Lost and Forgotten Narratives: Unveiling the Margins of Kurdish History

1. Introduction: Unveiling the Margins of Kurdish History

1.1. Defining "Lost" and "Forgotten" History in the Kurdish Context

The historical narrative of the Kurdish people is frequently marked by significant lacunae, often described as "lost" or "forgotten." However, this terminology requires careful consideration. Rather than implying passive neglect or accidental omission, the concept of "lost" history within the Kurdish context often points towards active processes of marginalization, suppression, and deliberate erasure, particularly within the dominant historical accounts constructed by the nation-states encompassing Kurdistan.[1] Kurdish history frequently exists not as a cohesive, self-authored narrative, but as scattered fragments embedded within the records of other dominant cultures—Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.[3] Furthermore, a substantial portion resides outside conventional written records, preserved primarily through non-written forms such as rich oral traditions, folklore, music, and other cultural practices.[5]

This predicament was recognized by Kurdish intellectuals themselves. The mid-20th-century Kurdish historian Salih Qaftan articulated a core challenge: the absence of an independent Kurdish state fundamentally hindered the ability of Kurds to systematically record, analyze, and disseminate their own history from an internal perspective.[5] As Qaftan observed, the act of historiography often requires the motivation and resources associated with statehood, elements historically denied to the Kurds.[5] Consequently, much of what is known about Kurdish history has been filtered through the lenses of neighboring powers or documented sporadically by external observers. This reality underscores a fundamental bias inherent in many historical records, where, as Qaftan noted, the experiences and perspectives of central powers are documented, while the "unwritten and the marginalized are always more than the written central ones".[5] Recovering Kurdish history, therefore, necessitates a deliberate effort to look beyond official archives and dominant narratives, seeking out these fragmented, marginalized, and often unwritten sources.

1.2. The Legacy of Erasure: Coloniality, Nation-States, and Kurdish Narratives

The fragmentation and marginalization of Kurdish history intensified dramatically with the geopolitical shifts of the 20th century. The dissolution of the Ottoman and Persian empires and the subsequent formation of modern nation-states—Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria—resulted

in the partitioning of the Kurdish homeland across newly imposed borders.[3] This division rendered the Kurds a significant minority within each state, subjecting them to aggressive nation-building projects predicated on ethno-linguistic homogeneity.[1] These states often adopted hostile policies aimed at suppressing Kurdish identity, language, and historical consciousness through forced assimilation, cultural restrictions, and, in some instances, outright linguicide.[1]

The experience of Kurds under these nation-states aligns significantly with concepts of coloniality, even in the absence of traditional overseas colonization. Applying Anibal Quijano's concept of the "coloniality of power," scholars argue that Kurds endured, and continue to endure, systems of power, domination, and exploitation characteristic of colonial rule.[2] This involved not only physical violence, displacement, and institutional discrimination—such as the genocidal Anfal campaign and chemical attacks in Iraq, the Arab Belt policy displacing Kurds in Syria, the suppression of uprisings in Iran, and the systematic denial and violence in Turkey—but also profound *epistemic violence*.[2] State apparatuses, including education systems, military forces, and official media, actively worked to erase Kurdish history and memory.[2] State-sponsored publications and historical narratives deliberately misrepresented or denied Kurdish identity, language, and culture, often portraying Kurdishness through negative stereotypes such as tribalism, feudalism, religious fanaticism, and backwardness.[2] In Turkey, the existence of Kurds as a distinct ethnicity was officially denied for decades, with theories labeling them as "Mountain Turks" [4], a textbook example of a colonizing power seeking to justify its presence by rendering the indigenous inhabitants historically invisible or inferior.[2] The ultimate goal was the assimilation of Kurds into the dominant Turkish, Arab, or Persian national identities, effectively erasing Kurdishness from the political and cultural landscape.[1] Geopolitical interests of external powers, including Britain and the Soviet Union, further complicated the situation, often influencing borders, political outcomes, and the selective documentation or neglect of Kurdish history to serve strategic aims.[3]

