ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOKS

Routledge Handbook on the Kurds

Edited by Michael M. Gunter

ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON THE KURDS

With an estimated population of over 30 million, the Kurds are the largest stateless nation in the world. They are becoming increasingly important within regional and international geopolitics, particularly since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Arab Spring and the war in Syria.

This multidisciplinary Handbook provides a definitive overview of a range of themes within Kurdish studies. Topics covered include:

- Kurdish studies in the United States and Europe
- Early Kurdish history
- Kurdish culture, literature and cinema
- Economic dimensions
- Religion
- Geography and travel
- Kurdish women
- The Kurdish situation in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran
- The Kurdish diaspora.

With a wide range of contributions from many leading academic experts, this Handbook will be a vital resource for students and scholars of Kurdish studies and Middle Eastern studies.

Michael M. Gunter is a Professor of Political Science at Tennessee Technological University and the Secretary-General of the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC), headquartered in Brussels. He is the author or editor of 15 scholarly books on the Kurdish and Armenian issues as well as over 100 peer-reviewed scholarly articles.

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To my wife Judy who has loved and supported
me for more than half a century

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INTRODUCTION

Michael M. Gunter

Given the increasing importance of the Kurds in regional and international relations writ large, there is a strong need for this multidisciplinary Handbook of more than 30 chapters that would seek to be a definitive overview of as much of Kurdish Studies as possible. The present purview includes emerging and cutting-edge areas, such as Kurdish cinema, literature, and travel, as well as more time-honored subjects, such as history; politics; religion; women; and country-specific analyses regarding Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, among others. Further chapters on corruption and nepotism in Iraqi Kurdistan, plus a contribution from an esteemed Russian scholar also largely novel to Kurdish Studies in the West, also appear. Two detailed bibliographic chapters on Kurdish Studies in the United States and Europe begin the collection and present the reader with an introduction to the wide panorama of the many authors and institutions now engaged in this burgeoning field.

Although these chapters are for the most part penned by academic scholars and contain reams of arcane details elaborating on important general themes, the Handbook is written for the intelligent lay public as well as scholars and governmental practitioners. Although each chapter covers a distinct subject, they still speak to each other and, taken as a whole, present the reader with a valuable overview.

The Handbook's compiler and editor opens this study with a bibliographic chapter on Kurdish Studies in the United States. Although the United States is about as far away from Kurdistan as is geographically possible, surprisingly, it has a well-established tradition of Kurdish Studies. Indeed, as long ago as April 1928, Sureya Bedirkhan—one of the three famous grandsons of the legendary mir of the emirate of Botan, Bedir Khan Beg (1800c.–1868)—journeyed to Detroit, Michigan, to mobilize the Kurdish community in that famous automobile capital in support of Khoybun's Ararat Revolt against Turkey. Surely, Bedir Khan only made this trip because there was a politically active Kurdish community there to receive him. Little known to even Kurdish scholars, William O. Douglas—the famous and longest-serving Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1939 until his retirement in 1975—visited Kurdistan in the summers of 1949 and 1950 as part of a much larger trip to the Middle East. He shared his impressions of the Kurds and concluded that "Independence Is Preferred," the title of one of the chapters in a book that recorded his overall trip and a predilection that still prevails, despite continuing frustrations and setbacks. Dana Adams Schmidt, for many years a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*,

spent 46 days with the Iraqi Kurds in 1962 (the climax of which was some 10 days with Mulla Mustafa Barzani), concluding that the Kurds were "the fightingest people in the Middle East."

Vera Eccarius-Kelly follows with a wide-ranging survey of Kurdish Studies in Europe, where the field is older and possesses more practitioners. Her chapter reviews the emergence of clusters of scholarly communities that are focused on resisting political pressures from outside of Europe to silence their academic contributions or to frame their work as ideologically tarnished. Organizationally, her chapter offers several subsections to examine Kurdish Studies in the context of (a) historical developments, (b) fluctuating geographic and linguistic challenges, and (c) the rise of ethno-national politics. In all areas, scholars involved with Kurdish Studies have faced tremendous barriers yet managed to prevail by pursuing innovative scholarly projects and networks. Despite the reemergence of constraints related to emergency measures in various parts of Kurdistan, the larger field of Kurdish Studies in Europe looks promising. It is deeply rooted within numerous European institutions and increasingly recognized through newly formed centers of scholarly excellence.

Part II covers early Kurdish history. Michael Eppel examines the former Kurdish emirates or principalities of the premodern era, such as Hakkari, Soran, Baban, Ardalan, Bitlis, Cizire, and Bahdinan, among many others. His chapter puts the lie to the frequently made disparaging claim that the Kurds have never had any institutions mirroring independent states. Hamit Bozarslan presents an overview of 19th-century Kurdistan, which he terms the "long century" because of how it was marked by violent discontinuities, conflicts, and re-structuration. Ahmet Serdar Akturk then views the development of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey from Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) to Ataturk (the founder of modern Turkey). Akturk argues that the modern history of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire dates back to the 1830s, when the Ottoman central government began to abolish the autonomous Kurdish hereditary emirates that had been ruling Ottoman Kurdistan since the early 16th century.

Part III deals with various aspects of Kurdish culture. Michiel Leezenberg reflects on how more than any other work, Ehmedê Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*, a mystical romance or *mathnawî* poem in 2,655 bayts, or distichs, written in Kurmancî or Northern Kurdish, symbolizes and reflects the Kurds' aspirations toward liberation and national independence. This story of two tragic lovers who are not allowed to marry in life and who—despite being buried together—remain separated by a thornbush, even in death, is usually seen as an allegory of the division of Kurdish society by outside forces and of the Kurds' inability to unite among themselves. Hashem Ahmadzadeh discusses classical and modern Kurdish literature. By comparing these periods, he shows how the modern period and the rise of nation-states have caused division in the content and mission of Kurdish literature. He concludes by illustrating that there is a clear relationship between the political situation and the flourishing of Kurdish literature. Michael L. Chyet writes that, although he is not a proponent of combining Kurmanji and Sorani into one hybrid language, there are ways that the two dialects can be brought closer together. This may be considered an important step in nation-building as well as a pedagogical tool in teaching Kurdish, both to native speakers and to foreigners. In situations where one dialect presents multiple forms to choose from, the forms that exist in the other dialect should be considered in order to calibrate the dialects, that is, to bring them closer together. Finally, in her chapter on Kurdish cinema, Bahar Simsek maintains that central to modern art forms, cinema has long been inseparable from discussions of

nationalism and popular culture. The definition of a national cinema has emerged as a discursive tool in the hands of both hegemonic (nation-state) politics and counter-hegemonic (anti-colonial) politics.

In Part IV, two enlightening chapters delve into the economic dimensions of the Kurdish experience. David Romano reminds us that just like the state of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) functions as a *rentier* economy—meaning that the large majority of government (including regional government) revenues come from an outside source (oil or budget transfers from Baghdad, the funds for which are also earned from oil) and flow directly to government coffers rather than coming from taxation or other forms of levies upon the population and its activities. Romano then goes on to examine the consequences of this curse of oil. Employing unpublished and published primary documents from British archival sources, published Turkish-/English-language primary sources, interviews, and a large number of secondary sources, Veli Yadirgi traces the political economic history of the Kurdish provinces of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia (ESA) from Ottoman times to the present. In so doing, he deconstructs the generally accepted thesis that the autochthonous, feudalistic tribal structure and resulting primitive economic conditions basically caused the backward economic underdevelopment/de-development that continues to retard economic progress in ESA and plays such a huge role in Turkey's Kurdish question.

Part V deals with religion. Mehmet Gurses examines the role that Islam has played in the assimilation of Kurdish culture into the more dominant Turkish, Arab, or Persian identities of the controlling states. He contends that the armed conflict between the Kurds and the hegemonic states in which they reside has resulted in Islam's decline in Kurdish identity. Based on recent events, Christopher Houston concludes that there is a major split between Kurdish and Turkish Muslims in Turkey on the causes and solution to the Kurdish issue. Thus, as long as Islamist discourse, in the name of an overt Islamic and covert Turkish identity, continues to deny Kurdish Muslims the legitimacy and necessity of political mobilization based on a defense of Kurdish ethnicity, this tension will fester. Mordechai (Moti) Zaken reviews in fascinating detail the long history of Jewish communities within the tribal Kurdish society, from their reputed origin as exiles by the king of Assyria, as mentioned in the Bible, to their final mass immigration to Israel following the creation of the Jewish state in 1948. Based on their recent field work, Tyler Fisher and Nahro Zagros analyze the esoteric rituals of Yezidi baptism. Given the genocidal Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) attack upon them in the summer of 2014, the Yezidis have transferred from being little more than an obscure footnote in regional history to the subject of important security and humanitarian initiatives.

Part VI deals with geography and travel. Michael Bishku reviews the difficult and changing geopolitics of the Kurds since World War I. He subtitles his thoughts as between Iraq and other hard places, which, given Baghdad's occupation of Kirkuk and other disputed territories in October 2017, seems particularly appropriate. In his chapter on roaming Iraqi Kurdistan, Stafford Clarry muses how traveling to and through any country is often about confronting expectations with the personal experience of meeting reality: flat, desert, hot, dry, or violent. Despite the Middle East's persistent image of pervasive violence, there are extensive areas that are safe and secure; easily accessible and warmly welcoming; unhesitatingly friendly and hospitable; and freezing cold in winter, with rugged snowy mountains, and lusciously green in spring, with wildflowers everywhere, with deep canyons and lakes, and with flowing waterfalls, rivers, and streams. Iraqi Kurdistan,

a major part of northern Iraq, is one such area. Touch wood, no American nor any other Westerner has been fatally harmed in Iraqi Kurdistan during the 2003 Iraq War and its aftermath to date.

In Part VII, Anna Grabolle-Çeliker cautions that such terms as Kurdish women are generalizations that, as will be obvious from other chapters in this Handbook, need to be tempered by considerations of a variety in terms of language, geography, and social class. Nevertheless, as women and members of a nation without a state, they have faced double discrimination, gender based and ethnicity based, in the countries they live in. Politically, the concept of gender equity and co-chairmanship has become established in Turkey's pro-Kurdish parties and in Northern Syria. This has attracted world attention and will, no doubt, inspire Kurdish women activists elsewhere to fight for similar rights. Whether or not the Kurdish movements in different countries move beyond token gestures in their gender politics depends also on the pressure these movements face from the state.

The next four parts deal with country specific chapters. Part VIII presents three chapters on the Kurdish situation in Turkey. Cengiz Gunes discusses the rise of the pro-Kurdish movement since 1990 and what factors have enabled its success in a number of local and national elections since 2014. He first provides an account of the organizational development and growth of the movement from its foundation in 1990 to the end of 2012, when the current pro-Kurdish political party, the HDP (Peoples Democratic Party), was established. This section also broadly discusses the political demands raised by the pro-Kurdish parties and their proposals to reform the existing political framework to recognize ethnic and cultural identities and difference in Turkey, and examines the attempts by the pro-Kurdish political parties to build a greater coalition of pro-democracy forces. The second section discusses the formation of the HDP and highlights the key political demands it articulates and its notions of democracy and pluralism. The final section discusses the factors behind the HDP's electoral breakthrough in the 2015 general elections.

Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya consider the formation and disintegration of Kurdish national political parties in the period between two coups in Turkey: the March 12, 1971, coup and the September 12, 1980, coup. After the coup of 1971, a regrouping took place in which we can see a (first) separation between the Turkish left and Kurdish organizations, with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) emerging from a grouping within the left Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association (ADYÖD) and other Kurdish organizations emerging from a Kurdish grouping outside the left Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations (DDKD). However, the Kurdish organizations were prone to mirroring the tensions and conflicts of orthodoxy and resulting sectarianism of the left in Turkey, with splits over the question of who represented the true path to socialism, the Soviet Union or China (or Albania), which were further deepened by various splits within these currents, notably the split over the Maoist Three Worlds Theory.

