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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the close relationship among members of Iraqi Kurdish culture and society and emerging nationalist/ modernist political structures currently in opposition to the Husain regime in Baghdad. In addition to providing updated information regarding various aspects of Kurdish society, this work supports the view that political actors and systems are primarily a product of, and subsequently supported by, socio-cultural factors such as tradition, environment and religion above and beyond the generally recognized economic and poli-historical influences.

Following a ~~highly~~ descriptive portrait of Kurdish ethnicity and political structure, I introduce what I feel are enduring social patterns in Kurdish society. These "patterns" of personal and political relationships which have long flourished in tribal societies like the Kurds can be seen still in Kurdish national leadership. One model, "saint-disciple", appears to render aptly not only Kurdish patterns of norms and social order, but much of Near Eastern and Islamic North Africa societies. In short, this thesis examines primordial ties within Kurdish society in transition from traditional to modernist. One system does not merely supplant the other, ~~however~~ but rather ~~instead~~ adds to and adjusts the former according to the needs of society leaving underlying relations among social groups unchanged. Keywords ;

(+; p.A)

A CASE STUDY OF CULTURAL ETHNICITY AND ENDURING SOCIAL PATTERNS: THE KURDS OF IRAQ

RICHARD PAUL DONOVAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF PRINCETON
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OF
MASTER OF ARTS

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BY THE PROGRAM IN NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

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A CASE STUDY OF CULTURAL ETHNICITY AND ENDURING SOCIAL PATTERNS: THE KURDS OF IRAQ

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Beyond what may be apparent from this thesis is the much needed advice and guidance provided by Professors L. Carl Brown and Norman Itzkowitz during the course of my studies at this institution. It is to their credit that most of the successes which I have enjoyed during the past two years belong.

Last, but certainly not least, I must give special thanks to my wife Katherine and sons, Michael and Jonathan for their patience and support throughout this period and willing acceptance of Kurdish culture and society into their lives this past year.

FOR KATHERINE TAYLOR

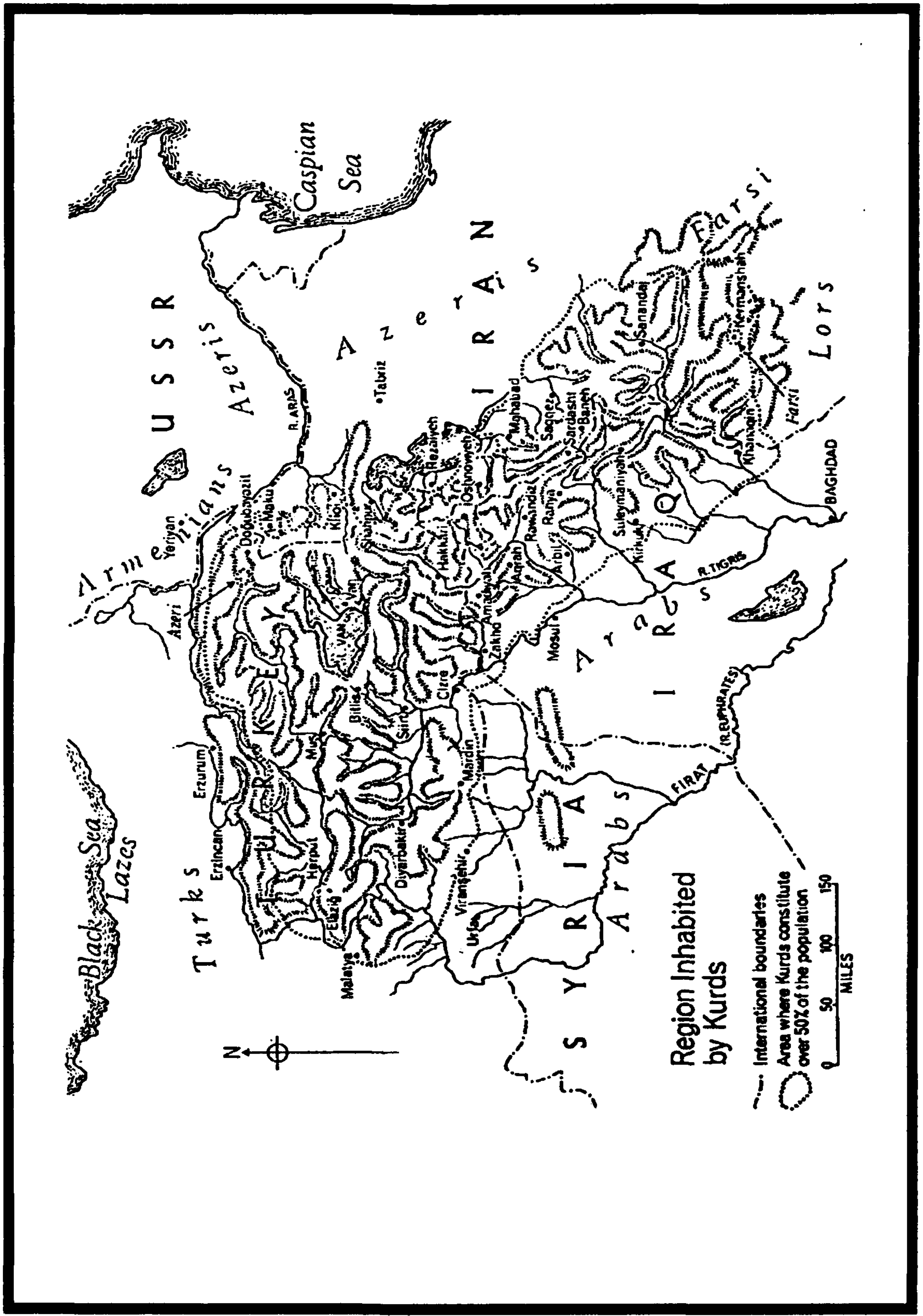
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Figure 1 Kurdistan Source: H. Arfa, *The Kurds*, p.ii.

INTRODUCTION

The typical outside observer today views the term Middle East to be synonymous with indiscriminate violence, endless turmoil, and religious fanaticism. In spite of enormous government efforts to stimulate economic development in the region to foster social progress and political stability, local politics in the Middle East continues to operate under a system of traditional customs, values, and cultural norms which contrasts with the Western perspective of efficient bureaucratic governing models considered representative of modern industrial nation-states. In contrast to the structured parliamentary procedure and open elections of the Anglo-American tradition that place individuals in leadership roles, prevalent actors in Middle Eastern politics often amass self-importance and personal power primarily by means of populist ideology, religious followings or charismatic influences. Once in power, these "strong leaders" often maintain their positions by authoritarian means. Opposition to the government is extremely restricted, and freedoms of speech and the press prevalent in the Western tradition are curtailed. To the casual observer it seems that this state of affairs in today's world is an anomaly from rational or civilized behavior, and a sign of backwardness. One example of what I feel is a widespread impression of Middle Eastern politics is expressed in an opening paragraph of an article by a Senior Research Associate at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies:

> For most of 1989 the Middle East languished outside the mainstream of global change. Stubbornly wedded to timeworn arguments about primordial conflicts, the region increasingly seemed a backwater of intellectual ossification and political stagnation. Toward the end of the year there were some tentative signs that Middle Eastern actors might yet transcend their pasts, but those changes were slow, hesitant and easily reversible. The Middle East remained a challenge to the rest of the world, but it was also in danger of becoming a mere bore.[1]

Although I am in complete agreement that this region remains a challenge to the rest of the world, I feel that the real challenge for non-Middle Easterners is to acquire a better understanding of the dynamics of personalized politics, preferred leadership traits and the primordial ties which tend to dominate decisions. One way to gain better insight to the way politics and culture "hang together" is to examine the particulars of individual ethnic groups in the region.

During the past century various religious, racial and cultural minority groups throughout the Middle East have taken a stand against efforts by central governments to impose their authority and culture within set political borders that ignore historical or social experience. In several cases the acceptance of this domination would mean the abandonment of the group's cultural heritage, language, and familiar social structure. This is in direct contrast to the loose administrative structure of the Ottoman period which recognized the many cultural differences within the Empire and permitted a more autonomous and decentralized existence for several hundred years. Presently demanding the recognition for political rights and cultural autonomy, these ethnic groups have learned to express their dissatisfaction by engaging in public demonstrations, popular uprisings, and armed resistance. Of these populist movements the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation has garnered the most attention, and remains the central issue and stumbling block toward peace and stability in the area. There are other, however, important issues in the region which have received far less news coverage and political interest. Not the least of these concerns is the continual saga of struggle and resistance of the Kurds.

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[1] Mark A. Heller, "The Middle East: Out of Step with History", *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 69, No. 1, 1990, p.152.

The 18-20 million people who identify themselves as Kurds are located in the region known as Kurdistan, now subsumed within the five nation-states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Soviet Union. Since the late nineteenth century, various tribal groups and resistance movements led by a variety of prominent religious and political leaders have emerged under the dual banners of Kurdish nationalism and cultural identity. They have done so in response to the forced integration and centralization policies of various national governments controlling territory which these leaders maintain belong to the Kurdish people. This opposition to government policy over political and ethnic rights, and control over natural resources located in Kurdistan, has resulted in periodic armed clashes and unremitting mutual animosity between the Kurdish tribes and the dominant ethnic group in Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

For the past hundred years a handful of missionaries, military officers, and curiosity seekers have visited the lands of the "wild Koords", and have written detailed but often romanticized descriptions of their travels. Nevertheless, knowledge regarding Kurdish society remains a limited field of study in which solid and reliable data is rare. Much controversy abounds still among scholars regarding basic facets of Kurdish ethnography, including population figures and composition, ethnic origin, cultural influences and local politics. Compared to other ethnic groups of similar size, very few sociological or cultural studies have been undertaken due to the limited access to the region, and the relative obscurity of these tribal peoples. Aside from the many geopolitical studies that focus on nationalist aspirations of the Kurd's, which are usually written to support one political position or another, serious scholarship concerning the structure and leadership roles of Kurdish society, and the beliefs and traditions which maintain it is rare.

This thesis will examine the social organization and patterns of authority in Iraqi Kurdistan and present a view of Kurdish society as it exists today. It is, in short, a study of how contemporary personal and political relations are products of a cultural group's historical experience and primordial influences such as patterns of behavior, values and systems of belief. By illustrating underlying elements of the Kurdish experience, I seek to explain why the pattern of communal identity and charismatic leadership traits especially common to Kurdish society persists in the face of forced detribalization and new regional economies. I will do this by first portraying a general sense of Kurdish identity and social structures which together create this community. In Chapter Two, I will describe various methods by which relations are maintained and controlled within Kurdish society, and how, within a tribal or local population social stratification develops. The final chapter looks beyond regional associations and examines the development of supra-tribal leadership and modern political leaders. Here I will also provide a model and rationale to explain the fortune of "charismatic leadership" and the tribulations of developing a consensual national Kurdish polity.

Where possible I support my statements from previous ethnographic studies of the society, or the various biographies written over the past one and a half centuries. But, in addition I draw conclusions from studies of similarly structured tribal societies and from available material on Kurdish literature, and public statements by the Kurdish leadership. What is often more revealing than what these leaders say, though, are the decisions and actions taken.

The major theme which I will develop in this paper is that despite the changes in the physical structure of the tribe and conditions of the society over the past century, through both outside and internal forces, primordial tribal social patterns and perspectives remain and play a particularly important role in Kurdish political actions to this day. Stemming from long-held relationships between those in leadership roles and followers, and enforced by religious, geographical and historical influences, these patterns are replicated in daily encounters and institutionalized into national politics.

I have limited this study to the Kurdish tribes of Iraq for three major reasons. The first is the greater amount of and what I believe are more substantive studies available on this particular region. This has grown out of initial British interest in the area prior to the end of World War I, and the subsequent regional importance of the territory due to its strategic central location in the Middle East and its development as a major area of natural resources. The second is the fact that the area of Suleymania in southern Kurdistan has historically played the role of the cultural and literary center of the Kurdish people. In this area the autonomous Kurdish "state" under the Baban Dynasty flourished from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Here too, resides the highest concentration of Kurdish residents in Iraq. Finally, of those states in which the Kurdish population forms a significant percentage, it is only in Iraq, where Kurds make up the largest portion of the population, that the Kurdish nationalist movements have exerted enough political leverage against the central government to achieve Kurdish political participation within the government. They have also managed official recognition of a separate Kurdish culture and language. This is not the case neither in Turkey nor in Iran where the government has been able to exert sufficient control over the Kurdish population and political movements to prevent the formation of significant military or political opposition.

The obvious limitations to this study are my inability to acquire and examine several of the foreign language sources dealing with Kurdish society, and the fact that I have never had the opportunity to live among the Kurdish villagers and observe the culture first hand. I do believe, however, that my materials have enabled me to provide an initial, conceptual framework for a more extensive study.

Since the end of World War I, and the subsequent division of Kurdistan following the Treaty of Sèvres, a series of Kurdish rebellions and resistance movements throughout the region have developed against the current heirs to these lands. Two general statements can be made regarding this tenacious problem. First, government policies designed to assimilate the Kurdish population into Turkish, Persian, or Arab cultures have failed to eradicate the Kurdish identity. Second, in spite of the enormous efforts exerted by the various states to suppress the movements, Kurdish resistance and demands for autonomy have risen again and again. Although often uniting on a temporary basis against the common foe, few of the tribal groups and villages have been able to put aside for long their seemingly endless divisions and internal conflict. Through it all, only a few major leaders have emerged to develop a broad-based following and support for what the Kurds view as a struggle for cultural and political freedom. If any sense of widely accepted Kurdish leadership within Iraq can be said to have existed in this century, it has come primarily from only three families, the Barzinci, Barzani and Talabanis.

The 3 million Kurds of Iraq constitute its largest ethnic minority group and live primarily in the hill and mountain villages of the north and northeastern part of the country. The intermittent fighting of these peoples against the assimilation policies of the Baghdad government has made this region a virtual battle-zone between government troops and pro-government tribes on one side, and rebellious Kurdish forces on the other. The fighting has persisted until the present time and has escalated to such a degree in the past three years that the government has resorted to forced relocation of the population, wholesale destruction of several thousand villages, and has employed the use of chemical nerve and blister agents against the insurgent tribes and villagers along the northern and eastern borders.

GEOGRAPHY

Although Kurdistan has figured on many world maps, the "land of the Kurds" has no clearly defined or recognized border and some difficulties arise when references are made to this area. The term should be viewed in the framework of how it is utilized and with what underlying purpose or intent. Thus, a linguistic and ethnic representation of Kurdistan, which I will rely on, provides a more contiguous and historical aspect that in general depicts the traditional areas in which a majority of the Kurds have commonly settled, speak and consider themselves to be Kurdish. This does not include the areas where the population has been dispersed in recent history and become integrated with another culture. The political concept of Kurdistan has evolved over time as a reflection of Kurdish aspirations, great power designs, and the prevailing political atmosphere. Obviously, it is normally in the best interests of partisans of the Kurdish movement to present as large a picture of Kurdistan as possible. In the various issues of *Bulletin du Centre d'Études Kurdes*, which were published in Paris since 1948, Kurdistan is shown covering a massive land area from İskenderün (Alexandretta) on the Mediterranean, to as far north-east as Kars in Anatolia, and southward to the Persian Gulf (see figure 2).

In addition, each state government with a large Kurdish population has adopted an administrative concept of its

Kurdish region, regardless if a separate identity of the Kurdish people is not yet recognized. In the cases of Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, these areas are well within the geographical representation and are much smaller in size. The administrative region of Kördestan, or as it is officially known, Sina (Sanandaj), in Iran is limited to a small area centralized within the main Kurdish population region whose limits actually encompass two additional provinces.[2] Turkey has refused officially to recognize the existence of a separate culture within its borders and refers to the Kurds as "Mountain" or "Eastern" Turks. The different nature of the "Eastern Provinces", however is such that several provinces where Kurdish insurgency continues to exist have been placed under "extraordinary measures" controlled by the military and gendarme forces.

From a geographical perspective, Kurdistan is found in the heartland of Asia Minor. This population region extends in a crescent-shaped fashion from the headwaters of the Euphrates River in central Anatolia, moving past Lake Van in eastern Turkey, to Lake Urmia (Rezayieh) in Iran and turns in a southerly direction as far as Kermanshah. The inside edge of this "crescent" runs as far south as northern Syria and moves due east until reaching the Tigris River in Iraq. Continuing to the south-east, the line follows the river

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[2] Adela Krikavova, "A Contribution to the Question of the Formation of the Kurdish Nation," *Archiv Orientalni* 47, (1979): p.146, note 2.

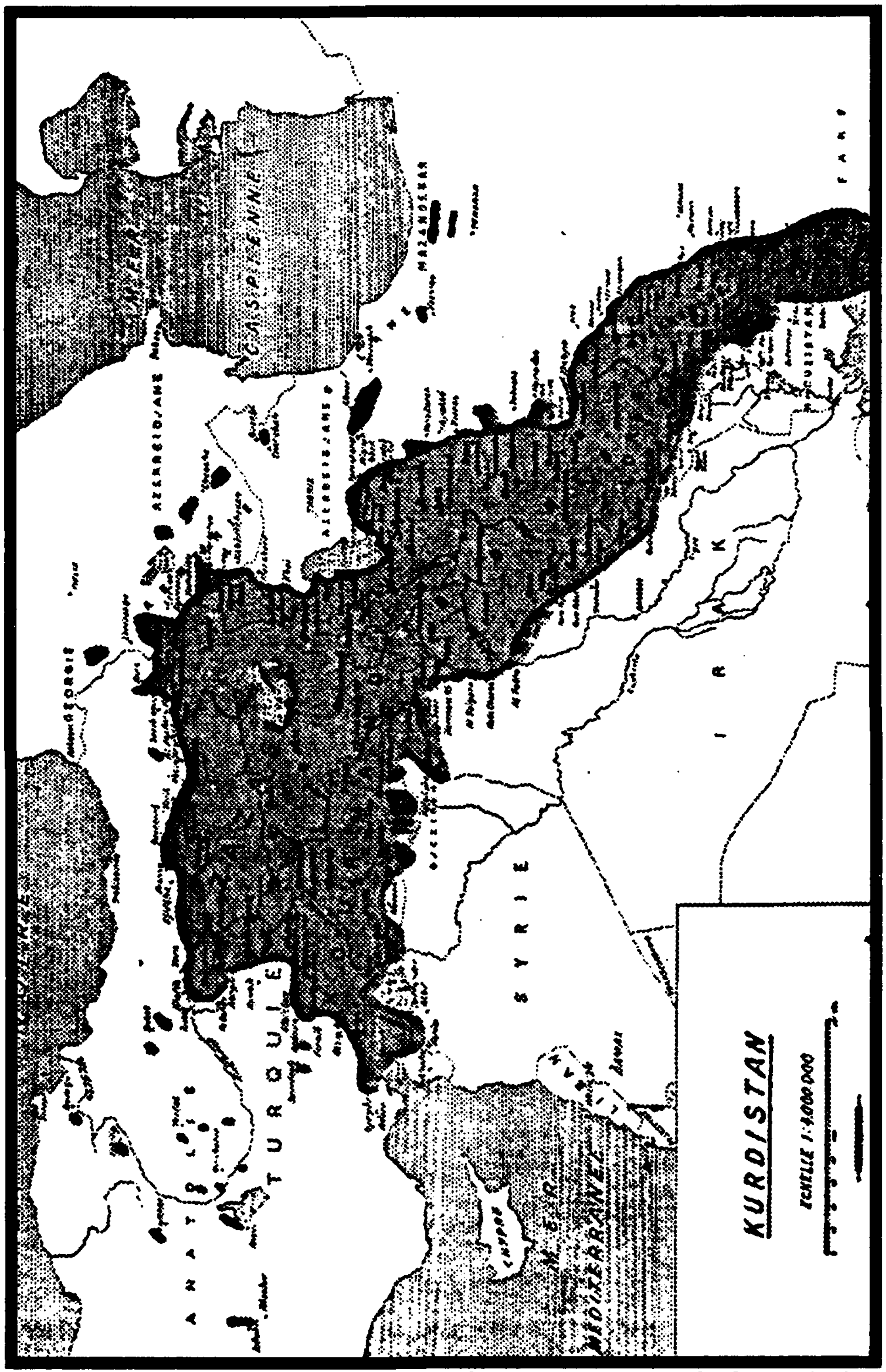
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Figure 2 __Limits of Kurdistan as Envisioned by Nationalists.__ Source: *Bulletin du Centre d'Études Kurdes*, Paris, 1950, p.29.

gradually turning eastward again to Kermanshah. The northern range of this Kurdish area reaches from Zara in north-central Turkey eastward into Soviet Armenia and turns south just west of Lake Urmia, finally ending at Kermanshah (see figure 1).

In Iraq, Kurdish populations are found primarily in seven ***muhafazat*** (governorates) in the extreme north and the north-western section of the country. Four of these administrative areas, Suleymania, Arbil, Dohuk and Kirkuk are located entirely within geographically defined Kurdistan. An autonomous region has been created out of the first three of these governorates which effectively isolates the officially recognized (Iraq) Kurdish zone from the major urban centers of Mosul and Kirkuk. In addition to several isolated pockets of Kurds throughout the state, the regions of Nineveh (Mosul), Diyala, and Wasit have large Kurdish populations.[3] Kurdistan as a whole can be divided into a northern and southern region with separate language dialects and cultures. Iraqi Kurdistan forms the junction of these two regions and for centuries served as a buffer zone between the competing Ottoman and Persian Empires. One effect of this central position is that the Kurdish tribes north of a Mosul-Rowunduz line speak the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish, while those to the south of this line in Iraq speak a Sorani (Suleymani) dialect.[4]

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[3] Ismet Cheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq", in *People Without a Country*, Gerard Chaliand, 1980 edition: p.154.

[4] See William Eagleton's book *An Introduction To Kurdish Rugs* for information regarding Kurdish tribes.

Beginning in the plains of the Lower Mesopotamia region just to the southwest of Iraqi Kurdistan, the Hamrin Mountains form a natural barrier between the Arab populations and the Kurds. The low foothills gradually give way to a series of parallel limestone ridges, stretching from the southeast to the northwest, each higher than the last until merging with the Zagros Mountain chain in the northeast which forms most of the Iranian border and connects with the Eastern Taurus system, forming the Turkish border to the north and northwest. The elevation in this generally hilly land ranges from the 12001 foot high peak east of Rowanduz, to the low areas in the plains. The province of Suleymania at 2750 feet occupies a median position in overall elevation and is the most populated region of Iraqi Kurdistan. Through this region flow the Tigris River and its tributaries the Greater and Lesser Zab Rivers, the Diyala and many smaller streams which irrigate this region.[5]

The topography of the land within Iraq ranges from the desert areas in the west to the riverine east and north-central regions. Agriculture in these areas is dependent upon irrigated water and provides limited crops due to highly saline soil and flooding early in the growing season. The now partly wooded mountains and valleys of Kurdistan in north-east Iraq however, receive ample rainfall and provide a fertile, albeit rocky soil, aiding the cultivation of corn and barley in addition to fruits, vegetables and tobacco, the major cash crop. Crop harvests in the Kurdistan region, which makes up only 17% (74,000 sq. km.) of the total land area of Iraq,[6] typically provide a much larger proportion of the country's total produce.

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[5] C. J. Edmonds, "The Kurds of Iraq", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. II, Winter 1957, No. 1, p.53.

The major natural mineral resource in Kurdistan is, of course, oil. Kirkuk became the first commercial oil field in Iraq in 1927 and remains the state's largest and primary deposit. Lesser deposits have been developed at Chemchemal (between Kirkuk and Suleymania) and the Ain-Zaleh/Butmah area north of Mosul. In addition to oil, various other minerals have been mined in Kurdistan including limestone, iron ore, copper and chromium.[7]

GEOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND

The partitioning of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War created several nation-states in the Middle East which were fashioned more to serve the interests of the allied powers than those of the indigenous population. As the region was divided into spheres of influence by the victors, the imposed peace treaties and agreements which were to follow enabled the Western nations to apply various forms of mandate rule and administration in the territories that in the past were under jurisdiction of the ***Sublime Porte***. Although ethnic and tribal conflict in the area had certainly existed prior to the Mandate period, the definitive arrival of the great powers in the Fertile Crescent region brought, through new technology and "Western ideas", the tools of war and duplicity which would eventually turn against the neo-colonists.

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[6] Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq", *People Without a Country*, p.157.

[7] Thomas Bois, "Kurds, Kurdistan", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1986, p.444.

This latest expansion of international influence was unique and significant in creating new disruptive influences for several reasons:

1) For the first time the great powers of Europe had become directly involved in the political affairs of the interior Fertile Crescent region.