1.3. Significance of Recovering Subaltern Voices and Histories

Given this context of active suppression and marginalization, recovering the "lost" or "forgotten" aspects of Kurdish history holds profound significance. It necessitates moving beyond state-centric and dominant cultural narratives to access subaltern voices and perspectives that offer a more complete and nuanced understanding of the past.[2] This endeavor is not merely an academic exercise; it is crucial for challenging the hegemonic historical accounts that have long justified assimilationist policies and denied Kurdish agency.[2] By bringing marginalized experiences—recorded in oral traditions, preserved in personal and community archives, and embedded in cultural practices—to the forefront, a more accurate and complex picture of Kurdish history can emerge.

This process of recovery aligns with the recent "archival turn" observed within Kurdish Studies.[23] Scholars are increasingly turning towards diverse and previously underutilized sources, such as oral history testimonies, documents from diaspora organizations, personal papers of activists and intellectuals, and non-state records, to reconstruct histories obscured

by official narratives. This methodological shift is vital for understanding the lived experiences of Kurds, their forms of resistance, their cultural resilience, and the multifaceted nature of their identity across different regions and historical periods. Ultimately, the recovery and recognition of these subaltern histories contribute not only to a richer academic understanding but also potentially inform contemporary Kurdish struggles for cultural preservation, political recognition, and social justice.[2]

2. Beyond the Ayyubids: Early and Medieval Kurdish Presence

While the Ayyubid dynasty, founded by Saladin (Salah al-Din Ayyubi), stands as the most widely recognized example of Kurdish political power in the medieval period [15], focusing solely on this era obscures a much longer and more complex history of Kurdish political entities and societal structures. Reclaiming "forgotten" history requires delving into the periods before and alongside the Ayyubids, exploring pre-Islamic echoes and the diverse landscape of Kurdish principalities that shaped the region for centuries.

2.1. Tracing Pre-Islamic Echoes: Medes, Karduchoi, Guti, and Early Mentions

The precise origins of the Kurdish people in the pre-Islamic era remain a subject of scholarly debate and are intertwined with the histories of various ancient groups inhabiting the Zagros Mountains and surrounding regions. A popular narrative within Kurdish national consciousness links modern Kurds to the ancient Medes, an Iranian people who established a significant empire and played a role in the downfall of Assyria in 612 BCE.[19] While linguistic connections exist (Kurdish languages belong to the Northwestern Iranian group, similar to Median [27]), direct, unbroken lineage is difficult to prove definitively.

Other potential precursors mentioned in ancient sources include the Guti, a mountain people who challenged Mesopotamian powers in the 3rd millennium BCE [15], and the inhabitants of the "land of Karda" or "Qardu," noted in Sumerian and Akkadian texts from the same period.[27] The term "Karduchoi" (Καρδοῦχοι) appears in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, describing a fierce mountain people who harried the retreating Greek army near modern Zakho (Iraq) in 401 BCE.[15] While the phonetic similarity to "Kurd" is suggestive, some scholars dispute a direct connection.[15] These early references, though debated, point to the long-standing presence of distinct, often warlike, tribal groups in the mountainous regions later known as Kurdistan.

The ethnonym "Kurd" (Akrad in Arabic) appears with greater certainty in sources from the early Islamic period, coinciding with the conversion of the region's inhabitants in the 7th century CE.[15] Initially, Arab sources often used the term more broadly to denote various nomadic or semi-nomadic Western Iranian tribes, distinguishing them from settled Persians, rather than signifying a single, unified ethnic group.[27] However, evidence from the preceding Sasanian Persian Empire (224–651 CE) indicates recognition of a distinct group identified as Kurds. The *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* (Book of the Deeds of Ardashir, Son of Pabag)

depicts the founder of the dynasty, Ardashir I, battling Kurds and their leader Madig.[27] Later, in the 4th century CE, Shapur II is recorded as encountering formidable Kurdish archers defending the Roman province of Zabdicene (around modern Cizre).[27] These references suggest that groups identified as Kurds were a recognized political and military factor in the region long before the Islamic conquests solidified the term.