Finally, Bill Park analyzes Turkey's Kurdish complexes and its Syrian quagmire. Notwithstanding the relatively harmonious relationships Ankara has eventually been able to develop with at least part of the KRG leadership, Turkey has generally chosen to present itself as opposed to Kurdish demands for self-determination throughout the region, largely because of its own sense of vulnerability, deriving from the failure to constructively approach its own Kurdish problem. Given the generally harmonious relationships that existed between Turks and Kurds up to the very formation of the Republic, it did not have to be this way. Turkey could have evolved as the champion of Kurdish rights throughout the

region or at least as willing to accommodate them. Instead, it is now doomed to oppose federal arrangements in Syria, and perhaps in Iraq too, that surely represent the best way forward for these two troubled neighbors. The problem is at least as much a Turkish one as a Kurdish one.

Part IX examines the scenario in Iraq where 2017 began as the year when it seemed possible that the KRG might actually become independent but ended in the disastrous aftermath of the September 25 advisory referendum. Kirkuk was lost as well as other perquisites, such as usage of its two international airports and control of its border gates, among others. Kurdish disunity, the failure to build genuine institutions of government, and active foreign opposition cursed the hope for independence. Once again, the Iraqi Kurds were reminded of the ancient Peloponnesian War's Melian dialogue that "the powerful exact what they can and the weak grant what they must." Or, as Henry Kissinger more recently put it, "Covert activity should not be confused with missionary work."

Francis Owtram mainly analyzes the pattern of resistance to the situation the Kurds have found themselves in as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement during World War I, using the late Fred Halliday's framework of "the syndrome of post-colonial sequestration" or being legally possessed by another. Owtram synthesizes this with the relevant role of oil and considers the disaster following the advisory referendum on Iraqi Kurdish independence held on September 25, 2017. This stunning Kurdish failure "cruelly exposed" the "limitations of a polity organized around family-dominated politics and militias." Liam Anderson focuses on the disputed territories—a broad swathe of resource-rich land stretching across northern Iraq from Sinjar on the Syrian border down to Mandali on the Iranian border—where Iraq's Arab, Kurdish, and Turkmen populations coincide. At the heart of the territories, both geographically and symbolically, lies the contested, oil-rich governorate (and city) of Kirkuk. Though claimed as the heart of Kurdistan by Kurdish President Masoud Barzani, it is clear that Kirkuk's sizable Arab and Turkmen populations reject these claims and are opposed to being (as they see it) annexed to the Kurdistan Region. Twice since ISIS's attack against Iraq in June 2014, these disputed territories have changed hands between Baghdad and Irbil (June 2014 and October 2017), while the constitutionally prescribed road to resolving the issue through Article 140 has ground to a halt.

Michael Rubin boldly reviews the continuing controversial problems of KRG corruption and nepotism. Although this subject has won him few fans among the Kurds, the KRG's quick collapse in Kirkuk in October 2017 suggests that Rubin's litany of complaints should be thoroughly examined and dealt with for the KRG's own good. Continuing in the tradition of such famous, earlier Russian authorities on the Kurds as Vladimir Minorsky, Kirill V. Vertyaev offers a unique Russian perspective on his country's historical and political approach toward putative Iraqi Kurdish independence. He concludes that Russia's official position is "not only spicy but also ambiguous." On the one hand, this position, voiced by both the Russian Foreign Ministry and the President, boils down to a simple statement that the issue of an independent Iraqi Kurdistan is an internal affair of Iraq and must be resolved within the constitutional norms of this state. On the other hand, active participation in the exploration and extraction of oil and gas in the Kurdistan Region by such Russian giants as "Rosneft" and "Gazpromneft" indicates that these largely risky venture deals concluded with the Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan may well be a significant investment into the economy of a future independent Kurdish state. In other words, Moscow "sits between two chairs" by supporting Iraq's territorial integrity while recognizing the aspirations of the Kurds for a homeland.

Part X deals with war-devastated Syria and Rojava, its Kurdish region. Eva Savelsberg argues that the Democratic Union Party (PYD) is thus far one of the few winners in this Hobbesian war of all against all. Until the beginning of the protests in 2011, the PYD was not only the party with the most sympathizers in Syrian prisons: its members were also, as a rule, sentenced to longer prison terms than the members of other Kurdish parties and were systematically subjected to torture. Since then, however, the balance of power has shifted in favor of this party, which is currently ruling the predominantly Kurdish regions and beyond. The PYD or rather its military wing, the People's Defense Forces (YPG), is not only armed by the United States but has, at the same time, good relations with Russia. Staffan de Mistura, the special United Nations envoy tasked with seeking peace in Syria, would like to have the PYD at the negotiation table in Geneva, and the relationship with the Assad regime is that of a more or less "hidden" cooperation. Savelsberg analyzes why the PYD is so successful—and how sustainable this development will be.

Jordi Tejel adds that if cross-border cooperation between all Kurdish regions in the Middle East is a common feature, the pervasiveness of cross-border ties between Syrian Kurds, on the one hand, and Turkish and Iraqi Kurds, on the other, is particularly noteworthy. It responds to some singularities, such as a relatively small Kurdish population in Syria compared to those in Turkey and Iraq, geographical separation of the three Kurdish enclaves in Northern Syria, and a clear connection between the emergence of a Kurdish nationalist movement in Syria and the arrival of dozens of intellectuals and activists from Turkey to the Levant between the 1920s and 1930s.

Continuing with Syria, Michael Knapp looks at the roots of democratic autonomy in Rojava. The conflict in Syria might be portrayed in a simplistic, geopolitical manner as one between Russian and United States interests, along with those of their allies. Yet this became part of the picture dominated until recently almost entirely by the cruelty of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). While the conflict had its geopolitical background, the war was fought along sectarian and ethnic divisions. With its Neo-Ottoman policy, Turkey tried to play out Sunnism in its gamble for power, while Iran, Syria, and Iraq used Shiite identity as a political leverage. Against this divisive policy, the multicultural and multireligious Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—composed of Arabs, Suryoye, Turkmens, Kurds, and numerous supporters from all over the world—formed a counterpoint of radical togetherness distinguished by female leaders like Cîhan Şêx Ehmed, a commander of the Women's Defense Units (YPJ), which is intertwined with the presence of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and its ideological development in the region.

In the one chapter on Iran in Part XI, Nader Entessar surveys events from the days of the short-lived Mahabad Republic in 1946 to the current situation under President Hassan Rouhani, who was reelected to the office in May 2017. Although Rouhani's election initially disappointed the Kurds, there is now renewed hope that he will yet prove to be a reformer by highlighting Iran's multiethnic nature and viewing it as a point of strength, not a threat.

Part XII, the final section, deals with the burgeoning Kurdish diaspora. Osten Wahlbeck notes how large numbers of refugees have been forced to flee Kurdistan since the 1960s, with the largest communities found in Europe, especially in Germany. However, these communities continue to be characterized by the various political developments in Kurdistan, including wars, genocide, and forced migration, that have occurred in the Kurdish regions in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. The successive waves of Kurdish political refugees that have arrived

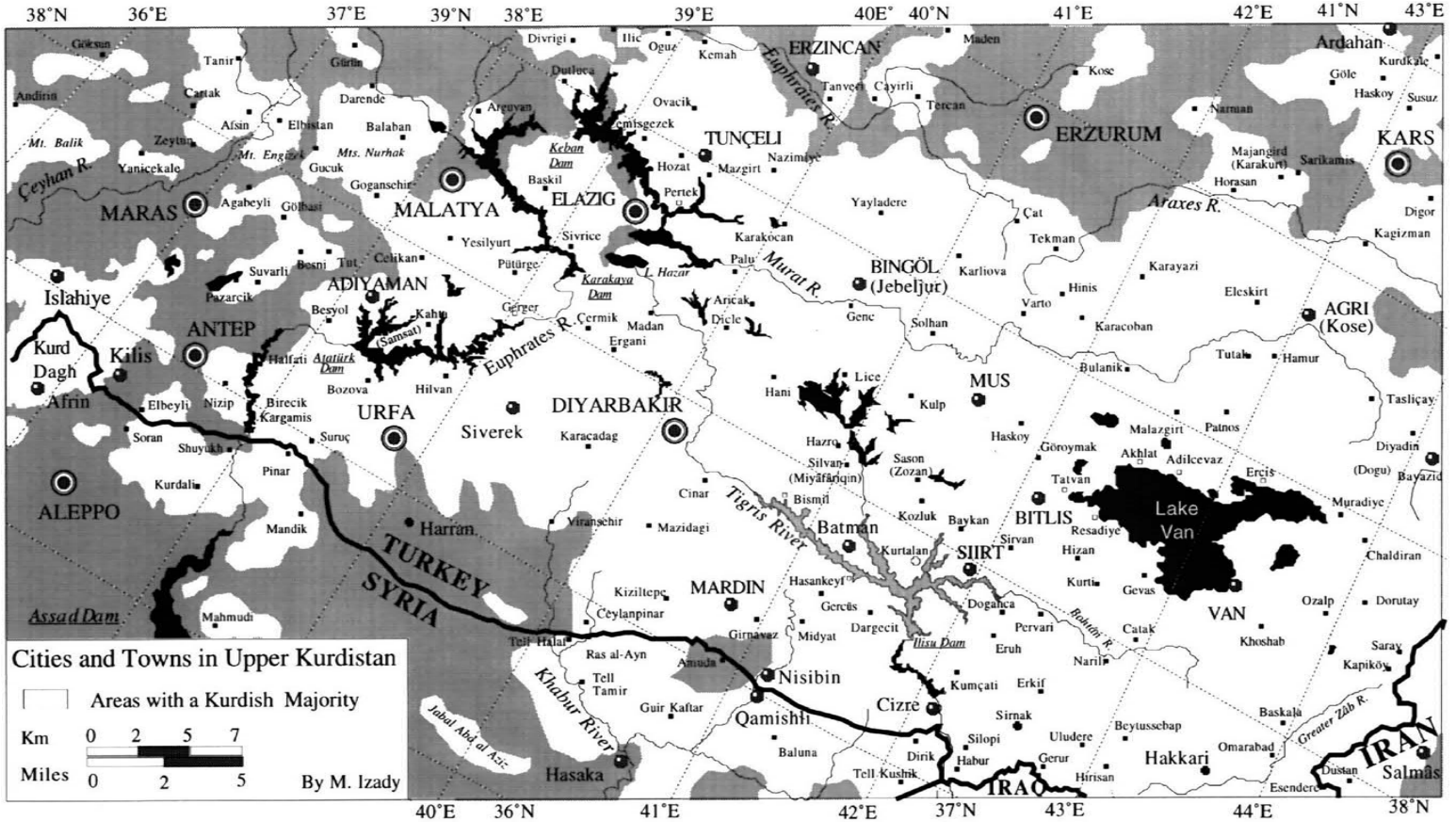
in the Kurdish diaspora have significantly influenced the processes of community formation and social integration throughout the diaspora.

Barzoo Eliassi explains that the concept of diaspora offers an important perspective on how different migrant groups experience dislocation and relate to the country of settlement and origin. The questions of movement, connectivity, and return are accordingly central to diasporic identity formation. Diasporas are not homogenous, and their members often hold different or conflicting views on the political order of their country of origin due to their social locations, based on gender, ethnic, and religious identity; political party affiliation; ideological orientations; class; and generation.

