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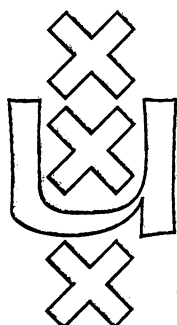
GORANI INFLUENCE ON CENTRAL KURDISH

Substratum or Prestige Borrowing?

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1990

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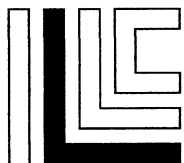
GORANI INFLUENCE ON CENTRAL KURDISH

Substratum or Prestige Borrowing?

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Gorani Influence on Central Kurdish:

Substratum or Prestige Borrowing?[1]

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Introduction
The vernaculars spoken by the Kurds fall in two groups, each again being divided into two main dialect groups. The great majority of the Kurds speak a variety of the so-called Kurmanci or Sorani dialects; smaller numbers speak Gorani or Zaza. Although the latter two dialects are close relatives of the former two, they do not strictly speaking belong to the same branch of Indo-Iranian languages. Nonetheless, both groups are commonly thought to belong to the Nortwestern group of Iranian languages.
A fact of particular interest is that Sorani shares a number of clearly contact-induced features with Gorani; we can then ask what kind of contact was involved. I would like to pose this question against the background of some recent theoretical work on language contact, especially Thomason & Kaufman (1988). These authors argue that there are no *linguistic* constraints on the results of language interference; it is rather the sociolinguistic history of the speakers that primarily determines the linguistic outcome (p. 35). Furthermore, they distinguish two basic types of interference: interference with language shift (traditionally better known as substratum) and borrowing with language maintenance. These two, they argue, have distinct linguistic results. Substral influence need not involve extensive lexical borrowing: it typically starts with phonology and syntax, and to a lesser extent the inflectional morphology (p. 39). In borrowing, by contrast, both languages are maintained throughout the period of interference; lexical items, especially items of nonbasic vocabulary, are invariably the first borrowed elements; more intensive contact may also lead to the borrowing of structural (i.e., phonological and syntactic) elements. For borrowing, but not for substral influence, a prolonged contact between the source and the target language is necessary (p. 41).
I would like to use this theoretical framework to focus on specific *kinds* of questions relating to the language contact phenomena mentioned above. MacKenzie (1961b: 86) argued that the grammatical features distinguishing Sorani from Kurmanci are due to a Gorani substratum, i.e., to traces of the

language spoken in the area before a presumed 'Kurdish invasion'. My main argument, presented in part 3 of this paper, will be that these closer affinities between Central Kurdish and Gorani are best seen not as a substratum (presumably preceding the Mongol invasions), but rather as prestige borrowings of a much later date, probably not before the seventeenth century. This process need not have involved any serious language shift among the Gorani population, as an account in terms of substratal influence would imply.

Because of the relative unfamiliarity of the terrain, I will start with a survey of the Kurdish dialects in the wider sense, including a brief mention of their most salient grammatical and sociolinguistic characteristics. It turns out that there are two distinct senses of the expression 'Kurdish dialect': the one being 'dialect of the Kurdish branch of Northwestern Indo-Iranian languages', and the other 'dialect spoken by people who consider themselves Kurds'. Failure to distinguish these two senses may easily lead to to needless confusion and polemics: ethnic developments should not be confused with linguistic reconstructions. Because of the lack of adequate linguistic and sociolinguistic information concerning many of the dialects involved, much of this paper is of necessity tentative and rather programmatic, at times even speculative. Moreover, the argument requires the combining of purely linguistic data with historical and sociolinguistic, if not sociological, considerations. I realize that to do so is to court disaster, the more so since in none of these areas can I claim any expert knowledge. However, I think that an approach like the one outlined here may be fruitful for seeing things in their proper perspective.

1. Kurdish dialects and 'Kurdish' dialects

Among the dialects spoken by the Kurds, there are, first, what MacKenzie (n.d.) calls the Northern Kurdish dialects, spoken by most Kurds in Turkey, Syria, the northernmost parts of Iraqi Kurdistan, and in a number of former Soviet Republics.[1] These dialects are better known as Kurmanci, or, to Iraqi Kurds, as Badini. The Boti or Cizre variety of Kurmanci can boast the greatest literary monument of the Kurdish language, the seventeenth-century epic *Mem û Zîn*. This literary reputation of Kurmanci, and the fact that the most important political and intellectual leaders of the Kurds in the 19th century (such as Bedir Khan Beg, the last emir of the influential Botan principality centered around Cizre, and his partly European-educated offspring) were Kurmanci speakers, made it most likely that if the Kurds were going to have a literary language at all, this dialect would at its basis; in fact, the efforts of Emir Celadet Bedir Khan in Syria in the 1930s (ultimately published as Bedir Khan and Lescot 1970) to create a written form of Kurmanci in the Latin alphabet were as much a normative attempt at standardization as a first serious descriptive study of the Boti subvariety.[2]

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[1]The most detailed description of the Northern and Central Kurdish dialects is MacKenzie 1961a; see also Blau 1975. A brief overview can be found in Blau 1989a.

[2]For transcriptions, I will largely use Bedir Khan's alphabet, which has become more or less the standard among Kurdish writers, despite certain inadequacies.

However, sociopolitical circumstances, most importantly the total prohibition of both spoken and written Kurdish in the newly founded Republic of Turkey since the 1920s, have largely blocked the natural growth of the Kurmanci dialect into a standardized language for education and mass communication. Only in Soviet Armenia did Kurmanci develop smoothly into a standardized and written language at all; in Turkey, the early 1990s have seen an explosive growth of semi-clandestine publications in and on Kurmanci in Turkey, based upon Bedir Khan's work and, to some extent, upon research done by Kurds in exile. In Iraqi Kurdistan, a few books in Kurmanci written in Arabic characters have appeared, but Kurmanci has never acquired the same status as an official language as Sorani.

The Kurmanci dialects have a case inflection for nouns and pronouns; the verb has a present and a past tense root; there is no passive conjugation, but an analytic passive is formed with the auxiliary verb *hatin*, 'to come'. The most salient phonetic characteristics will be listed in table 1 below. Syntactically, the most famous feature of Kurmanci is the ergative construction in the past tense forms of transitive verbs, as opposed to a nominative-accusative construction in the present tense. The verb here agrees with the logical object, which, though in object position, stays in the absolutive case:

Ez wî dibînim

I_{abs} he_{obl} $see_{1sing.pres}$

'I see him'

Min ew dît

I_{obl} he_{abs} $see_{3sing.pret}$

'I saw him'

In constructions involving the reflexive pronoun *xwe*, which does not receive any marking for case or person, this yields an 'impersonal' construction with the third person singular verb form in the past tense:

Ez xwe dibînim

I_{abs} self $see_{1sing.pres}$

'I see myself'

Min xwe dît

I_{obl} self $see_{3sing.pret}$

'I saw myself'

In some of the spoken subvarieties of Kurmanci, however, this ergative construction is apparently eroding, and developing into a double-accusative, or even a subject-object construction.[1]

Second, the Central Kurdish dialects, also called *Kurdi* or, more often, *Sorani*, after the dialect of Sulaimaniya. They also comprise, among others, the Mukri dialect, spoken around the town of Mahabad in Iranian Kurdistan. In Kurdistan of Iraq, these dialects are spoken south of the Little Zab river.