2) In contrast to other Middle Eastern areas where Europe had committed itself, the overwhelming majority of the local population in this region was non-Christian.

3) The relatively new concept of a concerted effort to impose an orderly, and "rational" division of territory was to be used to share the spoils in the region[8].

4) The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire was occurring at a time of growing nationalism based on ethnic, linguistic, and religious ties.

By the end of 1918 and the collapse of the Ottoman armies, Britain had occupied much of what would become Iraq. The inherent difficulty of creating a unified region and of administering a mutually satisfactory arrangement for the Kurdish population in Mosul vilayet soon became apparent to the British. An ad hoc arrangement by the British to establish several semi-autonomous Kurdish provinces under the leadership of ***Shaikh*** Mahmoud Barzinci of Suleymania fell apart after six months when the Shaikh rebelled against British imposed restrictions.[9] At this time the entire area seemed to be in utter chaos; from the battles between the Bolsheviks and Don Cossacks in the Caucasus, to the internal turmoil in Turkey following the Ottoman military defeat and occupation by foreign armies, and the ever-more complicated situation of alliances and intrigue among the Kurdish tribes of Mosul. In due course the Great Powers found themselves in the dichotomous position of satisfying strategic and imperialistic interests in this central and newly occupied area, while at the same time attempting to adhere to the highly laudable principles of self-determination that were accepted in conferences by the same governments.[10]

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[8] As L. Carl Brown points out in *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous Game*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p.88, no regional political system emerged from these efforts and irrespective of intentions, no single state, within the area or outside, could claim a hegemony of power.

On 20 August 1920 the Treaty of Sèvres was signed, which gave authority for a commission of Ally members to "...prepare for local autonomy in those regions where the Kurdish element is preponderant..." (Article 62). The powers also agreed that if the population of the area called upon the League of Nations within one year demonstrating that the majority of the population wishes to be independent of the Ottoman Empire then

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Edmonds, "The Kurds of Iraq", p.57.

[10] David McDowall, *The Kurds*, Report No. 23, The Minority Rights Group, 1985: p.11.

this will be granted and "...no objection shall be raised by the main allied powers should the Kurds living in that part of Kurdistan at present included in the vilayet of Mosul seek to become citizens of the newly independent Kurdish state." (Article 64).

What appeared to be a closed agenda was thrown askew over the next three years by indecision within a divided British government,[11] war-time promises to create an independent Arab state, and not the least, disunity among the Kurdish groups themselves, some of whom sought autonomy and others who wanted to remain under Ottoman authority. But perhaps the most influential force which was to cause the "Mosul Problem" to remain unresolved for at least the next six years[12] was the rapid and dramatic rise of Mustafa Kemal in Anatolia and the military campaigns in 1921-22 that brought him to power and forced the renegotiation of the Treaty of Sèvres by the Great Powers conference at Lausanne which invalidated the previously imposed treaty.

Kurdish nationalists today nostalgically refer to the "golden opportunity" lost during the years between Sèvres and

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[11] For a good documented account of this period based upon the many meetings and memorandums between the various ministries and local political officers illustrating the indecisiveness of the British to either create an autonomous Kurdish state or to incorporate Mosul vilayet into the state of Iraq because of security concerns and oil interests, see Mim Kemâl Öke's *Musul Meselesi Kronolojisi (1918-1926)*, İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1987.

[12] Most of Mosul vilayet was assigned to Iraq on December 16, 1925, under protest by Turkey.

Lausanne to achieve nationhood.[13] As Edmund Ghareeb writes, "The recurring and unfulfilled promises led many Kurds to feel - as they have many times since - that they were expendable tools in the hands of the great powers".[14] By July 1937 Turkey, Iran, and Iraq had signed a non-aggression pact, the Treaty of Sa‘dabad, to enable the group to offer greater resistance to outside imperialist powers. The joint recognition of mutual borders at this point and the new degree of cooperation between these states to settle the common Kurdish problem, acted to further isolate Kurds of one state from another, thus serving as another point of frustration for Kurdish aspirations.

Shaikh Mahmoud continued to be a major figure in the Kurdish political events raising several spirited, but unsuccessful rebellions against the British until the early 1930s. Not satisfied with the limited region the British had offered to him in 1933 he proclaimed himself "King of Kurdistan", to reign over an area which he considered to extend from Suleymania to the Hamrin Mountains. After a period of detention, he escaped from house arrest in 1941 one last time during the Rashid Ali pro-Axis coup, hoping to gain the support of the British in his calling for a general uprising against the Arabs.

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[13] A second incident the Kurdish nationalists were to experience demonstrating the weakness of written promises was illustrated in 1932 when Iraq presented the League of Nations with a document agreeing to the reaffirmation of minority rights in order to be considered for admission into the League.

[14] Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, pp.6-7.

During the early 1930s another prominent family entered the dispute with the British supported Iraqi government and joined the Kurdish rebellion, Shaikh Ahmad and his younger brother Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani. Like the Barzinci family, the Barzanis represented the traditional "shaikhly" establishment, providing a combination of powerful ***agha*** authority and charismatic leadership derived from their family's prominence in the ***Naqshbandi sufi order.***[15] By 1944 Mustafa Barzani had become a powerful military leader in northeast Iraq and had built an effective force against the Iraqi army. With his combative skills and faithful tribal following he provided the leadership and military might as one of four appointed Generals to protect the short-lived Mahabad (Iran) Kurdish Republic in 1945 which was being supported by Soviet equipment and influence. Upon the Kurdish Republic's collapse one year later and with few viable options, General Barzani took refuge in the Soviet Union staying for eleven years.

With the understanding that a new spirit of cooperation was to develop between the Kurds and the Iraqi government, Barzani returned to Iraq in 1958 and established a close relationship with the new leader of the July coup, General Abd al-Karim Qasim, and through pragmatic compromises he was able to gain legal recognition for the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Iraq. Mustafa Barzani soon became the predominate force in the blossoming Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq while attacking anti-government tribes and groups opposed to his power and the cult of personality which had developed.

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[15] McDowall, *The Kurds*, p.19. The following account of Mustafa Barzani is also taken from this work.

Although a new constitution in 1961 provided the Kurds unprecedented rights compared to the status of Kurds in Iran, Syria or Turkey, Barzani sensed the government would not willingly accede to further demands, and he and his followers again began to fight the government forces. By 1964, Qasim was overthrown, as was the Ba'th party which had come to power briefly after Qasim. Barzani then struck a new but unsuccessful deal with the new government. Concessions by Barzani in this deal brought about a major rift between Barzani and Jalal Talabani, the leader of the KDP Politburo, who left in exile to Syria. War continued between the government forces and the Kurds until a declaration of peace on 11 March 1970[16] was agreed by Barzani and the new Ba'th leadership. By 1974, with the transition period of the 11 March agreement over, this agreement had completely fallen apart as was to happen with the Autonomy Law of 1974, which in fact offered less than the 1970 agreement. Both settlements, however, were far more extensive than the Kurds of any other state had received. With Iranian support and promises given by the United States,

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[16] See *The Implementation of March 11 Manifesto*, Iraqi Ministry of Information.

Barzani once more engaged the Iraqi regular forces in battle. By Spring, 1975 Barzani's faithful ***Peshmerga*** forces[17] (those who face death) and the Kurdish militia were holding the Iraqi forces to a standstill with the support of Iranian artillery. Then, the Algiers Agreement in March 1975 signed by the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein allowed for the immediate cessation of Iranian arms support to the Kurds forcing up to 250,000 Kurds to flee the attacking Iraqi forces. For Barzani the struggle was over. He was permitted entry into the United States and in March 1979 died at a military hospital in Washington D.C. of cancer.

Since the September 1980 Iraqi invasion of Iran, the relations between the regional governments and the Iraqi Kurdish movement have become extremely complicated. The Baghdad government has continued to maintain the loyalty of a number of Kurdish tribes during the conflict. In addition, Kurdish irregular forces have been enlisted to assist the Iraqi army in military operations against the rebels in Suleymania, Kirkuk and Arbil.[18] After Mustafa Barzani left Iraq, Jalal Talabani returned to Iraq, founding an opposition Kurdish party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), in 1976. These two groups, the new PUK and the old KDP (under the leadership of sons Idris and Mas'ud Barzani) refused to combine their resistance efforts in Iraq, and until 1986 operated against each other. Barzani's KDP tried to replay the Iranian card by fighting with Iran's Revolutionary Guards against Iraqi regular forces in north-east Iraq, and eventually against the Iranian Kurdish Democratic Party (KDPI) and ***Komaleh***[19] guerrillas which were backed by Iraq. On the other hand, Talabani's PUK developed an understanding with the Iraqi regime preventing a serious Kurdish movement to develop during these years. In both cases, the Kurdish "patriot" leaders have suffered from charges of consorting with enemies of the populations which they claim to represent. Although doubts of Talabani's allegiance to its political aims remained among members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party due to his previous alliance with the Ba'th government, by the end of 1986 the KDP and the PUK joined forces against the Baghdad government which had embarked upon a new a broader policy of "systematically dynamiting and levelling all but the largest towns in Kurdistan"... "destroying a centuries-old Kurdish way of life."[20]

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[17] *Peshmerga* is a long used term implying the willingness to give one's life, figuratively or literally, for either a person or goal. Its usage dates back to at least the 1920s when Kurdish forces fought the Turkish Republican army. Correspondence with Mehrdad Izady, Program Associate, The Kurdish Program, May 9, 1990.

[18] Anthony Hyman, *Elusive Kurdistan*, p.14.

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[19] The KDPI was led by Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou until his assassination in Vienna in July 1989. The *Komaleh* is a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish guerrilla party in Iran. Anthony Hyman, *Elusive Kurdistan*, p.13.

[20] Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, (Iraqi refugee problem in Turkey) United States Senate, dated September 21, 1988.

CHAPTER ONE
ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

> *"Look at our dashing horsemen who know neither fear nor retreat. Look at the speed and the irresistible thrust of their mounts. Our men fire their rifles at the enemy and aim accurately at the gallop; they can even fight while slipping below the girths of their saddles and firing between the forelegs of their horses. We can, by Allah! conquer the world with such men and no nation in the world can resist us for long."*
>
> — Musto Ahmad Agha[1]

The "world" according to Musto Ahmad Agha in 1910, tribal leader of the Kurdish Batwan confederation in the hills north of Mosul, was essentially limited to the mountains of Kurdistan and regions in which his tribes and neighboring tribes roamed and took refuge. Far to the west, beyond the safety of the mountains, lived the "godless and corrupt" Young Turks in İstanbul who, in his view, were leading the great Ottoman state known by the chief and his forebears to ruin and detriment.[2] In light of what Musto Agha saw as the growing absence of effective power and control over Mosul vilayet by the Sublime Porte, new opportunities for the enhancement of his own power base were now emerging. By ordering his men to battle against a rival tribe to settle an old, but hardly forgotten dispute, he was now merely reenacting an age-old drama of the great and fearless Kurdish warrior. In addition to gaining more power and prestige for the moment at the expense of another Kurdish tribe, Musto Agha was also satisfying a long cultivated need to play out a much admired role depicted in Kurdish poem and song. In truth, the original source of this dispute between the two foes was no longer as important as how the battle was to be engaged. Far more at stake than mere territorial grazing rights or material assets were the honor and dignity of each tribe engaged in battle, even to the point of death.

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[1] Chief of Batwan tribal confederation in conversation with Arshak Safrastian prior to engaging neighboring tribe in battle. A. Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, p.7.

[2] Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, p.8.

The notion and influence of the "warrior ethos" among the Kurds continues to this day, having become highly ingrained in traditional folklore and poems describing deeds of daring and the honor of the Kurd. What Carleton Coon describes as a "thorough indoctrination", is repeated time and again for the Kurdish child lying in the cradle, who is often named after a legendary hero or national figure, as his mother sings the epic songs of the honorable but often luckless Kurdish warrior facing the treachery and greed of his enemies.[3] New lullabies and stories told in Kurdish villages today tell of the heroism of Mustafa Barzani and the Peshmerga in their fight against the Baghdad government.[4] Present-day young "warriors" live and grow under the influence of many traditional values and viewpoints shared by Musto Ahmad Agha nearly a century ago; concepts which are critical determinants toward shaping current attitudes and political decisions.

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[3] Coon, *Caravan,* p. 304.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND POPULATION

The word ***Kurd***, describing many of the formerly Iranian and iranicised semi-nomadic tribes living in western Iran and northern Iraq, has been used at least since the period of the Arab conquests in the seventh century (644-656 A.D.). It is important to realize that the Kurdish tribes are not merely one extended family that has broken off into various groups and settings. Rather, they are a union of tribes of different early origins who have in modern times claimed a common culture, language, and history, not unlike the Turks or most other national groups today. This absence of ethnic purity though, does not reduce in any way the common bond or affiliation generally felt by those who identify themselves as Kurd. Of those tribes now claiming Kurdish identity, some were autochthonous to the region, while others had migrated in earlier times from eastern lands. Most researchers agree with Kurdish literary sources that the modern-day ethnic Kurds are descendent in part from the ***Medes***, an Aryan group which moved in the first millennium b.c. from central Asia towards contemporary Luristan and Kermanshah in western Iran. These tribes brought with them an Indo-European language that forms the basis of the language shared by all the Kurdish people today. The merging of this group with other tribes already present in the region later described as Kurdistan, such as the ***Guti*** of lower Mesopotamia, and the ***Kassites*** of Luristan have resulted in the great variety of physical differences seen among the tribes in modern-day Kurdistan.[5]

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[4] In addition to the connotation of patriotic soldier, *peshmerga* implies selflessness for a person or goal. Kurdish mothers routinely ask their children "May I be your peshmerga?" Correspondence from Mehrdad Izady, Program Associate, The Kurdish Program, May 9, 1990.

Historically, traditional Kurdish society has been recognized as being comprised of two major ethno-social groups, the tribal or ***eşiret*** and non-tribal ***reyet*** (peasant) elements. The tribal groups are those families noted for their "warrior" quality and constitute descendants of, or members of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. Although pastoral nomadism has rapidly disappeared as an economic structure over the past sixty years, readily identifiable members of the old tribal group who live in the villages and towns continue to exert a controlling influence over the sedentary non-tribal peasantry. The apparent social and ethnic differences between these two groups have been noted for some time by visitors to the region including C. R. Rich and Lucy Garnett[6] in the nineteenth century. Speaking of this aspect Rich writes:

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[5] In Omran Yahya Feili and Arlene R. Fromchuck's article "The Kurdish Struggle For Independence" in *Middle East Review*, Fall, 1976, p.47, they claim one group of Kurdish tribes have emerged from the migration of the Hittites into Luristan around 1200 B.C.

> I had to-day confirmed by several of the best authorities, what I had long suspected, that the peasantry in Koordistan are a totally distinct race from the tribes, who seldom, if ever, cultivate the soil; while, on the other hand, the peasants are never soldiers... A tribesman once confessed to me that the clans conceived the peasants to be merely created for their use; and wretched indeed is the condition of the Koordish cultivators. It much resembles that of a negro slave in the West Indies;...[7]

As an additional insight to these predominate "Kurdish types", Lucy Garnett writes in 1891 that "one race is nomad, warlike, and full of vivacity, the other is agricultural, pacific, and not remarkable for intelligence". She further notes that the peasants have softer and less pronounced features while the tribesmen have "long and aquiline noses", prominent foreheads, keen black, gray or even blue eyes, and pointed chins, and appear proud and dignified. She states that "at first glance one sees that they are the lords of the country".[8] This difference between the tribal and non-tribal "types" was verified by Edmonds thirty years later as he visited several villages. He notes the use of the term ***Kurd*** throughout Iraqi Kurdistan to identify those who can claim tribal origin and the pejorative terms of ***Miskên, Kirmanj,*** or

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[6] C.J. Rich, *Residence in Koordistan* & Lucy M.J. Garnett, *Women of Turkey and Their Folklore*, London: David Nutt, (1891).

[7] C.J. Rich, *Residence in Koordistan*, pp.88-89.

[8] Lucy M.J. Garnett, *Women of Turkey and Their Folklore*, p.113

Gûran (i.e. "miserable") for the settled non-tribal residents.[9]

In practical terms this past differentiation serves a limited function among the more numerous lower economic classes and village farmers today. It does, however, provide a source of mild bias between Kurds of tribal origin and *miskên* of the same economic class but who "are not really Kurds".

A generally east-west line drawn from Lake Urmia in Iran through Rowunduz to the city of Mosul divides what is often described as Northern Kurdistan from the Southern region. The significance of this distinction is that both areas have retained important regional differences in language, traditional costume, and lifestyle. This has developed from the varying impact of the two primary sources of cultural and linguistic influences in the area over the past centuries, ie; the Ottomans to the north and Iran in the south. The southern dialect of Sorani used by the great Jaf and Dizai tribes is considered to be the most sophisticated version of the language, and has been accepted as the predominant form of most Kurdish literary works of today. The Barzani confederation and Herkis in the north speak the Kurmanji dialect and the men wear trousers which are of stove-pipe design and are slightly bell-bottomed in contrast to the baggy pants pegged at the ankles seen in the south.

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[9] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, p.12. Additionally, Edmonds points out that the term *Miskên* is the most suitable and less confusing term since *Goran* also denotes a tribal group in Iran and both *Kirmanji* and *Gorani* refer to dialects of the Kurdish language and not to tribal membership.

Settlement Patterns

By the early twentieth century the majority of Kurds in present day Iraq were concentrated in the historic Ottoman ***vilayet*** (province) of Mosul which under Ottoman and early Iraqi administration included the four ***liwas*** (districts) of Mosul, Arbil, Kirkuk, and Suleymania. In 1957, C.J. Edmonds wrote that of the estimated 900,000 Iraqi Kurdish population, the percentage of Kurds residing in each of these provinces ranged from a low of 35% in Mosul to 100% in Suleymania. In addition, a majority of the population in the neighboring ***qadhas*** (juridical district) of Khanaqin and Mandali, east of Baghdad along the Iranian border, were also Kurdish speaking at the time. In addition to Kurds, villages of Chaldean Christians and Turkoman settlers were scattered from the city of Mosul to Kifri in the south. In the north, approximately 10,000 Assyrians lived in the mountains near Amadiya.[10] The concentration of the Kurdish population within these principle areas underwent substantial change in later years through significant population shifts of Kurdish refugees affected by the fighting in the region and resettlement policies initiated by the Baghdad government after 1961. Since the reorganization of the administrative areas of Iraq and the subsequent designation of a Kurdish Autonomous Region in 1974 that limited the official Kurdish administrative sector to the governorates of Dohuk, Arbil and Suleymania, the territories around Mosul, Kirkuk and border regions east of Baghdad have been subject to extensive Arab settlements (see figure 3). This administrative autonomous zone in the mountainous area of northeast Iraq is situated within the mountainous, and thereby less accessible juncture of the Iraqi, Turkish and Iranian borders, and effectively separates the Kurdish area from the major industrial and population areas of Kirkuk and Mosul. Previous Kurdish settlements along the northern borders have been completely removed in the interest of Iraqi-Turkish security concerns and residents have been resettled in western Iraq and to the south along the Saudi border. A large number of Kurds have also moved in response to government economic incentives from rural villages to the major cities outside of the Autonomous Region including Baghdad which by 1975 had a Kurdish population of approximately 300,000.[11] These relocations of the Kurdish population have not, however, resulted in a thorough assimilation with the Arab culture and have in fact often served as a rallying point among the resistant forces. Suleymania and Arbil remain the centers of the Kurdish population within Iraqi Kurdistan and are its two major cultural areas. Suleymania is the most urban of the few cities in the "zone" and the heart of agricultural and light

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[10] C.J. Edmonds, "Kurds of Iraq", p.52

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[11] Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq", *People Without a Country,* p.157.

Iraqi Kurdistan

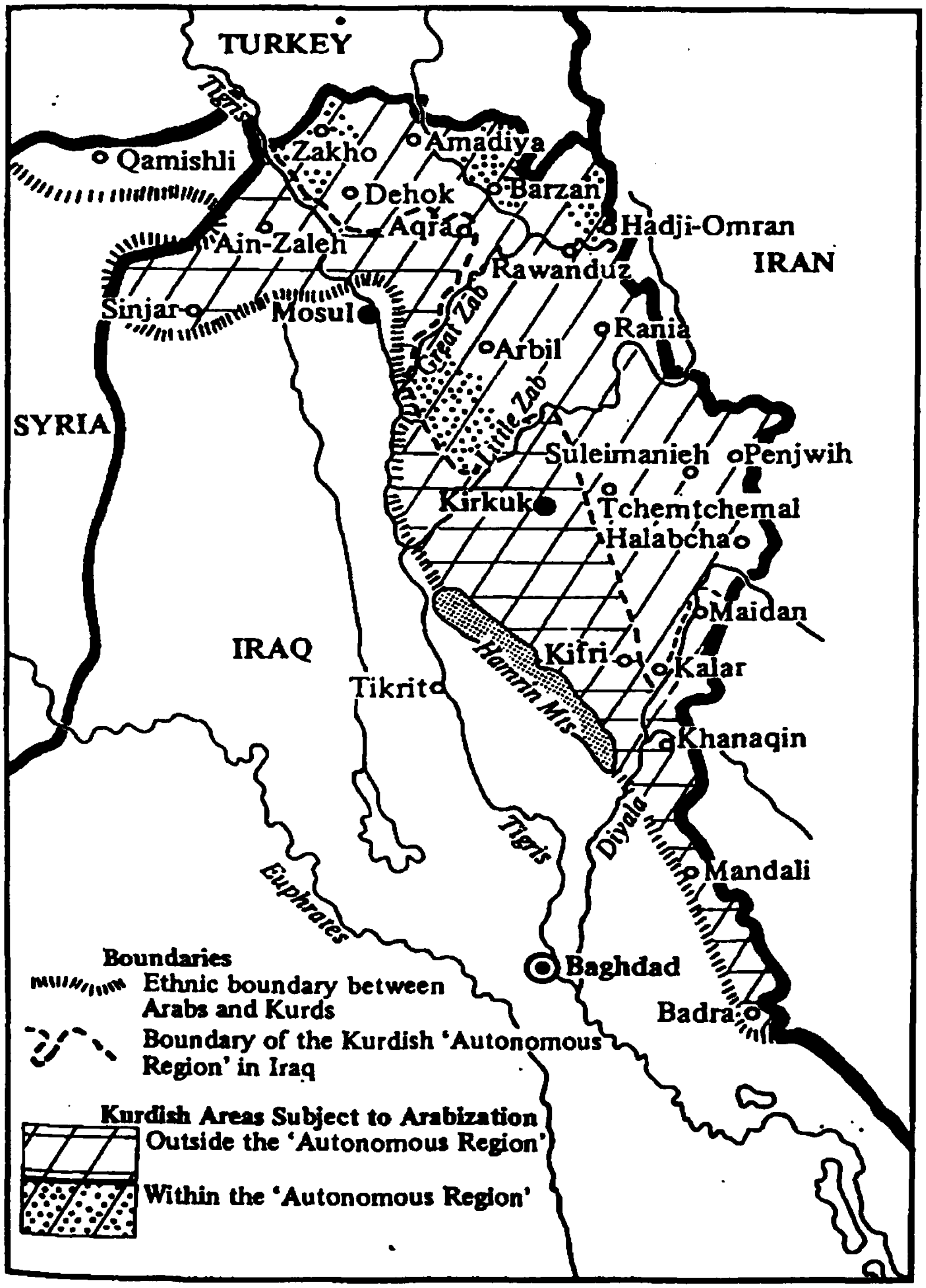
TURKEY
Tigris
Qamishli
Zakho
Amadiya
Dehok
Barzan
Aqra
Ain-Zaleh
Hadji-Omran
IRAN
Rawanduz
Sinjar
Mosul
Great Zab
Rania
Arbil
SYRIA
Little Zab
Suleimanieh
Penjwih
Kirkuk
Tchemtchemal
Halabcha
Maidan
IRAQ
Kifri
Kalar
Tikrit
Hamrin Mts
Khanaqin
Tigris
Diyala
Euphrates
Mandali
Baghdad
Badra
Boundaries
Ethnic boundary between Arabs and Kurds
Boundary of the Kurdish 'Autonomous Region' in Iraq
Kurdish Areas Subject to Arabization
Outside the 'Autonomous Region'
Within the 'Autonomous Region'

Figure 3 Autonomous Zone and Settlement Areas. Source: Chaliand, *People Without a Country,* p.155.

industry for the area. Arbil is the capital of the Autonomous Region and is almost as populous, but is more provincial in both economic terms and tradition. The political and cultural center of the region has gradually been shifting from Suleymania to Arbil during the past few years.[12]

Population Estimates

Population figures for Kurds overall, and especially in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, are notoriously inaccurate and highly politicized by central governments and Kurdish spokesmen alike reflecting the most optimistic viewpoint or pragmatic position of each side. With the aim of reducing the political significance of the Kurdish populations and to diminish international concern regarding internal policies, the Baghdad government provides minimal estimates of minority populations. Naturally, partisans of the Kurdish resistance movement try to achieve the opposite effect. Add to this the resistance of the villagers and tribal chiefs to provide personal data that would subject their people to increased military conscription and taxes, any figures provided are at best, only estimates, with statistics created and distributed by government and private sources varying in each country by as much as 170%.[13]

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[12] Eagleton, *An Introduction to Kurdish Rugs,* p.26.