Vera Eccarius-Kelly describes how Kurdish communities in Germany are heterogeneous in terms of their geographic and regional origins, their tribal heritage, their educational attainment over time, and their religious affiliations. The vast majority of Kurds in Germany came from impoverished southeastern provinces of Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s, but many also departed urban environments in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara following the military coup in 1980. About 85 percent of the Kurds in Germany continue to have family connections in Turkey. The majority of Kurds in Germany are Sunni, but significant communities identify as Alevi, Zaza/Dimili, or Yezidi, or belong to other groups.

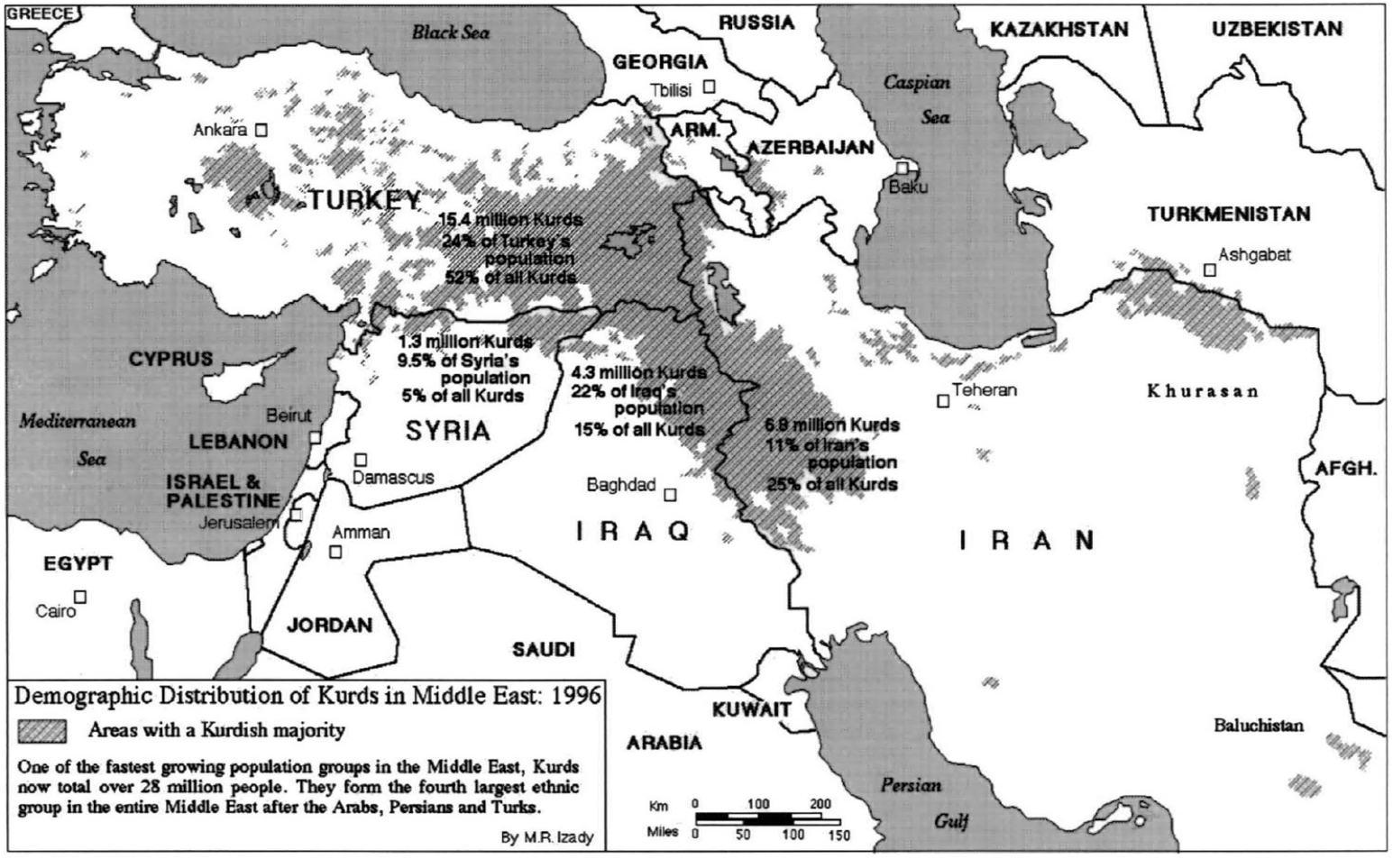
Desmond Fernandes analyzes the Kurdish diaspora in the United Kingdom. He notes how several scholars have debated the diaspora definitions and concepts as they relate to Kurds in the United Kingdom, and in the past 8 years, in particular, there has been a proliferation of academic articles focusing upon various aspects of the Kurdish diaspora in the United Kingdom. It is clear that as the diaspora establishes itself in the United Kingdom, many Kurds will continue to harbor a sense of "transnational belonging" and will continue to socially and politically organize through "transnational social spaces" and organizations. Unless there is a marked change in British politics, Kurdish communities will continue to be subjected to various forms of "othering" and criminalization.

In editing all these contributions, I have endeavored to let these accomplished scholars speak for themselves rather than trying to hold them to one strict, confining order. Of course, given the wide-ranging scholarly traditions these authors represent, one editorial style for all the succeeding chapters would have been virtually impossible to implement. In addition, standardization of Middle Eastern spellings would have been tiresomely pedantic, given so many scholarly variations and opinions. Thus, there are a variety of editorial schemes and spellings in the succeeding chapters. This heterogeneity speaks to the richness of Kurdish Studies and the international attention it now enjoys, and which is being represented in this Handbook. Of course, each individual chapter does adhere internally to one consistent stylistic standard. Finally, of course, any resulting errors in all this are my fault alone.



Map I.1 Cities and towns in Upper Kurdistan.

Source: Rowman and Littlefield, reproduced with permission.



Map I.2 Demographic distribution of Kurds in Middle East: 1996.
Source: Rowman and Littlefield, reproduced with permission.

Map I.3 Cities and towns in Lower Kurdistan.

Source: Rowman and Littlefield, reproduced with permission.

PART I

Kurdish studies

1

KURDISH STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Michael M. Gunter

Although the United States is about as far away from Kurdistan as is geographically possible, it has a well established tradition of Kurdish Studies. Indeed, as long ago as April 1928, Sureya Bedir Khan—one of the three famous grandsons of the legendary mir of the emirate of Botan, Bedir Khan Beg (1800c.–1868)—journeyed to Detroit, Michigan, to mobilize the Kurdish community in that famous automobile capital in support of Khoybun's Ararat revolt against Turkey. Surely, Bedir Khan only made this trip because there was a politically active Kurdish community there to receive him.[1]

Little known to even Kurdish scholars, William O. Douglas—the famous and longest-serving Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1939 until his retirement in 1975—visited Kurdistan in the summers of 1949 and 1950 as part of a much larger trip to the Middle East. He shared his impressions of the Kurds and concluded that "Independence Is Preferred," the title of one of the chapters in a book that recorded his overall trip.[2] Dana Adams Schmidt, for many years a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*, spent 46 days with the Iraqi Kurds in 1962 (the climax of which was some 10 days with Mulla Mustafa Barzani), concluding that the Kurds were "the fightingest people in the Middle East."[3] Margaret Kahn, whose PhD dissertation in 1976 at the University of Michigan dealt with Kurdish linguistics, wrote an entire book about her trip to Kurdistan in 1974.[4] All three of these American descriptions of the Kurds were early preludes to a veritable sea of later studies.

One of the most celebrated early American devotees of Kurdish Studies was Dr. Vera Beaudin Saeedpour (1930–2010). In middle age, she married Homayoun Saeedpour, a young Kurd from Sanandaj, Iran, and developed a keen interest in the plight of the Kurdish people. After her husband's premature death from leukemia, Saeedpour founded the Kurdish Heritage Foundation of America with a Kurdish library in her Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, brownstone. Her Kurdish library came to contain more than 2,000 texts in Kurdish and other languages, while her museum, opened in 1988, possessed Kurdish artifacts, art, costumes, and maps. For more than a decade, these institutions and related publications served as a source of Kurdish scholarship in the United States and in effect made Saeedpour the dean of Kurdish Studies in that country.

In 1986, she also established and served as the editor of *Kurdish Times*, a scholarly journal, which published semiannual issues in 1986, 1988, 1990, and 1991. Richard T. Reiter,

Benoni, Jane A. Daniels, and Wheeler Thackston served, respectively, as editors. Beginning with Volume 5, Nos. 1 & 2, in 1992, the journal was renamed *Kurdish Studies, An International Journal* "to better reflect its content and scope." Wheeler Thackston continued as its first editor. The following year, in 1993, the semiannual publication became known as *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies,* and for several years, with Merhdad Izady as its Editor in Chief, it published numerous refereed articles of high quality. Izady, an Iranian Kurd with a PhD from Columbia University, also contributed several articles and computer-generated maps to the publication.[5] Ismet Cheriff Vanly, the dean of international Kurdish Studies, served as one of the journal's advisers.[6] However, after Izady left the journal in 1998, its quality declined, and it eventually ceased publication.

In 1991, Saeedpour also began publishing *Kurdish Life*, a "quarterly featuring research and analysis of contemporary issues and events in the Middle East in the context of U.S. foreign policy."[7] The last issue of this newsletter was published as Number 68 in the fall of 2008. After her death, Saeedpour's Kurdish library and museum were donated to the Binghamton University Library in Binghamton, New York. The collection contains more than 3,000 books, journals, and newspapers in Kurdish and other languages. It also holds artifacts, costumes, maps, photographs, artwork, and other unique materials, including Saeedpour's correspondence with politicians, universities, Kurdish friends, writers, and others.[8]

Not to be confused with Vera Saeedpour's *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* was *The Journal of Kurdish Studies*, an entirely separate scholarly journal edited by Professor Keith Hitchins (1931–) of the University of Illinois at Urbana. Dr. Joyce Blau, the renowned French scholar of Kurdish literature, served as one of this journal's associate editors. *The Journal of Kurdish Studies* published volumes in 1995, 1997, 2001, 2002, and 2005, with probably the final volume publishing in 2008.

Mustafa Al-Karadaghi was a former peshmerga fighter and minister in the Iraqi diplomatic service who resigned in protest against Iraq's genocidal policies against the Kurds before finally settling in the United States, where his daughter, Dr. Pary Karadaghi, established the Kurdish Human Rights Watch to aid Kurdish refugees. From its first issue in the winter of 1990 to possibly its final one in June 2001, Mustafa Al-Karadaghi edited and published *Kurdistan Times: A Biannual Political Journal*. While not a scholarly journal, this publication contained short, interesting pieces on the Kurds and their heritage, along with historical photos. Omar Sheikhmous, Margareta Hanson, Walter Landry, Yona Sabar, and Desmond Fernandes, among others, were sometime associate editors.

Practically legendary in Kurdish Studies and considerably predating Saeedpour's work was the famous PhD dissertation that Wadie Jwaideh submitted to Syracuse University in the United States in 1960. *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* was finally published, with a foreword by the renowned Kurdish scholar Martin van Bruinessen, by Syracuse University Press in 2005. Although Wadie Jwaideh's study only goes up to 1959, it remains seminal in Kurdish Studies as a detailed analysis of the early phases of Kurdish nationalism and offers a framework within which to understand the movement's late development. It also contains a number of fascinating, unique photos.

For many years, Professor Jwaideh taught in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures at Indiana University, where one of the leading modern Kurdish scholars in the United States, Robert Olson, studied under him. Professor Olson went on to author 10 books, edit or co-edit another 4, and write 114 referred scholarly articles in books and journals, many dealing with the Kurdish issue.[9] For many years, he taught at the University of Kentucky, where he was selected as the Kirwan Memorial Prize Professor in 1999–2000 and the Distinguished Professor of the College of Arts and Sciences in 2000–2001. Olson also

served for more than a decade as the general editor of Mazda Publication's Kurdish Studies Series, which, as of 2013, had published 13 books.[10] In 2013, he finally retired.