Sorani was the court language of the Baban court at Sulaimaniya, where the then British consul, Claudius James Rich, spent some time (cf. Rich 1836). This principality emerged at the turn of the 18th-19th century, and in the

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[1] See Bynon (1979) and Dorleijn (1992) for more details.

course of time came to overshadow the nearby court of Erdelan, located in Senna (Sanandaj), which had hitherto been the most important Kurdish principality in the Southern area.[1] In 1919, the British mandate authorities in Iraq decided to develop this dialect into the language for official use and in education, although literary texts had not been written in it before the early nineteenth century (cf. Hassanpour 1989: 66-7). Consequently, at the same time when Kurmanci was being forcibly suppressed in Turkey, the Sorani dialect was introduced by the British mandate authorities in Iraq as the official language of the Kurds there, and it has remained so ever since. Though spoken by a smaller number of people than Kurmanci, Sorani has thus had much better opportunities to adapt itself to the needs of modern mass communication. This development has had problems of its own, however: when Sorani was introduced as the official language of instruction in Iraqi Kurdistan, Badini (i.e. Kurmanci) speakers in Amadiya at first preferred to send their children to schools where Arabic was the instruction language.[2] Moreover, it seems that in the 1980s, the opportunities for education in Kurdish were steadily declining as a result of attempts at arabization by the Baath government.

The most distinctive features of Sorani are the loss of the case system, a passive morpheme -rê-/-ra- and the employment of suffixed forms of personal pronouns, which in transitive verbs are placed between the verbal prefix and the stem; in the preterite, inflection is dependent on whether the semantic Agent and Patient are expressed in a noun, an independent pronoun, or a clitic:[3]

'e- tan- bîn- im   nard- im- ît
pres. you (pl.) see$_{pres}$ 1sing   send$_{pret}$- 1sing 2sing
I see you (pl.)   'I sent you'

êwe- m dît   gurgekan- im dît- in
you(pl.) 1sing see$_{pret}$ wolf-det-plur 1sing see$_{pret}$ 3plur
'I saw you'   'I saw the wolves'

Unlike Kurmanci, Sorani requires that the reflexive pronoun xo- receive a suffixed personal pronoun:

xo-t 'e-sho-y
self2sing imperf-wash$_{pres}$ 2sing - 'You wash yourself'

A minor third dialect group, which is related to the two mentioned thus far, consists of the 'Southern' Kurdish dialects, which are spoken in the south-

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[1]We will see the linguistic consequences of these events below; of particular interest here is the fact that the Baban court poets at first wrote verse in Gorani, but turned to Sorani as their medium of expression in the early 19th century.

[2]Blau 1975: 10; for a more detailed account of the emergence of Sorani as the standard language of Iraqi Kurdistan, see Hassanpour 1989: 96-117.

[3]More discussion of transitive-verb constructions in Kurmanci and Sorani: Bynon 1979; Blau 1980: 69-74.

eastern part of Kurdistan, especially around Kermanshah. According to MacKenzie (n.d.), they shade off into the Luri dialects. The vernacular spoken by the shi'ite Feyli Kurds, who used to live in the urban centers of Southern Iraq before being deported to Iran almost in their entirety in two subsequent waves in 1971 and 1980, apparently also belongs to this dialect group, although its precise position is unclear, as is that of Lakki. Several informants told me that in Iraqi Kurdistan, Luri is still spoken around Khanaqin and Mandali, and that there are, or have been, pockets of Lakki south of Arbil, and near Kirkuk. Little research has been done on these dialects, which lack a written literature; some of them, however, seem to have developed an impressive oral literary tradition (see Mann 1910 for dialect samples of Luri and Feyli).

Next, there are the Gûrânî or Gorani varieties, spoken by far fewer people than either Kurmanci or Sorani. Several distinct dialects of Gorani proper are spoken in Hawraman in Iranian Kurdistan and further south, and right across the border in Iraq; these varieties are most commonly called 'Hawrami' or 'Hawramani' by locals.[1] However, in Iraqi Kurdistan, there are various pockets of distinct ethnic groups speaking dialects closely akin to Gorani (see dialect map). To begin with, the Bajalan, partly living near Khanaqin, and partly north of Mossul, in the Khosar valley. Next, there are the Shabak, also living near Mossul. The precise linguistic and ethnic relations between the Shabak and the Bajalan are far from clear; earlier authors, e.g. Minorsky (1943: 76) and MacKenzie (1956: 418-420) use the terms 'Bajalan' and 'Shabak' as practically synonymous[2], but it seems that they actually should be kept distinct. Ethnically, the two are certainly different, the Bajalan being tribally organized and probably heterodox Sunnis, and the Shabak nontribal heterodox Shi'ites;[3] there are also some linguistic differences between the Bajalani from Arpachi recorded by MacKenzie 1956 and the Shabak samples I collected with the aid of a Shabak from Qahrawa village.[4] For example: Shab. *çaw*, 'eye' vs. Baj. *çam* (but Shab. *ziman*, 'tongue, language' vs. Baj. *ziwan*); Shab. *shime, oshan*, 'you (pl.), they' vs. Baj. *êshma, êshân*. There are also slight differences in e.g. numeral expressions and verbal morphology, but otherwise, the two dialects seem closely related; cf. Shab. *emin zilamê metî*, 'I see the man', *emin zilamem tît*, 'I saw the man' with Baj. *sara yânat matî*, 'tomorrow I'll see your house', and *emin zilamem tît*, 'I saw the man'.[5]
Another important ethnic group speaking a Hawrami variety are the Kakai, also called Ahl-ê Haqq, Ali-Illahi or, in Iran, Yaresan, who have a distinct

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[1]Descriptions of various Gorani dialects can be found in Mann/Hadank 1930 and MacKenzie 1966.

[2]MacKenzie 1956: 419-420: 'All Shabaks... called themselves Bajlân or Bêjwân'.

[3]My Shabak informant claimed that there are three *ta'ifs* (sects) of Shabak: the Bajalan, the Zengana, and the Shabak proper.

[4]For reasons of space I include only a small number of examples from the dialects involved, most of which have not yet been described; a more detailed treatment awaits another occasion.

[5]For more information on the Shabak, see Edmonds 1957: 190ff, Vinogradov 1974, Moosa 1988: ch. 1. For descriptions of the Bajalani dialects, see esp. Mann/Hadank 1930: 395-424 and MacKenzie 1956.

religion and a religious literature partly written in New Persian, and partly in a Hawrami koine. Not all Kakai have Hawrami as their mother tongue: there are also Turcoman- and Sorani-speaking Kakai, and even some speaking Arabic in Mandali, Baquba, and Khanaqin; and, of course, a good number of them (as of other groups) speak several of these languages.

A few samples of Macho (as the Kakai dialect is often called, after the expression for 'I say') from Topzawa near Tawuq may suffice to show its belonging to the Gorani dialects: *min birinc morî*, 'I eat the rice', *min birincim ward*, 'I ate the rice'; *çem*, 'eye', *çemim*, 'my eye'. The past tense personal suffixes are practically identical with those of New Persian, as appears from a sample conjugation. 'I, you, etc. saw a man': Singular: 1. *min piyawyêm dî*; 2. *tu piyawyêt dî*; 3. *ew piyawyêsh dî*; plural: 1. *piyawyêman dî*, 2. *piyawyêtan dî*, 3. *piyawyêshan dî*. The reflexive pronoun *yo-* receives a suffix: *min yom mewînî*, 'I see myself'.

The Sarlî or Sarlû living near Eski Kalak are really Kakais, as Edmonds (1957: 195) surmised, and Moosa (1988: 168) observed; they actually dislike the term 'Sarlû' their neighbours use for them. The ones I met near the village of Sfêye, near Eski Kalak, belonged to the Ibrahimi 'family' of the Kakai; their dialect seems to be an intermediary between Shabak and Macho. Finally, the Zengana, a tribal confederation that traditionally lived Southeast of Kirkuk and near Khanaqin, also speak a clearly Hawrami-related vernacular, witness e.g. *nan morü*, 'I eat bread'; *min nanim ward*, 'I ate bread'; *a piyaw mewînü*, 'I see the man'; *a piyawima dî*, 'I saw the man'; *çam*, 'eye', *çemi min*, 'my eye'; *min ma'açü*, I say', *min watim*, 'I said'. Emonds (1957: 195) calls them 'Kurdish Qizilbash', but local informants claimed that they are Sunnis. Interestingly, one informant also claimed that virtually the entire Germian area was Zengana-speaking until the late 19th century; more recently, the Zengana seem to have become largely assimilated to their Sorani-speaking neighbours. There may actually be still other Hawrami-like dialects in this region: one informant mentioned the Roshkakai dialect spoken near Khanaqin.