2.2. The Era of Kurdish Principalities: Governance and Society Before Centralization

Contrary to persistent stereotypes portraying Kurds solely as nomadic tribesmen peripheral to major empires, the medieval and early modern periods witnessed the rise and flourishing of numerous independent and semi-autonomous Kurdish principalities, often referred to as emirates.[3] These entities, existing from roughly the 10th century until their gradual suppression by Ottoman and Persian centralization efforts culminating in the 19th century, constituted significant centers of Kurdish political power, administration, and cultural life.[1] Examining these lesser-known dynasties is crucial for understanding the historical depth of Kurdish self-governance and societal development beyond the singular focus on the Ayyubids.

These principalities varied greatly in size, longevity, and influence, often navigating complex relationships with larger regional powers like the Buyids, Seljuks, Byzantines, Safavids, and Ottomans.[3] They frequently served as buffer states or vassals, leveraging regional rivalries to maintain degrees of autonomy, but ultimately many succumbed to the centralizing ambitions of these larger empires. The *Sharafnama* (Book of Honor), compiled in Persian by Sharafkhan Bidlisi, the prince of Bidlis, in 1597, remains a seminal, though not uncritical, source for the history of many of these Kurdish ruling houses.[3]

The following table summarizes key information about some of the more prominent, yet often overlooked, Kurdish principalities:

Table 1: Key Medieval and Early Modern Kurdish Principalities

Dynasty Name	Approximate Period	Key Centers/Regions	Notable Rulers/Events	Relationship with Major Powers	Significance/Legacy
Hasanwayhids	c. 959–1015 CE	Western Iran (Zagros): Dinavar, Nahavand, Hamadan, Kermanshah	Hasanwayh ibn Husayn (founder); Badr ibn Hasanwayh (ruled 979–1014, known for stability, infrastructure, security)	Vassals of/Allied with Buyids; Fought Samanids; Superseded by Annazids & Buyids; Territory eventually taken by	Early powerful Kurdish dynasty in Zagros; Badr remembered as ideal ruler; Demonstrated Kurdish ability to establish stable administration

				Seljuks [26]	[15]
Marwanids	983/990–1085 CE	Diyar Bakr (Upper Mesopotamia): Mayyafariqin (capital), Amid (Diyarbakir), Akhlat, Manzikert, Nisibis	Badh ibn Dustak (founder); Mumahhid al-Dawla Sa'id; Nasr al-Dawla Ahmad (ruled 1011–1061, apogee of power, cultural patronage, building projects, took Edessa)	Fought Buyids & Hamdanids initially; Faced Byzantine pressure; Became vassals of Seljuks; Overthrown by Seljuks via vizier Ibn Jahir [34]	Major power in Diyar Bakr for a century; Significant cultural center under Nasr al-Dawla (libraries, observatory); Badikan tribe traces roots to founder [40]
Shaddadids	951–1199 CE	Parts of Armenia & Arran: Dvin, Ganja, Ani	Muhammad ibn Shaddad (founder); Lashkari I (took Ganja); Fadl I (ruled c.985-1031, expanded territory, took Dvin, raided Khazars); Abu'l-Aswar Shavur (ruled c.1049-1067, zenith of power)	Fought Musafirids, Armenian Bagratids, Georgians, Byzantines; Became vassals of Seljuks; Ani branch continued longer [32]	Long-lasting dynasty in Caucasus region; Intermarried with Armenian royalty; Faced constant warfare; Loss of sources like *Tarikh al-Bab* hinders full study [32]
Annazids	c. 990/991–late 12th CE	Iran-Iraq Frontier (Central Zagros): Hulwan, Kermanshah, Dinavar, Shahrizor	Abu'l-Fath Muhammad b. ʿAnnaz (founder); Abu'l-Shawk (ruled c.1011-1046, period of conflict & expansion, peak of	Allied with/Vassals of Buyids; Fierce rivalry with Hasanwayhids; Fought Banu Uqayl, Banu Mazyad, Kakuyids; Faced Oghuz/Seljuk	Dominated central Zagros after Hasanwayhids; Period marked by instability; Represented last major Kurdish dynasty in the central Zagros