In Olson's honor, Michael Gunter compiled and edited the only Festschrift honoring a U.S. scholar of Kurdish Studies.[11] The Olson Festschrift contains 13 chapters on various subjects by such distinguished scholars of Kurdish Studies (listed in alphabetical order) as Hamit Bozarslan, Vera Eccarius-Kelly, Nader Entessar, Cengiz Gunes, Joost Jongerden, David Romano, Michael Rubin, Eva Savelsberg, Kamal Soleimani, Jordi Tejel, and Abbas Vali, among others.

Edmund Ghareeb published another well-known study in the formative period of modern Kurdish Studies in the United States in 1981.[12] He also introduced the first regular courses to be taught in the United States on Kurdish history, politics, and culture. In addition, he became the first Mustafa Barzani Distinguished Scholar in Global Kurdish Studies at the American University in Washington, D.C. Three core topical areas were to guide the research, course development, and program activities of the Barzani scholar: Kurdish history and culture in a local, regional, and global context; reconciliation among Kurdish groups and factions; and coexistence between the Kurds and the peoples and states of the Middle East. Among numerous other accomplishments, Ghareeb was the principal author of the first edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Iraq*.[13]

Michael Gunter followed Ghareeb's first book on the Iraqi Kurds, with two more books on the Kurds in Iraq in 1992 and 1999.[14] His first scholarly publication on the Kurds, however, had already had been published in 1988 but only after Paul Henze, the former U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) station chief in Ankara, who was then working for the Rand Corporation, asked Gunter to document how the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey was controlled by the Soviet Union and international communism.[15] When Gunter instead concluded that the PKK was mostly motivated by Kurdish nationalism, Henze rejected his findings. However, Gunter felt vindicated when the prestigious *Middle East Journal* published his article.[16] In the succeeding years, other U.S. scholars began to publish a veritable flood of scholarly books and articles on the Kurdish problem in Turkey, Henri J. Barkey in 1993 being one of the first.[17] Over the years, Gunter also published three more well-reviewed monographs on the Kurds[18] as well as numerous scholarly articles.[19]

Gunter also was possibly the first and only Western scholar to meet Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader, in his Syrian safe house before he was expelled from Syria in October 1998 under heavy Turkish pressure and then captured by Turkey in February 1999.[20] At the time, a few said that somehow Gunter was involved in some type of plot to capture Ocalan, a wild conspiracy theory in complete opposition to the facts.[21] Indeed, for several years, Gunter has served as the Secretary-General of the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC), a non-governmental organization that lobbies the EU parliament in Brussels for Turkish admission into the EU as a way to help solve the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Since its establishment in 2004, the EUTCC has held 14 annual conferences on the Kurdish problem in Turkey at the EU parliament. Gunter also taught courses on Kurdish and Middle Eastern politics, among others, for the U.S. Government Areas Studies Program and U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Institute in Washington, D.C. In a keynote speech at the international conference on "The Kurds and Kurdistan: Identity, Politics, History" at the Centre for Kurdish Studies, University of Exeter, UK, April 2, 2009, the renowned French-Kurdish scholar Hamit Bozarslan referred to Robert Olson and Michael Gunter as the two leading scholars of Kurdish Studies in the United States.

Dr. Najmaldin O. Karim was a young Iraqi Kurdish doctor who treated Mulla Mustafa Barzani in his final years and became an American citizen. Then for almost 35 years,

Dr. Karim was a very prominent and successful neurosurgeon in Washington, D.C. In addition, he served as a most knowledgeable lobbyist for the Kurdish cause on Capitol Hill and frequently shepherded Kurdish visitors about the city. For several years, he also served as the president of the Kurdish National Congress of North America (KNC), a nonprofit, member-driven organization founded by Asad Khailany that represents Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan living in the United States and Canada. In April 2013, the KNC held its annual conference in Nashville, Tennessee, whose maybe 12,000 Kurds are the largest such concentration in the United States, where maybe 50,000 Kurds presently live. In 1996, Dr. Karim also established the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI) as a nonprofit research and educational organization. Finally, in 2010, he returned to this homeland and served as the prominent governor of Kirkuk province until Baghdad removed him in October 2017. His colleague, Dr. Kirmanj Gundi, a professor of education at Tennessee State University, also served recently as the president of the KNC.

Born in Kirkuk, Dr. Mohammed M.A. Ahmed earned a PhD in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University in 1964 and worked for many years in the United Nations. Upon his retirement, he established the Ahmed Foundation for Kurdish Studies, a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization based in the United States, which undertakes scholarly conferences and studies pertaining to Kurdish history, culture, and politics pertaining to the Kurds. Under the Ahmed Foundation's purview, Dr. Ahmed also has co-edited five academic studies with Professor Michael Gunter,[22] while in addition writing two more academic studies of Iraqi Kurdistan.[23] In recent years, the Ahmed Foundation has also sponsored a panel on Kurdish affairs at the large annual Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) conference. These panels have spotlighted leading scholars from both the United States and Europe, while drawing large audiences.

At the same time, Kurdish scholars in the United States have also created the Kurdish Studies Association (KSA) as an affiliated organization of MESA. The KSA is a nonprofit organization composed of scholars and other individuals interested in Kurdish Studies. It was founded in 2000 by a small group of faculty members to (1) encourage scholarly research and writing on Kurdistan and Kurdish politics, culture, and society; (2) facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among scholars and others sharing interest in these issues; and (3) foster a wider and better informed understanding of this important region and people of the Middle East. Currently, it has approximately 125 members, mostly faculty members, librarians, and doctoral students from more than 20 different countries. The KSA is run by a committee of four officers (President, Vice President, Executive Secretary, and Treasurer) and an executive board. It organizes annual meetings (in conjunction with the larger MESA), attracting scholars and researchers from all over the world to present research papers on the Kurds and Kurdistan. Charles MacDonald, a now retired professor of political science from Florida International University, served as the KSA's first president, followed by Shayee Khanaka, a Kurdish librarian at the University of California at Berkeley, and recently Christian Sinclair, the Director of International Studies at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Michael Rubin, presently a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and an instructor to senior military officers deploying to the Middle East, has been in the past a visiting lecturer at the Universities of Sulaymaniya, Salahuddin, and Duhok in Iraqi Kurdistan, and an official at the Pentagon. He also has written a number of commentaries criticizing nepotism and corruption among Kurdish officials that have aroused their ire, but time has shown him to be often accurate in his assessments. Rubin's recent book *Kurdistan Rising? Consideration for Kurds, Their Neighbors, and the Region* (Washington, D.C.: AEI, July 2016) is a valuable contribution that breaks new, important ground by identifying many significant

questions that would arise **after** Kurdish independence is achieved. In other words, "statehood would be not the fruition of a process but rather its beginning" (p. 121). For example, the Kurds "will face disputed borders, disunity, major gaps in defense and infrastructure, and major economic challenges" (p. 123).[24]

Nader Entessar, a now retired professor and chairman of the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice at the University of South Alabama, was one of the first modern scholars of Kurdish Studies in the United States. Over the years, he became one of the leading American scholars of this increasingly important sub-discipline. His main concentration was on the Kurdish situation in Iran.[25] Entessar retired in 2017, but surely will continue to monitor and comment on Kurdish developments.

Among his many other scholarly books, Brendan O'Leary, the Lauder Professor of Political Science and Director of the Penn Program in Ethnic Conflict at the University of Pennsylvania, co-edited a much-read book dealing with Iraqi Kurdistan.[26] Professor O'Leary's main contribution to Kurdish Studies possibly has been applying his deep understanding of federalism to the situation in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

David Romano, the Thomas G. Strong Chair in Middle East Politics at Missouri State University,[27] is arguably the leading member of the new generation of Kurdish scholars. He spent several years living in and conducting research in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Romano also rode his bicycle through large parts of northern Iraq and Turkey as part of his onsite learning process. His recent publications include insightful and well-written articles in leading academic journals.[28] For several years Romano has also been writing regular, thought-provoking, weekly pieces for *Rudaw*, one of the principal Iraqi Kurdish newspapers. Along with Mehmet Gurses, he additionally compiled an important collection of articles on the prospects for democracy and peace for the Kurds and the states in which they principally reside.[29]

After more than two decades of researching and working in the Kurdish regions of Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria, Denise Natali became a Distinguished Research Fellow and Minerva Chair at the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) in Washington, D.C. There she has carved out an important niche for herself as a well-respected, often exacting critic of the Kurds,[30] as well as providing Middle East security analyses and strategic support to senior leaders at the Defense and State Departments, unified combatant commands, intelligence communities, and the broader national security community. Natali assumed her present position after engaging in research, teaching, and university start-ups in Iraqi Kurdistan, including positions as director of research institutes and the Dean of Students at the American University of Iraq-Sulaymaniya. Earlier, she was a specialist for the American Red Cross Gulf Relief Crisis Project in Washington and information officer for the Disaster Assistance Relief Team, U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in Northern Iraq in support of Operation Provide Comfort II (1993–1994).

Gunes Murat Tezcur, the Jalal Talabani Chair of Kurdish Studies at the University of Central Florida (UCF) and associate professor of political science, is also the chair of the Kurdish Political Studies Program at UCF, the first and only academic unit in North America dedicated to the study of Kurdish issues. His research centers on studying political violence[31] and Islamic politics in Iran and Turkey.[32] Possibly, his best-known work is on the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey in which he explains why ordinary individuals take risks and join the insurgency. This study is based on an original dataset involving biographies of thousands of militants in which he argues that the ethnic cleavages do not matter by themselves, but they become politically salient when individuals from a certain ethnic minority face state repression and see their ethnicity and identity under threat.[33] Tezcur's research has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the Harry Frank

Guggenheim Foundation. Along with David Romano, Gunes Murat Tezcur is clearly among the leading members of the new generation of Kurdish scholars in the United States.

Nicole F. Watts, a professor of political science at San Francisco State University;[34] Vera Eccarius-Kelly, a professor of comparative politics at Siena College in New York;[35] Diane E. King, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Kentucky;[36] Janet Klein, an associate professor of history at the University of Akron;[37] Mehmet Gurses, an associate professor of political science at Florida Atlantic University;[38] Michael L. Chyet, a linguist and cataloger of Middle Eastern languages at the U.S. Library of Congress;[39] and Peter Galbraith, a former U.S. ambassador and Congressional staffer[40] are also noteworthy U.S. scholars of Kurdish Studies. Surely, there are others which this author has missed and for the oversight of which he apologizes.

Among a number of prominent journalists in the United States, a partial list and possibly their most important contribution includes Jonathan C. Randal, a distinguished retired correspondent who has worked with the *New York Times and Washington Post*, among others;[41] Kevin McKiernan, a war correspondent;[42] Aliza Marcus, a commentator who has worked for the *Boston Globe* and Reuters News Agency, among others;[43] and Quil Lawrence, a well-known reporter for the National Public Radio.[44] Susan Meiselas,[45] a documentary photographer, has compiled a huge, magnificent photographic history of the Kurds with useful commentaries by Martin van Bruinessen.

Finally, although they are politicians and diplomats rather than scholars, mention might also be made of three Iraqi Kurds who lived for several years in the United States where they furthered Kurdish Studies, among many other duties. Barham Salih, who earned a PhD in Statistics and Computer Applications in Engineering from the University of Liverpool in the United Kingdom, also spent the 1990s in the United States as the representative of Jalal Talabani's leftist-leaning Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). He returned to Iraqi Kurdistan in 2001 and subsequently served as the Prime Minister of the PUK-controlled portion of the KRG from 2001 to 2004, the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq (2006–2009), and Prime Minister of the KRG from 2009 to 2012. Since Jalal Talabani suffered his debilitating stroke in December 2012, Barham Salih has served as one of the *de facto* PUK heads but with disappointing results. Qubad Talabani, the son of Jalal Talabani, served for several years as a successful KRG representative in the United States until moving to the KRG in 2012 and becoming the Deputy Prime Minister of the KRG. Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the daughter of the famous Kurdish leader Sami Abdul Rahman, succeeded Qubad Talabani as the KRG representative in the United States in 2015. The American connection these three prominent KRG leaders have undoubtedly influences their views.