[13] See Martin Short's figures in *The Kurds,* Minority Rights Group Report No.23, 1981, p.5. For example, the highest and lowest population figures for Iraqi Kurds are 2.5 million and 1.5 million based on a total country population of 9.5 million.

In order to derive a standard base percentage figure for a reasonable Kurdish population estimate in Iraq, it is necessary to look at several, more or less, impartial past estimates. In 1925, the League of Nations Commission estimated the Kurdish population figure in Iraq to be nearly 500,000 which Edmonds states was too low.[14] According to his figures, by 1957 the population level of the Kurds had reached 900,000 or 20% of the total Iraqi population.[15] Van Bruinessen using the 1924 and 1935 censuses applies the given 23% Kurdish population figure to 10.5 million total Iraqi population in 1975 and derives an approximate number of Kurds at 2 to 2.5 million.[16] Estimates of the proportion of the Kurdish population even reach 30% by some accounts[17] which is discounted by David McDowall who like Van Bruinessen uses a figure of 23% which he states is between that of the government and Kurdish supporters.[18] In one of the latest estimates available, William Eagleton uses a figure of 2.8 million in 1980 representing a 20% Kurdish population rate.[19] By using his calculation of 20% and a 1988 Iraq population estimate of 16,630,000 in 1988[20] the Kurdish population figure should be in excess of 3.3 million. This seems to be a reasonable estimate even when one considers the considerable population shifts across Turkish and Iranian borders and the large casualties resulting from internal conflicts and the Iran-Iraq war.

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[14] C. J. Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs,* p.3.

[15] C.J. Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs,* p.3.

[16] M.M. van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.21.

[17] See I. C. Vanly's detailed estimate equating to 28% of the population in 1975 (about 3 million) in his article "Kurdistan in Iraq", in *People Without a Country,* and his use of 30% in *The Revolution of Iraki Kurdistan.*

[18] David McDowall, *The Kurds,* The Minority Rights Group, Report No.23.

PATTERNS OF SUBSISTENCE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

Kurds living in the highlands and small villages of Kurdistan have traditionally practiced three general forms of subsistence - peasantry farming, transhumant semi-nomadism, and pastoral nomadism. The majority of Kurds in Iraq, though, as in all of Kurdistan, are engaged in agricultural farming supplemented by limited herding of sheep, cattle and goats. Land usage in the area has not been fully exploited and is one factor preventing large agricultural surpluses within the predominantly local economy. An added effect of this minimal production is to maintain a perception of requisite dependence among community members and gives support to large land tract ownership by the ruling elite. Out of the total available arable area in Iraqi Kurdistan, only 25% is under active cultivation at any one time. For the peasants living in the villages in the mountainous regions, the harvests from individually-owned plots of land provide a steady and sufficient local source of food. The herds of sheep and goat provide families milk, cheese and the preferred drink ***mast*** (a mixture of yogurt and salted water) in addition to the wool and hides which can be used for making clothing, tents and rugs. Although the making of rugs is an activity that continues to be performed by the tribes in Kurdistan, many rugs and kilims using borrowed nomadic patterns are woven in the villages by non-tribal peasantry and sold on both the local and regional markets.[21]

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[19] See Eagleton's discussion of the Kurdish people and history in *An Introduction to Kurdish Rugs*, p.9.

[20] Data taken from population estimate in Encyclopædia Britannica, 1989 Book of the Year, Chicago: *E.B., Inc.*, p.748 which utilizes a 3.1% annual growth rate since the 1977 census.

The ample rainfall and cooler climate found in the low hills and plains of northeast Iraq makes Kurdistan a major resource of grains such as wheat, rice and barley and summer vegetables for the country permitting the peasantry to produce a small surplus for the market. In addition to these crops, tobacco farming has always been a popular activity, particularly around the Suleymania region and is used as a ready cash crop by the Kurds. The tobacco industry is strictly regulated though, with prices and cultivation permits strictly controlled by the government that oversees the distribution of the tobacco throughout the rest of Iraq and exports a portion of the crop to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.[22] The use of share-cropping in the plains regions (paying an absentee land-lord a fixed share of the crop yield) has been more or less discontinued in the past quarter century, having been replaced by migratory agricultural farming due to the introduction of tractors and mechanized harvesters and the subsequent reluctance of the land-owners to renew share-cropping contracts. According to Van Bruinessen, the trend toward migratory farming has also emerged in the mountains, where ploughing continues to be done by oxen and mule, because of the lack of arable land and the ever-decreasing land tract sizes since each son inherits an equal share of the available property. This leaves insufficient land for the family to grow much more than basic subsistence and with the ever-increasing costs of goods and supplies from the town, members of the family are now forced to leave the impoverished regions of Kurdistan, moving to the major industrial centers, or areas where intensive farming is taking place. In order to acquire needed money for the family, many young males are travelling as far as Baghdad or across national borders and remaining in the urban centers for lengthy periods of time.[23]

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[21] Eagleton, *An Introduction to Kurdish Rugs,* p. 79.

Nomadism today is rare with the vast majority of Kurds sedentarized and living in various-sized villages and towns throughout Kurdistan. In far northern Iraq small numbers of semi-nomadic tribes continue to exist and practice a vertical, transhumant lifestyle.[24] These tribes maintain fixed dwellings in the mountain valleys and lower foothills where they remain during the winter. In Spring, as the temperature increases, they move their flocks to their designated pastures at higher, cooler elevations where they live under cover of tents. These tribes earn money through the sale of wool and animals, in addition to butter and dairy products to middlemen from the towns.[25] The number of these transhumant tribes has quickly dwindled over the past decades due to restrictions in migratory routes, economic development and the continuing political centralization of the region. However, several tribes remain in the northern mountainous regions of Iraq (north and east of Mosul), including the major tribes of Baradost, Surchi, Herki and Zibaro (See figure 4). The well-known Barzani tribe is now technically a confederation of smaller tribes (like the Shirwan and Barush) and non-tribal followers of this group. In the region south of Mosul, which can claim the important urban centers of Arbil, Suleymania, and Kirkuk, the large tribes of Talabani, Jaf, Hamawand, Dizai, Girdi, Ako, and Pizhdar still have significant member-

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[22] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.22, and Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq", p.175.

[23] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.23.

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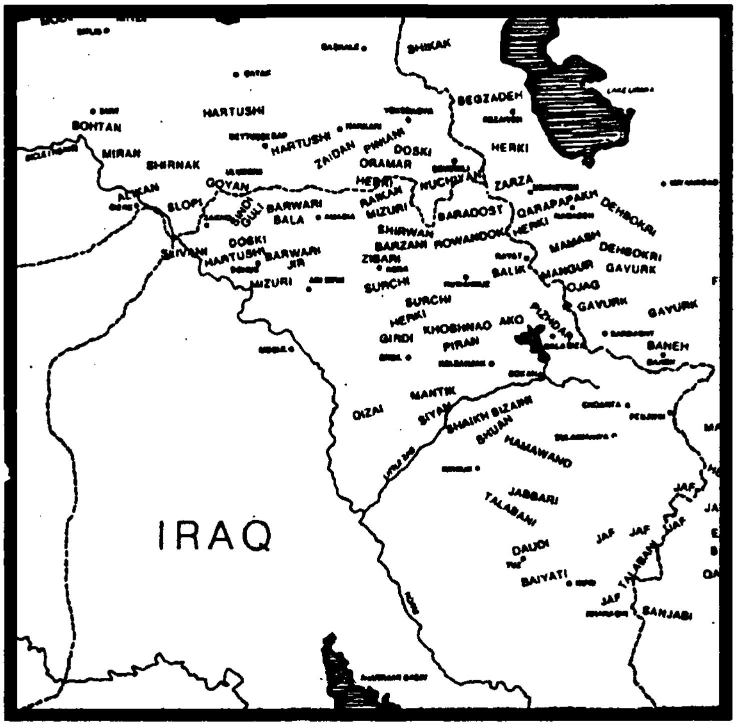
[24] According to Vanly "at most 0.5% of the population is made up of semi-nomadic elements". ("Kurdistan in Iraq", p.158.) This too, is a topic which has political significance since the Kurdish political "left" has a stake in presenting the population in a more modern, less traditional fashion.

[25] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.25.


SHIKAK
BEGZADEH
HERKI
HARTUSHI
BOHTAN
MIRAN
SHIRNAK
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ZAIDAN
PINIANI
DOSKI
ORAMAR
HERKI
KUCHIYAN
ZARZA
ALIKAN
SLOPI
GOYAN
SINDI
GULI
BARWARI
BALA
RAIKAN
MIZURI
BARADOST
QARAPAPAKH
DEHBOKRI
HERKI
SHIRWAN
BARZANI
ROWANDOK
MAMASH
DEHBOKRI
SHIVAN
DOSKI
HARTUSHI
BARWARI
JIR
ZIBARI
MIZURI
SURCHI
BALIK
MANGUR
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PIZHDAR
PIRAN
BANEH
MANTIK
OIZAI
SIYAN
SHAIKH BIZAINI
SHUAN
HAMAWAND
JABBARI
TALABANI
DAUDI
JAF
JAF
JAF
JAF
BAIYATI
TALABANI
JAF
SANJABI
IRAQ

Figure 4 Major Tribes of Kurdistan.
Source: Eagleton, *An Introduction to Kurdish Rugs,* inside cover.

ship and influence in the region.[26]

There is little practical difference in modern Kurdistan between the semi-nomadic and nomad tribes. In some villages where herding and cultivating are mixed, each Spring most of the villagers move the animals up to the ***kûhistan*** (summer pasture) in the mountains. When agricultural work is required to be done back at the village, the men make the return trip journeying again to the pasture when the work is completed. Because of limited land space these herds and flocks are relatively small and animal sales for slaughter and wool provide only a modest income. Of those truly nomadic tribes which remain in existence many have been subject to forced settlement by the Baghdad government while in other cases, individual members of the tribe have chosen to settle. According to Van Bruinessen only the ***Herki*** are still nomadic, travelling from their winter pastures north of Arbil to their summer kûhistans near Mt. Dalanpar in the highlands of the Iranian border.[27] The functional difference between these two migratory groups becomes cloudy as many nomads lead a partly sedentary life and are known to often build permanent shelter at or around the winter pasture sites. The major differences between the purely nomadic and the transhumant semi-nomads are; the general abhorrence on the part of the nomads to engage in farming, their practice of contracting peasants to cultivate arable land, longer distances travelled to summer pastures, and the larger heads of livestock that the nomadic tribes own.[28]

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[26] Eagleton, *An Introduction to Kurdish Rugs,* pp.26-30.

In addition to the above three traditional economic subsistence groups there has been a significant entry of increasingly larger numbers of the Kurdish population into unskilled labor and technical vocations made available by the growing urban centers in the region and in larger towns and cities outside of Kurdistan. Slightly less than half the population now pursues employment activities which do not fall within the traditional means of subsistence.[29] Leaving the once secure mountain villages, many people have settled in the increasing number of towns that can boast populations of 10,000 to 75,000 working as common laborers, tradesmen and petty merchants. Many of the youth and men seeking new skills have settled near the oil centers of Iraq giving rise to a new Kurdish "oil proletariat" in the region.[30] After the rise of the second Ba'th regime in 1968, however, the industry was, according to one source fairly well purged of Kurdish workers.[31] Another source of employment is the military. Although a significant number of Kurdish youth have followed their fathers and brothers into the various Kurdish militia and the Peshmerga to fight against the government, many have also joined the Iraqi Armed Forces or the counter-insurgency ***"Josh"***[32] mercenary forces comprised of pro-Government Kurdish tribesmen which are sent into the mountain areas after the rebels.

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[27] See Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.24 and Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946,* p.17.

[28] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.25.

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[29] Ismet Cheriff Vanly writes in 1978 that the peasantry represents 55% of the Kurdish population and the semi-nomadic tribes are no more than 0.5%. "Kurdistan in Iraq", p.158.

[30] David McDowall, "The Kurds", *The Minority Rights Group Report* No. 23, 1985, p.9.

[31] Interview with Dr. Karim, Kurdish National Congress of North America.

[32] "Josh", meaning little donkey, is the name the Kurdish partisans use describing those Kurds who have joined the Iraqi Salah-al-Din Calvary in order to fight against the nationalist movement and support the government forces. During the Iran-Iraq war, Barzani's own men were referred to as "Josh" by the Iranian Kurds fighting against the Shah.

A different sector of Kurdish society has grown up outside the hills and mountains of Kurdistan alongside the predominant Arabs of the plains and cities. Among this Kurdish population can be found the professional and intellectual sectors which have permanently settled in the towns and cities. These urbanized, and better educated Kurds live a lifestyle markedly different than their rural brothers and tend to be either fully assimilated and accepted into the politics and society of the central government, or on the other hand provide the nucleus of the Kurdish nationalist movement which continues to be a constant thorn in the side of the Baʻthist regime. Many of the individuals and families who have historically cooperated with the government constitute the heirs of the old landlord class that rose in power and influence after 1920 due to changes in land registration laws that required land ownership titles to be placed under individual names. The tribal Kurd's natural aversion to identifying oneself to avoid taxation or military conscription enabled the agha to acquire absolute title and control over commonly held land of the tribes. The village aghas, who were permitted by the unwitting population to register the lands, began to derive power and authority from the new relationship with the central government rather than from the established basis of the tribal chiefs.[33]

SOURCES OF IDENTITY

A unified sense of "Kurdish national consciousness" among the Kurds has been a relatively nebulous concept for the common peasant and difficult to establish and develop among the tribes in Kurdistan. This is primarily due to the lack of a common language, inter-tribal rivalries, and the overriding sources of identity which reside in religion and the tribe. Added to this has been the political interest of the various central governments in keeping the tribes divided and the subsequent socio-economic effects on the region by what M. Jafar calls under-underdevelopment.[34] In spite of the various revolts and uprisings conducted in the name of "nationalism" up to the First World War, these operations were merely the characteristic reactions of tribal and religious leaders and "rootless intellectuals"... "to events according to local self-interest or personal ambitions".[35]

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[33] McDowall, "The Kurds", p.9.

[34] In *Under-Underdevelopment: A Regional Case Study of the Kurdish Area In Turkey*, Helsinki: Painoprint Oy, 1976, Majeed Jafar describes Kurdistan as a resource region located on the periphery of underdeveloped central governments is subject to debilitating socio-economic forces which effectively extracts many of the area's educated and trained personnel along with the natural resources from the "backwater" region creating barriers for the future political, economic and social development for the neglected population.

[35] Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, p.8.

The participation of those involved in the disputes should be seen merely for what they represented: tribal rivalry, raiding, international political intrigue, religious conflict, and only "for a few, Kurdish nationalism.[36] The rebellion of Shaikh Obaydullah in the late nineteenth century is often used as an example of emerging nationalism. This argument is based on a letter written in 1880 by the Shaikh to the British Vice-Consul in Başkale where, as a representative voice of all Kurdish people, he demanded that Kurdish "affairs" be in Kurdish hands. As Hamid Algar states, though, "The rebellion of Shaykh ʻUbaydullah and his son Taha in Iranian Kurdistan in the late nineteenth century was a manifestation of traditional Naqshbandi hostility to Shiʻism."[37] Additionally, the rebellion should be seen as an articulation of Kurdish identity vis a vis the shiʻa majority. Similar conflicts which followed this uprising have also been used as examples of Kurdish nationalism such as the Shaikh Said revolt in Turkey in 1925, but this was simply a response against the abolition of the Caliphate in İstanbul. Algar continues, "the attribution of Kurdish nationalist motivation to these and similar movements is unjustified."[38] Although several political organizations had existed since the Mandate Period such as the ***Hewa*** (Hope) in Iraq and ***Hoyboun*** (Independence), both of which claimed to represent Kurdish nationalism, memberships in these groups were severely limited to educated urbanites and little known outside these circles.[39] By the Second World War, though, and certainly by August 1944 at the signing of the ***Peman i Se Senur*** (Pact of the Three Borders) by Kurdish representatives of Iraq, Iran and Turkey at Mt. Dalanpar, a new period had been entered which projected mutual support among the various national groups, a mass following of the movement and the sharing of material and human resources in the interests of a greater Kurdistan.[40] It was not until this point that a serious discussion of political organizations and a widespread national identity began to emerge. At this point an "official" map of geographical Kurdistan was drawn by the nascent nationalists and later provided to the United Nations. This map, however, greatly magnified the limits of the Kurdish region and, interestingly included open water access to both the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf (see figure 2). In May of the same year another concrete representation of a proposed Kurdish nation was born when a red, white and green flag (the Iraqi flag upside down) depicting a Kurdish "coat of arms" of the sun flanked by bushels of wheat, with the mountains and a pen in the background was designed by the Komala.[41]

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[36] Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, p.8. Several authors have argued that the rise of nationalism among the Kurds can be traced back to the 19th century from the time of Sheikh Obaydullah of Nehri and his Kurdish League in 1880 (for example, see Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989.)

[37] Algar, "The Naqshbandi Order: A Preliminary Survey of its History and Significance", *Studia Islamica*, January, 1977, p.151.

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[38] Algar, "The Naqshbandi Order", p.151.

[39] Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946,* p.33.

[40] Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946,* p.36.

The montane and rural Kurd is, after all, a member of his tribe first, a Muslim, Yezidi, or Christian second, and a Kurd last of all. Nationalism is a willful allegiance to a particular social structure which involves a new relationship between culture and role systems within that society. In a complex and highly-stratified traditional society, such as the Kurds, there exists a near monopoly of leadership roles and education in certain "strong" families and spiritual leaders. There do not exist in this type of society, where the rural population is insulated and immobilized, any factors encouraging religious, cultural or linguistic homogeneity although there are many to encourage its present diversity.[42] Without the necessary factors, or need, to create a "seamless society" agrarian societies such as the Kurds, have followed a different political path than European industrial states witnessed. These multiple cleavages which have evolved between tribes and the relative independent actions of tribal groups have spawned a specific Kurdish culture in which one can find elements of

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[41] Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, p.38. This standard was not, however, accepted by Barzani as a symbol for his own KDP movement.

[42] E. Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. pp.10-16.

Sufism, mysticism, patriotic enthusiasm and a sense of the revolutionary.[43]

Physical Environment

As with other societies, Kurdish culture and communal identity can not be separated easily from the environment. The highlands and mountains of Kurdistan have shaped the life of the Kurds "as the bones and muscles of a healthy man shape his skin".[44] To understand the complexities of a tribal society like the Kurds one necessarily has to examine the influences of its natural environs, the mountains.

Most of what the Kurdish tribesman holds dear can be found in the mountains. Life in the high country has provided the Kurdish tribes protection from the onslaught of invading forces from the plains area. The mountains have been the source of refuge and daily sustenance, the guarantor of freedom, and a primordial link to nature and ethereal needs. "Like a noble beast growing in the wilderness, or a wildflower, real only when it flourishes in the boundless freedom of the wild, a Kurd "is" only when he embraces his sunny, cool, and airy mountains."[45] This close intimacy by which each Kurd identifies and associates himself with the mountains is depicted in a Kurdish saying "Level the mounts, and in one day the Kurds would be no more". The depth of this relationship is expressed in several ways. One needs only to look at the artwork and traditional patterns found in Kurdish rugs and kilims that are distinguished from other tribal weavings by the prevalent floral, bird and animal designs imaginatively worked together by the young Kurdish women. The bright and distinctive costumes which continue to be worn throughout Kurdistan provide a visual marker of personal identity, and represent the varied colored flowers which grow throughout the mountain hills and valleys.

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[43] Kendal (Nezan), "The Kurds Under the Ottoman Empire", *People Without a Country,* p.23.

[44] Coon, *Caravan,* p.10.

[45] Samande Siaband, "Mountains My Home: An Analysis of the Kurdish Psychological Landscape", *Kurdish Times,* Vol 2, No 2, Summer 1988, p.7. Much of the following is also taken from Siaband's article.

The connection between Kurdish society and the lure of the mountains is also evident in town planning. Although there is ample flat ground and small plateaus by which housing can be built Kurdish towns and villages are unique in that houses are built along the slopes of the mountains. This characteristic is not limited to small towns or highland areas since the phenomenon also occurs in large urban areas such as Suleymania. Here, like the more mountainous northern region the city expands into the highlands rather than onto the plains.[46]

The view by Kurds living on the plains and the city that the mountain tribes are illiterate, vicious, and uncivilized is perhaps matched only by the mistrust and the belief by the highlanders that not to understand the secrets of the mountain or tribal customs marks one as a non-Kurd. This mistrust of the "outside world" stems naturally from the almost continual battles between the Kurds and foreign armies over the past centuries. Additionally, this mistrust extends to mountain Kurds who leave the highlands for an extended period of time and return. Often, on their return they attempt to "educate and modernize" the Kurds telling them "how quickly they can succeed once they become non-Kurdish in every way – even to the point of forsaking their own language".[47]

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[46] S. Siaband, "Mountains, My Home", *Kurdish Times*. p.11.

PRIMARY SOCIAL STRUCTURES

There are some common characteristics of Indo-European peoples such as the Kurds which distinguish them from their Arab and early Mediterranean neighbors. As Coon describes it, this likeness includes "clothing with built-in legs and sleeves," a high regard for the horse as a noble means of transportation during war and "a three-class social structure" consisting of "earls, churls and thralls, plus a priesthood."[48] The three-tiered social arrangement among the highland Kurds consists of the chief, including the privileged and his close relatives, a group of retainers and servants, and the most numerous section, the members of the tribe.[49] The non-tribal groups have a much simpler "bi-class" arrangement made up of landlords and peasants. Organized under these rather stable frameworks, political changes have been slow to occur, especially in the rural sectors where traditional roles prevail.

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[47] S. Siaband, " Mountains, My Home...", p.9.

[48] Coon, *Caravan,* p.67. The Kurdish regard for the horse as a means of transportation rather than a draft animal is also shared by the Arab bedouin.

Within the over-arching structure of the tribe are various ***tire*** (subdivisions based on blood and marriage such as a clan) that have specific social and economic significance and can be further broken down into smaller sections such as the ***hoz*** (simple descent group) and ***khel*** (tent-group). At times each group is identified by terms which are also applied to other larger or smaller groups making a definitive description difficult. Thus, group size, rather than specific terminology is a better means of differentiating many of these groups. At the lowest level of social organization within the tribe is the family household.

The basic corporate unit within Kurdish society is the ***mal***, or household. At this level nearly all economic activities take place. Unlike the traditional Turkish, Arab or Persian extended family pattern, the typical Kurdish household is the nuclear family consisting of the husband, wife and unmarried children. Elderly surviving relatives, on occasion, do stay with the family in the case of hardship or necessity. An exception to this common arrangement is when a newly married son remains in his father's household for a few years creating a temporary patrilineal extended family unit. Although the women of the household will continue to share common chores, the son and his wife often retain separate economic activities, and the couple will live conspicuously less integrated in the parent household than the other members.[50] In those increasingly rare cases where the well-to-do male has taken on additional wives, these women maintain separate rooms within the house. Normally, the wives all share in performing necessary household tasks while the men work almost exclusively outside of the home.

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[49] Qazzaz, "Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism", p.25.

In Kurdish society, like much of the Middle East, marriage provides a social function which goes far beyond the "love and happiness" of two individuals, although in many cases Kurdish marriages are also based upon mutual attraction. Marriage is a means of control within the community forming a union between families. In many cases the marriage, which is one of the village's most important public occasions, is "employed to reaffirm or strengthen existing family ties as well as to build new ones where none existed before."[51] Through various arrangements made by the families of the bride and groom, the role and status of the parents is enhanced and important economic and political aims are satisfied for the family and community. Marriage among the Kurds is highly endogamous, with full cousin, the father's brother's daughter (FaBrDa) matrimony preferred. Another type of marriage agreement, which like FaBrDa provides both a reduced marriage portion[52] and a protective position for the bride's family is ***zhin-ba-zhin* (*berdêlî*)**, meaning sister exchange by two men.[53] The desire by fathers of the brides to continue protecting their daughters from abuse by their new husbands is an important factor in close relations marriage since the father already knows the young man and as a relative can exert more influence on the husband than if he were a stranger. Marriages between non-relatives in the society tend to be accompanied by much higher payment to the bride's father signifying the economic worth of the bride and the waiving of future marriage rights with the family.