Incomplete as it is, the available information unambiguously suggests that all dialects mentioned belong to the same branch of Iranian languages, and also that they are more widespread than is commonly thought. The present-day numbers of all Gorani speakers together are estimated at several tens of thousands (cf. MacKenzie, 'Gurân', 'Hawramân' in EI2), but apparently these figures do not include the groups discussed above. Apart from the Hawrami living in the mountainous range east of Sulaimaniya and Halabja, most of these Gorani pockets are situated in the foothill borderline territory between the Kurdish and Arab areas of Iraqi Kurdistan, where considerable numbers of Turcomans live as well. The northernmost of these pockets, the Shabak and the Bajalan, are geographically not all that far removed from the southernmost Zaza speakers dwelling in the plains around Diyarbakır, but linguistically they are much closer to the Hawramis further eastward. In all, until quite recently there has been an almost continuous chain of separate Gorani-speaking communities on the edges of, and partly in, the area where dialects of Kurdish proper are spoken. Rather than 'some islands of

mountainous territory.. in a Kurdish-speaking sea' (MacKenzie 1989: 541), they virtually constitute an entire archipelago of Gorani islands all the way from Mossul to Khanaqin and beyond. Recent political upheavals, however, especially the massive deportations that were part of the notorious Anfal operations in 1988 (the Baath government's 'Final Solution' for the Kurdish problem in Iraq), and the 1991 refugee crisis, have largely upset this geographical distribution. Many Zengana, Hawrami, Shabak, and others were relocated, deported to *mujammas* (concentration camps), or moved to refugee shelters far away from their original dwellings. It is a rather bitter irony that the government efforts at forced assimilation of these groups into the Arab majority have only strenghthened the sense of a common Kurdish identity among all of them: they have suffered the same persecutions, and the same destructive violence as the other Kurds. As one Shabak informant put it: 'the government said we are Arabs, not Kurds; but if we are, why did they deport us from our homes?'

The nomenclature of this group (or these groups) of dialects is rather confusing, as are the precise relations between the ethnic groups speaking them. Western authors use 'Gorani' as a generic term for all of these dialects, but none of my informants (save those familiar with European writings on the subject) ever used it in that way; instead, the expression 'Hawrami' or 'Hawramani' is used as the collective term by Iraqi Kurds (as well as by Hassanpour 1989), but also more specifically, to indicate the dialects spoken near the border with Iran.[1] Part of the trouble here stems from the fact that locals indiscriminately use terms like 'Gorani' and 'Hawrami' as geographical, ethnic, linguistic, or even social labels (cf. Van Bruinessen 1989: 139-51). Obviously, more detailed and principled research is needed to make an adequate classification of these groups and their dialects; here, I will be conservative, and stick (albeit reluctantly) to 'Gorani' as a generic label, while keeping in mind that few locals use it in that way, and that no conclusions as to ethnic affiliation can be drawn from it. At present, the Gorani speakers think of themselves as Kurds, even though they are aware of speaking dialects which are not mutually comprehensible with Kurmanci or Sorani, and in some cases, of having a dinstinct religious and cultural tradition (cf. Edmonds 1957: 10). Confusion as to whether the Goran are actually *distinct* from the Kurds may easily arise from the abovementioned ambiguity.

An interesting point to note is that many (though by no means all) Gorani speakers, especially those in Iraq, seem to be related to one of the various heterodox (*Ghulât*) sects that developed out of various Sufi orders, and in combination with the struggle between the Sunni Ottoman empire and Shi'ite Safavid Persia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Both my Shabak and my Zengana informant claimed that all members of their respective ethnic groups were orthodox Sunnites; the Shabak, however, was unable - or unwilling - to say what his *madhhab* (branch) was, protesting that 'we are all muslims anyway'. According to Edmonds (1957: 195),

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[1]Mann/Hadank 1930 and MacKenzie 1966 use 'Hawramani' in this more restricted sense.

however, the Shabak as well as the Zengana are in fact Kurdish Qizilbash, that is, descendants from the (partly Turcoman) heterodox shi'ite tribes that migrated in the East of the Ottoman empire, and in Safavid Persia, up till the seventeenth century.[1] Likewise, the Kakai are adherents of a heterodox faith that seems to have developed out of an orthodox Sufi order with an ever-increasing amount of veneration for Ali, the nephew of the prophet.[2] As said, many, though not nearly all, Hawramani speakers are Ahl-ê Haqq. We will return below to the significance of this.[3]

This group of dialects, like the next one, is grammatically quite distinct from the ones mentioned thus far, and not mutually comprehensible with any of them. It shares some morphological features with the Southern and Central dialects, but as we will see in §3, these common features are borrowings; apart from these, Gorani is quite distinct from its neighbours. Unlike Sorani, for example, it has maintained a case system.

The Hawrami dialect was the court language at the Kurdish principality of Erdelan, which flourished in the 17th and especially the 18th century.[4] As said, a Gorani koine was also used as the written medium of the epic and lyric poetry at the court, of many of the religious texts of the Ahl-ê Haqq living in the area, and of popular ballads sung at the court and outside (see Soane 1921; Minorsky 1920, 1943).[5] As said, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Erdelan court was eclipsed by the nearby Baban court centered at Sulaimaniya, the poets of which had until then mostly written in the prestigious Gorani dialect, but from the early 1800s on wrote in Sorani, which then rose considerably in status. Nowadays, Gorani is a mere shadow of its past: it is largely spoken by impoverished and isolated peasants, and has practically become extinct as a literary dialect; for as far as I know, only one poet, Sayyid Tahir Hashemi, has written Gorani poetry in recent years; his *Diwan* was published in Mahabad (Iran) shortly after his death in 1991. However, the Pahlavi government of Iran did stimulate the use of Gorani in mass communication, and in the late 1950s started broadcasting radio programs in this dialect, apparently in an effort to sow discord among its Kurdish citizens (see Hassanpour 1989: 258); the Iraqi government, for similar reasons, also started broadcasting in Gorani in 1975 (ibid., p. 271).[6]

Finally, there are the varieties of Zaza, some of which are also called Dumilî or Dimilî. These are spoken in the northwesternmost part of Kurdistan, in

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[1]My informants' claims may have been instances of *taqiyya*, the dissimulation of one's real faith which is allowed among shi'ites and other sects.

[2]For more information on the Kakai religion, see Edmonds 1957: 190 ff; 1969; Minorsky 1920.

[3]See Sohrweide (1965) and Mazzaoui (1972) for a more detailed account of the historical developments concerning the islamic Sufi orders, and the Qizilbash and other heterodox groups that developed from them; cf. Moosa (1988) for detailed, if uncritical, information on the various *ghulât* sects.

[4]For more detailed historical information on the Erdelan court, see Nikitine 1922 and the lemma 'Senna' in EI1 by the same author.

[5]Even today, *gorani* is the Sorani and Hawramani word for 'song', whereas Kurmanci uses *stran*.

[6]According to Hassanpour, Western theories stating that Gorani is not a Kurdish dialect and that Gorani speakers are not Kurds, were a major source of inspiration for the Iranian government policy.

the triangle between Sivas, Bitlis, and Diyarbakır.[1] Interestingly -and confusingly-, Zaza speakers in Dersim (present-day Tunceli) call their own tongue *Kirmancî*, and the local Kurmanci dialect *Herewere* (the Kurmanci imperative 'come-go') or *Kurdasî*; Dersimî Zaza is also called *So-bê* ('come-go' in Zaza) by local Kurmanci speakers. Mann and others have explained 'Dimilî' as a metathesis of 'Dailamî', which, they claim, suggests that the Zazas originate from the Dailam region near the Caspian Sea; however, I have not heard any Zaza from Dersim or further East refer to his native tongue as 'Dumilî' or 'Dumilkî' (cf. Van Bruinessen 1989a: 455 n16).