Notes

1 Sureya Bedirkhan (1883–1938), who spent several years in prison for his nationalist activities, resumed publishing the newspaper *Kurdistan* in Constantinople after the Young Turk coup in 1908 and was an early member of the transnational Kurdish party, Khoybun. His brother, Jaladet, was elected the first president of Khoybun. Subsequently, he devoted himself to literary work and helped to develop a Kurdish alphabet in Latin characters. The third brother, Kamuran, became a noted Kurdish author, spokesman, editor, and professor teaching Kurdish at the Ecole des Langues Orientales in Paris, where Joyce Blau, the famous French authority on Kurdish literature, was one of his students. I published an earlier, much smaller version of this chapter as "Kurdish Studies in the United States," in *Wiener Jahrbuch fur Kurdische Studien*, eds. by Ferdinand Hennerbichler, et al. *Vienna Yearbook of Kurdish Studies* (Bremen: Wiener Verlag, 2014), pp. 178–192.

2 William O. Douglas, *Strange Lands and Friendly People* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1951), p. 87.

3 Dana Adams Schmidt, *Journey among Brave Men* (Boston, MA and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1964).
4 Margaret Kahn, *Children of the Jinn: In Search of the Kurds and Their Country* (New York: Seaview Books, 1980).
5 Izady is perhaps best known for his *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook* (Washington, DC: Crane Russak, 1992). Among numerous other scholarly items, he also published an English translation and commentaries of Prince Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi, *The Sharafnama or the History of the Kurdish Nation – 1597 – Book One* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2005), but unfortunately did not continue with the project.
6 Lokman I. Meho, a Kurdish scholar from Lebanon, who earned his doctorate in library sciences from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has been the Director of Libraries at The American University in Beirut, Lebanon since 2009, compiled a cumulative index of *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* in its issue of 17:1 & 2 (2003), pp. 121–154. Meho is also the compiler of *The Kurds and Kurdistan: A Selective and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997); and with Kelly L. Maglaughlin, *Kurdish Culture and Society: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001).
7 She published a cumulative index of *Kurdish Life* (Fall 1991–Fall 2002) in *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 17:1 & 2 (2003), pp. 155–167.
8 See www.binghamton.edu/libraries/specialcollections/researchandcollections/saeedpour.html, accessed December 23, 2013.
9 Perhaps his most famous publication was *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). Two other noteworthy books were *The Goat and the Butcher: Nationalism and State Formation in Kurdistan-Iraq since the Iraqi War* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2005) and *The Kurdish Nationalist Movements in Turkey: 1980–2011* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2011). However, Professor Olson himself argues that his best book was *The Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persian Relations 1718–1743: A Study of Rebellion in the Capital and War in the Provinces of the Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), reissued in 2017 by Mazda Publications with a new introduction by Olson.
10 Abbas Vali, ed., *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Press, 2003) is probably one of the more important ones.
11 Michael M. Gunter (com. and ed.), *Kurdish Issues: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Olson* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2016).
12 Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981).
13 Edmund Ghareeb and Beth Dougherty, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004). With Dougherty now the principal author, the two published an 858-page second edition of this volume in 2013.
14 *The Kurds of Iraq: Tragedy and Hope* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); and *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq: A Political Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).
15 Earlier, Henze, a most knowledgeable student of Turkey, also had argued vehemently that the Soviet Union had been behind the attempt to assassinate the Pope in May 1981. See Paul Henze, *The Plot to Kill the Pope* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985). However, probably the attempt on the Pope's life was more complicated, and Henze's real purpose—consciously or not—was to frame and smear the Soviet Union as part of what was then the covert counterintelligence struggle between the two Cold War adversaries. For a cogent critique of the supposed Soviet role, see Jeffrey M. Bale, "The Ultranationalist Right in Turkey and the Attempted Assassination of Pope John Paul II," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 15 (March 1991), pp. 1–63.
16 "The Kurdish Problem in Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 42 (Summer 1988), pp. 389–406. Gunter followed up this article with his first book on the subject in 1990, *The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990). Perhaps Gunter's most important contribution to Kurdish studies is his *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2018).
17 Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey's Kurdish Dilemma," *Survival* 35 (Winter 1993), pp. 51–70. In 1998, Barkey and Graham E. Fuller published *Turkey's Kurdish Question* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).
18 Michael Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); *Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War* (London: Hurst and Company, 2014); and *The Kurds: A Modern History*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2016), among others.

19 Michael M. Gunter, "Trump, Turkey and the Kurds," *Middle East Policy* 24 (Summer 2017), pp. 78–86; and "US Middle East Policy and the Kurds," *Orient* 58:2 (2017), pp. 43–51, are two of his most recent ones.

20 See Michael M. Gunter, "Interview: Abdullah Ocalan, Head of the PKK," *Middle East Quarterly* 5 (June 1998), pp. 79–85; and Michael M. Gunter, "An Interview with the PKK's Ocalan," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 18 (Fall 1998), pp. 104–109.

21 On Ocalan's capture in February 1999, see Michael M. Gunter, "The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey after Ocalan's Capture," *Third World Quarterly* 21 (October 2000), pp. 849–869.

22 Based on papers presented at conferences it sponsored, The Ahmed Foundation for Kurdish Studies published privately *The Kurdish Question and International Law*, 2000; and *Kurdish Exodus: From Internal Displacement to Diaspora*, 2002. Subsequently, the Ahmed Foundation went on to publish three more academic studies co-edited by Mohammed M. A. Ahmed and Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurdish Question and the 2003 Iraqi War* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2005); *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2007); and *The Kurdish Spring* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2013).

23 Mohammed M. A. Ahmed, *America Unravels Iraq: Kurds, Shiites and Sunni Arabs Compete for Supremacy* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2010); and Mohammed M. A. *Iraqi Kurds and Nation-Building* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

24 Also see Alireeza Nader, et al., *Regional Implications of an Independent Kurdistan* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016).

25 Among his many publications, possibly Nader Entessar is best known for his *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992); and *Kurdish Politics in the Middle East* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

26 Brendan O'Leary, John McGarry, and Khaled Salih, eds., *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

27 David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) is possibly his best-known contribution.

28 See, for example, his "Iraq's Descent into Civil War: A Constitutional Explanation," *Middle East Journal* 68:4 (Autumn 2014), pp. 547–566; "Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey: Temporary Marriage?" *Middle East Policy*, 22:1 (2015), pp. 89–101; and "Iraqi Kurdistan: Challenges of Autonomy in the Wake of US Withdrawal," *International Affairs* (London) 86 (2010), pp. 1345–1359, among numerous others.

29 David Romano and Mehmet Gurses, eds., *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

30 Denise Natali, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), is probably her best-known work. It was the recipient of the Choice Award for Outstanding Academic Titles. Other noteworthy publications include *The Kurdish Quasi-State: Development and Dependency in Post-Gulf War Iraq* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010); "The Kirkuk Conundrum," *Ethnopolitics* 7:4 (November 2008), pp. 433–443; and "Kurdish Concessions in Baghdad," *Foreign Policy Magazine* (December 2010), among others.

31 Gunes Murat Tezcur, "Violence and Nationalist Mobilization: The Onset of the Kurdish Insurgency in Turkey," *Nationalities Papers* 43:2 (2015), pp. 248–266.

32 Gunes Murat Tezcur, *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey: The Paradox of Moderation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); and "Democracy Promotion, Authoritarian Resiliency, and Political Unrest in Iran," *Democratization* 19:1 (2102), pp. 120–140.

33 Gunes Murat Tezcur, "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Risks: Participation in an Ethnic Rebellion," *American Political Science Review* 110:2 (2016), pp. 247–264.

34 Nicole F. Watts, *Activists in Office: Kurdish Politics and Protest in Turkey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010) is probably her best-known publication. Others include "The Role of Symbolic Capital in Protest: State-Society Relations and the Destruction of the Halabja Martyrs Monument in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 32:1 (2012), pp. 70–85; and "Towards Kurdish Distinctiveness in Electoral Politics: The 1977 Elections in Diyarbakir," (with Giles Dorronsoro), *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41:3 (August 2009), pp. 457–487.

35 Vera Eccarius-Kelly, *The Militant Kurds: A Dual Strategy for Freedom* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011) is perhaps her most prominent work. Other notable publications include "The Imaginary Kurdish Museum: Ordinary Kurds, Narrative Nationalisms and Collective Memory," *Kurdish*

Studies 3:2 (October 2015), pp. 172–191; and "Surreptitious Lifelines: A Structural Analysis of the FARC and the PKK," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24:2 (2012), pp. 235–258.

36 Diane E. King, *Kurdistan on the Global Stage: Kinship, Land, and Community in Iraq* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

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

38 Mehmet Gurses, "Ethnic Exclusion and Mobilization: The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey" (with Gunes Murat Tezcur) *Comparative Politics* 49:2 (January 2017), pp. 213–230; and "Environmental Consequences of Civil War: Evidence from the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey," *Civil Wars* 14:2 (2012), pp. 254–271 are two of his important publications as well as the joint collection of chapters he co-edited with David Romano, *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

39 Michael L. Chyet, *Kurdish-English Dictionary/Ferhenga Kurmanci-Inglizi* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2003) is arguably the best Kurdish-English dictionary available.

40 Peter Galbraith, *The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War without End* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006) analyzes very well how Iraq has become a broken, failed state that makes Iraqi Kurdish independence likely in the future.

41 Jonathan C. Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness: My Encounters with Kurdistan* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).

42 Kevin McKiernan, *The Kurds: A People in Search of Their Homeland* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006).

43 Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007).

44 Quil Lawrence, *Invisible Nation: How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood Is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2008).

45 Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008). This volume contains 301 often rare color plates and 219 halftones. The first edition was published by Random House in 1997.

2
KURDISH STUDIES IN EUROPE

Vera Eccarius-Kelly

Introduction

As a subspecialization of Middle East Studies, contemporary Kurdish Studies integrates a wide range of methodological and geographic foci. The field includes the study of languages, literatures, and linguistics; research related to peace and conflict studies, ethno-nationalism, migration, and diasporas; and intersectional projects on gender, race, and human rights. Kurdish Studies also overlaps with anthropology, history, international relations, and political science. Over the last decade, Kurdish Studies has demonstrated an increasing openness to younger scholars with an interest in interdisciplinary and boundary-spanning work.[1]

In 2016, the University of Leicester, UK, offered its first specialized Kurdish Studies Summer School, which was organized and directed by sociologist Ipek Demir.[2] Best known in the field of Kurdish Studies for grappling with notions of identity in "Battling with *Memleket* in London: The Kurdish Diaspora's Engagement with Turkey," Demir's summer program affirmed the emergence of new directions in Kurdish Studies.[3] The far-reaching themes that were integrated into the summer school program reinforced the field's increasingly multifaceted and interdisciplinary approaches. Recent publications in Kurdish Studies (and in the *Kurdish Studies* journal) demonstrate a pattern of bridging disciplinary boundaries by proposing an engagement with varied methodologies, diverse schools of thought, and broader epistemological concepts.[4]

The aim of this chapter is to identify how the field of contemporary Kurdish Studies has evolved over time, why certain academic institutions or research centers in Western Europe dominate the field of Kurdish Studies, and in which ways European-based scholars shape both the existing knowledge and new narratives about Kurdistan and Kurds. This chapter also reviews the emergence of clusters of scholarly communities that are focused on resisting political pressures from outside of Europe to silence their academic contributions or to frame their work as ideologically tarnished. Organizationally, this chapter offers several subsections to examine Kurdish Studies in the context of (a) historical developments, (b) fluctuating geographic and linguistic challenges, and (c) the rise of ethno-national politics. In all areas, scholars involved with Kurdish Studies have faced tremendous barriers yet managed to prevail by pursuing innovative scholarly projects and networks. Despite the reemergence of constraints related to emergency measures in various parts of Kurdistan, the larger field of Kurdish Studies

in Europe looks promising. It is deeply rooted within numerous European institutions and increasingly recognized through newly formed centers of scholarly excellence.