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[50] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* pp.42-43.

[51] Daniel Bates and Amal Rassam, *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East,* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1983, pp.198-99.

There is little question as to whether the offspring will marry. All men marry and not to do so would be looked down upon. In Kurdistan, there is a proverb, "A single man grows weak, a single woman gets hot".[54] Marriage is performed at a relatively young age where the men marry before twenty years old with women in past times often being married by the time they reached the age of twelve. There is now a growing trend for people to marry at an older age, breaking away from the arranged marriage, and except on rare occasions there is a departure from the once popular practice of polygamy.[55]

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[52] The marriage portion, or bride-price is paid in the form of livestock, land, cash or a future marriage agreement between the families and is considered an appreciation of the bride's value and not merely as a sale. (D.N. MacKenzie, "Kurds, Kurdistan", *E.I.*, 1986, p.470.

[53] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.27.

[54] Thomas Bois, *The Kurds,* p.43.

The primary corporate territorial unit within Kurdish culture today is the village which normally is comprised of 10 to 60 household units. Generally located on hilly terrain, the compact villages are co-situated with its agricultural lands. The small single-story mud and rock houses are terraced against the hill and built closely together. Aside from the few remaining purely nomadic tribes and tent groups the village is the major decision making group for the residents of Kurdistan and serves as the point of contact for central government (Baghdad) communications with the settled population. Group decisions above and below this level are extraordinary and normally limited to feuds, tribal wars and disputes.[56] The village also serves as the religious center where the Friday prayer is performed although normally less than half the men attend.

It would be extremely difficult to describe the internal organization of a typical village for each has developed according to its own unique history and influences. While some of the villagers practice a type of tribally organized free-hold farming the residents of other tribes are non-tribal

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[55] Thomas Bois, *The Kurds*, p.44.

[56] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp.47-49.

sharecropping tenants.[57] In some cases the village represents a form of tribal segmentation such as a clan or subdivision while on other occasions it presents a cross-section of various groups. Van Bruinessen describes how one village was settled near the burial site of a revered shaikh by a diverse group of tribesmen. After the population increased, first one segment, and then another split off and settled at a higher location in the valley. By the time the initial village had totally split up it was along relatively pure kinship lines creating new villages that were more homogeneous than the original.[58]

The dwindling number of Kurdish villages in Iraq is a matter of grave concern to the Kurdish nationalist organizations. Since 1963 an extensive Kurdish depopulation and resettlement program has been undertaken by the Baghdad government to reduce Kurdish resistance. Beginning in 1975, a new phase of Arabization was initiated with the creation of security belts along the Iraqi border with Syria, Turkey and Iran when the population was forced to evacuate. After 1985 the government escalated this program by actually destroying many villages and towns in the Kurdish regions including the village of Barzan. According to Vera Beaudin Saeedpour, Director of The Kurdish Program in Brooklyn, New York, of the 5000 villages thought to have existed in 1975 at least 4,000 have been effectively destroyed by Iraqi military forces. Although specific figures are difficult to verify various sources confirm the eradication of large settlements during this period. Most of the villages destroyed were located along the Iraqi borders where the government has attempted to create a 20-30 kilometer wide security strip through the Kurdish areas, and the northwest corner of Iraq close to the major rail and highway arteries leading to Mosul and the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline.[59]

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[57] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.16

[58] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State,* p.48.

The tribe, or ***eşîret*** is the largest traditional political and corporate institution in Kurdish society. It is comprised of various ***tîres*** (divisions) that constitute a number of maximal descent groups within the tribe. Like the tribe, each tîre is headed by an ***agha*** (chief) who sets his own limited political agenda for the followers of his division and controls the land for his clan of the tribe. Although the agha of the tîre is normally closely related to all members of the division the paramount agha, or tribal chief, has a much looser connection, especially in the case of the plains tribes, where the agha is a descendent of a dominating tribal group and now functions as a feudal landlord. Although in some areas non-tribal people constitute the majority of the population this grouping is equally applicable since until recently the miskên were politically and/or economically subjected to a tribal imposed "quasi-feudal" relation.[60]

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[59] Briefing paper, "Congressional Human Rights Caucus", Brooklyn: The Kurdish Program, dated October 24, 1989, pp.1-3.

The tribe is the highest authority regarding the designation of territorial rights and membership within the tribe for the various lineages and clans in a particular region, and exists primarily for protection against external enemies. In this way the political role of the tribe is more of a potential asset to be used in time of confrontation with similar groups and the central government, and not where daily political action is taken. This role as protector of the subordinate clan units without regard to close kinship ties has enabled various tribes like the Barzani to create a confederation with other tribal groups seeking common protection and economic survival.

Although the majority of the tribe are related to one another, actual kinship is less important than political allegiance to the tribe's claimed lineage. This sense of belonging to the same house, or a sense of brotherhood, is captured by the Kurdish word ***taîfe*** implying both real and putative kinship.[61] Members of the tribe trace their lineage through "common" important ancestors which may in fact be invented and origins past a few generations tend to be forgotten. The present unity of the group is projected back to create a complimentary mythical history and most significantly, actually behaves as a pristine descent group.[62] The territory occupied is named after the tribal designation even though the tribes frequently move to other areas. Several regions still retain the tribal name long after the original people have departed.[63]

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[60] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.40.

[61] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.57.

Religion

It is doubtful that one could find a variety of religious groups anywhere in the Islamic world as found in Kurdistan. This religious diversity fits in well with the independent structure of Kurdish structure and exists as a major source of identity. Although the majority of Kurds are Muslim, a number of smaller tribes continue to adhere to Zoroastrian and Christian beliefs. The Kurds themselves consider their ancestral faith to be Zoroastrian (worshippers of fire)[64] and their conversion from Christianity, paganism and the Zoroastrian religion to Islam was not without great difficulties, holding to other faiths as late as the thirteenth century.[65] Of the Muslim Kurds, many belong to unique and little known sects. Most Kurds are ***Sunni*** Muslim who differ from both their ***Shi'i*** and Sunni Arab neighbors since they follow the ***Shafi'i*** school of Islamic law. The great majority of the Sunni Turks to the north and most of the Arabs in Iraq identify with the **Hanafi** school. Among the Kurds though, are **Shi'i Alevis** located in northwestern Turkish Kurdistan, "orthodox" **Imami Shi'ite** ("twelver variety") and the syncretic **Ahl-e Haqq** ("people of the truth") near Kirkuk, Mosul and Suleymania (known as **Kakais**) and in southern Iranian Kurdistan around Kermanshah province. The Kakais are a group which developed much like a sufi order. Around Mosul live a sect called **Sarlis** who are reported to engage in ritual orgies at the beginning of each lunar year.[66] Finally, there are the once powerful and numerous **Yezidi** Kurds, which are the well-known, but misnamed devil-worshipers.[67] The Yezidis are a religious group found only among the Kurds and have been the object of much persecution by the orthodox Muslims. A major group of the Yezidi lives in the Sinjar mountains near Mosul and in the Şêxan district east of Mosul.

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[62] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.41.

[63] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.44.

[64] Sykes, *Caliphs' Last Heritage*, p.425.

[65] Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement", p.46.

Although Kurds themselves emphasize that they are faithful to Islam and "devotion to the faith comes as a tradition.. .. in spite of the type of religion which he practices or the sect to which he may belong",[68] in practice the Kurds take a more pragmatic view of religion which has been modified and conditioned by Kurdish experience and social structure. The Kurds are ever mindful that in spite of their membership in the community of Islam they have never been unconditionally accepted by their Arab neighbors. To the orthodox Islamic visitor though, the Kurdish variant of worship seems to have taken on a number of local differences "contaminated by pagan superstitions and strange rites," having "points of resemblance with Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and other heathen cults."[69]

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[66] W. Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement...", p.49.

[67] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.32; W. Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement...", p.48.

[68] Correspondence between Kurdish religious scholar and historian Jamil Rojbeyani and Shafiq T. Qazzaz, "Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism: The Kurdish Case", p.30.

Of great significance in Kurdish culture is the practice of organized ***Sufısm*** that is popular among the Kurds. The connection between sufı practices and leadership roles is a topic which will be further developed in Chapters Two and Three. Although this religious convention is often described as an enduring "refuge for pre-Islamic sentiments and habits or an Iranian based "antinomian response to a Semitic, legalistic Islam" contemporary adherents claim that the origins of Sufısm can be found in the Qur'an and ***sunna*** and is the very essence of Islam.[70] A physical and spiritual link to the Prophet Muhammad, referred to as the ***silsilat adh-dhahab*** (The Golden Chain) provides legitimacy for the sufı movements and a means for new initiates of the orders to establish a personal identity through contemporary and past guides and saints, and, by means of the Prophet to God. The life, or ***tariqa*** (path), a Sufi strives to live emulates the inward devotion and outward activity characteristic of the first generation of Muslims who were "men whom neither trading nor commerce diverts from the remembrance of God".[71] In brief, Sufism enables members to rise above the dogmatism of modern orthodox religion endeavoring toward a closer and personal relationship with the sacred by assistance of a guide, the Shaikh. The Shaikh secures eminence among sufi adherents because of the ***barakat*** (charisma) which God has chosen to bestow upon him and not because of his personality. This barakat is a manifestation of the spiritual being that is passed along the Golden Chain and is greatly respected by the membership. When an individual happens to pass a shaikh he will automatically kiss his hand. This is out of respect for the barakat and not an act to demonstrate any special respect for the shaikh. The presence of barakat continues to exist well after the death of a really great shaikh, who, due to the strength of his barakat and ability to perform miracles ***(keramet)*** had, in life, been recognized as a saint. The burial site would then be a source of spiritual grace for followers of the order as was the shaikh while alive.

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[69] G. R. Driver, "The Religion of the Kurds", BSOS, Vol. II, Part II, 1922, p.197.

[70] H. Algar, "The Naqshbandi Order", *Studia Islamica,* p.123-25.

Although it is said that the majority of the serious devotees of these mystic orders are among the lowest economic strata in Kurdistan, there does seem to be an overall acceptance of his position and function within the community and the entire population attends to the shaikh's economic needs. According to Van Bruinessen most of the participants in the twice-weekly ***majlis*** (ritual meeting) that he witnessed were small or landless peasants, unskilled laborers or petty craftsmen.[72] However, during audience hours with the shaikh, visitors of all economic statuses come to partake of the barakat, provide a small gift, and perhaps receive a special protective amulet or cure for illness.

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[71] H. Algar, "The Naqshbandi Order", p.134.

The two most prominent of the brotherhoods in Iraq are the ***Qadiri*** and the ***Naqshbandi*** orders. Although once prevalent within the region the Qadiri orders have since been greatly overshadowed by the Naqshbandiya. Prior to 1808 the only sufı orders in Kurdistan were Qadiriya. Followers of this branch included two powerful, but rival shaikhly families, in southern Kurdistan the Barzincis[73] and Talabanis. The position of shaikhs in the Qadiri order is generally passed from father to son in contrast to the Naqshbandi where ***xelîfes*** (khalifes/deputies) can be appointed to gather followers and spread the word.

The Naqshbandi order which developed in the 14th century near Bukhara in Transoxiana (present day Uzbekistan) spread to as far west as Rumelia during the fifteenth century by

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[72] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.294.

[73] The Barzinci family, like many others in the region have since converted to the Naqshbandi brotherhood. Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.283.

Shaikh Nasir ad-Din Obaydullah Ahrar and his disciples and first took on a political face. As a military ally and supporter of a ruling prince of Samarkand, Khwaja Ahrar was able to attain effective rule over Transoxiana until his death in 1490 A.D. Responding to questions about his political influence, Khwaja Ahrar said:

> If we acted only as shaikh in this age, no other shaikh would find a disciple. But another task has been assigned to us, to protect the Muslims from the evil of oppressors, and for the sake of this we must traffic with Kings and conquer their souls, thus achieving the purpose of Muslims.[74]

Although the Naqshbandi order was practically eliminated in the early sixteenth century by the Safavids in western Iran the movement continued to exist in eastern Iran and spread to India. In the early nineteenth century a Kurdish religious figure Hajj Maulana Khalid Baghdadi returned to Suleymania after having been initiated into the Naqshbandi order during a stay in India. In Kurdistan and the region his growing popularity gradually came to overshadow the Qadiriya branches in the region enabling the ***Khalidiya*** branch of the Naqshbandi Shaikhs to assume an important social and political role rivaling that of the tribal and clan chiefs. Important leaders in modern times whose families claim descendency from Maulana Khalid have included Shaikh Obaydullah, Shaikh Said and Mulla Mustafa Barzani.

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[74] H. Alger, "The Naqshbandi Order", p.138.

CHAPTER TWO
POWER, INFLUENCE AND AUTHORITY

> *"I am an ignorant man, but the leader knows. He says we are the oppressed Kurdish people. I am from the mountains. I have less than one hectare of tobacco. I lived near Zakho. I abandoned my family. I decided it was better to die than to live like this. I could go, but I don't."*
>
> — A Peshmerga explaining why he joined with Barzani[1]

Daily life, in general, for the common rural dweller in Kurdistan continues as it has for decades. Aside from technological advances such as farm machinery introduced into many of the plains crop areas, and changing policies of the central government regarding land use, there is little to distinguish one man's lifestyle from that of his father's. To a large degree existence within his "world" is predicated by how well he fits into the social scheme and relationship among his peers.

For those "destined" to hold positions of power, socialization entails the building of networks and a personal following which can translates to greater influence and demonstrated respect at the expense of another's loss of power. The majority, though, have little expectation of crossing social barriers and achieve "influence" by aligning themselves with a prominent figure who can offer them group prestige and moral authority through which they can better accept the vicissitudes of the "daily grind". Security for both groups is gained through loyalty to the traditions and practices of the society.

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[1] Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men,* p.26.

MAINTENANCE OF SOCIAL ORDER

There exists in Kurdish society a number of structures and concepts which function to maintain order and provide social stability through adherence to lasting tribal practices and beliefs. A repetitive theme and fundamental feature of these social practices is the overriding importance of individual power in daily life and the eternal struggle for influence.

Traditional Kurdish political authority and alliances have operated by means of two mechanisms. Among the tribal elements, power and influence was transmitted primarily via lines of lineage, while the populations of non-tribal settlements were organized under a quasi-feudal system. Today the blending of traditional tribal law, Islamic ***shari'a***, feudal practices dating from Ottoman rule, and the introduction of the modern concept of private ownership have created a more confusing and mixed pattern of society among the various tribes and peoples of the region.[2]

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[2] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.44.

In spite of the intermingling of these diverse forces and the government's continual efforts to diffuse primordial influences, which run counter to its administrative control over the area population, the overriding and enduring force driving Kurdish society and politics is found in tribal structure and relations.

Although casually thrown about, the term tribe is replete with assumptions and can be used to describe a wide range of ideas about social structures and societies throughout the world. The many differences in social composition and political organization between the diversity of Kurdish tribes and the Arab Bedouins, or even the Marsh tribes of southern Iraq illustrate the many possible ways the term is used. Hay defines the tribe as "a community or confederation of communities which exists for the protection of its members against external aggression, and for the maintenance of the old racial customs and standards of life".[3] This definition applies to the Kurds and brings up the more germane question of why a tribe exists and the purpose it serves. The two major arguments to explain the "essence" of political action, or "the patterns in which groups of people will actually combine or dispute in a predictable manner"[4] are explained by segmentary theory popularized by E.E. Evans-Pritchard originally used in describing African societies, and the territorial subsistence theory as described by Emanuel Marx.

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[3] W.R. Hay, Two Years in Kurdistan, p.65

[4] Dale F. Eickelman, "What is a Tribe?", The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach, p.128.

Segmentary theory is quite readily accepted among those who write about Kurdish tribal organization.[5] The basic concept of this viewpoint states that social control, order, and cohesion are maintained by the "balancing and opposition of constituent groups".[6] These constituent groups are seen to be primarily linked through lineage and can be depicted as successive family branches leading from one common ancestor splitting through marriage and forming at the same time a sense of relation and opposition through all descending kinship levels. Since members of this highly endogamous group are closely related in one sense by their preceding ancestor at a higher level, yet are less related at the same level and thus prone to antagonisms and disputes over power, a dichotomous relation simultaneously exists between two potential combatants (any father can have two sons but each son can only have one father). The sense that higher levels of relations will not join conflicts where they will be forced to choose among blood relations serves to reduce natural conflict, thereby maintaining social order at lower and less direct kinship levels (such as cousins). Since the tribe is without any centralized institution charged with maintaining order, collective honor and responsibilities prevent the society from being reduced to total anarchy.

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[5] For example, see Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.40.

[6] Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, p.41.

According to segmentary theory, all members of a tribe are viewed as inherently equal and operate in a set position within their common maximal kinship group. Within this egalitarian setting each kinship element conforms to a specific attitudes towards other similar elements to whom they are related through a common forefather. Although cousins are linked by their uncles it is a different relationship than for one another and hostilities and rivalries can easily break out. Yet, by virtue of one's more immediate blood relations, (each cousin's father are brothers) the individual is beset with a responsibility to conform to the wishes of his own kinship group. Gellner states that the ultimate success of the system is dependent upon certain inefficiencies in interaction. Thus, social order and group maintenance will occasionally succumb to the oppositional factors of competition and struggle for power creating an escalating round of violence within the tribe. It is the fear of total and unrestrained chaos and death that tends, finally, to permit an orderly resolution of the problem. In those cases where the violence gets completely out of hand an outside arbitrator is necessary to resolve the problem.[7]

The endogamous marriage patterns, bloodletting between distant affinity groups, and the "warrior" tradition of

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[7] Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, p.53.

Kurdish society all seem at first to fit the segmentary framework. A major and requisite element of this theory, however, the corporate feeling and identity of individuals within each lineage level, as described in segmentary theory, appears to be lacking in the case of the Kurds. The Kurdish model seems, instead, to be more a unit of subsistence operating within the limits of a specific cultural ecology which the members seek to preserve in the name of self-interest than a unit of kindred souls reliant upon shared responsibility depending upon the fear of escalating violence to relieve fraternal tensions. "If the vertebral column of the Arab tribe (kabila) is ***nasab*** (kinship line), among the Kurds it is the soil ***(ard)***" where they reside owing allegiance to the territorial chief.[8]

Any actual considerations regarding the sanctity of blood relations seems to be a secondary consideration as evidenced by the rather broad membership roles among the Kurdish tribes. The population of a tribe grows and subsides not only by birth-rate and disease but with any political and economic success the tribe is thought to have achieved through charismatic leadership or raw power. Roving families and groups often attach themselves to a particular tribe and refer to themselves, and are accepted as its members. In time, those families that continue to travel with the group become assimilated into the general tribal "genealogy" without prejudice and adhere to its social practices in exchange for security and identity. The nomadic tribes control specific pasture lands, exacting a fee from any migrating tribe crossing this territory. The clan or tribal chief collects the owed sum from his members and pays it to the head chief who generally keeps the payment for himself.[9]

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[8] Thomas Bois, "Kurds, Kurdistan", *E.I.*, 1986, p.471.

Additionally, in contrast to the overriding importance of differentiation being a product of segmentary kinship groups Kurdish society tends to emphasize social stratification as the predominate discriminatory factor within society which maintains social order by the submission of the lower stratum to the ruling elite.

The foremost believers of the singular importance of kinship relations, and therefore of segmentary organization, are the Kurds themselves. It is likely that the preferred view of a warrior society, a "corporate society based upon quasi-agnation" is actually the view of the pastoral nomad community which the tribe members wish to portray.[10] The nature of the society and vagueness of tribal membership, though leads me to consider that these tribes are primarily territorial subsistence groups consisting of lineage segments, expressing their corporate unity through "communal ownership of land, cooperation and coordination in herding and irrigation," and maintaining "political unity for purposes of defense and raiding".[11]

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[9] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.45.

[10] Emanuel Marx, "The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence: Nomadic-Pastoralism in the Middle East", *American Anthropologist*, No. 79, 1977, p.356.

PRESTIGE AND SOCIAL STATUS

A common thread of all societies is that each individual member strives to realize at least a minimum level of personal security and to maintain for himself and his closest relatives a positive consideration among peers. This seems to be true if for no other reason than the need to survive within the society. By gaining the esteem of others, rather than their enmity, and attempting to make the life environment more predictable, each person can minimize the daily fear and anxiety which are created in all but the most simple societies. Kurdish society is by nature traditional, and based upon an agrarian economic system having a highly stratified and complex structure. Since there is no formal, internal legal body to maintain order, social discipline and societal norms and values are maintained by means of personal prestige and status. Prestige, as used here, is gained primarily by means of demonstrated traits which enhance a person's standing among peers. The proximity to which an individual approaches specific cultural ideals is a measure of prestige which can be transformed into power and influence. Status, though, is more often an ascribed trait of a person due to hereditary factors such as kinship or functional position in society and provides a more or less direct source of power.[12]

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[11] Barth, *Principles of Social Organization in Southern Kurdistan,* p.72.

Prestige

More significant and binding than a set of codified laws to which members of the tribe are obligated to follow are the various cultural mores and expectations which function to maintain order in Kurdish society. Daily life is replete with situations which can affect personal standing, either favorably or not. How a person is perceived by others is generally based on the degree by which he fares against established values and standards of the community. Nonconformity to set standards often ends in ridicule and loss of prestige, while acceptance and respect is gained for accepted behavior. In Kurdish society there is no place to hide. If you choose to leave, a drastic decision at best, you depart with only a fragment of your former identity. The need to conform and to cooperate is a two-sided sword which on one hand provides each individual security and conserves traditional patterns yet on the other hand prevents a separation of an autonomous, personal identity from that of the family or tribe.

Honor, embracing the three notions of reputation, nobility and integrity, has far-reaching implications and is involved in such diverse topics as showing hospitality, blood feuds, and sexual relations. Honor is one of the Kurd's most treasured possessions. What constitutes honor is revealed in the symbolic "Kurdish Hero". Major elements of this romanticized characterization include one's physical prowess, his valor in the face of danger, a certain recklessness, respect for women, kindness to the poor, and unending hospitality.[13] To be found lacking in any of these traits could seriously weaken the power which the individual has enjoyed through family ties or other attributed status. A Kurd's reputation, therefore, can rely on both how well he can measure up to the image of the Kurdish warrior, a man's man so to speak, and on the other hand by the graciousness of his hospitality to guests of the village or town.

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[12] Barth, *Principles of Social Organization in Southern Kurdistan,* p.79

The Kurds take great pride in their "spirit of generosity" and unwavering hospitality. A guest of the village is accorded all the respect and munificence that the villagers can afford. No guest is allowed to wander at will but is assigned a charge who insures all personal needs are satisfied. Located in most village is the ***diywexan*** (guest house) which is maintained by the village chief, or as Edmonds describes, the "resident squire".[14] All travelers and guests of important personages within the tribe are permitted to stay here without charge. Funds to support these activities are gathered from the villagers who also use the building as an up-scale "coffee-house" to exchange information. In villages without a separate diywexan, the chief maintains a special room in his own house, which is normally the most grand and secure residence in the village.

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[13] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.98.

[14] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs,* p. 100.

Stories describing Kurdish proclivity towards brigandage in the past are generally not far from exaggeration. To dismiss these activities as actions of a band of thieves, though, would miss the mark. Although the concept of a Middle Eastern "Robin Hood" may be a slight exaggeration, there are stories which tell of how these raiders often robbed from the rich and helped the poor.[15] The Kurds make the distinction between the brigand who boldly robs a group of travelers during the light of day and the thief who slips through at night to steal from the same group sound asleep. In the first case, there is the element of risk and daring involving skill and craftiness which rewards the group by the gained wealth and their demonstrated power, while the second case represents the actions of common thieves. To be caught in common thievery would serve no purpose aside from bringing shame to the men if caught. Kurdish honor is not taken lightly. From the verbal oath ***ser cheva*** (on my eyes) which the speaker uses to demonstrate the unique importance and value of his guest or visitor and the sincerity and bond of his word,[16] to the blood-letting that is shared by the kin-group until vengeance is satisfied, each man's actions are often in response to the unwritten code of honor and obligation.

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[15] Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men*, p. 133.

