieu.

The analysis of the extant data—mostly linguistic—creates a solid base for defining the relative chronology and possible routes of the northward movements of the Kurds, resulting, consequently, in their mass influx into the historical Armenian lands—an event, which took place presumably not earlier than the 16th century. The earliest Kurdish-Armenian relations, having seemingly had a character of sporadic contacts, as clearly manifested by the lexical borrowings, must be dated back to the 11th-12th ceturies, the area of encounter most likely being somewhere near the Lake Van basin and to the south.

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