In sum, doctoral- and master's-level students should continue to seek out specialized Kurdish Studies programs in Europe today. As a dynamic and interdisciplinary area of study, the field has moved away from the once dominant state-centric emphasis on intelligence, government, and military affairs. In fact, more refereed journals now invite and welcome contributions from Kurdish Studies scholars, which affirms a general commitment to the multiplicity of communities in the Middle East. Instead of the once overwhelming scholarly emphasis on Arab-, Persian-, and Turkish-centric articles, a noticeable shift has taken place, creating space for more diverse contributions. Edited volumes and special journal issues now focus on the study of Kurdish, Yezidi, Shabak, Jewish, Turkmen, Assyrian, and other regional, syncretic, and ethnic communities. Therefore, prospects for students interested in pursuing Kurdish Studies seem propitious, notwithstanding the return of familiar barriers that have limited archival work as well as fieldwork in parts of Kurdistan.

The origins of Kurdish Studies at Western European Institutions[5]

Numerous European academic institutions in the UK, France, and Germany assert historically grounded connections to various regions of Kurdistan. The field of Kurdish Studies in Europe never experienced a period of uninterrupted growth, which tended to weaken or undermine opportunities for academic institutionalization. Kurdish Studies in Europe have been characterized as highly decentralized and often dispersed across numerous academic disciplines until very recently. Frequently, the field has been institutionally subordinated to more traditional areas of study, such as Middle East or Iranian Studies. In addition, as a result of both political and economic realities, Kurdish Studies in Europe repeatedly faced pressures related to disciplinary program mergers, the reduction of funding opportunities for younger scholars, and the increasingly common practice of failing to replace senior scholars after their retirement.

Several positive trends must also be identified. A growing body of work has been published by younger scholars who emphasize linkages across conventional academic and national boundaries. In particular, it is noteworthy that considerable opportunities have been created for Kurdish Studies scholars through interdisciplinary and transnational approaches, and the pursuit of comparative methodologies. This development, in spite of troubling restrictions involving research in Kurdistan, has led to a growing sense of academic autonomy for Kurdish Studies.

A historical examination of Kurdish Studies in European countries has been carried out by several well-recognized scholars. In particular, Martin van Bruinessen's extensive work in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kurdische Studien* (2014), Joyce Blau's contributions in *Encyclopedia Iranica* (2009), and Clémence Scalbert-Yücel and Marie Le Ray's inquiry into the production of knowledge about Kurds in the *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (2006) shaped historical understandings about the field.[6] Both van Bruinessen and Blau traced the origins of Kurdish Studies as an academic field to orientalist scholars involved in colonial and missionary activities in the late 18th century.[7] Initial studies on Kurds published by Catholic and, later, Protestant missionaries focused on language and grammar, and sporadically provided regional histories and ethnographies.[8] During this period, Kurdish Studies relied on descriptive approaches, which privileged disciplines such as archeology, ethnology, linguistics, and history. Nearly all aspects of Kurdish life were studied by orientalist scholars, who focused on

cultural and linguistic practices or provided insights into the lives of distinguished Kurdish leaders. Military officers, diplomats, and colonial administrator-scholars in the service of the British, French, Russian, and later German imperial authorities pursued specific cultural and language projects with the intent to advance strategic regional interests.[9]

The British school of Kurdish Studies exerted a noticeable influence on the larger academic field in Europe and can be traced to two influential orientalist scholars: Major Ely Banister Soane (1881–1923) and diplomat Cecil J. Edmonds (1889–1979). Major Soane arrived in Persia in 1902 and spent years traveling in Mesopotamia and Kurdistan. He published a number of influential books on Kurdish grammar and culture, and a well-known travel account, fittingly entitled *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, which recounted his journey from Constantinople to Baghdad while impersonating a Persian traveler.[10] Edmonds, who served as a political officer with HM Expeditionary Forces in Mesopotamia and spent years in the region, first visited Kurdistan in 1922 and then rose to the position of advisor to the Ministry of the Interior of Iraq from 1935 to 1945.[11] After Edmonds left Iraq, he became the UK's permanent delegate to the International Refugee Organization and served in the British Foreign Service until 1950. His career then continued in academia for a short period of time. He was appointed to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London and became its first chair of Kurdish Studies. He lectured in Kurdish languages until 1957, when the position was filled by Neil Mackenzie. Initially, Mackenzie served in the role of lecturer in Kurdish and was later named lecturer in Iranian languages (1955–1975) before accepting a professorship in Germany. Today, both *Kurmanji* and *Sorani* Kurdish continue to be offered at SOAS on a regular basis within the Department of Languages and Cultures of the Near East and Middle East.[12]

The formation of financially independent Kurdish Studies centers and programs characterizes a very recent phenomenon at European universities. The rise of major Kurdish political players in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq encouraged this parallel development in academia. In 2006, the University of Exeter in the UK established a Centre for Kurdish Studies after receiving funding from the Ibrahim Ahmed Foundation as well as Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the KRG. While housed in the same building as the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, it and its successor program have produced some 26 PhDs in Kurdish Studies as of June 2016. Gareth Stansfield, a leading scholar on Iraqi Kurdish history and politics, has played the crucial role in this program. Stansfield is also the Al-Qasimi Professor of Arab Gulf Studies and is a Senior Associate Fellow of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), London, among others. Christine Allison, a prolific scholar on Yezidi oral traditions, holds the Ibrahim Ahmed Chair at Exeter.[13] She studied Kurdish at SOAS, was a tenured lecturer (*maître de conférences*) in Kurdish at the *Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales* (INALCO) in Paris, and then accepted the chair position at the Centre for Kurdish Studies at Exeter in 2007. Her colleague in Kurdish Studies is Clémence Scalbert-Yücel, a senior lecturer in ethno-politics.[14]

Along with the premier program at the University of Exeter, several smaller Kurdish Studies options are beginning to emerge in the UK, as evidenced by the University of Leicester's recent addition of Marianna Charountaki as Lecturer of Kurdish Politics and International Relations. Charountaki earned her doctoral degree from Exeter, and after publishing her work on Kurdistan-US relations, she brought funding from the KRG to the University of Leicester. She now directs the Kurdistan International Studies Unit (KISU) at the university.[15] Ömer Tekdemir, a PhD Research Associate at Leicester, further enhances the University of Leicester's ability to organize occasional seminars and special conferences

related to Kurdish Studies. According to the University of Leicester, the 2017 Kurdistan Studies Unit was established "to bridge the gap" that exists between institutionalized research in the field of Kurdish Studies and International Relations in the UK.[16] In March 2016, the KISU held its first major symposium under the title "The Role of the Kurds in the Middle East and Beyond: Regional and International Interactions," and among the most significant political participants were the KRG's Government Spokesperson and the KRG's High Representative to the UK.

The French school of Kurdish Studies similarly emerged out of a military and intelligence tradition within the French Mandate Administration in Syria and Lebanon (1923–1946). Both Roger Lescot (1914–1975) and Pierre Rondot (1904–2000) were among the best-known orientalist Kurdish scholars in continental Europe.[17] Lescot spent some 25 years in Kurdistan and studied *dengbêj* storyteller musicians in Syria during the mid-1930s. While they carried out scholarly work in the region, Lescot and Rondot also engaged in extensive intelligence gathering within Kurdish communities throughout the war years, which was a common practice in the region.[18] According to Jordi Tejel,

> Rondot and Lescot were more than solely French orientalists dealing with Kurdish affairs. Today, we know that Rondot and Lescot went beyond the parameters of their scientific mission giving precious assistance to Kurdish intellectuals, especially Jaladat and Kamuran Badirkhan, who had sought refuge in the Levant after the Turkish republic was founded in 1923.[19]

In an experience that is certainly reminiscent of British orientalist scholar Edmonds at SOAS, Lescot became the first chair of Kurdish Studies at the *École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes* (*Langues O'*) in 1945. However, he only remained at *Langues O'* until 1947, when Kamuran Badirkhan was named chair of Kurdish Language and Civilization. He was followed by Ismet Chérif Vanly, a Syrian-born Kurd. Vanly was later joined by Thomas Bois and Joyce Blau.[20] By 1970, the institution of *Langues O'* faced a significant restructuring effort and became integrated into *Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle*, now known as the INALCO. Sorbonne's INALCO inherited numerous arts, language, and humanities faculties from the former University of Paris, and its students can continue their studies of Kurdish by taking courses in both *Kurmanji* and *Sorani*. The predominantly publicly funded *Fondation Institut Kurde de Paris* also plays a significant part in advancing access to Kurdish language studies in France while simultaneously offering courses in French to Kurdish immigrants and refugees.[21]

The German school of Kurdish Studies emerged as a consequence of increasing economic, political, and cultural relations between the Ottoman Empire and Germany. The first well-known orientalist German scholars were Emil Rödinger (1801–1874), a professor of oriental languages in Berlin, and August-Friedrich Pott (1802–1887), a scholar of linguistics in Göttingen. Both shared an interest in theology and frequently collaborated. Another influential German orientalist was Oskar Mann (1867–1917), who traveled through Persia from 1901 to 1903, taking photographs and documenting archeological monuments.[22] Van Buinessen mentioned that Oskar Mann was not just a librarian at the Royal Prussian Library in Berlin but also "the first Western scholar to carry out extensive linguistic fieldwork among the Kurds and neighboring Iranian groups."[23] In 2014, Mann's travel accounts were republished by Mojtaba Kolivand under the title *Persische und kurdische Reiseberichte*.[24] All three German orientalist researchers, Rödinger, Pott, and Mann, pursued scholarly work related to Persian and Kurdish languages, regional cultural practices, and archeological studies, which shaped

the still common practice of housing Kurdish language studies within Iranian programs at German academic institutions.[25]

Berlin's Humboldt University supported Kurdish Studies (*Kurdologie*) for years, but discontinued the program in the mid-1990s when mergers became an increasingly common practice. The Free University of Berlin (FU) has offered *Kurmanji* language courses as part of its Institute for Iranian Studies and maintains a lecturer position in Kurdish, which is currently held by Feryad Fazil Omar.[26] The Kurdish Studies working group at FU attempted to develop an independent Kurdish Institute in the 1990s and succeeded temporarily when a guest professorship for Kurdish Studies in the Institute of Anthropology became a reality in 1996/1997. That position was filled by van Bruinessen; yet, despite vigorous outreach efforts, sustained public funding for a Kurdish Studies Institute at the Free University failed to materialize. However, a privately funded European Center for Kurdish Studies was formed in 1999, which continues to collaborate with the *Österreichische Gesellschaft für Kurdologie* (Austrian Society for Kurdish Studies), led by Thomas Schmidinger. A network of affiliated scholars with the European Center for Kurdish Studies produces high-quality papers and reports on a range of Kurdish issues. The Center, nevertheless, remains heavily reliant on private support and occasionally receives specialized public funding.