[16] Margaret Kahn describes usage of this term in addition to marking arrivals and farewells also indicates the sincerity of a promise made. *Children of the Jinn*, p.279.

The obligation to protect one's reputation and honor is manifested in the phenomenon known as "blood-letting" or the blood feud. This tribal ritual is found throughout the world including many of the tribes in Kurdistan. This phenomenon which theoretically serves as a deterrent to extreme inter-tribal transgressions is described by a villager from Mutki (Turkey) as follows;

> One of us was killed by someone from another tribe his close relatives went after that tribe and killed *the first one they saw:* sometimes they killed more than one man, four or five; then of course the other tribe came to take revenge, killing some of us; and on it went, for years and years; sometimes 50 to 100 men got killed before peace was finally made.[17]

In this fashion the battle would ensue between the lineages of the two men involved until a settlement is made, normally through mediation by an influential chieftain leader, government official, religious renown mediator, or through the payment of ***bej*** (blood-money).

One important note is that retribution is limited to certain considerations. First, the response to a misdeed is not necessarily directed towards the perpetrator. Murder within the tribe is not an individual matter but an affair between groups.[18] Sometimes revenge is taken against close blood-relatives of the murderer or even against highly valued members of the clan or tribe. The second point to consider is that group revenge is generally limited to equals of one's own socio-status level. For instance, since a peasant or other low status individual would not even seriously consider attacking a tribal chieftain, the murderer of an important figure would automatically be assumed to be an opposing chief or other individual of like status. On the other hand, a peasant would not normally strike out on his own to seek revenge but would expect his chief to insure satisfaction was obtained. Blood-money is collected from the entire lineage of the murdering party but is distributed to the father or relatives of the victim to care for the aggrieved family.[19]

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[17] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.59.

Barth writes that the Kurdish tribal system with its lineage organization, small endogamous community, and under-developed governmental institutions makes it highly favorable for blood feud patterns to exist. However, he found that upon closer examination, there is nonexistent or very weak evidence of this type phenomenon occurring in Southern Kurdistan (Suleymania area) which is more sedentary. He defines institutionalized blood feud as a special form of revenge "whereby a whole group of persons are held collectively responsible for the behavior of one of its members and when the wronged party is ... conceived ... as the whole larger group to which he belonged".[20] It is the collective nature of the blood feud which Barth feels does not emerge in cases where revenge occurs in Southern Kurdistan. In situations where he finds one group attacking members of another group in revenge, he sees it as a form of communal justice stemming from corporate actions such as a raid or inter-tribal feud, where the group causing the first casualties operated as a political unit in a planned action. This is in contrast to the action of the single individual who is able to draw in both his lineage and that of the victims in a continually escalating fashion. In fact, Barth states that in the case of the tribes he studied, any collective responsibility of members of the descent group at all seems to be lacking.[21] If the incidence of lineage related blood-letting is in fact more limited in Southern Kurdistan and more a function of a struggle for power by tribes acting as territorial units, then, the presence of an outside arbitrator to control the actions of combatants takes on a greater significance with the southern tribes.

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[18] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.59.

[19] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.62.

Most of the accounts which Barth recognizes as corporate action by descent group occur in northern Iraqi areas such as Rowanduz and as he surmises may be peculiar or more relative to a certain social ecology. However, irrespective of the degree to which this may take place south of the Mosul-Rowanduz line, or the mechanism by which revenge is pursued, it is true that tribal chiefs and leaders have in the past and continue to expend enormous efforts engaging in disputes and intrigues against one another, preserving tribal honor in the search for power.

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[20] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.73.

[21] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.74

An important aspect of male honor is also demonstrated by the role of the family in the protection of a woman's reputation and image. The young girl's safety, modesty and virtue are the responsibility of the males of the family primarily residing with the father and to a lesser extent the paternal uncle. After the young woman is married this complex convention of right and obligation passes to the husband. Kurdish women are considered to be free of many conservative institutional trappings since they do not veil and are not generally subject to the obvious segregation that many Middle Eastern women are obliged to follow in public.[22] The existence of these apparent differences of practice do not, however, signify any lessening in the "Islamic" (or Mediterranean) ethos reflecting the male view that unconstrained sexuality poses a danger to social order "and the necessity for male control of female sexual behavior".[23] Breaches of honor by the Kurdish female such as engaging in prostitution or extra-marital sex are dealt with by the family who feels that the woman has brought shame upon the household and it is their obligation to resolve the situation. It is important to note, however, that incidents of impropriety are exceptionally rare in Kurdish society. Past travelers have noted that without a word for prostitution Kurds borrow the Turkish or Persian equivalent to describe the activity.[24] Punishment of the guilty woman for such indiscretions, even in recent times, are quite severe to include the ultimate penalty of death.

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[22] Kurdish women often work in the fields with the males and enjoys annual and special public celebrations by participating with the men in various types of folk-dances. See Bois, *The Kurds,* for a description of leisure activities among the Kurds, pp. 59-74.

[23] Daniel Bates and Amal Rassam, *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East,* p.215.

Success in Kurdish society runs the gamut of mountain tribesmen returning from a triumphant bear hunt to the urban Kurd able to make a successful living in a major city. In both cases the "hunter" has emerged victorious against the odds and his prestige will be accordingly raised. This is seen as an achievement not only for the individual, but also for the tribe and the Kurdish values system. When the Kurd living abroad writes to his family of his newly found wealth or rise in fame it is done less to brag than to bring cause for shared celebration.

In the continuing turmoil for power in the escalating confrontations which erupt between tribes and among tribal members, the role of the mediator has played an important part in resolving conflicts. The eminent position of the mediator truly exemplifies the degree to which Kurdish politics is personalized in order to contain disorder within the various social groups. The utility of this role in Kurdistan has created a vehicle for the rise in personal influence and power of family members, religious leaders or political chiefs, and particularly in the case of a non-local resident or one claiming descent from the Prophet.[25] An individual who can claim to be both a demonstrated leader yet not a lineage member of the embattled parties becomes what is considered the ideal mediator. During the past two centuries, this position has been assumed by the Shaikh. Already having a certain degree of prestige through religious teachings and leadership among the dervishes, his power and influence are further bolstered by his acceptance as a local arbitrator. The historical precedence since the mid-nineteenth century for the shaikh to be used in the role of a mediators in nearly all confrontations and serious disputes in Kurdistan, has enhanced and protected his virtual monopoly in this position.[26]

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[24] For example see Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, p.397.

Status

In most modern industrial societies the station in life an individual maintains and his relationship to others in society is primarily determined by his political and economic status. From a "Western" perspective the necessary connection between those who hold political office or possess great wealth, and their resultant influence within the society almost seems natural, often ignoring other non-political or economical factors of hierarchical position. This perspective of the manner in which members of a culture are viewed prevents a full understanding of the differing mores, influential primordial ties and networks of personal relationships which exist and serve unfamiliar societies. A useful manner to examine primary sources of direct power in Kurdish society is to look at four major categories of what Barth refers to as "part-statuses"; political influence, division of labor, religion, and kinship.[27]

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[25] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.63.

[26] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.64.

The holder of a high political position is endowed with a type of direct power since the office itself prescribes effective influence and control over sections of the population. This is the kind of power or status which we identify the elected or appointed political office holder with. To the small town or village Kurd, the influence wielded by the office holder is acknowledged due to his ability to control certain elements of life such as taxes and production but the position itself has no inherent prestige. The concept of "office" as a symbol of power to the population outside of the larger towns and urban areas is not well developed. Thus, his true influence among the people is determined to a greater degree by other factors such as age, family name, wealth, and religious piety, that together will determine the degree to which the political figure can function as an intermediary between the government and his local supporters. In sum, influence in Kurdish society is to a large degree a measure of the personal following one can garner. Within the village is a hierarchical structure of prestige based upon division of labor. Depending upon how one earns his living within the society, a specific level of prestige is attributed to each individual and family. At the lower end of the scale is the common laborer. Moving up past the level of the tenant farmer, the most prestigious economic class is the absentee landowner. Freeholding farmers are considered to rank on a status-scale with tenant farmers but when holding lands in a village where most of the land is controlled by the absentee landowner the freeholding farmer is in the unfortunate position of being the object of interest as the general landowner attempts to gain control of his land also.[28] Each of these positions has traditionally been directly related to the degree of control the individual has over land use and people, with each status level prescribing specific rights and privileges regarding relations between the various levels. With the rise of workers in manufacturing positions and the developing urban "middle class" careers in professional fields, an elaboration on occupational prestige becomes much more involved. To my knowledge there has been no research conducted on this subject.

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[27] Barth, *Social Organization,* pp.79-100.

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[28] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.80.

There is also the general distinction between tasks which are performed by men and that relegated to women. While the men perform most of the tasks outside of the house, in the fields and dealing with the horses, the women work inside the house, preparing the food, weaving, drying tobacco and in general, all the chores that one might expect to find women doing in rural Europe.[29]

Another major source of status in society is religion which provides the framework for several complicated but important positions of status, both formal (orthodox) and informal (mystical). Within the structure of formally organized religion are several designated positions. The first is the ***Mullah***. In spite of the claimed importance of Islam within the community, the mullah holds a relatively low social position on the scale of a tenant farmer. His present function within the village is similar to that of a priest calling morning and evening prayer and attending to funeral rites of the deceased. His prestige is based to a large degree on the degree of piety he exhibits and in general the mullah does not tend to transform his position into one of de facto power.[30]

The designation of ***Hadji***, an individual who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca, is a relative rarity in Kurdistan and individuals who have received this title receive the benefit of prestige from both displayed religious piety and from the acknowledged modest wealth. Although the Kurdish village is rather informal regarding those who fulfill their obligation of the pilgrimage, the means to make the trip is reflective of the man's ability to support his family and as long as he continues to show fiscal solvency, he will normally be a leading citizen of the village.[31]

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[29] Barth, *Social Organization,* pp. 24-25.

[30] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.95.

An important religious institution throughout the Muslim world but especially prevalent and powerful in Kurdistan are the various ***dervish*** or ***sufi*** brotherhoods which have been previously mentioned. Three major orders of these spiritual groups popularized in Kurdistan are the ***Naqshbandi, Qadiri,*** and ***Rifa'i*** orders. Although most religious orders tend to be equated with an "aristocratic" movement of the higher strata of society, the Naqshbandi and Qadiri orders allow membership by all social and economic classes.[32] These religious fraternities are still, however, more active in the rural areas and are typically attended by the lowest economic groups. As a response to the orthodox interpretive teachings of the Qur'an, these orders attempt to seek a union of knowledge and truth with God by means of an alternative ***tariqa*** or path; the way of the sufi. The method by which a ***murid*** (disciple) finds his way to this union is by following the practices of the ***murshid*** (teacher) or Shaikh. Disciples of sufism believe that God's blessings are transmitted to him along the chain from God to Muhammad, and by means of a series of saints ***(ewliya)***[33], both dead and alive, to his personal teacher and Shaikh. The prestige of a particular Shaikh is not only enhanced by the size of his following, and the wealth that he accumulates through their gifts, but also by the degree of ***keramet*** or "special grace" which he is thought to have. This grace is measured by his ability to perform miracles, indicating that God has decided to permit this Shaikh to distribute his "blessings" ***(barakat)*** to others.[34]

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[31] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.95.

[32] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.261.

The last part-status category described by Barth is kinship. Within this field the most prestigious role is that of the patriarch of the family who functions as the organizer and primary authority of the group. Once the wife provides the patriarch children, she too accrues status by virtue of her parenting role. Authority, however, is transmitted along male lines, and even if headed by a widow, the family is known by the name of the oldest male child.[35] Status and authority passes down through the ranks of the children within the family with each individual child reigning over and commanding the respect of younger siblings. Variables to the degree of status are generally limited to the total size of the family, where a large fold is looked on with admiration, and, any ties or connections between this family and the ruling clan.

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[33] Awliya is the Arabic plural for wali but in Turkish and Kurdish it is more often used as singular.

[34] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.267.

[35] Barth, *Social Organization*, pp. 29-30.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND ROLES

Politics within Kurdish society is largely a matter of social contacts and interaction on the personal level. Within the village the typical daily life of influential persons entails the hosting and entertaining of an "endless stream of visitors in their home and office".[36] At this level, "many, if not most, decisions affecting public life arise from long discussions, interminable negotiations, and ultimate consensus. Even gossip cannot be thought of as entirely idle. It is often a mechanism for spreading information, influencing decisions, and controlling behavior."[37] An important feature of personalized politics is the overt shifting of alliances and contending households, clans within the tribe, and on a larger scale among villages and political factions, which is manifested by a complicated network of dyadic ties. As Bates and Rassam point out, these ties can be seen as informal contracts between two individuals based more on "mutual expectations of loyalty and assistance, rather than on commitment to abstract principles or codes..."[38] The result of this factioning process is that political structures which emerge from the Kurdish "experience" are thus typified by this political style.

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[36] Bates and Rassam, speaking of Middle East local politics, *Peoples and Cultures,* p. 244.

[37] Bates and Rassam, *Peoples and Cultures,* p. 244.

Informal political action.

Decision-making and communications concerning items of local interest within the villages are accomplished through several general kinds of assemblies. For the common peasant there exists a "roof-top society" where the men of the village gather at night to discuss a variety of issues such as neighborhood disputes and factors of livelihood. Issues range from purely parochial activities to concerns beyond the limits of the village. These meetings are conducted in a courtyard or terrace but most often on the actual roofs of the houses which are terraced against the side of a hill.[39] Topics of discussion are brought up by anyone present and everyone is free to comment without fear of having his opinion suppressed. In a true display of democratic participation, vaguely reminiscent of the New England "town meeting", one can hardly have a private discussion as anyone interested can become involved. Villagers come and go as they please while conversations continue through the evening.

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[38] Bates and Rassam, *Peoples and Cultures,* p. 245.

[39] Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men,* p.44.

A second informal type of gathering is what Barth refers to as "the smokefilled room".[40] Normally taking place in the village guesthouse, this is where the important and influential men of the village, or at least one faction of the local decision-makers, come to discuss business and politics, and entertain guests. Maintaining honor and besting one's rival in the eyes of peers in the dense and smoky atmosphere is an important dynamic of this group arrangement that will ultimately develop and decide plans of action for the village. Proper social relationships are preserved in spite of the lively discussions taking place. Guests are normally accorded special honors and are seated alongside the most prominent figure present. Tea, the preferred drink of Kurds, is readily available at any time of the day.

Women, however, are not welcome members at either of these gatherings and although responsible for the preparation of food to be eaten in the guesthouse, they keep themselves away from the room where the discussions are taking place.[41] Although often aware of stated opinions and decisions within the groups, the women tend to gather together around the water-hole or stream where clothes are washed and exchange news and the latest gossip. Women belonging to more influential families will gather together in private rooms within the houses and talk.

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[40] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.103.

[41] Barth, *Social Organization,* p.105.

Formal political action

The role of the leader is very important among the Kurds, and wherever an absence of a strong and influential chief exists, there is open struggle and conflict among potential leaders for the acquisition of power. The combination of the high degree of importance placed on the role of a "chief" and the willingness to engage in a struggle for power in the absence of a strong leader leads to insidious and continual fighting and requests for outside support and alliances. In Kurdish tribes this factioning tends to take on a dualistic type split. Around each group leader there always appears to be a left and right faction, and no more, both vying for control and influence within the clan. As Van Bruinessen describes it, this left-right world view is a permanent part of the culture and is a major factor which prevents a long-lasting unity among elements of a tribe or between tribes. Disputes among the high chiefs are exceptionally difficult to resolve leading to efforts by other tribal chiefs to mediate a solution. This, however, causes dissension of the factions within the quarrelling parties since they see this move by the outside chief as a motive to raise his own power and stature.[42] In northern Kurdistan there is a proverb summarizing this idea which states "Chiefs there are many, but the chief to whom chiefs listen is rare".[43] Another difficulty is the tendency for chiefs to abruptly change allegiance forcing part of his supporters to befriend a former enemy, while others are left with a new enemy of their chief's. In typical Kurdish fashion "a friend of my enemy is my enemy also".

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[42] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.63.

[43] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.63.

The question of who leads in a society and how the reign of power is transferred is always important but especially so in the tribal Kurdish society. Leadership normally passes patrilinealy through the family but there is no set rule of succession. Rather than pass automatically to the eldest son, rule tends to be based on the leadership and qualities exhibited by a prospective candidate, the following he is able to attract via his charismatic personality, and the particular virtues he displays.

Elder

Within the tribal and clan structure are a group of men known as ***ri spi*** (white-beards), or the elders.[44] These are individuals who have been selected to form a council due to their influence and prestige. An elder is also granted authority and leads the smallest structured group within the tribe, the ***khel*** or tent-group. The khel, or ***oba*** as it is known in certain parts of central and northern Kurdistan, is a purely economic herding group consisting of between ten to thirty households and exists in order to conduct herding operations with a manageable number of livestock.[45]

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[44] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.81.

The primary roles of the tribal council are to settle disputes and administer justice in accordance with customary tribal law. This includes providing advice to the agha regarding the settlement of feuds, matters of war, and responsibility to choose a successor.[46] The council is often empowered with the authority to impose the severe punishment of banishment from the tribe.

Agha

The variety of differences existing among the Kurdish social groupings and the continuing effects of modernization and government centralization policies forces any definitive description of the role of the Agha (tribal or clan chief) to be outdated at best and theoretical at worse. The aspects of relationship between the agha and tribesmen or to the peasants tied to his land to this day are not easily seen, having been cloaked in the illusion of modernity. Yet, traditional tribal sentiments and loyalties persist and reinforce the conditional relationship between the common peasants and the tribal, clan or village chief, although he may be more properly described today as an "Agha in a Suit".[47]

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[45] Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement...", pp. 74-75.

[46] Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement...", p. 80.

Within each tribe a ruling family of aghas exists. There may be one preeminent agha or several aghas who have a loyal following among different clannish factions or interests. Lessor members of the ruling family are normally installed as Agha of one village belonging to the tribe.[48] Marriage is almost invariably within the ruling family ***tire*** with limited exceptions. One exception is when the bride is a "subject" who happens to be in a position to bring wealth into the arrangement. This type of exogamous marriage effectively strengthens the Agha's own position within the clan.

The Agha is not expected or required to perform work himself and instead lives off his perquisites of rule. In addition to revenue received from tax-farming arrangements carried over from Ottoman times, other income includes money which he has the right to levy from the tribesmen for the upkeep of the village guest-house and any services that he feels entitled to from each of the villages.[49] Most of the ruling aghas are now permanently settled in towns retaining little authority over the peasants yet by their family status they are still addressed by the feudal title of ***beg*** or ***agha***.

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[47] A term used by Vera Saeedpour during discussions at the Kurdish Library in New York, NY, 1989-1990.

[48] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs,* p.13

[49] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs,* p.14.

Shaikh

An examination of the role and nature of Shaikhship provides a good perspective on the character of the Kurds. Commanding a position more powerful than the temporal tribal leadership, the Shaikh's role in society is a combination of both spiritual and political leadership, an unique blend of influence from heaven and earth. The founder of each shaikhly family is nearly without exception an outsider to the area in which he gains fame. He is neither a member of the tribe nor a native of the locality where he first begins to gain fame.[50] His climb to influence begins shortly after his arrival by impressing the rather ignorant and untamed mountain people to become quite impressed with his strict religious piety and the good deeds which he performs.[51]

As a means to establishing his high reputation the Shaikh takes measures to assist the common peasant and the less fortunate. This enables him to build up a large following which further increases his prestige. Hay describes how the Shaikhs Obaydullah and Ala ud Din had established a hospice for cold and weary travellers near a mountain pass at Dar ul Aman (The Abode of Security). The two Shaikhs were later buried at this spot and their sons carried on the work by maintaining the site.[52] The burial site is felt to retain the spiritual nature of the Shaikh providing a source of ***barakat*** and often becomes a meeting point for disciples of the Shaikh.

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[50] Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement", p.130

[51] Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement", p.130

The Shaikh performs a number of roles in Kurdish society, among them holy man, mediator, object of popular devotion, and guide/instructor in mystical ***sufi*** brotherhoods.[53] By playing such an active part in every-day life of the peasants the Shaikh competes directly with the Agha in both receiving economic support and in obtaining political control. In fact, although the Agha controls many of the peasants life necessities which are limited by access to his land, in many ways the Shaikh could challenge the agha by the number of supporters he can gather, ideology, and his mystical barakat. A member of the aristocracy, the shaikh conducts business on the level of the tribal chieftain and governmental officials.

The essence of the power and influence of the shaikh is perhaps best illustrated by the following paragraph describing the ***marabouts*** (saints) living among the Berber of North Africa:

> He respects their traditions and their customs, even those which are not in accord with the precepts of the Holy Book. He collects...contributions which are freely offered him and rules by means of persuasion and skillful manoeuvres. His word is respected and feared because of the magic powers held by members of his lineage and

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[52] Hay, *Two Years in Kurdistan,* p.257.

[53] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.258.

> because he has the power to bring the implacable curse of Allah upon the insubordinate.[54]

In spite of the steadfast urbanization *of the region* and the transfer of political power away from traditional tribal personages the influence and strength of the Kurdish shaikhs remains. This is recognized by both the peasant class and professional alike who continue to pay visits to his shaikh for advise, cures for sick members of the family and political consultation. Even the agha calls the shaikh "Your Highness". This power and influence is also recognized by the central government in Baghdad which currently provides financial assistance to the leading shaikhs in order to control their potential influence among the populace. "Owning nothing particular *of his own, he has power over* all things. He exacts nothing from anyone, and everyone gives freely to him."[55]

Of these three holders of political power within Kurdish society only the Agha and the Shaikh have been recognized as legitimate contenders for any type of supra-tribal leadership roles. The position of the elders in Kurdish society is not well documented other than limited accounts of their role in some intra-tribal decision-making. "Real" power, that is the accepted influence and control over major decisions in the lives of the population, however, seems to reside in the agha, representing temporal authority, and the shaikh who has been able to combine economic influence with spiritual puissance.

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[54] Robert Montagne, *The Berbers,* p. 11.

[55] Description of a marabout lord of Tazerualt in the eighteenth century by Saugnier. Montagne, *The Berbers,* pp. 11-12.

CHAPTER THREE
LEADERSHIP AND HEROES

If only there were harmony among us,
If we were to obey a single one of us,
He would reduce to vassalage
Turks, Arabs, and Persians - all of them.
We would perfect our religion, our State,
And would educate ourselves in learning and wisdom...

— Ahmedi Khani, Mem û Zîn, 1695

The transition of Kurdish society from numerous constituent tribal groups to an assimilated national community is a slow and continuing process that has been most evident over the past four centuries, since the first political division of Kurdistan. Nomadic and settled populations, which until the past fifty years operated under pastoral and quasi-feudal political structures typified by a submissive population controlled by number of chiefs owing allegience to a single territorial leader, have, by fits and starts, been transformed into a multi-faceted society which now owes allegiance to a variety of nationalist organizations in search of common aspirations. The primal and stirring developments which were to lead the Kurds from a strictly tribal perspective to one of supra-tribal or nationalist timbre was not, however, inspired by evolutionary socio-political thought, nor did it move in progressional linear fashion. Rather, the presence and flowering of the early Kurdish state-like emirates increased and subsided over time primarily in response to external geopolitical factors.

A number of modest Kurdish dynasties first emerged in Kurdistan during the tenth century but soon settled back into relative obscurity. By the late fifteenth and sixteenth century, though, new and lasting ideas and opportunities to support a separate Kurdish identity emerged in response to the growing influence of regional powers beyond the mountain frontiers. Earlier Kurdish leaders such as the celebrated Salah-ed-Din (Saladin) of Tikrit (d.1193 A.D.) who ruled over the Sunni Ayyubid dynasty, did not emphasize their Kurdish stock and were not interested in establishing a Kurdish state.[1] After a series of conflicts over territorial claims to the area, the defeat of the Persians on the plains of Chaldiran was to mark the beginning of institutional political integration of Kurdish organizations above the level of tribe.