Zaza is marked off from the neighbouring Kurmanci dialects by a number of phonetic differences (see table 1 below), and morphological features like a passive morpheme *-ye-*, a present suffix *-an-/-n-*, which is unlike the imperfective prefixes of the Kurmanci, Sorani and Gorani dialects (*di-*, *'e-*, and *ma-* or *mi-* respectively), and probably a morphological borrowing from Armenian (cf. Mann/Hadank 1932: 32-5). Thus in the Siverek dialect we have *o kisheno*, 'he kills', and passive *o kishyeno*, 'he is killed' as opposed to Kurmanci *ew dikuje*, 'he kills' and *ew tê kushtin*, 'he is killed' (lit. 'he comes to killing'). Another morphological borrowing from Armenian is the negative prefix *çi-*, which strengthens the negative form of the copula, *nû/nyo*, thus yielding *çinyo*, 'is not'. On the whole, Zaza seems to have undergone a relatively strong influence from Armenian, which was spoken in the northernmost parts of the area now almost exclusively inhabited by Kurds up till the early 20th century.[2]

The Zaza dialects are not a monolithic whole; among them, important dialectal differences appear, not only in phonetics (e.g the Dersimi *s* as opposed to *sh* in all other varieties), but also in morphology; for example, the personal pronoun systems diverge significantly. It must likewise be stressed that the Zaza-speaking areas are by no means monolingually so. For example, of the 127 tribes in the Dersim region listed by Dersimi (1952), 90 are Zaza- and 37 Kurmanci-speaking. Early authors writing on Zaza, such as Alfred von le Coq and the Armenian monk Antranig, claimed that most Zaza speakers also knew Kurmanci, and that in fact, among the Kurds of this region, Kurmanci was the lingua franca for trade and other contacts (quoted in Mann/Hadank 1932: 20).[3] When nowadays speakers of both varieties find themselves together, Turkish is the language most likely to be used as the common medium of conversation.

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[1] Müller 1864 was the first attempt at a description of the 'Zaza dialect of the Kurdish language'; see Mann/Hadank 1932 for a description of the dialects of Siverek and Kôr (near present-day Bingöl), and Todd 1985 for an analysis based on a single speaker from Siverek.

[2] See Asatrian & Gevorgian 1988; this kind of language contact is still very much an underinvestigated terrain, however.

[3] I have repeatedly come across a present-day variety of this bilingualism among Kurds in European exile: they had grown up speaking Zaza, but after receiving education in Turkish, they had practically lost the habit of speaking their native tongue. Once in Europe, they learned Kurmanci, which they saw as the Kurdish lingua franca, for communication with their fellow Kurds. Another reflection of this difference in status may be the often-heard remark that Zaza speakers learn Kurmanci more easily than vice versa.

Some final sociolinguistic remarks: Zaza is not exclusively spoken by nontribal Kurds, as becomes clear from Dersimi (1952), who, as said, mentions no less than 90 Zaza-speaking tribes.[1] There is no indication that these Zazaophone tribes of Dersim were originally non-tribal peasants (nor, incidentally, that they have been in the area for longer than the Kurmanci-speaking ones). In short, Zaza is, and for as far as we can tell has at all times been, spoken by tribal (semi-) nomads and by nontribal peasants alike. There is also an important link between the Zaza dialects and heterodox Islam, as with Gorani: a fair number of Zaza speakers, particularly in the Tunceli region, are Alevis, i.e. heterodox Shi'ites; but the Zaza speakers in other regions (e.g. Siverek, Diyarbakır, and Bingöl) are mostly orthodox Sunnis.[2] Nevertheless, the link between Zaza and heterodox religion is significant, as are the similarities between the Alevi and the Ahl-ê Haqq faiths (cf. Van Bruinessen 1989a: 139-51).

Zaza has practically no written literary tradition: the earliest specimens of written Zaza sources are two *mawlûds* written in the Arabic alphabet, which were published in the early 20th century, one of them in 1930 in Damascus; all earlier grammatical studies concentrate on the spoken language. The first serious attempts at creating a Zaza variety fit for purposes of mass communication appeared in the review *Tirêj* in the late 1970s. After three issues, however, this review was banned in 1980. Since then, a small number of authors have published poetry, short stories, and essays in exile periodicals such as *Hêvî* and *Berbang* that also contain texts in Kurmanci and Sorani, and more recently in magazines exclusively written in Zaza, like *Piya* and *Rashtiye*, which espouse a specifically Zaza nationalist feeling (and a demand for a separate 'Zazaistan'); but these probably reach a small audience only. The most important contemporary Zaza author is Malmîsanij, now living in Sweden, who regularly contributes poetry and prose texts to various periodicals; in 1987 he also published a Zaza-Turkish dictionary.

In conclusion, it seems safe to say that Zaza is not very likely to become a widespread medium of writing and education, although the increased self-awareness of Zaza speakers, and the growing numbers of cassette tapes with music sung in Zaza (by vocalists like Yılmaz Çelik, Kadri Karagöz, and on occasion even Shivan) may contribute to its survival as a spoken language in mass communication.

2. Genetic and other relations between the Kurdish dialects

We have given a brief overview of the most important linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of all Kurdish dialects. How are the dialects or dialect groups sketched above related to each other, and to the other Indo-Iranian languages? To give an idea of the genetic relations among them, I have

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[1]Martin van Bruinessen (personal communication) informs me that the Zaza tribes do not practice long-distance migration like Kurmanci-speaking tribes such as the Alikan or the Milli. Transhumance is standard among them.

[2]Bumke 1989 and Van Bruinessen 1989b: 614 claim that Kurdish Alevis consider themselves ethnically one with Turcophone Alevis rather than with Sunni Kurds, whether Zaza or Kurmanci.

listed their most important phonetic traits in table 1 below, which basically summarizes Blau 1989a, b.[1]

Table 1. Some isoglosses of Western Iranian languages

Old Iranian	New Persian	Kurmanci	Sorani	Gorani	Zaza
*hw-	kh-	xw-/xo-	xo-	w-	w-
	khord- eat	xwar-	xward-/xo-	ward-	werd-
*j	z	j	j	j	c
	zen-woman	jin	jin	jenî	cenî
*z	d	z	z	z	z
	dân- know	zan-	zan-	zan-	zan-
*Vm, *-sm,	-m	-v/-w	-w	-m	-m
*-xm	nâm- name	nav	naw	nâmî	nam

The table shows that Kurmanci and Sorani clearly belong to the Northwestern group of the Iranian languages, as they do not share some of the most conspicuous features that set the Southwestern languages apart already at the stage of Old Persian, especially OIr. z- developing into d-, and the more recent development of OIr. j- into NP z- (a related form dz- does occur in some Dersim subvarieties of Zaza, but it is clearly an instance of a recent process, specific to these dialects, of palatalized fricatives and affricates losing their palatalization).

In all, although Kurdish proper contains some Southwestern elements (MacKenzie 1961b: 79, 86), on the whole it is rather distinct from Southwestern languages like New Persian (cf. Blau 1989b: 329). The table also indicates that Zaza and Gorani, although equally unambiguously part of the Northwestern group, are quite distinct from the other two dialects, and resemble each other closely. Phonologically, the most clearly distinguishing characteristics of these dialects are the development from Indo-Iranian *hw- into w-, and *b- into v-/w-; morphologically they are set apart from Kurdish proper and New Persian alike, e.g., by the use of waç- (Gorani) or va- (Zaza) stems, rather than Km. bêj-/got-, Sor. gut-/lê- or NP goft- , for the verb 'to say'. This dovetails well with the often-heard observation that Zaza and Gorani speakers can mutually understand each other far more easily than speakers of Zaza and Kurmanci, or Gorani and Sorani. However, the differences between Gorani and Zaza should not be overlooked (cf. Mann & Hadank 1930: 65-6; 1932: 24-6): for example, most Gorani dialects have present tense prefix mi-/ma-, whereas we saw that Zaza has a suffix -an-.