The University of Göttingen holds one of four distinguished chairs of Iranian Studies in Germany (Berlin, as mentioned is another, along with Bamberg and Hamburg). Göttingen has offered a concentration in Kurdish Studies, and represents one of the most prestigious centers of Iranian Studies in Europe.[27] Neil Mackenzie, formerly a leading academic at SOAS, arrived in Göttingen in 1975 and retired nearly 20 years later in 1994; he was followed by Philip Kreyenbroek, who led the program from 1996 to 2014. Kreyenbroek specialized in Iranian religions (Zoroastrianism and Yezidism), but has now retired. Currently, Khanna Usoyan Omarkhali, who holds a PhD from St. Petersburg State University, serves as Assistant Professor in the Institute of Iranian Studies in Göttingen.[28] Like Kreyenbroek, she is a prolific and well-known scholar on Yezidism, and her significant scholarly contributions (in collaboration with Kreyenbroek) were highlighted in a special issue on Yezidism in *Kurdish Studies* in 2016.[29]

In 2012, Nechirvan Barzani, the KRG's Prime Minister, also provided financial support for the *Mustafa Barzani Arbeitsstelle für Kurdische Studien* in Erfurt. It appears that the start-up funds given to Erfurt seemed comparable to the amount that was provided to the University of Leicester—a more modest sum than the financing that had established the Exeter Center for Kurdish Studies in 2006.[30] The Barzani Center in Erfurt is currently led by Ferhad Seyder, who arrived from the FU. In 2013, the center was fully integrated into the University of Erfurt system, which stabilized access to basic funding. However, nearly all Kurdish Studies programs in Western Europe grapple with providing sufficient scholarship support for the number of interested doctoral and master's level students. State funding sources have been limited in an environment of academic austerity in an effort to address budgetary deficits. In addition, the original funding the KRG provided to Exeter's Center for Kurdish Studies, for example, has run out. The KRG, however, appears to be interested in reinvesting in several Kurdish Studies Centers throughout Europe in the coming semesters.

Geographic and linguistic impediments to scholars

Two significant barriers created challenges for Kurdish Studies researchers during the past several decades, namely (a) the varying levels of accessibility to particular regions of Kurdistan and (b) the range of languages required for carrying out substantial archival and

field work. Some 30 years ago, it was extremely challenging to pursue any sort of ethnographic work related to Kurdish communities in Turkey as the war between the military/security apparatus and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) was at its height. While opportunities for research in predominantly Kurdish provinces improved significantly in the last decade, current patterns of widespread repression in Turkey make it once again nearly impossible to carry out sustained fieldwork. The United Nations (UN) has accused the Turkish government of serious human rights violations during the state's targeting of Kurdish militants between July 2015 and December 2016. Its report suggested that up to half a million people have been displaced by the violence and that hundreds of civilians died during that time period.[31] The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, also criticized the Turkish government for failing to initiate a proper investigation into the unlawful killings and displacements.[32] Few scholars can expect to pursue systematic research under such conditions as that might endanger Kurdish communities as well as the researchers.

Comparatively limited knowledge exists about Iranian Kurds since the Islamic Republic started denying visas to international scholars in the 1980s. Meticulous studies about Kurdish communities in *Rojhilat* (East Kurdistan or the Iranian part of Kurdistan) are infrequent and often rely on secondary sources. At times, researchers of Kurdish origin with family connections to the region add contributions that represent exceptionally important insights. It is not surprising that the UN has affirmed a long familiar pattern of systemic repression that targets Kurds in Iran. Asma Jahangir, UN Special Rapporteur-designate for Human Rights in Iran, asserted that nearly half of all Iranian prisoners today are Kurdish, even though the Kurdish community in Iran makes up an estimated 7 million people, or 10 percent of the entire population.[33] Her report suggests that relentless brutality affects the lives of Kurds in Iran, and that one-fifth of all executions in 2016 targeted Kurds.

Researchers interested in Syrian Kurdish communities have also faced noteworthy obstacles that relate to the overbearing security apparatus. Traditionally, the Syrian state required scholars to apply for special visas or entry permits to ensure that government minders could keep an eye on scholars to control the flow of information. Today, of course, the country is enmeshed in a gruesome civil war, which presents its own set of challenges for researchers. Scholars with an interest in radical democracy (or democratic autonomy), however, have embraced opportunities to spend time in *Rojava*, the Kurdish-controlled cantons of northern Syria known as *Efrîn* (in the West), and *Cizîrê* and *Kobanê* (in the East).[34] Increasingly compelling journalistic and scholarly publications encourage a deeper study of Kurdish political structures. Both the socio-political realities in the *de facto* autonomous region and the use of militias, the YPG or Popular Protection Units that engage in fights against the Islamic State and Turkey, are of deepening interests to researchers.[35]

In addition, the KRG in contrast to other parts of Kurdistan invites international scholars to pursue their research without constraints. When the region had been under Saddam Hussein's control, the area was entirely closed off—especially from the mid-1980s to 1988, when the Baathist regime's attacks culminated in the gassing of Kurds in communities surrounding Halabja. But following the 2003 war in Iraq, researchers entered the region on a constant basis. They began to teach at the newly established universities in Erbil, Sulaimani, Duhok, and elsewhere, and pursued transnational scholarly networks. Interestingly, and perhaps not surprising, publications related to Kurdistan today are dominated by projects in the KRG. It is essential to remember, however, that studies on the KRG do not necessarily represent interests that are broadly advanced in all of Kurdistan. Many Kurds (both in the KRG and across borders) perceive the KRG to be economically dependent on neighboring

Turkey, and accuse Ankara of advancing its preferred policies through linkages with the KRG. Research on Kurdistan must therefore be considered within the appropriate historical and geographic contexts rather than be accepted as representing a unified Kurdish position or regional agenda.

Finally, linguistic realities are also continuing to present impediments to scholars. While increasing numbers of Kurds speak English and German, and many European scholars have knowledge of *Kurmanji* and *Sorani*, archival documents still tend to be available in Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish. Access to language training, therefore, is essential for many students and deserves to be financially supported. While options to pursue Kurdish language study in Europe exist, an increasing number of students from Europe also flock to universities in Kurdistan to improve their languages. A few years ago, a heated debate over creating a unified written Kurdish language became politicized and ended up producing a "language war" that pitted supporters of *Sorani* against those who hoped to advance the use of *Kurmanji*. Hassan Ghazi articulated at the University of Exeter in 2009 that political posturing and the projection of cultural power play a significant role in this struggle. Ghazi suggested that the lack of a unified written Kurdish language was "unlikely to affect the development of Kurdish communities in economic, social, political and cultural spheres and it is not the source of the present division among the Kurds even in Iraq."[36]

National liberation and Kurdish Studies

In the 1960s, Kurdish Studies in Europe accelerated in terms of academic research related to socio-economic and political structures, language and cultural rights, and the intensifying ethno-national movements in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran (Syrian Kurdish agendas emerged fully after the Qamishli uprisings in 2004). More than 25 years ago, van Bruinessen had noted that between a quarter and a third of all Kurds effectively lived outside of the territorial region of Kurdistan and suggested that only a small minority might ever be able to return to the homeland.[37]

Among the most significant political developments that allowed Kurdish Studies to gain traction at European universities was Mustafa Barzani's revolt in Iraq in the 1960s and again in the 1970s. Scholars with an interest in Kurdish communities intensively focused their research on national liberation movements. Following the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988) and the genocide carried out by the Iraqi Baathist regime against the Kurds (al-Anfal/Halabja), a growing body of work examined the existing knowledge on genocide, trauma, and memory.[38] A series of Turkish military coups (1960, 1971, and 1980) and then the rise of insurgent warfare led by the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) in the early 1980s also marked moments that contributed to growing academic interest in theories related to internal colonialism, rural sociology, and ideologies of resistance.[39] More recently (2003 and after), the field of Kurdish Studies was measurably reshaped by the establishment of the KRG, the rise of the Islamic State, the battle for Kobanê, and Turkey's renewed emphasis on a military solution to the so-called Kurdish question. Kurdish Studies has been deeply and, at times, negatively affected by high levels of political sensitivity. Fragmentations within the field are a manifestation of restrictive environments in Kurdistan, the perception that research agendas are vulnerable to co-optation or misuse. The notion that political agendas are advanced by regional powers such as Turkey and Iran has created tensions in some academic departments.

The Kurdish experience with conflict, expulsion, and migration made the European-based Kurdish diaspora increasingly diverse, but also politically engaged and active. By the

late 1980s, Kurdish protesters reached out to engage with scholarly communities, collaborated with leftist intellectuals, and fed information to journalists. This pattern, over time, resulted in growing linkages between circles of political activists and the academic field of Kurdish Studies. A period of intensive politicization in a number of European countries (in particular in Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, among others) shaped future academic interests and interactions between diaspora Kurdish community members and scholars.[40]

It is without question that Kurdish communities have been shaped by their experiences with expulsion and migration just as much as by their regional origins, social status, religious affiliations, cultural practices, and so forth. Kurdish cultural centers, social associations, and political organizations have long reflected levels of heterogeneity in the diaspora through varied ideological positions and cultural memberships. Yasemin Soysal observed early on that migrant populations, such as the Kurds in Europe, tended to bring with them an entire "organizational repertoire" that over time adjusted to the political sphere in the country of settlement.[41] For example, the ethno-nationalist umbrella group KON-KURD (Confederation of Kurdish Organizations in Europe) differed in its membership and mobilization strategies from the transnationally oriented KOMKAR (Confederation of Association from Kurdistan).[42] According to Bahar Başer, KOMKAR has been portrayed as a more "moderate" nationalist Kurdish organization in Europe, while KON-KURD maintained linkages with PKK close groups.[43]

Today, between 1.5 and 2 million Kurds live throughout Europe, with about 1 million Kurds dispersed in Germany.[44] The Kurdish diaspora initially expanded during the 1960s, creating sizable communities in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK.[45] Denise Natali asserted in 2007 that some 250,000 Kurds in Europe originated from Iraq, 50,000 Kurds hailed from Iran, and about 15,000 Kurds had arrived from Syria.[46] About 85 percent of Kurds living in Germany originated from Turkey, while Kurds in Scandinavia arrived mostly from Iran and Iraq.[47] Kurdish asylum seekers in Sweden, more highly educated in contrast to many Kurds in Germany, focused intensively on cultural and linguistic projects, in part because the Swedish state sponsored Kurdish academics, writers, and artists.[48] Khalid Khayati and Magnus Dahlstedt suggested that about 60,000–70,000 diaspora Kurds in Sweden were from "highly differentiated social background[s] and engage[d] in various skilled occupations in Sweden."[49] The Syrian civil war and the refugee crisis over the past several years have made it harder to determine the size and composition of various Kurdish diaspora communities in Europe. Thousands of Kurdish refugees fled without papers; some relied on human smugglers; and many have been forced to remain in the shadows as undocumented laborers across the continent. In particular, the number of Kurdish arrivals from Iraq and Syria has risen dramatically over the past five years (especially in Scandinavian countries and in Germany). In response to these realities, Kurdish Studies can be expected to embrace a host of new studies and methodologies related to migration and war.

Contemporary research clusters

Scholarly activity in all aspects related to Kurdish Studies rely on multiple, innovative, and at times fused methodologies. This is particularly the case in reference to ethno-nationalism, cultural and linguistic manifestations, and diaspora politics, which have enriched existing knowledge about Kurds in Europe, but also advanced new narratives and new ways of conceptualizing transnational influences on Kurdish communities.[50]

Innovative ideas that reach across disciplinary borders helped to reframe scholarly relationships by linking migration and ethnic identity, borders and political violence, feminism, media studies, environmentalism, and diaspora studies. Today, the most exciting opportunities for Kurdish researchers emerge through transnational and frequently online scholarly networks. Researchers from diverse academic fields increasingly share project ideas, announce conferences, and provide publication updates, while pursuing connections with colleagues in Kurdistan and beyond.