SUPRA-TRIBAL LEADERSHIP

After the Perso-Ottoman Battle of Chaldiran in 1514, a pact was drawn up between the Ottoman government and Kurdish paramount tribal chiefs which formally recognized the autonomy of sixteen various-sized independent Kurdish ***Hukumats*** (governments or principalities) and approximately fifty smaller ***sanjaks*** (a sub-division of a province ruled by tribal chiefs or beys) located throughout Kurdistan. This deft maneuver to draw these Kurdish ***mirs*** (princes) closer to Ottoman interests and thereby severing the historic and cultural Kurdish bond to Persia was accomplished through the services of the preeminent Kurdish religious personage, historian and intermediary, Mulla Hakim Idris of Bitlis. Although many of the Kurdish leaders were already resentful of Shah Ismail's previous attempts to appoint Persian governors over them in order to control the region, Idris was able to convince the princes and various other pro-Persian Kurdish chieftains of the mutual benefits of an alliance. The mirs of the principalities in southern Kurdistan were acceded almost complete independence and sovereignty within the confines of their "states" in return for their assistance in the defeat of the Shiʻite ***Safavids*** and future loyalty to the Sultan. They were granted the right to produce coinage, to administer their region without accountability to the Sultan, and were exempted from the payment of tribute. The only restriction they were obliged to follow, and this without question, was to refrain from rising up against the Sublime Porte or against any of the neighboring principalities.[2]

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[1] H. Arfa, *The Kurds,* pp.9-10. For additional information on early Kurdish dynasties and early history read Chapter 1.

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[2] Kendal (Nezan), "The Kurds under the Ottoman Empire", *People Without a Country,* p.22.

The mirs, selected from the leading tribal families, were placed in control of these principalities consisting of both settled and nomadic Kurds, Christians, Armenians and Assyrian populations. These designated preeminent leaders of the new tribal confederations, under the auspices of the Sublime Porte, owned the villages, pastures and village estates, and were able to utilize the residing peasants as share-croppers bound to the princes' lands. The more important mirs retained a number of subordinate chiefs who controlled portions of the principalities in their service. The princes, unlike other territorial leaders within the Ottoman system, were able to transfer their titles and privileges to their chosen successor on a hereditary basis. Through this unfettered, management style by feudalistic home-rule, the Ottoman center believed it could insure both peace and stability in the region and preclude the emergence of a powerful rival Kurdish state acting either independently or in unison with Persia. The Ottoman success at the Battle of Chaldiran and Kurdish alliances did not, however, signify the end of Persian efforts to woo Kurdish loyalty and again control this territory. The intermittent battles to win Kurdish territory and support during the next century served to make the Kurds increasingly aware of their own political significance and they developed a pattern of behavior towards the rival overlords which remains today.

> When the...governments tried to impose upon them taxes or military service to which they were unwilling to submit,

> ...they revolted. If their revolt was successful, they tried to make the best bargain from their momentary success; if not, they crossed the unguarded border into a neighboring state and took shelter with the Kurdish tribes living in that country, remaining there until more auspicious times.[3]

In 1639 Sultan Murad IV and Shah Abbas II signed a treaty to establish a permanent border between the Ottoman state and Persia. This agreement was important to the Kurds since it also managed to divide the region of Kurdistan in a line following the Zagros mountain chain north to Mt. Ararat with three-quarters of the area under Ottoman control. The treaty provided a period of peace in the region between the Ottoman and Safavid states which lasted for eighty years until 1724.

Between the seventeenth and the mid-nineteenth century a number of semi-independent "feudal states" gained power and regional influence in the area which would become Iraq. The most important of these principalities were known as Bahdinan, Soran and Baban (see figure 5). Bahdinan existed in the most northern, and mountainous region corresponding to today's governorates of Dohuk and northern Ninevah laying just north of the north-south linguistic/cultural line. The Soran principality was situated to the south of this line in an area roughly conforming to Arbil. Baban was a very large and powerful principality which included the whole of Suleymania and part of Kirkuk governorates.

The exercising of the special privileges previously

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[3] H. Arfa, *The Kurds,* p.16.

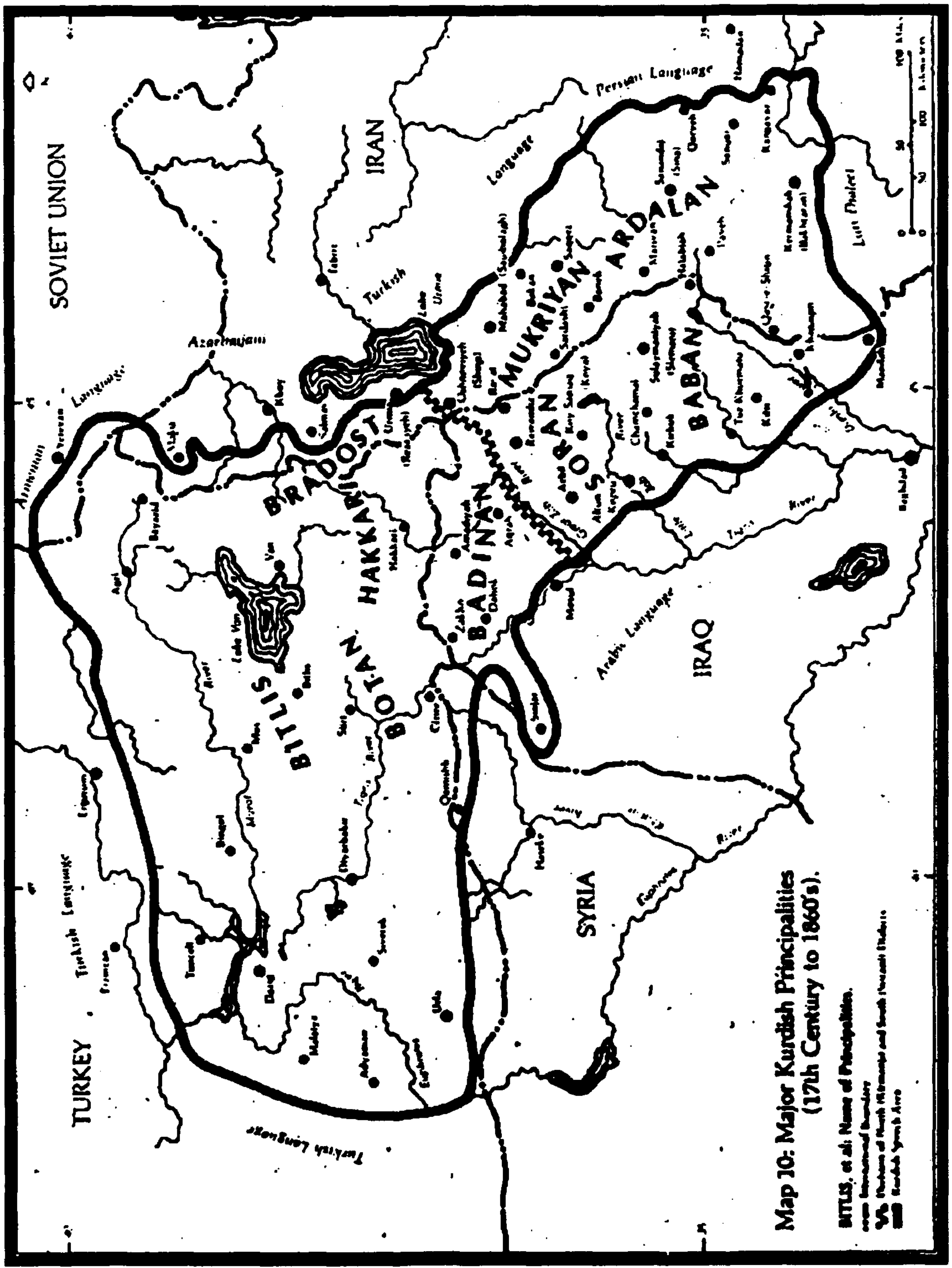
SOVIET UNION
IRAN
TURKEY
SYRIA
IRAQ
BITLIS
BOTAN
HAKKARI
BRADOST
BADINAN
SORAN
MUKRIYAN
ARDALAN
BABAN
Persian Language
Turkish Language
Arabic Language
Map 10: Major Kurdish Principalities
(17th Century to 1860's).

Figure 5 Autonomous Kurdish Principalities. Source: Hassanpour, "The Language Factor in National Development", p.49.

accorded the Kurdish chiefs and subsequent increased sense of independence by these territorial leaders, boosted the concerns and fears of the Ottoman Sultans who now began to grow jealous of this "autonomy which was reducing their effective control..."[4] Thus, by the mid-eighteenth century the Ottomans gradually began to subordinate the semi-independent Kurdish leadership to a centrally appointed ***Pasha*** (the highest military or civilian rank) who through a reconfiguration of the administrative system and rank structure was able to manage local affairs of the Mosul region from Baghdad. The paramount Kurdish chiefs, once granted the rank of pasha themselves, were reduced to district governor status under the centralized control of a regional Ottoman Pasha. By 1760, after the introduction of the government appointed Pasha, the system of self-governing tribal confederations under autonomous Kurdish princes as established by Mulla Idris had in general begun to break down as the "ruling" Pashas sold the hereditary titles of district governorships to the highest bidder, supported one principality over another, and extorted funds from all.[5]

During the period of Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) and Abdul Mejid I (1839-1861) the Ottoman government was able to bring the once powerful aristocratic Kurdish princes in line through a combination of military oppression and conciliatory gestures. By 1830 the Ottoman state had already begun to initiate a series of radical reforms which would subsequently -

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[4] Bois, *The Kurds,* p.140.

[5] Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan,* pp.44-47.

> "...threaten the old established order of things, and consequently to destroy the last vestiges of their ancient privileges" and "seemed to sound the death-knell of the grand feudalism, alone compatible with the Kurd's conception of an order of society."[6]

In addition to replacing the Janissary Corps with a standing regular army and militia after 1826, a new administrative policy of centralization, to further reduce the autonomy of the outlying region between the Tigris and the Persian border, was instituted in the period referred to as the ***Tanzimat-ı Hayriye*** or "Auspicious Reorderings". From 1839 to 1876 this era of modern reform in the Ottoman Empire produced wide-ranging legislation directed at increasing the function of the state in the daily affairs of its citizens and tighter control over outlying territories.[7] Similar to the provincial reforms which took place in the Lebanon during this period, a new emphasis towards the "reconquest" of the Kurdish tribes was taken. Except for temporary changes in tactics the resolve of the Ottoman state to destroy the remnants of the Kurdish principalities and remove resistant local leadership, continued right up to the twentieth century when the second political division of the region occurred following the

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[6] Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan,* p.49.

[7] Stanford J. Shaw & E. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey,* Vol II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.55. See entire Chapter 2 for additional information on Ottoman reforms in this period.

British occupation of Mosul. A number of the now uprooted princely families and feudal nobility chose to side with the Ottoman government in an effort to retain some remnant of wealth and authority. Another group though, continued opposition to the central government and began to organize on a tribal basis and engaged in armed insurrection against military conscription, taxes and religious concerns.

By 1852 the princes of the "autonomous" principalities of Baban, Soran and Bahdinan were effectively suppressed and placed under direct Ottoman jurisdiction. Close government control was not, however, welcomed by the now disassociated tribal groups and the region underwent a period of struggle by the Kurdish leaders in an attempt to maintain their past authority and prestige. At one point, the impressive military might of the Ottomans and community of Sunni Islam had once existed as unifying factors between the Kurds and the Ottoman state. The distant stranger was appreciated in his role as Sultan and Caliph as "enforcers of the larger code of revelation and conduct, and of peace among...tribes".[8] As the "sacred stranger" drew closer, though, and gained more control over daily activities loyalties shifted to Kurdish tribal units and Kurdish political activity was typified by local bickering and mounting hostility to the unwanted stranger.[9]

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[8] Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p.11.

[9] Qazzaz, "Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism", pp.99-100.

In the absence of any temporal unifying force, as the mirs had once provided, a new type of leader emerged as a primary acceptable source of authority able to restore peace, order and faith. The political role of the Shaikh, as a blend of tribal chieftain status and moral force, gained prominence in Kurdish politics during this era. Through a combination of religious piety, material wealth, charismatic influences and family connections the shaikh was able to provide a source of moral strength among the population which was sorely lacking.[10] Although there were no shaikhly political leaders of any significance before the defeat of the last Baban ruler, after this period, nearly all major political leaders were either shaikhs or came from a shaikhly family.[11] The ascendence of Shaikhly leadership as a major regional political force among the Kurds became first evident in the rebellion of Shaikh Obaydullah of Nehri (Shemdinan district, Turkey) in 1880. After the Ottoman defeat of this uprising and the death of Shaikh Obaydullah in 1883, sole religious authority for the tribes of Kurdistan passed to Shaikh Muhammad of Barzan who had been instructed in the Naqshbandi tariqa by Obaydullah.[12]

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[10] R. Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism,* p.xvi.

[11] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* pp.291-92.

[12] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* p.330. Shaikh Muhammad was the son of Shaikh Abdul Salam I who earlier was arch-nemesis of Obaydullah.

MODERN NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

By the turn of the century two general trends of upper-class political leadership among the Kurds could be discerned. The first of these was the traditional agha and shaikhly patterns of quasi-feudal leadership which sought to preserve their status within the tribe with its hereditary system of rule and forms of maintenance and control which they benefitted from. Political action stemmed from a reaction against outside powers which were determined to effect control over the region.

The second group was comprised of a growing intellectual class who following the Turkish and Arab nationalist movements saw the possibility that either in cooperation with the Young Turk nationalists or alone, the people of Kurdistan could also achieve independence. This circle of modernists had matured outside of Kurdistan in the urban centers of Istanbul, Baghdad, Mosul and Cairo and were well-versed in the ideas and trends of Western political thought.

Formation of Political Groups and Organizations

After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 a variety of political clubs and organizations were established in major urban centers of Mosul and Baghdad, but especially in Istanbul. The first Kurdish political organization, established in 1908, was called the Kürt Terraki ve Teavun Cemiyeti (Kurdish society for Progress and Mutual Aid). This group was formed by well-educated and illustrious Kurdish princely sons who had been sent to school in the Ottoman system and lasted for only one year until it was reactivated in 1918 under a different name. At the same time a new educated elite outside the Ottoman Empire began to form as sons of influential and wealthy families began to leave the Middle East for Europe to obtain educations in such countries as France and Switzerland.

An important factor towards the development of the Kurdish nationalist movement within Kurdistan was the function of the religious tariqas and tekkiyes. Here, the shaikhs were able to proselytize nationalism with little fear of government intervention because of the protection religion afforded them.

> For a number of reasons, the importance of the takiyahs as centers for the dissemination of nationalist ideas can scarcely be exaggerated. The ideas emanating from these focal points found ready and wide acceptance among the kurds. For they bore the stamp of...authority of the shaykhs. Moreover, the religious character and influence of the shaykhs gave the takiyahs relative immunity from interference and harassment by the authorities.[13]

The shaikhs represented a significant element in the rise of nationalist feelings since unlike the urban Kurdish elite who looked to the Young Turks as their "bread and butter" the shaikhs closely identified with the masses and supported the traditional Islamic state represented by the Sultan-Caliph

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[13] Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement", p.302.

Abdul Hamid.[14]

Shortly after the Young Turks came to power Shaikhs Abdul Salam Barzan and Nur Muhammad of Dohuk sent a petition to the government in Istanbul which aptly demonstrates the blend of religious reform and nationalism which they believed was necessary. Among the seven points listed in this petition were –

(1) Adopt a Kurdish speaking administration for the Kurdish population areas.

(2) Adopt the Kurdish language as primary in these areas.

(3) Appoint Kurdish speaking government representatives for area.

(4) Administer law and justice according to Shariʻa.

(5) Fill positions of ***qadi*** (religious judge) and ***mufti*** *(canon law official) by members of the Shafiʻi school of* law.

(6) Taxes to be levied in accordance with the Shariʻa.[15]

Resolving the Young Turk movement to be antithetic to their own position a new period of short-lived armed rebellion began throughout the region which would last in Iraq until 1945.

The rejuvenated "Rise and Progress Society", now identified as of Kürdistan Taali Cemiyeti (Society for the rise of Kurdistan), expanded its membership base and included for the first time tribal members in addition to its intellectual and urban elite core. In 1927 an international

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[14] Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement", pp. 302-03.

[15] Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement", pp. 304-05.

Kurdish organization named ***Hoyboun*** was created which had as its primary objective the merging of all existing nationalist associations into one united body. Hoyboun was felt by its organizers to represent the political aspirations of the entire Kurdish population and the organization would function as the supreme political body of Kurdish nationalism and a government in exile.[16] Created by the Ağri Dağ Congress, by the time the revolt was smashed in 1931 it began to lose its sense of purpose. Its organizers had no clear alternate objectives and failed to develop into a widely based or action oriented political organization. Later, Walter Laqueur would correctly assess its dysfunctional nature by stating "the main assignment of Hoyboun appears to have been to make the Kurdish views known abroad; for the last twenty years it has been responsible for most of the Kurdish propaganda outside Kurdistan...Hoyboun was in short, a propaganda center rather than a political party."[17]

Political parties

The development of political parties in Iraq was a slow process and the initial party structures were exceptionally vulnerable to internal dissension and lack of direction. ***Hewa*** (Hope), created in 1938, was the first true nationalist

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[16] Qazzaz, *Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism,* p.72.

[17] Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East,* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, p. 223. Cited by Qazzaz, "Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism", p.74.

Kurdish political party in Iraq. This organization, formed by lawyers, teachers and journalists provided the nationalist movement with a break from past groups which were merely centers of discussion and strictly limited to a cadre of intelligentsia. Hewa developed a wide-based nationalist front that merged political ideology with revolutionary action. By 1943 the organization began to falter as it was forced to address two fundamental questions which would surface time and again during the armed struggle. The first was whether to support the Barzani revolt in the north which were drawing British ire, or to maintain a neutral position. The second question provides insight to prevalent attitudes of the period and illustrates how difficult it is for the "leopard to change its spots". There was the question of whether the Kurds should seek the support of either the British or Soviets in order to realize their aspirations of unification of Kurdistan and an independent Kurdish state.[18] Ultimately the right wing of this party, led by the ***Serok y Bala*** (Supreme Leader) Refiq Hilmi, forced Barzani to halt the fighting and negotiate with the British and Iraqis. The left wing, relatively weak at this time favored the continuation of the revolt and in 1945 were able to mobilize political and moral support for Barzani.[19] After the reorganization of this party in 1945 into a new left-wing nationalist ***Bere y Rizgar y Kurd*** (Kurdish Liberation Front), several fractions broke off to join the Iraqi Communist Party and a few other close companions of Barzani who later worked for the creation of another organization. The Kurdish Liberation Front served more than just an interregnum of political parties as it afforded the precedence of political party members actively participating in battles in the field.[20]

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[18] ʻAzziz Shamzini, "The National Liberation Movement of the Kurdish People", *Khebat,* No. 306, July 19, 1960. Cited by Qazzaz, "Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism", p.75 no.1.

[19] Qazzaz, "Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism", p.76.

Inspired by the seemingly auspicious events at Mahabad in early 1946 Barzani encouraged the creation of an Iraqi counterpart to the Democratic Party of Kurdistan. On August 16, 1946 the ***Parti Demokrati Kurd*** (Kurdish Democratic Party) was established by a combination of intellectuals and army officers from Suleymania with Mustafa Barzani elected president in absentia.[21] During the years of Barzani's exile in the Soviet Union the party leadership was directed by Ibrahim Ahmed, a Suleymania lawyer.

Shortly after the 'Abd al-Karim Qasim coup in 1958, Barzani was permitted to return to Iraq and immediately tried to control party activities. Conflicts between Barzani and the politburo (Ahmad and Talabani) soon developed and when Barzani signed the cease-fire agreement in 1964 without notifying the politburo the situation came to a head and Ahmed tried unsuccessfully to have Barzani expelled from the party. Barzani declared this action void and had the politburo faction expelled instead and forced a new politburo to be elected.[22] By now the Kurdish political objective of Barzani spoke not of an independent Kurdistan but autonomy for the Iraqi Kurds. Although later returned to the KDP the Ahmed/Talabani group would remain in intermittent struggle with the Barzani group who controlled the reins of power until Barzani's departure and the collapse of the movement in 1975.

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[20] Qazzaz, "Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism", p.78.

[21] This party changed its name in 1956, 1959, 1975 and 1979 is now identified as the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

Since 1975 there has been a great struggle over succession of the Barzani leadership. This has resulted in the factioning of the KDP several times over, and the creation of new political groups. The first of the political parties to place partisans back in the field against the Baghdad government was a new Syrian-backed group called the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) formed by Jalal Talabani in 1975. Mustafa Barzani's sons Mas'ud and Idris formed the KDP-Provisional Command and took control of the Kurmanji-speaking north while the PUK established its base in the south. Although the KDP-PC has aligned itself with the Iraqi Communist Party and Socialist Party of Kurdistan in a confederated Democratic National Front since November 1980, the two main rival political parties are Talabani's group and

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[22] Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds Between Iran and Iraq", *MERIP*, p.22.

Mas'ud Barzani's KDP-PC.[23]

LEADERSHIP AND MODERN DAY HEROES

The actors in any political arena bring more to the table than merely ideology or party positions. Their personality, life history, and outward perspective are fitted against what they believe and expect adversarial positions to be. The two most prominent figures in recent Kurdish history are Mustafa Barzani and Jalal Talabani. Although biographical data for either individual is sparse and sources are often contradictory, what information is known provides a good representation of their personal character.

Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani

The family of Barzani has been a powerful military and religious force in northeast Iraq for at least the past hundred years[24] and traces its origins to the princes of Amadiya centuries earlier. Although at first lacking any tribal leadership role in the territory which has since been designated Barzan, the family exerted highly influential "moral authority" because of its aristocratic lineage and renown fighting qualities.[25] The village area, once inhabited by Christian and Jewish residents, developed a certain prominence as a sort of "utopia" and became recognized as a place where refugees were welcome, whether Christian or Moslem. By the mid-nineteenth century, the family achieved regional prominence by the religious following of Shaikh Taj al-Din who acquired spiritual leadership position of the Naqshbandi order from Shaikh Taha of Shemdinan. This preeminent role of khalifa was then passed down to Shaikh Taj al-Din's son Abdel Salam I, who was beaten by his followers when he refused to march with them to Istanbul to take the position of the Caliph. Some accounts state that his followers had proclaimed that he was the ***Mahdi*** (Messiah) which led to Abdel Salam's own adherents throwing him out an upper floor window to his death believing the Shaikh's powers would save him. Abdel Salam was then succeeded as the Shaikh of Barzan by his own son Muhammad who was made khalifa by the widely acclaimed Shaikh Obaydullah of Nehri. Following the major revolt in 1880 directed against Persia in which Shaikh Obaydullah was captured and exiled, the village of Barzan was recognized as the spiritual center of the order. Muhammad also was the recipient of messianic adoration and celebrated for his mystical powers. Mohammed's death was in the aftermath of an armed movement against the vali of Mosul who according to one account trapped the shaikh and had him incarcerated.[26] Two of Mohammed's eight sons would in turn take on the revered leadership role of the sufı order. The eldest, Abdel Salam II was hanged in Mosul in 1916 after he offered resistance to newly imposed laws of the Young Turks in İstanbul. The next oldest son Ahmad took over as religious guide of the Naqshbandi sect gaining significant recognition and an increased following due to his own mystical powers which rivaled that of his father.

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[23] Idris, the more assertive of the two brothers and Mustafa's more favored son died in January 1987 from a heart attack.

[24] Mustafa Barzani claims family dominance in the region for twelve hundred years. Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men,* p.94.

[25] Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men,* p.94.

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[26] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* pp. 330-31.

Shortly after the turn of the century the Barzani tribe began to increase in size as several other tribes joined the new Barzani confederation. Looking to the Shaikhs of Barzan for spiritual guidance the Shirwani, Mizuri and two smaller tribes quadrupled the strength of the Barzani tribe from 750 families in 1906 to approximately 2700 families by mid-century. A much younger brother, Mulla Mustafa, named Mullah after a maternal uncle, gradually took over the military arm of the family and soon became a nationally recognized figure fighting both tribes and government forces.

Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani was born in 1904 amidst the heat of Kurdish insurrection. While still an infant he spent nine months at his mother's side in jail while she and his family served a prison sentence imposed by Ottoman authorities. In the same year his father died. He returned to the village of Barzan at two years old and within the next two years (1908) the region became embroiled in military action by action of the Young Turks against the Kurds. Later, Mulla Mustafa received his first six years of primary education from private tutors in the village. This was followed by four additional years studying theology.

As a boy he worked on his father's farm, learning to plow and tend the flocks of sheep and goat. Like all Kurdish boys he spent his spare time hunting partridge, wild boar, wolves and bear in the mountains of northeast Mosul vilayet. While in his early twenties, Mustafa married a cousin who gave him three sons and a daughter. The names of the two of these sons were Obaydullah and Lochman. From a second wife was born Idris. Later, around 1944 he took another wife who was the daughter of Mahmoud Agha, the chief of the rival Zibari tribe. From this third and final wife he received five additional sons named Mas‘ud, Sabir, Nahad, and two more who were born after 1960.