Other than MacKenzie (1961b), I have used phonological isoglosses only, as many morphological traits have apparently been borrowed in various

directions. However, even the phonological data are not unambiguous. An indication of this is the reflexive pronoun, which hardly seems a likely candidate for a recent borrowing, among the different Gorani varieties. It appears as *hê* in Shabak, *yo* in Macho, *wê* in Byara and *we* in Tawêla Hawrami, everywhere with a suffixed personal pronoun (as a comparison: the reflexive is *kho* or *khwe* in Sorani and Kurmanci, *kho* in Zaza, and *khod* in New Persian; only in Sorani and New Persian does it receive a personal suffix). Morphological factors have probably interfered with regular phonological developments here. Likewise, the Gorani dialects, while clearly distinct from New Persian, feature a present indicative prefix *mi-/me-* similar to New Persian *mî-*, and similar enclitic personal pronouns, which are employed in possessive constructions and in verbal inflection (e.g. in the past tense of transitive verbs in Macho). How these common features came about is altogether unclear at present.

Mann (1909: XXIIIn) was the first to remark that the differences between Zaza and Gorani on the one hand, and Kurmanci and Sorani on the other, are so big that we cannot properly speak of different dialects of the same language; Soane (1921) independently reached the same conclusion some years later. Earlier authors, e.g. Lerch (1857-8) and Müller (1864), thought of Zaza as just one among the Kurdish dialects, albeit one that was particularly difficult to understand for speakers of other dialects; Rich (1836) on the whole tended to include the Goran among the Kurds ethnically, although at times he hesitated, being well aware of linguistic and social differences with the surrounding Kurdish-speaking Jaf tribesmen. Mann adjusted the linguistic picture, and stressed that Zaza and Gorani are not Kurdish dialects properly speaking but constitute a separate branch of the Iranian languages. However, he made this genetic distinction in *linguistic* terms only, and not in ethnic terms,- even though he did notice some distinct cultural features among the Goran. If Zaza and Gorani were considered Kurdish dialects by locals up until Mann's time (and for a long time afterwards), this was because, by and large, Gorani and Zaza *speakers* were unhesitatingly considered Kurds ethnically. In other words, language *in itself* was not a very important distinguishing ethnic criterion, although it could if it coincided with other factors like religion, tribal affiliation, etc.

This becomes clear if we look at the remarks made by early outside observers. The 17th-century travel writer Evliya Çelebi lists Zaza as one of sixteen (elsewhere fifteen) Kurdish dialects in book 4 of his *Seyahatname*; interestingly, he listed the local court language spoken in Bitlis, called Rojikî, among the Kurdish dialects, even though his samples in fact show this dialect to be quite obviously *Turkish* with a heavy dose of Armenian borrowings (cf. Dankoff 1990). Apparently, criteria other than linguistic ones were decisive for Evliya in establishing ethnic affiliation.

Similarly, the Danish pioneer scholar Carsten Niebuhr (1768), traveling in the area in the mid-18th century, passed straight through Zaza-speaking territory on his way from Diyarbakır to Mardin, but did not note even a single time that this terrain contained a distinct ethnic group. As he did not speak Kurdish or Turkish himself, his informants (who otherwise seem to

have been rather meticulous and reliable) apparently did not tell him of any dialectal or concomitant ethnic difference here. In other words, at this time, it seems that Zaza speakers *as such* were not considered very distinct from the other Kurds. In this period, religion was a more significant ethnic boundary than language, but not even this boundary was absolute: Niebuhr (p. 370) explicitly counts the Bajalan, the Lak, and the Sarli among the Kurds. Ethnically, Gorani and Zaza have thus for all practical purposes been Kurdish dialects throughout.

The reverse situation (i.e. a dialect that is linguistically speaking Kurdish, although its speakers do not consider themselves, and are not considered, Kurds) occurred as well. Niebuhr, on purely religious grounds, considered the Yezidis, who speak Kurmanci but often are not considered Kurds by Sunni Kurmanci speakers (cf. Van Bruinessen 1989b: 614), as a separate ethnic group. In recent years, however, it seems that the rise of a secular Kurdish nationalism, claiming among other things that the Kurds were originally Zoroastrians, has led to a more inclusive view of the Yezidis, who are now often perceived as having preserved the original faith, and consequently as being in a sense the 'purest' Kurds. Thus, Kurds from Syria will readily claim in public that they are Yezidi or, as they call it, 'believe in Zaradasht'.

Up to at least the mid-twentieth century, there are no traces of any awareness of a distinct secular Zaza identity. Tribal, geographical, and especially religious factors seem to have been more important at all times.[1] Until quite recently, Zaza was simply considered a Kurdish dialect, because the Zazas were considered Kurds.[2] Much the same can be said of the Gorani speakers. Belonging to a certain tribe, or, even more importantly, to a specific religious group, rather than to a linguistic community, seems to have been the more significant ethnic characteristic; in this, they did not differ from the Kurmanci-speaking Kurds.

The rise of a feeling of common Kurdish identity among *all* Kurds, regardless of social class, tribal or religious affiliation has been a relatively recent development (cf. Van Bruinessen 1989b); and once it had arisen, it was of course not fixed once and for all: it developed in interaction with social and political developments in the surrounding world. Religious and tribal differences persisted for a long time. For example, participation in the great Kurdish revolts in the Republic of Turkey (Shaikh Said, Dersim) was decided by religious factors or membership of a tribe or tribal confederation, rather than by linguistic considerations. In Shaikh Said's revolt, led by Zaza-speaking Sunni Kurds, the Kurmanci-speaking Mil confederation, and the Cibran and Hasanan tribes, participated; but Zaza- and Kurmanci-speaking Alevi tribes actively opposed the revolt: religious and tribal, rather than

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[1] I have come across linguistically mixed marriages in Tunceli, e.g. a Zaza-speaking man from the Kureyshan tribe married to a Kurmanci-speaking woman of the Milli tribe from Pülümür; both were Alevis, however. Endogamy among members of the same tribe (and of the same dialect) seems thus to be less strictly applied nowadays, although it remains among religious lines.

[2] In fact, growing acquaintance with the work of *Western* authors seems to have been instrumental in the rise of a specifically Zaza nationalism among educated expatriates in recent years.

linguistic, boundaries were critical in these cases (cf Olson 1989: 95). In the Dersim revolt of 1937-1938, only Alevi tribes participated. In recent years, with the development of a secular Kurdish nationalism, and under the influence of harsh government policies, these boundaries may have become less significant. In the Republic of Turkey, Zaza- and Kurmanci-speaking, and Sunni and Alevi Kurds alike have suffered the same oppression and attempts at forced assimilation, just as Kurmanci-, Sorani-, and Gorani-speakers alike, whether orthodox or heterodox Muslims, have been persecuted regardless of religious or other affiliation. Likewise, as we saw in §1, Iraqi government policies have helped the shaping of a sense of common Kurdish identity among distinct, but equally oppressed, ethnic groups.