In 2009, Welat Zeydanlioğlu founded the Kurdish Studies Network (KSN), a global network for scholars interested in Kurdish Studies. Among his well-received work is a co-edited book (with Cengiz Güneş) on *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation, and Reconciliation*.[51] As an exceptionally important research network, KSN welcomes a multiplicity of projects related to Kurdish scholarly activities. Zeydanlioglu also serves as the managing editor of the *Kurdish Studies* journal, which was launched in 2013, while van Bruinessen is the journal's editor in chief. Comparative, transnational, and interdisciplinary work is frequently published in *Kurdish Studies*. While the journal initially faced serious financial threats, its funding appears to have stabilized in recent years. The stated editorial goal has been to

> revitalize and reorient research, scholarship and debates in the field of Kurdish studies in a multidisciplinary fashion covering a wide range of topics including, but not limited to, economics, history, society, gender, minorities, politics, health, law, environment, language, media, culture, arts, and education.

Kurdish Studies has published several innovative special issues, affirming its commitment to a wide variety of methodologies and geographic areas. In 2015, a special journal issue concentrated on the Kurdish diaspora (guest edited by Bahar Başer, Ann-Catrin Emanuelsson, and Mari Toivanen), and in 2016 on Yezidism (guest edited by Khanna Omarkhali and Philip Kreyenbroek).

The newly formed International Institute for the Study of Kurdish Societies (IISKS) in Germany also represents a network that links Kurdish Studies scholars with international scholars interested in all areas of Kurdistan. Founded as a non-governmental and non-political organization that emphasizes cultural and civilizational dynamics in Kurdish societies, the institute publishes reports and papers, and also organizes occasional conferences. Frankfurt's prestigious Goethe University agreed to host the society's first major conference in September 2017. In addition, IISKS also produces the *Journal of the Study of Kurdish Societies* (JSKS), which is an open access and peer-reviewed journal.

Contemporary Kurdish Studies is a field that can be expected to grow in the coming decades. The practice of establishing thematic research clusters at several European universities has produced strong collaborative relationships across recognized Kurdish Studies programs in Europe. It also appears that the KRG is committed to financially strengthening Kurdish Studies programs in the future to maintain relationships between a growing number of universities in Kurdistan and Kurdish Studies centers in Western Europe (and the United States). While renewed regional barriers are limiting access to archival sources and obstructing field work in some Kurdish communities, a wide range of methodological approaches have helped the field mature. This change allows younger researchers to gain entry into the field, especially since the KRG welcomes international students through its own articulated academic networks. Kurdish Studies has entered a dynamic phase as it has fully committed to an interdisciplinary and transnational outlook for the future.

Notes

1 A similar observation can be made about the state of research related to ethnicity and nationalism as a recent special issue of *Ethnopolitics* has demonstrated. Guest editors Erika Forsberg, Johanna Kristin Birnir, and Christian Davenport focused on the state of the field and its new directions for research in *Ethnopolitics* 16, 1 (2017).
2 For information, see "Kurdish Studies Summer School," The University of Leicester at www2.le.ac.uk/departments/sociology/research/conferences-and-workshops/kurdish-studies-summer-school.
3 Ipek Demir, "Battling with *Memleket* in London: The Kurdish Diaspora's Engagement with Turkey," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38, 5 (2012): 815–831. Also, Ipek Demir, "Rethinking Cosmopolitanism, Multiculturalism and Diaspora via the Diasporic Cosmopolitanism of Europe's Kurds," in *European Cosmopolitanisms: Colonial Histories and Postcolonial Societies*, eds. Gurminder K. Bhambra and John Narayan (London: Routledge, 2017), 121–135.
4 A few recent journal articles indicate this pattern. For example, Bilgin Ayata, "Kurdish Transnational Politics and Turkey's Changing Kurdish Policy: The Journey of Kurdish Broadcasting from Europe to Turkey," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 4 (2011): 523–533; Wendelmoet Hamelink and Bariş Hanifi, " Dengbêjs on Borderlands: Borders and the State as Seen through the Eyes of Kurdish Singer-Poets," *Kurdish Studies* 2, 1 (2014): 34–60; Vera Eccarius-Kelly, "The Imaginary Kurdish Museum: Ordinary Kurds, Narrative Nationalisms and Collective Memory," *Kurdish Studies* 3, 2 (2015): 172–191.
5 My apologies to Kurdish Studies scholars in Central/Eastern Europe and Russia for the limitations set by this chapter. For example, a very active Kurdish Studies group emerged in 2008 within the Department of Iranian Studies in the Institute of Oriental Studies of Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. The program is led by Dr. Joanna Bocheńska.
6 Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Studies in Western and Central Europe," in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kurdische Studien* (Wiener Verlag für Sozialforschung, 2014), 18–96. Joyce Blau, "Kurdish Language," *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Online edition (2009). Available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kurdish-language-ii-history-of-kurdish-studies. Clémence Scalbert-Yücel and Marie Le Ray, "Knowledge, Ideology and Power. Deconstructing Kurdish Studies," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 5 (2006). Available at https://ejts.revues.org/777 In addition, see Michael M. Gunter, *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).
7 van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Studies in Western and Central Europe," 20–28.
8 Blau, "Kurdish Language".
9 van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Studies in Western and Central Europe," 25–27.
10 Ely Banister Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise* (Boston, MA: Small, Maynard and Company, 1910).
11 For details about Edmonds's life and work, see the Edmonds Collection housed at St. Anthony's College www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/MEChandlists/GB165-0095-Cecil-Edmonds-Collection.pdf.
12 More information is available at www.soas.ac.uk/nme/languages/languages-of-the-near-middle-east-at-soas-kurdish.html.
13 Christine Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan* (London: Curzon Press, 2001).
14 More information about the Kurdish Studies Centre at Exeter is available at http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iais/research/centres/kurdish/about/.
15 Marianna Charountaki, *The Kurds and US Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2010).
16 Information about the Kurdish Studies Program at the University of Leicester is available at www2.le.ac.uk/news/blog/2017-archive/march/new-international-studies-unit-launch-at-our-university.
17 Roger Lescot (ed. and tr.), *Mamê Alan, Epopée kurde* (Paris, 1999).
18 Jordi Tejel, "Scholarship on the Kurds in Syria: A History and State of the Art Assessment," *Syrian Studies Association Newsletter* 16, 1 (2011). Available at https://ojcs.siue.edu/ojs/index.php/ssa/article/viewFile/1996/491.
19 ibid.
20 van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Studies in Western and Central Europe," 28.
21 Information about INALCO is available at www.euni.de/tools/jobpopup.php?lang=en&option=showJobs&jobid=453490&jobtyp=5&jtyp=0&university=National+Institute+of+Oriental+Language+and+Civilization%7C+University+of+Paris+(INALCO)&country=FR&sid=62893&name=Kurdish+Language+Course.
22 Oskar Mann, "Archäologisches aus Persien," *Globus* 83 (1903): 327–331.

23 van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Studies in Western and Central Europe," 21, fn. 6.
24 Mojtaba Kolivand, *Persische und kurdische Reiseberichte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014).
25 Oskar Mann, *Kurdische und Persische Forschungen IV.II.1–2: Die Mundart der Mukri-Kurden* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1906–1909).
26 For further information, see the Freie Universität Berlin's Iran Studies department at www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/iranistik/mitarbeiter/lektoren/omar/index.html.
27 For information about the Universität Göttingen, see www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gttingen-university-of-history-of-iranian-studies.
28 Khanna Omarkhali, "On the Structure of the Yezidi Clan and Tribal System and Its Terminology among the Yezidis of the Caucasus," *Journal of Kurdish Studies* 6 (2008): 104–119. This journal was published by Peeters and should not be confused with the more recent *Kurdish Studies* by Transnational Press London.
29 See *Kurdish Studies* 4, 2 (2016): 122–130, 197–207, and 148–154. Special Issue: Yezidism and Yezidi Studies in the early 21st century.
30 Information about the Universität Erfurt is available at www.uni-erfurt.de/staatswissenschaften/mustafa-barzani-arbeitsstelle/.
31 UN News Centre, "Turkey: UN Report Details Allegations of Serious Rights Violations in Country's Southeast," March 10, 2017. Available at www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56330#.WMQn0Wwiy1s.
32 Ibid.
33 Ava Homa, "UN Special Rapporteur: Kurds Almost Half of Political Prisoners in Iran," *Kurdistan 24*, March 8, 2017. Available at www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/7145642c-2a65-4208-937e-17a91cec66d5/UN-Special-Rapporteur--Kurds-almost-half-of-political-prisoners-in-Iran.
34 See Bülent Küçük and Ceren Özselçuk, "The Rojava Experience: Possibilities and Challenges of Building a Democratic Life," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115, 1 (2016): 184–196.
35 Till F. Paasche, "Syrian and Iraqi Kurds: Conflict and Cooperation," *Middle East Policy* 22, 1 (2015): 77–88. Also, Si Sheppard, "What the Syrian Kurds have Wrought," *The Atlantic*, October 25, 2016 at www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/10/kurds-rojava-syria-isis-iraq-assad/505037/.
36 For more information about the language debate in Kurdistan, see the text of Hassan Ghazi's 2009 talk at Exeter available at www.kurdishacademy.org/?q=node/582.
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PART II

Early Kurdish history

3

THE KURDISH EMIRATES

Obstacles or precursors to Kurdish nationalism?

Michael Eppel

The main sociopolitical frameworks in Kurdistan in the premodern era were the tribes and the tribal, quasi-feudal principalities or emirates headed by emirs (or mirs). The emirates were ruled by strong Kurdish tribal dynasties, which dominated their tribes and subjected weaker tribes and non-tribal populations to their control, sometimes creating extensive supra-tribal political units. The major Kurdish tribal dynasties were the Hasanwahids (Hasanwiya) (959–1095), Banu Annaz (Annazids) (990–1116), Shaddadid (951–1075), and Banu Marwan (Marwanids) (984–1083).

Although the Kurdish emirates experienced varying degrees of autonomy, they continued to be vassals of successive Muslim overlords – the Abbasid, Seljuk, Turkmen, Ottoman, and Iranian (Safavid and Qajar) states and dynasties. From the tenth century, the Kurdish tribes and emirates were exposed to the growing pressure of migration from the east of Turkish tribes. In the eleventh century, the Seljuk sultanate arose a major force in the Muslim world. The Kurdish emirates and dynasties either submitted to the Seljuk rulers or were incorporated into their political arenas. The prominent Kurdish dynasty that won renown as Muslim fighters under Seljuk rule was the Ayyubi dynasty of Salah al-Din al Ayyubi (1137–1193), known as Saladin.[1]

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Kurdish emirates suffered from the destruction inflicted on the region by waves of Mongol conquests. From the mid-fourteenth century until the end of the fifteenth century, Kurdistan was dominated by Turkmen tribal confederations ruled by the "White Sheep" (*Aqqoyunlu)* and "Black Sheep" (*Karaqqoyunlu*) tribal dynasties.[2]

Their weak control of Kurdistan enabled the Kurdish emirates to recover. The relations between the Turkmen military tribal elites and Kurdish tribal society were essentially unstable. The Turkmen rulers accepted the autonomous, and at times even independent, status of the Kurdish tribes and emirates, which, in turn, accepted the Turkmen. Prominent among the Kurdish principalities was the Hasankeyf emirate, ruled by descendants of the Ayyubi dynasty in the service of Turkmen rulers.

During the fifteenth century, conflict broke out between the two Turkmen confederations. It was joined by the Kurdish emirates and tribes, many of which were allies, and indeed vassals, of the Black Sheep. Even in the early stages of its rise to power, in the years 1420–1436, the White Sheep confederation was forced to fight the Kurdish tribes and