Mulla Mustafa's first experience as a leader of Kurdish forces came in 1931 when he joined his older brother and tribal leader Shaikh Ahmad to defeat the Bradost tribe led by long-time rival Shaikh Rashid who had declared a ***jihad*** (holy war) against the Barzanis for heresy. This jihad was issued on the accusation that Ahmad had been presumptuous enough to claim himself the mahdi. To add fuel to the fire, stories were retold regarding his father's own plight. This information was apparently being spread by members of the opposing Qadiri order and others who had reasons to resent the increased strength and influence of the Barzani family. This inter-tribal rivalry and confrontation was viewed by the

Baghdad government as a serious obstacle to peace in the region and during the years 1932 and 1933 government forces, assisted by the British R.A.F launched attacks into the area destroying many of the village homes. With British intervention in 1934 to prevent further reprisals against the tribal territory, Shaikh Ahmad, Mulla Mustafa and approximately eighty members of their family were confined in "restricted residence" first outside of Kurdistan in southern Iraq and after 1936 to the town of Suleymania. While under house arrest the Barzanis received a modest stipend from the government. As Archie Roosevelt recounts a story told to him, while the Barzanis sat in Suleymania, inflation gradually reduced the worth of the monthly salary forcing Mustafa to sell the tribes most prized possessions, its rifles. As if this were not enough for the proud tribal leader to endure, one night he discovered that his wife had substituted a horseshoe for her large golden headband since she had been secretly selling the family jewelry to buy provisions. At this point he screamed in rage, "By Allah, I will avenge this humiliation of my family."[27]

In November 1943, Mustafa escaped from the house arrest and returned to Barzan to stir up his followers once more, fighting against the rival tribes, local police, and the government troops sent after him. After a brief settlement with the British and Iraqi forces in which the first

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[27] Roosevelt, *For Lust of Knowing,* pp.256-57.

"nationalist" demands were acceded to Barzani through British encouragement for official language, and appointment of Kurds to political offices. This was negotiated by Nuri al-Said who allowed Barzani and his family to return to Barzan. Under a new change of government Barzani led his men against the government army once more in 1945 resulting in the Iraqi forces receiving an initial severe beating, but soon the tide began to turn against the rebels and Barzani opted to leave Iraq. By summer Barzani had formed a tremendous following as was demonstrated when he led a force of at least 10,000 persons from northern Iraq to Mahabad in Iran where he served for about a year as military General for the Kurdish Republic until its collapse in early 1947.[28]

For the next eleven years until 1958 Mustafa remained in exile in the Soviet Union with about 500 selected followers. During this time he and his followers received training and education in the Soviet school systems where Mustafa studied Russian, economics, and geology. In the late 1950s Barzani became politically active in a relatively minor sense when, at least for a short while he read daily radio broadcasts in Kurdish across the Iraqi borders.[29] At the same time, the party leadership in Iraq had given Barzani honorary presidential status at home as if preparations were being made for his near return. Upon being permitted to return to Iraq in July 1958 Barzani tried to work with the new Qasim government in Baghdad. Barzani was by February 1960 able to see the full legalization of the KDP as a "Patriotic" party. But this period of cooperation soon changed when –

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[28] Barzani's own account states that he led 35,000 people across the mountainous terrain. Dana Adams Schmidt, "Recent Developments in the Kurdish War", *JRCA,* February 1966, Part I, p.25.

[29] C.J. Edmonds, "The Place of the Kurds in the Middle Eastern Scene", *JRCA,* April 1958, p.151.

> The Kurds, like the entire political public of Iraq, realized that Qassem was an eccentric whose benevolence strictly depended on receiving obedience and adulation. Qassem found the Kurds stubborn and not at all interested in his own image of what a rejuvenated Iraq should be. Mulla Mustafa expected solid advance towards administrative and cultural autonomy which Qassem refused with increasing harshness.[30]

By September 1961 the spirit of a Kurdish-Arab state suddenly dissipated and the "war of autonomy" began with no substantial changes in the relationship between the Kurdish nationalists and the succeeding regimes in Baghdad. From this point until Barzani left Iraq in 1975, he and his two sons Idris and Mas'ud gained absolute control of party operations and Mustafa's name and reputation within Kurdistan and among the Western media reached epic proportions. Barzani and his Peshmerga were followed and interviewed by journalists from around the world, all lending support to the Kurdish efforts and cause. In 1975 Barzani, at age 72 was still living the perilous life of a revolutionary guerrilla and viewed by many to be leading "his people as dauntlessly as ...Saladin rallied all Islam against 12th-century Crusaders".[31] During the forty-year period which Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani played an active role in the Kurdish resistance movement he was able to inspire and gain the respect and allegiance of Kurds throughout the region as no other modern day figure had. Barzani is the epitome of the charismatic hero who was able to combine the superior military leadership traits of the traditional Kurdish tribal leader with compassion and empathy for those he sought to protect. He had become the infallible leader. Holding this power though placed him at odds with other would-be Kurdish leaders and more importantly for the party, a challenge to the government which could not be ignored.

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[30] Uriel Dann, "The Kurdish National Movement in Iraq", *The Jerusalem Quarterly,* Jerusalem: The Middle East Institute, No.9, Fall 1978, p.138.

Jalal Talabani

In southern Kurdistan, there were two leading families which competed for influence in the early part of the present century. One was the Barzinci family of Suleymania whose religious leader, Shaikh Mahmoud, was noted for his anti-British activities lasting until 1931, and who, in the early years of the British Mandate, was probably the most influential man of southern Kurdistan. The other, and most powerful family in Kirkuk province, was the Talabanis who were at this time relatively friendly toward the British government and provide a modern example of a Kurdish family which rose to "a position of wealth and worldly power by virtue of the religious influence of its dervish founder".[32]

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[31] LeRoy Woodson, Jr., "We Who Face Death", *National Geographic,* Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, Vol 147, No.3, March 1975, p.368.

Tracing its sufi lineage to the Qadiri master Mulla Mahmoud of the Zangana tribe of Iran, the village of Talaban in Chemchemal province (Iraq) was first settled by Mahmoud's son Shaikh Ahmad at the end of the eighteenth century. Although Mulla Mahmoud was of "common descent" he achieved high prestige through his eminent reputation as shaikh and was offered the marriage of a paramount chief's daughter. This marriage served the purpose of linking religious piety and demonstrated ***keramet*** to be linked with tribal "nobility" status thereby enhancing both his position of status and thus of his succeeding heirs.[33] A rather fortunate and prolific family, especially with male descendants, the lineage quickly grew allowing various branches of the family to settle throughout the region. Among the most notable men of the family was one of Shaikh Ahmad's sons, Muhammad Arif. Muhammad Arif acquired a great reputation as a miracle worker and was so influential in his support of Ottoman military actions against the Persians the Pasha of Baghdad rewarded him with several border villages north of Khanaqin in Iraq.[34] By the time of the British occupation of Mosul vilayet in 1918

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[32] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks,and Arabs,* p.269-70.

[33] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State.* p.280.

[34] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs.* p.271.

Shaikh Hamid, the nephew of Muhammad Arif, Shaikh Hamid was recognized as the most important personage in Kirkuk liwa. Fighting now against the Turks, the Shaikh and the Talabani family supported the British cause which consequently enabled his family to administer the Talabani villages in the territory of Gil directly and without government representation. In addition, the family was permitted to receive a small fee for the several working oil wells located in the district.[35]

Jalal Talabani was born in 1934 and grew up in the village of Koi Sanjak. His father taught religion to the children of the village. He had one older brother named Jengi who worked in village as a carpenter. Jalal stayed in Koi Sanjak until he graduated from the secondary school. Moving to Baghdad he entered the University of Baghdad Law School in 1952. At school he quickly became noted as a student activist and founded the Kurdistan Student Union in 1953 in protest of the lack of Kurdish rights. Due to his rising reputation, Talabani was soon asked to join the Kurdistan Democratic Party. While attending Law School he was arrested at least a dozen times and subsequently went to jail. He began to get so used at being arrested that "whenever an important figure came to Baghdad, Jalal would first pack a personal bag because he knew that he would soon be arrested."[36] His association with the nationalist movement and government interest in his political activities forced him to hide among his friends in many instances during the period of 1956-57. After he graduated from Law School in 1957, as required he entered the Iraqi Army as a Reserve Officer and was assigned to the Tank Division. After his mandatory service he turned to work within the politburo of the KDP. In 1972, he married Hero, the daughter of his political mentor and ally Ibrahim Ahmed. With Hero, he had two sons, the first born in 1972 and the second in 1979. His children lived and grew up outside of Kurdistan and were sent to boarding school in London.

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[35] Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*. p.271.

By the time Jalal Talabani was twenty-nine years old he had become a leading member of the politico-bureau in the KDP and a field commander of the southern third of the Kurdish regional forces in Iraq. Throughout his association with Barzani in the KDP he played a variety of roles, sometimes as an aide and messenger, and often as the oppositional force within the organization. His first tactical confrontation with Barzani came in a meeting on April 16, 1961. While the majority of the committee members, including KDP Secretary-General Ibrahim Ahmed, felt fighting should be delayed in order to better organize the fledgling fighting forces and to possibly set up a radio broadcasting station, Jalal and several tribal leaders insisted that the KDP should take the initiative. The interest of the tribal chiefs in fighting the government, was at this point less a matter of nationalism than to revolt against land reform and taxes on cigarettes and beer.[37] In July, the politburo agreed with Talabani and sent him to Shirin to meet with Barzani to express their feelings. Although Barzani ruled to delay the uprising a "chance" meeting of tribal forces and Iraqi military forces moving through the region set off a confrontation resulting in the bombing of Barzani territory in September, which was supposed to be neutral territory. At this point Barzani split with his brother Ahmad, the Shaikh of Barzan who declared his intention to remain neutral. The politburo, along with Barzani decided to rise up against the Baghdad government.

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[36] This comment and much of the information on Talabani was in the course of interviews with close associates of Barzani and Talabani.

As the KDP began to organize armed resistance, fundamental differences in approach and capabilities between the traditional military leaders and the political elements emerged. Unlike Barzani, who possessed a ready source of trained and experienced fighters and some of whom had been with him since the conflicts in the 1930s, there was no such talent among the men Talabani had with him in the south. Although he was given the responsibility for forming partisan groups in Suleymania and Kirkuk it was a difficult task.

> We were about thirty men, and they all wanted to go home. I had eighteen with me at Chem y Rezan. Twelve of these

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[37] Much of this episode is taken from Dana Schmidt's *Journey Among Brave Men*, pp.76-79.

> were without arms. I had a bird gun which Mullah Mustafa had brought me as a gift from his last trip to Moscow. Twelve other men were stationed near Mawet.[38]

While Barzani moved across the north and western regions of Iraqi Kurdistan under a "grand strategy" the group of "nascent warriors" was not able to achieve anything operationally significant until December 1961 when an armored car shipment of government funds was robbed. Due to the small size and limited experience of the Talabani group they concentrated their efforts in developing cooperation with local police forces and Kurdish officers in the regular armed forces. Military objectives were essentially limited to overtaking police posts in the region.

The lack of fighting prowess among the Talabani group, was equally matched by the political ingenuousness of Barzani's tribal fighters. In addition to organizing partisan units throughout the region, a second tactic was to establish an underground support group in the Baghdad controlled areas to "collect money and information and to establish and maintain the political contacts that might ensure a "reasonable" government in Baghdad once Kassem would have fallen".[39] Barzani recognized his own deficiencies in this area and relied upon the Talabani group for such efforts. It was because of Talabani's education, political acumen,

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[38] Jalal Talabani to Dana Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men,* p.80.

[39] Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men,* pp.79-80.

popularity within the party second only to Barzani and probably what was recognized as great inner strength and conviction that Jalal was selected as the spokesmen and negotiator for the KDP on several future events including the role of negotiator with the Baghdad government of a cease-fire in February 1963. The various breaks and reconciliations in the relationship between Talabani and Barzani, which would last until 1970 when Talabani left Kurdistan for five years, illustrate not only the different political perspectives each man held but also the individuality and ability each had to command a personal following which was perceived as a threat to the influence of the other. Not unlike the segmenting phenomenon which occurs within the tribe as a result of the dyadic struggle between brothers of a ruling tribal family, Talabani left the party since he could not do or freely speak as he desired under the preeminent leadership of Barzani. Similar to the tribal structure, the stronger and impervious KDP withstood all challenges to its authority, healing breaches yet giving up no authority until the source of its power had faded.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As previously detailed, leadership above the level of the tribe during the sixteenth to nineteenth century was represented by a number of paramount tribal chief families whose power and authority was conferred by the Ottoman government in order to maintain control and allegiance over the territory. After the disintegration of the semi-independent Kurdish states in the period 1837-1852, the political pattern, in general, reverted back to segmented tribal groups led by petty tribal aghas, and settled villages under the protection of aristocratic landlords (urban aghas) and their families.

Since that period, despite the independent nature of each tribe and village, groups of tribes and villages have been able to unite on several occasions under the guidance of one individual leader. This coalescence of divergent interests and alliances has typically occurred under conditions where eminent danger from outside the Kurdish community threatens the existence of all. In recent times the main threat has been the increased centralization of economic and socio-political institutions and the drastic resettlement policies developed by the Iraqi government. As in the past, the current crisis paves the way for innovative responses from the Kurdish people. One possibility is that the situation will provide an opportunity for the emergence of personal and unique leadership styles, such as the charismatic or heroic leader.

Any discussion of leadership styles would be remiss to exclude the scholarship offered by Max Weber.[40] He presents a concept of legitimate authority which can appear as one of three types – rational-legal, traditional and charismatic which relies on belief in the source of legitimacy. Each of these models can be differentiated by means of the "validity" of leadership position that subordinates in the society attribute to any individual.

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[40] Much of the following general information is taken from the numerous references to Weber's voluminous works. Unless otherwise noted, material derives from Gerth and Mills' *From Max Weber:*

> Although obedience by group members may be based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance, the sufficient condition for a reliable and stable system of imperative control, is belief in the legitimacy of the basis and source of control.[41]

Weber defines the rational-legal authority as based on a legalistic framework. The likelihood that commands from any given actor will be obeyed in this model rests on the recognition that the "office" of the individual legitimizes the request. People in societies which are characterized by "rational-legal" leadership styles relinquish personal and subjective decisions to what they regard are universal, and standard rules of conduct and justice. Weber sees this type of authority as a dominant feature of bureaucratic institutions in the industrialized world.

The second type of authority, according to Weber, is the traditional model which is based on customary and personal sources of legitimacy or, as he describes, "established belief

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Essays on Sociology (1946) and English translations of *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947). Where necessary specific citations will be used.

[41] R. Bradley, *Charisma and Social Structure,* New York: Paragon House, 1987, pp. 30-31.

in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them".[42] This pattern of authority is a bilateral relationship between the governed and the governing power since action is dictated by accepted traditions within the culture providing a set of rules which bind both parties to specific intrinsic responsibilities and obligations "owed" to the other. In this case, as can be easily seen in the feudalistic social arrangement once common in Kurdistan, the agha, in his role as tribal chief, village agha, or absentee-landlord, controlled the peasants working his lands. Although there have of course existed "good" aghas who took their duties seriously, as well as the "bad", by tradition the agha was responsible for sheltering and protecting the peasant farmer from external threats.

The final model which Weber describes is charismatic authority. Charisma as a source of authority rests — "on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him".[43] The leader is obeyed due to the evidence of charismatic qualities (barakat) which must be periodically proved to followers by miracle-making (keramet). Thus the personal legitimacy of the leader is limited to a specific individual and transitional in nature, temporary and unstable, enduring as long as keramet can be observed. In his viewpoint, charisma as a type of legitimacy stands apart from (and incompatible with) the rational-legal and traditional model since it can not be routinized and has no place in a modern industrialized society only serving as a means for societal change from a pre-industrial to an industrial order.[44]

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[42] Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* 1947, p.328, cited in Bradley, *Charisma and Social Structure,* p.31.

[43] Weber, *Social and Economic Organization,* p.328, as cited Bradley, *Charisma and Social Structure,* p.32.

Weber saw the relationship between the three archetypal patterns of authority as a continuing process during which a period of revolution led by charismatic leadership brought about changes in society that would eventually later become rationalized and bureaucratized. After a period of time this society would become more tradition-bound and static. In time, the traditionalist society, too would become ripe for a new uprising of charismatic leadership.

Many would argue that Weber's definition and treatment of "pure" charismatic authority deals only with past civilizations and has little to offer for modern times. This has not been the case over the past century in the Middle East and certainly not in evidence in Kurdistan where the concept of barakat remains a sacred force and pervades social life at nearly every turn. Whether one speaks of the saintly burial sites scattered throughout the country and in the major cities which have become a place of pilgrimage, or the mutual kissing of hands by two Shaikhs who meet one another, or the ritual of leaving a tuft of wool on the back of the sheep at shearing time in order not to remove all traces of barakat, the phenomenon of spiritual charisma plays an important role in Kurdish society today. The miracle-making, or keramet provides evidence that an individual has barakat. Thus, it is at once, the effect of and means to transmit barakat, and proof of its presence. Without the proof there is no special grace. Confirmation of the presence of barakat in a Shaikh can take a variety of means. Sometimes, the effect is rather ordinary such as a wound healing although it would in any case. In other cases the Shaikh has been viewed as a clairvoyant or having the power to withstand bullets fired against him.[45]

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[44] Bradley, *Charisma and Social Structure,*pp.32-40.

Associated with the concept of charisma, yet more readily accepted in "secular" societies as a viable force are the "charismatic hero" and what in many ways serves as its antipode, the "political ideologue". Although both character types seek to be looked upon as charismatic leaders, in order to draw the necessary following to fulfill a craving sense of esteem and actualization, the hero seeks to satisfy his supporters by performing and living up to their concrete expectations while the ideologue relates to his audience on an abstract and organizational plane, often subordinating their physical and spiritual needs to an overriding collective goal, the movement.[46] It is important to realize that these character patterns are not mere traits or qualities but are in fact types of relations between the leader and his followers.[47]

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[45] Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State,* pp. 267-68.

The charismatic hero draws his following, hence his power and influence, from his ability to coordinate compassion and competence to resolve issues during a crises. The main attribute the hero has at his disposal is not past experience, or ideology but his character. In the height of his glory, the hero is idolized and viewed as infallible. He is not merely a popular figure, but emerges during a crises when the entire social fabric is under stress and the current leadership is suffering from a lack of legitimacy and trust. His major task is to lead the population against rampant disorder and injustice. In Kurdistan a handful of minor leaders have emerged as a heroic figure during this century but only a few have played a meaningful role. The hero, who is also idolized by adherents from rival tribes, is a rare find indeed. Since 1961 there has only been one figure in Iraq who has truly fit this characterization, Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani.

Along with the maturing of Kurdish nationalist organizations in Iraq after World War II, the political significance of the "ideological leader" surfaced. The first difference between this type leader and the hero is that the ideologue seeks to do more than address grievances against his people. The objective is far more reaching and includes the transformation and reorganization of the society by means of the party. This can lead to the movement transcending any personal issues which first attracted the adherents to the leader. "The crucial quality of ideology is that it combines both what one believes...and how one came to hold certain beliefs."[48] A leader's success is not measured by "consumer satisfaction" as is the case with the hero but with the degree of social change measured by party programs and objectives. Since social change is a dynamic quality and ideology is relatively static except for tactical deviations from the espoused orthodoxy, organizations led by ideologue are beset by fracturing of elements not in agreement with the leadership who represents the "party line". The unlikely role of Mustafa Barzani, as the president of the KDP, who derived personal influence due to his charismatic persona, most likely served as a stabilizing factor for the organization allowing it to better withstand the ideological pressures emanating from the ranks of the membership in the politburo. During the early years of the KDP ideological leadership was primarily shouldered by Ibrahim Ahmed and later taken up by the current leader of the PUK, Jalal Talabani.

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[46] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, New York: Harper & Row, 1978, pp. 243-249.

[47] Burns, *Leadership*, p.244.

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[48] Burns, *Leadership,* p.248.

The Model of Master-Disciple Relations

The charismatic hero and the ideologue are not mutually exclusive terms. Many of the major actors in Kurdish politics as well as other societies, enjoy the benefits from both types of leader/led relationships. It seems, however, that the paramount leadership tends, in the Kurdish case, to rely primarily upon one or the other sources of legitimacy. This is true in the case of Barzani until 1975 and Talabani who rose to prominence after the death of Barzani, rivaling the two Barzani sons Idris and Masʻud. What is also interesting is that supporters of both leaders, when asked to explain the popularity of either leader, refer to the presence of "charisma" as the primary factor and not to results achieved or "party platforms".

A common thread apparent in the political leadership among the Kurds and their society is the "authoritarian" nature of their rule. There are, in addition, several general features of this pattern of authoritarianism which are replicated in behavior models of its social institutions. Among these features is the idea that regardless of the political system, whether local politics or national level, there is the "image of the leader and the close group which decides solutions".[49] Although the system proclaims its egalitarianism, in reality it is this stratum of the paramount chief and his close relatives or circle of insiders who have the authority. Mustafa Barzani refused to be called "General" by the Western media and claimed to be merely the standard bearer for his people. In truth, he was the single paramount chief and "Master" of the KDP and made all the important decisions in spite of the parties organizational structure and pluralistic declarations. This lasted until 1971-72 when along with his sons Idris and Masʻud he formed a triumvirate which controlled all negotiations and decision making. In the tribe and villages one finds the "smoked-filled rooms" and "roof-top society" which also appears to function as a superficial means to give release to daily pressures and concerns. Looking very much like the Houses of Lords and Commoners, in this case the "King" listens but makes his own decisions regardless. A second feature of this behavioral model is the concept of the "undivided nation or community" that the leader does not recognize or accommodate cleavages or factions and maintains privileged contact with other political entities for himself or close circle. Here, too, Barzani functioned much like a tribal chief and was able to control party arbitration with government agencies such as Israel or the US through personal discussions or with his sons. Talabani maintains this personal style of negotiations today and travels quite extensively to transact party business.

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[49] The concept and major points of this discussion are taken from a lecture given by Abdellah Hammoudi, "Master and Disciple in Mystic Initiation: Toward a Cultural Model for the Understanding of Authoritarianism in the Middle East" (unpublished), in which he uses the Moroccan and Egyptian cases. April, 1990, Princeton

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University.

Hammoudi explains that the persistence of this pattern of behavior found in Middle Eastern societies is difficult to explain yet appears to rest on an underlying relationship between authority figures and a submissive followship which can be best observed in ritual behavior found in religious practices within the culture. Specifically, Hammoudi demonstrates how the initiation procedure within the mystical orders, and the Master/Disciple relationship which develops is a microcosm of political institutions and Leader/Led relations in the Middle East. The prevalence of sufi orders and the preeminent and charismatic role of the shaikh in Kurdish society appears to present a more "pristine" representation of this phenomenon within the Middle East and seems to follow the pattern Hammoudi describes.

Personal Relationships and Encounters

After a prospective disciple locates a master willing to teach him the tariqa he must agree to undergo a period of submission to the Shaikh. In addition to learning necessary teachings of the religious order the disciple works for the shaikh within his house, performing tasks which in Kurdish society are normally performed by women such as preparation of the food, washing the clothes, and serving guests of the shaikh. To address the question of why this model operates in cases such as the Kurdish experience we can benefit by looking at human relations in Islam.

By looking at the relations which exist between human beings to deal with every day problems, we can go past the problem of creating a specific theory to explain any individual culture. In his work on transformation theory, Manfred Halpern outlines his ideas on how the "human encounter" among Muslims (groups and individuals) can be examined to illustrate fundamental patterns which they live.[50] Without delving too deeply into the theory it can be said that out of eight possible ways in which all peoples have to deal with one another, he finds the repertory of traditional orthodox Muslims to be limited to patterns of "emanation", "subjection", "buffering" and "direct bargaining".[51] Due to the influence of Islam in all facets of personal and political life, other sorts of relationships are limited or unnecessary.

The Kurd lives in a world where the tribe or village and his religion are treated as an extension of himself. It is through his acceptance within the group that he receives his identity. By denying or attaching one's personal identity and self-importance to a mysterious outside force in exchange for security, emanation is enabled to play such an important role. This force can be manifested in the sacred through spiritual belief or membership in a mystical order or can take on such forms as believing in the infallibility of one's father, a charismatic leader, or a political movement.[52]

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[50] Manfred Halpern, "Four Contrasting Repertories of Human Relations in Islam:...", *Psychological Dimensions of Near Eastern Studies,* eds. L. Carl Brown and Norman Itzkowitz, Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1977.

[51] Halpern, "Human Relations in Islam", p.64.