This is just one instance of the general point that not 'objective' factors such as language (in the genetic, linguistic sense), but rather 'subjective' ones, like self-perception and significance attached to such 'facts' (which, as we saw, are open to discussion anyway) are fundamental in determining ethnic identity (*pace* Isajiv 1974). In itself, speaking Kurmanci, Sorani, Gorani, or Zaza (or none of these, as is the case with many Kurds in Turkey) is not a knock-down argument in establishing one's main ethnic identity; it is the *significance* that the language spoken carries for the speakers which counts (cf Fishman 1977). The identity of an ethnic group is determined, and develops through interaction with other groups (cf. Barth 1969); ethnic boundaries are not fixed once and for all, but may be created, destroyed, or crossed at any time, either voluntarily in a negiotiated process of interaction between groups of roughly equal status and power, or forcedly through major sociopolitical events or deliberate government measures.

A related point is that the concept of the *formation* of the Kurdish ethnic group(s) is, on the whole, a more useful one than that of its (their) *origin*. Often, the question of origins is not so much factually wrong as misguided. Rather than vainly searching for, say, the origins of the Zazas, the Ahl-ê Haqq, or the Yezidis, we should look at how these *became* distinct ethnic groups. The processes involved are much better seen in terms of ethnogenesis than of origin: in fact, the literature contains various examples of people or groups of people becoming Kurds by crossing various ethnic boundaries. One example of a tribal group becoming Kurdish at a relatively recent date is that of the Karageç or Karakeçili tribe (also discussed in Van Bruinessen 1989b): this was a Turcoman tribe from Western Anatolia, but sultan Selim I (1514-1520) relocated part of it in the Karacadağı area near Diyarbakır; this part gradually Kurdicised through intermarriage with, and incorporation of, the neighbouring Kurds, and remained Kurds after being deported again, in the nineteenth century, to the area south of Ankara.[1] Apparently, this displaced group as a whole underwent a drastic language shift along with the change in ethnic identity. Another case in point are the numerous Armenians, especially those living in the Dersim region, who in

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[1]Sykes (1908: 472) lists them as a *Zaza*-speaking tribe, but this seems to be wrong: Martin van Bruinessen (p.c.) heard the dialect described as a 'filthy Kurdish', not as Zaza, by locals.

the course of the nineteenth century converted to (heterodox) Islam, and thus became Kurds at a relatively recent date (cf. Molyneux-Seel 1914).

It seems useful, then, to take Zaza and Gorani as 'Kurdish dialects' in a wider, ethnic sense, though not in the narrow, linguistic sense. At present, the speakers of these dialects by and large consider themselves Kurds.

3. Gorani elements in Central Kurdish (Sorani)

As we saw in the preceding paragraph, among the Kurdish dialects in the wider sense, Kurmanci and Sorani on the one hand, and Zaza and Gorani on the other, show clear and unambiguous grammatical differences. However, on a number of points Sorani differs from Kurmanci; as MacKenzie (1961b: 81ff) was the first to note, these distinctive traits of the Central and Southern dialects seem to be due to Gorani influence. MacKenzie lists four cases 'in which C. and S. Kd. appear to have borrowed [sic] directly from Gorani':

1. The passsive conjugation: the Sorani passive morpheme *-rê-/-ra-* corresponds to *-yê-/-ya-* in Gorani and Zaza, while Kurmanci employs the auxiliary *hatin*, 'come';
2. a definite suffix *-eke*, also occurring in Zaza;
3. an intensifying postverb *-ewe*, corresponding to Kurmanci preverbal *ve-*;
4. an 'open compound' construction with a suffix *-e*, for definite noun phrases with an epithet (e.g. *kiç-e ciwan-eke*, 'the pretty girl').

MacKenzie also sees indirect influence, rather than direct borrowing, in:

5. the preservation of enclitic personal pronouns, which have disappeared in Kurmanci and in Zaza;
6. a simplified izafe system: in the Central Kurdish dialects preserving a case system, the izafe became identical with the oblique case morpheme; in the dialects without case, it became a single form *-i*. MacKenzie attributes this development to 'the clash between the two systems' of Gorani and Central Kurdish (1961b: 82).

Because of these common characteristics, for MacKenzie 'there is no avoiding the conclusion that these [Central and Southern] dialects of Kurdish have overlaid a Gorani substratum, while the Northern dialects have to a much greater extent preserved their purity' (1961b: 86). In fact, such a conclusion is not at all the only one we could draw. We could attempt to explain this convergence in various ways: as parallel innovations of a Sprachbund-like nature, as prestige borrowings, or as innovations specific to Kurmanci. At least two of the cases listed could equally well, and probably more plausibly, be explained as inherited from a common Indo-Iranian ancestor: Avestan and Old Persian have a passive morpheme quite similar to that in Gorani (*-iia-*, *-ya-*, and *-yê-/-ya-*, respectively), and the enclitic pronouns of Old and New Persian are practically identical to those in some Gorani varieties. Obviously, conservatism in itself does not call for an explanation, let alone for a substratum, and in these cases the burden of explanation rather seems to lie with the innovations specific to Kurmanci

(loss of passive conjugation and of enclitic pronouns).[1] Likewise, there is no particular reason to assume that the simplification of the izafe was caused by a substrate: it may equally well be due to developments internal to Central Kurdish comparable to the loss of the case system (for which MacKenzie does not claim external causes).

This leaves us with the affixes *-eke, -ewe*, and with the 'open compound construction,- really a rather meagre basis from which to argue for a substratum. There seems to be no noteworthy phonological or syntactic influence of Gorani on Sorani either; however, there is considerable lexical influence. The Sorani dictionary of Wahby & Edmonds lists a few Gorani borrowings, but their list is far from complete. MacKenzie (1966) includes a good number of lexical items occurring in both Sorani and Gorani, but not in Kurmanci; these include specific cultural items such as clothes and tools, but also basic vocabulary items like body part expressions and basic color terms. Remarkable, however, is that many such items also occur in e.g. New Persian (e.g. Km. *kesk*, 'green', vs. Sor. *sewz*; Gor. *sawz*; NP. *sebz*), and that Sorani speakers may employ both the 'Kurdish' and the 'Gorani' item (e.g. *resh* or *siya*, 'black', cf. Gor. *siyaw*),- an indication of borrowing rather than of shift. In numerals, there are some distinct differences between Sorani and Gorani, e.g. Sor. *sê*, 'three' vs. Gor. *yerî*. In short, the lexical evidence is not particularly conducive to a substratum hypothesis, either.

But there are more general problems with an explanation along the lines MacKenzie proposed. One is the apparent asymmetry in the extent of the presumed substratal influence of Zaza and Gorani. Northern Kurdish has nowhere near the same number of Zaza features as Central Kurdish has Gorani traits, even though, on MacKenzie's account, both Kurdish dialects, originally more resembling each other, overlay the original dialects in a similar manner. But then why did Zaza leave no traces in Kurmanci even remotely comparable to the Gorani features in Central Kurdish? Or, if we limit ourselves to Iraqi Kurdistan, why did none but the southernmost Gorani-like dialects leave any traces in the neighbouring varieties of Kurdish proper? We saw that there are islands of such dialects all the way up to the Kurmanci-speaking regions north of Mossul. In the absence of any historical or other extralinguistic evidence, there is no reason to assume that the presumed invading Kurdish tribes that partly subjugated and partly ousted the Zaza/Gorani stratum, faced radically different conditions at the northwestern and at the southeastern edges of their new domain of settlement.[2]

Another problem is the fact that substratal influence is notoriously hard to demonstrate in the absence of sociohistoric evidence (cf. Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 111), this quite apart from the fact that MacKenzie does not

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[1] The situation regarding the loss of enclitic pronouns is actually even worse: these have disappeared both in Kurmanci *and in Zaza*, so an additional explanation, not in terms of substratum, is necessary for this convergence (if such it is).