A similar connection, yet under different circumstances, which exists between the Kurd and his world is subjection. The submersion of the personal identity is undertaken due to naked power, accepted authority or coercion. In this case, there is no loss of identity but the relationship is still one of imbalance, and in the case of the Kurdish landlord and peasant there exists a sort of collaboration with the exchange of the literal survival of one for acceptance of supremacy of the other. The "josh" forces who fight against neighboring tribes and in doing so are being used as a means by the central government to eradicate resistance are in this relationship.

In order to breach inter-tribal conflict or to achieve a greater unity with Allah an intermediary figure is often used. This encounter of buffering is often played by the shaikh in both gathering adherents to his tariqa and to gain influence as a mediator. Buffering also enables communication between strata of society by the use the "strong man" or use of elders that can bring problems of the lowest levels to the power wielders.

Direct bargaining is the last form of encounter which seems to be used in Kurdish society. In this instance there is a give and take much like one witnesses at the town bazaar. The balance of power changes according to the "deals" struck and this relationship is most evident in social maintenance and control systems. For example, hospitality is viewed as a very favorable aspect of Kurdish society, and constitutes one determinant of honor and prestige. Normally, the more resplendent the feast the greater degree of honor is bestowed upon the household. In a society where there are limited provisions hospitality can be a means of controlling the frequency of visits among neighbors. If you know the host is obligated to provide you with the majority of what he owns you will refrain from visiting knowing he will repay your kindness with a visit of his own.[53] Other obvious manifestations of this encounter are found in the marriage rites. In a society where there are, again, limited resources, or pervasive friction between tribal groups (most likely due to property or power conflicts) marriage by FaBrDa or tribal exchange is the most economical and best insurance for the survival of the tribe.

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[52] Halpern, "Human Relations in Islam", p.64.

Islam means "the submission or surrendering of oneself to God". In light of the above repertoire of actions each Muslim can make four fundamental choices regarding his religion. He could submit himself totally to Islam following the path of a mulla or shaikh as an emanation of his God, or, out of fear, he could display devotion to the degree he felt was necessary to be safe. He could attempt direct bargaining with this source of emanation anticipating financial rewards or power in exchange for submission to Islam. Finally, he could resort to buffering in which case he relies upon the Shaikh to intercede on his behalf or to create a magic amulet for his protection.[54]

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[53] Discussion with Abdellah Hammoudi, Princeton University, 29 April 1990.

The quest for power and influence among the Kurds can be seen as the effort by each individual (within the limits of social norms and position) to represent himself as a source of emanation, even if this was limited to becoming the father of a large family. If this was not possible or sufficient then he would present himself as the "outward emanation" of another source, be it an adherent to the brotherhoods, a client of a local benefactor or a member of the Peshmerga. As the emanational source began to wither and fade (as they eventually do) a realignment to another source was necessary to reduce the internal confusion and insecurity. Thus, a shifting of alliances and realignment of positions which is so evident in Kurdish political history.

THE NATIONALIST STRUGGLE AND INTERNAL CONFLICT

On September 11, 1961 the armed Kurdish insurrection, which Dana Schmidt christened the "war for autonomy", began in Iraq which quickly transformed itself into a popular movement for national liberation. Although the majority of the Kurdish population allied with Mustafa Barzani against the Qasim regime old internal rivalries and conflicting alliances were soon evident. The first evidence of a major split in the KDP leadership emerged in 1964 from tactical differences between the traditionalists under Mustafa Barzani and the progressive, left-wing politburo section of the party led by Ibrahim Ahmed and Jalal Talabani.[55] Due to the overriding authority and widespread respect given Barzani he was able to maintain control of party decisions, eventually forcing the opposition group out of the movement by the fall of 1965. It is to Barzani's credit that despite many similar splits over the next decade he was able to virtually control all decisions of the party, maintaining his power and authority until the decision to lay down the arms in 1975 after the Algiers Accords. In fact, after the departure of Mustafa Barzani from the leadership position, a void of authority permitted underlying cultural patterns and personality traits to overshadow the ultimate purpose of the party fragmenting the nationalist movement like so many tribes and clans.

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[54] Halpern, "Human Relations in Islam", p.66.

The Kurdish nationalist movement has been slow to move past the concept of territorial loyalties and historical social relationships. Notwithstanding the ceaseless regional and international intrigue and alliances which have beset the

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[55] The Ahmed-Talabani group felt that dialogue with the Aref government could resolve the issues while Barzani insisted on continuing the armed struggle.

Kurdish "question" since the turn of the century, a great deal of Kurdish misfortune is self-inflicted rising out of enduring social and cultural patterns which are replete with polar enmities. In many ways these varying perspectives and lifestyles are reflected in the life drama of the two most influential Kurdish leaders of the past quarter century, Mustafa Barzani and Jalal Talabani, representing opposite poles of the Kurdish movement.

The inception of ***Kurdayeti***, or nationalism, in Kurdish politics was a result of political action by two distinct social strata.[56] The first of these was the educated, urban circle of intellectuals and professional classes. Upon witnessing the development of Arab and Turkish nationalism into dynamic and fruitful political movements they became eager to employ their knowledge of modern political ideologies into a political role for themselves. The second seed of nationalism developed from the "tribal milieu" which for generations had become increasingly "resentful and resistant to increasing government interference."[57] It is interesting that despite the natural antipathy that exists between the "modernists" and "traditionalists" each social stratum is highly dependent upon the other in the armed struggle. While on one hand the urban intellectuals rely on tribal forces for their noted military skills and source of influence, and the traditional tribal leaders require the "street-smart" modern political acumen possessed by the intellectual elites in order that the revolution can move beyond the mountain campaigns and into the national and regional arena. The link between the two polar groups is more than a pragmatic relationship since many of intellectuals also belong to aristocratic and tribal chief families. Among the urban elites, this is not a factor which they hold dear, and one of the most frequent and most effective slights one modernist can charge a vacillating compatriot is that his thoughts are reminiscent of "tribalism".

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[56] Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds Between Iran and Iraq", *Middle East Report,* Vol. 16, No. 4, July-August 1986, pp.16-17.

[57] Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds Between Iran and Iraq", *MERIP,* p.16.

The difficulties encountered by these divergent outlooks are a consequence of both opposing political ideology and, as equally important, the divisions along purely cultural lines. The urban intelligentsia desire to establish a Kurdish society and autonomous region based on modern institutions. In order to attain this modern society, they claim the national and social struggles must become integrated as one to combine against the tribal divisions and feudal structure of traditional Kurdish society.[58] This is in contrast to the traditionalists who continue to view national independence as primarily a territorial issue and struggle against government intrusion and domination. It is in their interest to work toward cooperation among the various tribes and settled Kurds against the greater threat of the government in Baghdad. Collaboration among the tribal chiefs, though, has been an elusive goal even for such purposes as oil rights, grazing lands and industrial development due to foregoing feuds and maneuvers over power. Distant and abstract goals such as cultural rights and political autonomy are much harder to deal with.

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[58] Gershon Salomon, "Some Aspects of the Kurdish Revolt", *New Outlook,* Tel Aviv: Tazpioth Ltd., Vol.10, No.4, (88), May 1967, pp.48-49.

The tribal groups resent the interference of the political parties almost as much as that by the government.[59] Similar to the alignments which have occurred among pro-government and the opposition forces, tribal rivalry has caused some tribes to move against the interests of a political party because of its membership rather than its ideology. Separate peace agreements made by either group with the government are met with suspicion and accusations of treachery by the strata in opposition. "Both groups suspect the other of inherent tendencies to betrayal – and both have a few convincing instances to cite."[60]

The other significant cleavages in Kurdish society which continues to be minimized despite its influence on Kurdish politics are the psychological and cultural influences which vary within the region. From the perspective of geography, there exists a general antipathy between the Kurds of the mountains and those who reside in the plains. Living in the safety of the mountains the rural Kurd grows up in rather innocently and naive of the "machinations, and maneuverings basic to the creation of successful political figures" of the modern state.[61] In order to develop political awareness, then, the Kurd must leave the villages in the mountains for the cities on the plains. Along with his innocence, though, the man who has left the mountain is also seen to have lost his virtue by living among the crafty plains people and if gone for long will never be wholly trusted again by his friends in the village. In the eyes of the "true" Kurds, those of the mountains, even the most venerated of the Kurdish leaders can be "corrupted" by the people of the plains. To those who strongly believe in this characterization, they point to the decision made in 1975 as the source of their current misfortune when Mustafa Barzani unilaterally declared the termination of the revolution after falling prey to hollow promises of the politicians on the plains.[62] For the long-settled and assimilated Kurds in the large towns and cities on the plains, the thought of returning to the hills is often greeted with ridicule and sarcasm. A recent traveler Gavin Young asked several villagers near Arbil if the "hill-men" wouldn't miss their mountains. Their reply was "Up in the hills there were no schools, no motor-cars. Imagine – many Kurds had never seen a car!" Looking at a large conical, grass-covered tell, one young Kurd grinned and quipped "That's our new mountain. That will satisfy us."[63]

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[59] Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds Between Iran and Iraq", *MERIP,* p.16.

[60] Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds Between Iran and Iraq", *MERIP,*p.16.

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[61] Siaband, "Mountains, My Home", *Kurdish Times*, p.8.

[62] Siaband, "Mountains, My Home", *Kurdish Times*, p.9.

Partially linked to the factor of topography there is also the linguistic and cultural diversity of Northern Kurdistan which is mainly tribal and the predominately non-tribal urban region of Southern Kurdistan. Power and authority in the north has typically been in the hands of the traditional tribal chiefs like that of the Barzani and Baradost tribes. In the more settled and urbanized southern region, though, the political party commands influence.[64] These two regions also delineate the separation between the northern (Kurmanji) dialect found in Bahdinan region of Iraq and the southern (Sorani) speakers of Suleymania and beyond. Most of the intellectual dialogue among the Kurds has been in the Sorani dialect where the major urban centers are located. Here too, mutual prejudices are found where –

> the *Soran* often find the *Kurmanj* primitive and fanatical in religious affairs, but they acknowledge their fighting prowess; the *Kurmanj* often see the *Soran* as unmanly, unreliable and culturally arrogant.[65]

Although from 1961 – 1975 Mustafa Barzani was able to capture the hearts and minds of the majority of the Kurdish population including the urban intellectuals of southern Sorani Kurdistan, the region is now neatly divided into two political spheres of influence. Jalal Talabani's PUK effectively controls the majority of the Sorani-speaking districts. To the north, the KDP-PC under Mas'ud Barzani dominates the Bahdinan Kurmanji-speaking area. The practical effect of these cross-cutting cultural cleavages is that the key to success for Kurdish politics on a national level is still dependent upon a charismatic figure who can rise above the crowd reenacting the cultural patterns of daily life.

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[63] Gavin Young, *Iraq: Land of Two Rivers,* London: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd, 1980, p.230.

[64] Salomon, "Some Aspects of the Kurdish Revolt", *New Outlook,* p.49.

[65] Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds Between Iran and Iraq", *MERIP,* p.16.

It has been fashionable for some scholars to write of the demise of religious and cultural influences among the Kurds and discount its implications in the modern politics of the new Kurdish nationalist groups which have spread like wildfire in Europe and North America. On the other hand, these same writers are prone to find new evidence of Western-style nationalism reaching further back in Kurdish history and tradition. These assumptions spring from the underlying conviction that social change moves in a linear progressional fashion, one societal model replacing the former. Thus, the assumption arises that tribal society represents backwardness and localized sentiment based on ethnic and cultural identity whereas modern society signifies social improvement and national loyalty at the renouncement of primordial ties.

It is exactly this attitude which led the Iraqi government to impose forced migration "from the countryside to the supposed melting pots of the big cities" to force the Kurds to lose their distinctive character.[66] As Van Bruinessen states,

> Now this is precisely what did not happen. Although the Kurds continued to be further integrated into the economies of the countries where they lived, the increased contacts with other ethnic groups made them also more aware of their own separate ethnic identity. As a reaction against the discrimination that many suffered at school or in finding jobs, many began to search for things in Kurdish history and culture that they could take pride in.... Even children of parents who had been successfully assimilated, rediscovered their Kurdish roots and started learning Kurdish again. It is probably because of the migration from Kurdistan to the big cities outside, that Kurdish national awareness and pride in Kurdish culture became mass phenomena.[67]

Although the types of institutions and outward manifestations of Kurdish culture have changed over time, it seems to me that these recent changes are only adjustments in form and not substitutions of one pattern of behavior over another. Underlying patterns prevail and are extraordinarily difficult to change. Patterns can be broken but not by means of coercion, bargaining or the substitution of nationalism, as one object of emanation for religion or tribal authority which represent another. The close connection between Kurdish culture and its national politics perseveres over time providing the partisans of the autonomy movement both its source of strength and its weakest link.

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[66] Van Bruinessen, "Traditional Kurdish Society and the State", Unpublished speech presented at the First International Conference On Kurdish Human Rights and Cultural Identity, October 14, 1989, Paris, France, p.12.

[67] Van Bruinessen, "Traditional Kurdish Society and the State", p.12.

CONCLUSION

Some say, "They were three; their dog the fourth":
Others say, "Five; the dog the sixth":....
Others say, "Seven; and their dog the eighth."

— Companions of the Cave, The Qur'an

O Apostle of God! Why should not I, like the dog
of the Companions of the Cave,
Enter Paradise in the company of thy friends?
That it should go to Paradise and I to Hell, how is
that seemly?
It being the dog of the Companions of the Cave, and
I the dog of the Companions of thyself.

— Epitaph on tomb of Shaikh Riza Talabani (1841-1910)[1]

There has hardly been a period in modern history when the Kurdish people have not been compelled to defend themselves against aggression. Assaults and challenges to power and authority have not only come from the powerful nation states which surround Kurdistan, but also from within, as one Kurdish clan, tribe, or confederation made war against other Kurds to maneuver into a position of dominance. This thesis has taken a brief look at the culture of the Kurdish people, their traditional social structure, and what I propose are enduring patterns of personal and political relations. It is my hope that by examining and discerning how each culture directly affects political style and decision-making, better relations between dissimilar cultures can be achieved.

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[1] C.J. Edmonds, "A Kurdish Lampoonist", *JRCAS,* Vol XXII, January 1935, p.122.

In the previous chapters I have described what I view as an enduring, co-dependent relationship between the wielders of power and the populations which they have come to lead. This close connection between traditional Kurdish culture and personalized politics stems from both the environment and social ecology of small, pastoral tribal societies relatively secluded in mountainous regions, and, outside political interest in the region by powers who have taken advantage of Kurdish discord. The pattern of domination by an individual leader of one stratum over the remaining population is further reinforced by traditional values and religious beliefs.

The most remarkable aspect of the Kurdish experience is how the struggle for, and acquisition of, power and influence appears to be institutionalized within daily life. This can be seen even within the household setting where, not only does the father of the family command irrefutable respect and authority among his family, a distinct hierarchy of authority passes through the children from eldest child to the youngest. Each child submits to the authority of his elder until the time he leaves the family and can dominate his own family. In the village and tribal setting, leadership is generally reserved for members of a ruling family under the domination of a paramount agha. Total acceptance of his decisions and rule is yielded as long as he can maintain a base of support and power within the tribe. Failing this, opposition factions emerge and break away from the main tribe to form smaller social groups. Within the political organizations various factional groups remain at odds with the dominant figure (such as Barzani), but submit to the ultimate authority until either the leader leaves the group or can no longer gather supporters. In all cases there is only room for one leader in any of these settings, permitting one of two options for opposition groups, submission or departure. Aside from the individual differences found in the Kurdish case, the concept that politics reflects cultural patterns could be said to be valid in most societies. It is the degree to which politics among the Kurds is personalized and reflective of its culture that, perhaps, makes this case unique.

What becomes important in the practical sense is how these patterns contribute to or hinder political success in achieving national aims. Among the primary aims of the nationalist struggle as described by one organization are –

> 1). ... "the implementation of the March 11 Agreement ... to enable the people of Kurdistan to achieve autonomy and to ... develop that autonomy in Kurdistan and within the Iraqi Republic."
>
> 2). to establish "a popularly elected revolutionary and democratic form of government."
>
> 3). "the strengthening of brotherly relations between the

Arab and Kurdish nations" towards national unity.[2]

Almost two decades after these principles were drawn up none of these objectives have been achieved. In 1974 an Autonomous Region was designated, yet did not include all of the area claimed by the nationalists and still does not provide tangible elements of political or cultural autonomy as characterized in the 1970 March Agreement. A large chasm exists between the goals and actions of the nationalists and the desires of the population. The single most coveted aspiration of the general population can be found throughout the literature, ballads and personal interviews; Kurdish unity.

In my opinion, a major factor which contributes to the ineffectiveness of Kurdish national parties and, hence, prevents any significant progress towards the realization of political goals, is directly related to the pattern of "master-disciple" relations found within Kurdish society and the pervasive quest for personal influence and authority. Like Musto Ahmad Agha (see p.23), who saw new opportunities to enhance his own power base, the modern "Aghas in Suits" of the nationalist movement work endlessly, promoting the ideology of the Kurdish cause. Unfortunately, this is often done for the sake of personal aggrandizement and has little effect in resolving practical problems or creating solidarity within Kurdistan.

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[2] "On the Kurdish Movement in Iraq", *Know the Kurds Series*, no. 1, Kurdistan: Information Department of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, 1973, p.5.

In the United States alone, at least a dozen Kurdish nationalist organizations exist, each claiming to represent the 18-20 million Kurds of Kurdistan. Members of these groups attend conferences, celebrate ***Newroz*** (Kurdish New Year) each Spring, and pass a number of resolutions denouncing the latest transgressions against the Kurdish people. There is little interest, though, in solving the basic and pressing concerns of survival faced by the peasants, who are not permitted or able to live beyond the Iraqi borders, as much of the nationalist membership does. What has become important for the nationalist leadership are membership drives for influential patronage, and the publication of material to convince Western observers of the dismal state of affairs in Kurdistan, with the ultimate expectation that another nation can lend assistance. The greatest handicap the Kurdish movement faces today is the lack of unity among the Kurds. Collaboration among the various organizations towards a unified position to deal with the common problem is practically non-existent. To date, this has prevented political action to rise beyond mere rhetoric and engenders a fundamental obstacle toward the realization of political freedom and cultural autonomy by the Kurdish people. This becomes an obstacle because Kurdish-Iraqi relations have fallen into a cyclical pattern of confrontation, mediation, and renewal of confrontation with little gain achieved.

The key to developing a consolidated front which can deal most effectively with the Baghdad regime can be found in the following assessment of Kurdish nationalism –

> One of Kurdish nationalism's dilemmas is the fact that it has remained centered around individuals instead of an ideology. What aggravates this problem is that the one individual who wields the most influence over the direction of the Kurdish nationalist movement is the one who is least ideologically oriented. In spite of his impressive charismatic powers, Mulla Mustafa Barzani neither perceives the need for nor is willing or capable of constructing a *single and enduring political culture.*[3]

In this paragraph Qazzaz presents Barzani's personal brand of politics as a detriment to the KDP and suggests that without a highly structured political organization based on a Western model, the Kurdish *people* have *existed* without a political culture. This certainly must come as a shock to the very people who felt Barzani represented their deepest patriotic aspirations and paramount national authority. Contrary to this perspective, I believe that the individual approach towards decision-making was Barzani's forte, which permitted him to remain in control over the span of several decades and resulted in the Kurdish resistance developing into a popular movement. Kurdish political culture promotes the charismatic, patriotic leader, like Barzani, who is devoted to his homeland and its culture and traditions, believing it to be superior to all others, yet retaining his individualism. The nationalist, however, submerges his individuality into the concept of an abstract ideology and the "nation". In his obsession to satisfy the ideology rather than the needs and wishes of the population, he fails to gain the support and following that the charismatic leader can attain. Jalal Talabani, dismissing too much hope to achieve the goals of the Kurdish struggle has been quoted as stating "I am a politician, not a dreamer".[4] Perhaps, in order to achieve unity among the Kurdish people, what is required is someone with vision and empathy, someone who can provide moral support, a dreamer.

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[3] Qazzaz, "Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism", p.186.

Tribal sentiment and the power of charismatic leadership have both been given a premature death sentence by various scholars of Kurdish society and in particular, at the hands of the throng of Kurdish nationalists which have emerged since 1975. The argument that primordial ties and cultural attitudes would merely give way to objective rational liberalism appears to grow weaker as old patterns of rivalry and internal strife within Kurdish political parties continue to develop, recreating past relationships found in traditional Kurdish tribal society.

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[4] Told to author during discussions at Kurdish Library, Brooklyn, NY, November 1989.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN IRAQI-KURDISH HISTORY

1919-20

First uprising led by Shaikh Mahmoud Barzinci against British occupation of Mosul Vilayet.

1922

22 November – Peace Conference at Lausanne. Impasse between Lord Curzon and İsmet Paşa İnönü regarding retrocession of Mosul vilayet to Turkey resulted in exclusion of "Mosul Question" from the conference program and effectively voids Mandatory Power responsibility to support Kurdish Statehood in eastern Anatolia. Treaty finally signed on 24 July 1923.

22 December – Anglo-Iraqi Joint Declaration presented to the League of Nations to enable the Kurds to establish an autonomous government within the confines of Iraq.

1923

Second revolt by Shaikh Mahmoud against British and Hashemite regime. Self-proclamation as King of Kurdistan.

1924

19 May – Beginning discussions of Mosul Commission in Istanbul.

1926

16 December – Mosul Vilayet formally attached to Iraq under British Mandate and Turkish-Iraqi border established.

1927

5 October – Hoyboun (independence) Kurdish National League founded by Ihsan Nuri Pasha of Bitlis (Turkey). Eventually became organization of Kurdish exiles in Lebanon and in Europe. Later replaced in Iraq by Hewa.

28 October – Declaration of independent Kurdistan by Hoyboun near Mt. Ararat. (Turkey)

1931

Third revolt by Shaikh Mahmoud; captured by British and placed under arrest in Baghdad. Shaikh Ahmed Barzani leads uprising in north-east assisted by brother, Mulla Mustafa.

1933

New revolt in northern Iraq under Barzani leadership.

1938

Founding of the secret Hewa Party in Kirkuk.

1943

Revolt in northern Iraq led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani.

1944

August - Signing of the Pact of the Three Borders at Mt. Dalanpar. Symbolized Kurdish unity among Iraqi, Turkish and Iranian Kurds.

1946

13 January - Kurdish Republic of Mahabad established under Presidency of Qazi Mohammed.

13 August - First Congress of Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq. Formed from merger of Hewa and Jiani Kurd (Kurdish Insurrection). Barzani named as chairman in absentia.

1947

Barzani and selected followers granted asylum in Soviet Union.

1948

KDP effectively divided into Democratic Party of Kurdistan (Iraq) led by nationalist intellectual Ibraham Ahmed, and the Progressive Democratic Party of Kurdistan pro-communist leader Hamza Abdullah.

1956

KDP renamed Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) at second congress.

1958

14 July - Hashemite Monarchy overthrown by General Qasim and the Free Officers establishing a Republic based on "the free association of Arabs and Kurds".

1960

9 January - Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) legalized under chairmanship of Mustafa Barzani.

1961

11 September - Beginning of Kurdish "war for autonomy" in Iraq.

1963

8 February - Qasim government overthrown. New Ba'th regime supported by Barzani. Temporary cease-fire in Kurdish war. War begins again in June and intermittently continues until March 1970.

1970

11 March - Kurdish-Iraqi agreement regarding autonomous Kurdish region to be instituted within four years. Begins period of "Neither peace nor war"until 1974.

1974

11 March - "Law on the Autonomy of Kurdistan" passed to comply with government pledge in 11 March 1970 Agreement to create autonomous Kurdish region. Present day boundaries delineated at this point. Seen as backing off from 1970 agreement.

April - Kurdish armed struggle resumes with new intensity.

1975

5 March - Algiers Accords between Iran and Iraq forces cessation of Iranian arms aid to Kurds forcing Barzani to unilateraly declare resistance movement over.

1976

June - Armed resistance breaks out once more in Iraq under leadership of Idris and Mas‘ud Barzani.

1979

2 March - Mustafa Barzani dies in Washington D.C.

1980

September - Beginning of Gulf War.

1987

31 January - Leader of KDP, Idris Barzani, dies of heart failure.

1988

20 August - End of hostilities in Gulf War.

25 August - Chemical weapons offensive in Kurdish territory near Turkish border. Refugees flee Iraq for Turkey and Iran.

1989

14-15 October - First Kurdish International Conference held in Paris, France to present human rights and cultural identity issues to a worldwide audience.

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