[2] MacKenzie (p. 86) does suggest that the Kurds first ousted the Zazas and only 'in more recent times' overran the Goran, but this chronology of events seems purely speculative, and not a reflection of any linguistic findings.

make his use of the term 'substrate' very precise.[1] In the case under investigation, we have hardly any information, apart from reconstructions, about the structure of either the substratal or the target language during the supposed pre-Mongol period of Gorani influence. An even more serious difficulty arises if we look at precisely what substrate influence is. Substrata, in fact, are merely one specific kind of language shift through imperfect learning of the target language (ibid., p. 38f.). In the case of Gorani-Sorani, this would amount to a group of Gorani speakers acquiring an imperfect acquaintance with 'proto-Sorani', and this imperfect language then somehow becoming the standard among those having Sorani as their mother tongue as well. Historical evidence for such an event is altogether lacking, except for some hints that in the past 100 years or so large numbers of Gorani speakers have become asssimilated,- but this is a much more recent period than MacKenzie appears to refer to.

Shaky as the linguistic evidence for a substratum is, it leads MacKenzie to the much stronger hypothesis that the Zaza people, like the Goran 'originating from the southern shore of the Caspian Sea', i.e. from Dailam, were pushed westwards by the 'main body of the Kurds' arriving later (1961b: 86). A second, southward expansion of the Kurds then 'led to their overrunning and gradually absorbing all but the surviving Goran'.[2] This view, of the Goran/Zaza as the 'pre-Kurdish inhabitants' of the region being pushed aside or subjugated by invading waves of Kurdish immigrants is pretty much the standard one. Edmonds (1957: 12) holds on to a more specific variety of the same thesis: he believes that *non-tribal* Gorani speakers were the 'original' inhabitants of the area, overrun by waves of 'rough Kurdi-speaking nomads'. However, even apart from the fact that the linguistic data do not seem to warrant a Gorani substratum, we should be wary of making such inferences. Linguistic reconstructions such as proto-languages are purely theoretical notions, and can by no means be equated with actual ethnohistorical developments, at least not without further corroborating evidence from related disciplines such as history, archaeology, or anthropology. Linguistic arguments are just that: linguistic ones, so even if an explanation of Gorani elements in Central Kurdish in terms of a *linguistic* substratum is right, it does not yet entail the presence of a Gorani substrate underlying the Central and Southern Kurdish *population*.

There is no reason to assume that at any time either the Goran or the present-day Central Kurdish speakers constituted a homogeneous or undivided group either linguistically, socially, or ethnically. In fact, there is historical and other evidence pointing to a much more complex situation than linguistic reconstructions would lead us to believe. Van Bruinessen (1989a: ch. 2) has argued that the view of Kurdish-speaking tribes over-

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[1] It may be that MacKenzie did not have any precise notion of 'substratum' in mind, or meant something else with it, viz. his indiscriminate use of 'borrowing' (p. 85), 'substratum' (p. 86) and 'simplification because of the clash between systems' (p. 82) alongside each other. However, it is unclear what such an account would amount to, let alone whether it would warrant the far-reaching historical hypotheses he derives from it.

[2] In a more recent paper (1989), MacKenzie reiterated his hypothesis without any essential changes.

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running and subduing an original Gorani-speaking population which itself originated from Dailam (let alone an entirely non-tribal one, as Edmonds 1957: 10 suggested) is far too simplistic. Neither ethnic group was a monolithic whole, and there are historical sources indicating other processes. For example, Minorsky (1943: 78) states that 'the Goran are mentioned as a warlike *tribe* already in the tenth century' (emphasis added), and (p. 84) refers to the fourteenth-century Egyptian scholar Shihab al-Din al-'Omari, who wrote that after the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Kurds of Shahrizûr emigrated to Syria and Egypt, and their place was taken by another nation *hasaneh/hasano* whose members aren't veritable Kurds." Minorsky conjectures that the term 'hasaneh' points to Gorani tribes replacing earlier Kurdish inhabitants of the area; in other words, if the identification is right, this source suggests the very *opposite* of Edmonds's and MacKenzie's claim.[1] Shihab al-Din further stated that the Goran consisted of warriors and peasants, which runs counter to the view of the Goran as a purely non-tribal agricultural community as well.

There is other historical evidence that the processes involved were more complex than MacKenzie and Edmonds suppose: 1) Rich (I, 201) makes mention of Goran princes with Kurdish tribes under their sovereignty. In other words, the Goran were by no means merely the subjugated nontribal peasantry of the area. The Goran themselves could be organized tribally, and even be the superiors of non-Gorani tribes. (cf. Van Bruinessen 1989a). 2) According to the *Sherefname* (II, tome I: 82), the sovereigns of Erdelan derived from a member of the Merwanid dynasty of Diyarbakır (cf. Mann/Hadank 1930: 20). 3) Edmonds (1957: 190-4) notes that the (Gorani-speaking) Kakai and their religion appear to originate from Luristan. There is thus no need to assume that the Goran came from Dailam *en masse*, or that they originate as a whole from the area south of the Caspian sea.

A general problem with the historical sources, however, is that we must beware of the ambiguity of the term 'Gûran/Goran' (and, by the same token, of the term 'Kurd'): as Minorsky 1943 and Van Bruinessen (1989: ch.2) indicated, 'Goran' may be used to refer to a dynasty, a tribe or a tribal confederation, or even to a social class.[2] Consequently, we must be careful not to mistake one use of the word for another. For example, Butyka (1892: 209) mentions the presence of Goran in the Dersim region, which is far away from the Gorani heartlands; but he clearly uses the expression as indicating a social stratum rather than an ethnic group. It is very well possible that the word *goran* has undergone a change of meaning from, say, the ethnic sense to the social one in the course of various sociopolitical changes,- if it has ever had any single clearly specified meaning at all.

In other words, the picture of a Gorani substratum is unsatisfactory for linguistic as well as sociological and historical reasons. Instead, I would like

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[1] The source does not specify who these 'hasaneh' are, however, nor explain why they are not 'veritable Kurds'.

[2] An informant from Arbil notified me of yet another sense expressed in the proverb 'Ez ne kurd im, ne guran im', meaning something like 'I am neither a town-dweller nor a countryman'.

to suggest that the Gorani elements in Central and Southern Kurdish may be the result of prestige borrowing at a relatively recent date. In so far as there has been a major language shift among 'the Goran' (which is, strictly speaking, a misnomer for the ethnic group as a whole), the observation, made by various local informants, that such a shift took place in the past 150 years is worth considering. The available historical evidence suggests that at least one of the preconditions for borrowing (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 113) was fulfilled, viz. the prolonged maintenance of both the source language and the receiving language in the contact situation: as we saw, both languages are still spoken today. Likewise, a sociocultural background conducive to *prestige* borrowing is well attested: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the court of Erdelan, which had Gorani as its court language, was at the height of its political and cultural influence. Its linguistic influence may as well have passed through literary as through colloquial channels: as said, the poets of the Baban court in Sulaimaniya at first wrote in Gorani; the influence on the spoken Sorani varieties could be due to the social and political prestige of the court dialect in trade and other informal contacts, and to the reputation of Gorani as a medium of a sophisticated literature, often sung in public,[1] which may well have persisted long after the political influence of the Erdelan court had vanished: even today the Hawramis have a reputation for cleverness and superior craftsmanship among the inhabitants of Sulaimaniya. Of course, we must be careful not to see particular sociohistorical circumstances as actually *determining* the outcome of language contact (cf. Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 46-47), but at least this historical knowledge provides a plausible background for the language contact we know to have occurred.

This obviously leaves many problems open: for example, how did the 'islands' of Gorani or Gorani-related dialects in Iraq originate? How to account for the correlation between heterodox religion and heterolingual pockets in Iraq and Turkey? This is not the place for detailed discussion or further speculation, but two suggestive points stand out: first, the 'Gorani-related' religion of the Ahl-ê Haqq had contacts, and features in common, with Alevi doctrines in Zaza-speaking Dersim and with the pockets of heterodox shi'ites often speaking Gorani-related languages in Northern Iraq. And second, these contacts cannot be fully accounted for in terms of common *origins*, as Moosa (1988: 447) and, possibly, Van Bruinessen (1989a: 147-9)[2] attempt to do; for most of these religions seem to derive from the Sufi orders (and, possibly, in part from Turcoman tribes) in the area that gradually became more heterodox in character, and did not develop a fully articulated doctrine, or even define distinct ethnic or religious groups, until at least the fourteenth century.[3] So although many questions remain wide

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[1] Soane (1921) presents some translations from an 18-century anthology of Gorani poetry.

[2] N.B. this section does not occur in the 1992 English edition.

[3] See e.g. Mélikoff 1975, 1982; Sohrweide 1965 for more information. Both stress the heterodox pseudo-Shi'ite nature of the Alevi faith.

open, ethnogenesis and relatively recent contacts seem more adequate explanatory concepts here than origins.
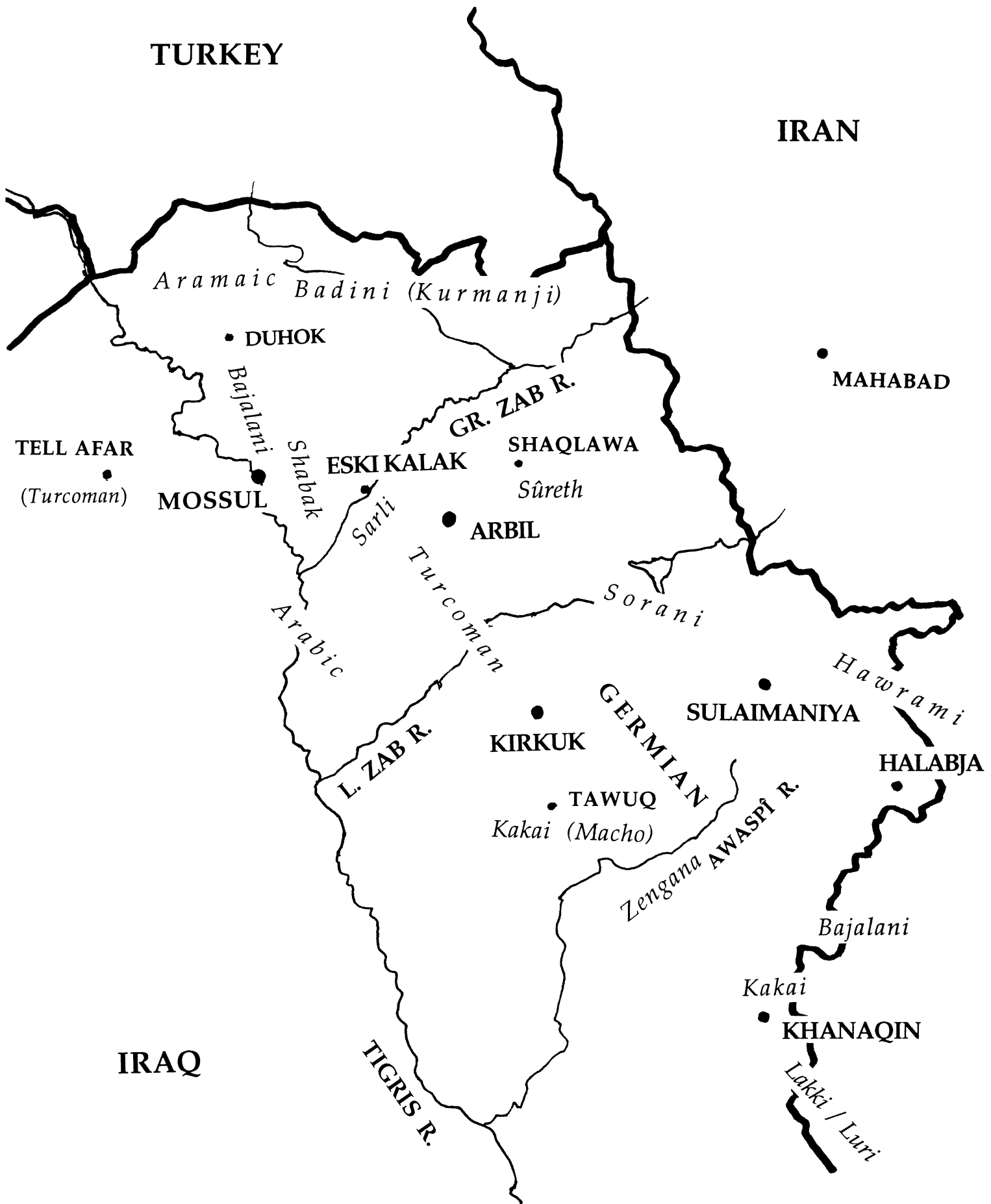
4. Conclusions

The main thesis of this paper may be summarized as follows: the Gorani-like elements in Central Kurdish can be accounted for without any appeal to dramatic events such as a massive language shift among entire groups of Gorani speakers. The available historical evidence, and the kind of borrowings involved (primarily lexical and morphological), fit in well with an account in terms of prestige borrowing over a extended period of time.

Next, we must be careful not to confuse linguistic reconstructions with postulated ethnohistorical developments. There is no historical evidence for anything like a homogeneous Gorani stratum in the population overrun by a clearly identifiable influx of 'real' Kurds, nor does the linguistic evidence give any reason to think so. However, migrations (some of which are attested) of individuals, of tribes, and of wordly and spiritual leaders have been taking place throughout the past centuries, and undoubtedly various cases of language shift did occur. The picture is far from clear, but it suggests that the phenomenon of language contact in dealing with Kurdish dialects deserves more attention than it has received thus far.

Third, it seems useful to distinguish an ethnic sense of the expression 'Kurdish dialect' from the purely linguistic sense. What is a Kurdish dialect in the former sense is a matter of ethnic affiliation that may well change over time; what is a Kurdish dialect in the second sense is a matter of linguistic classification and reconstruction. Thus, Zaza and Gorani are (at present) Kurdish dialects in the former sense but not in the latter. The predominant ethnic affiliation of individual members of any of these dialect groups, or even the ethnic identity of part or whole of those groups themselves develops in a dialectic interplay with social and political events, and is thus inherently instable. We have seen some cases (the Karakeçili tribe, Armenians in 19th-century Dersim) where the crossing of ethnic boundaries has demonstrably taken place, and in some others (the Gorani-speaking groups that gradually *became* heterodox) it is quite likely to have occurred. A further question is whether and how these developments are reflected in the languages spoken by the ethnic groups under consideration, but obviously this is far too large a topic for the present occasion. Nevertheless, I hope to have shown that it may be worthwhile to look further in this direction.

Dialect map of Iraqi Kurdistan

(before deportations)

TURKEY

IRAN

Aramaic *Badini (Kurmanji)*

• **DUHOK**

• **MAHABAD**

Bajalani

TELL AFAR

Shabak

ESKI KALAK

SHAQLAWA

(Turcoman)

MOSSUL

Sarli

Sûreth

ARBIL

GR. ZAB R.

Turcoman

Sorani

Arabic

Hawrami

SULAIMANIYA

GERMIAN

L. ZAB R.

KIRKUK

HALABJA

• **TAWUQ**

Kakai (Macho)

Zengana *AWASPî R.*

Bajalani

*Kakai*

IRAQ

KHANAQIN

TIGRIS R.

Lakki / Luri

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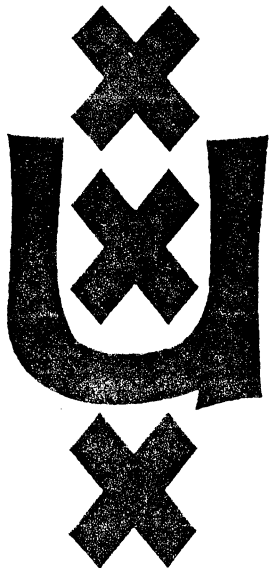
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