			power); Surkhab III (late 12th c. ruler in Luristan)	pressure [26]	before Seljuk dominance [15]
Ardalan	c. 14th Century–1867 CE	Northwestern Iran: Sanandaj (capital), surrounding regions (roughly modern Kurdistan Province)	Bābā Ardalān (legendary founder); Khan Aḥmad Khan (Safavid era); Sobḥānverdī Khan (Nader Shah era); Ḵosrow Khan Bozorgī (Zand era); Amān-Allāh Khan Bozorgī (early Qajar era, last major wālī)	Independent initially; Became semi-autonomous province under Safavids; Shifted allegiance between Safavids & Ottomans; Supported Zands; Subdued by Qajars [31]	Long-ruling principality in Iranian Kurdistan; Played key role in Safavid/Ottoman border dynamics; Sanandaj developed as capital; Dynasty ended by Qajar centralization [31]

This overview demonstrates a significant history of Kurdish political organization and statecraft that predates and extends beyond the Ayyubids. These principalities were not mere tribal confederations but functioning political entities with administrative structures, military forces, and, in many cases, a notable cultural output. Their existence challenges narratives that depict Kurds solely as stateless subjects of larger empires and reveals a forgotten landscape of diverse Kurdish polities. The recurring pattern of their rise, consolidation, navigation of regional power dynamics, and eventual decline under centralizing pressures offers a deep historical context for understanding the trajectory of Kurdish political aspirations and challenges in later centuries.

2.3. Early Social Structures and Cultural Flourishing

The social fabric of these Kurdish principalities was complex, often characterized by a combination of tribal structures and developing urban centers.[3] Tribal affiliations remained significant, with chieftains (often titled Sheikh or Agha) wielding considerable authority, particularly in rural areas.[15] However, the emirates also encompassed towns and cities like Dvin, Ganja, Mayyafariqin, Amid (Diyarbakir), Dinavar, and later Sanandaj, which served as administrative, economic, and cultural hubs.[31] This coexistence of tribal and urban elements shaped the political and social dynamics within these Kurdish polities.

Crucially, several of these principalities provided the patronage necessary for the flourishing of Kurdish language and literature.[1] During periods of relative autonomy, Kurdish linguistic varieties—notably Kurmanji, Gorani, and later Sorani—developed into literary languages, breaking the dominance of Arabic and Persian in written expression.[1] This era saw the

emergence of classical Kurdish poets whose works remain foundational. Figures like Ali Hariri, Malaye Jaziri, and Faqi Tayran composed significant works primarily in Kurmanji.[28] Ahmad-e Khani (1651-1706), perhaps the most celebrated, penned his epic *Mem û Zîn* (1694-95).[3] This work is considered a cornerstone of Kurdish literature and an early, powerful expression of Kurdish national consciousness, lamenting Kurdish disunity and subjugation while celebrating Kurdish culture and identity.[3] The Gorani dialect also served as an important literary language (koiné), particularly in the Ardalan region, from as early as the 14th or 16th century, used for epic poetry like the *Kurdish Shahnameh* before being gradually supplanted by Sorani in later centuries.[1]

This period also witnessed the beginnings of Kurdish historiography itself. Sharafkhan Bidlisi's *Sharafnama* (1597), while written in Persian (the dominant literary and administrative language of the era), represents the first known comprehensive history focused specifically on the Kurds and their ruling dynasties.[3] Its creation within the context of the Bidlis principality underscores the link between political autonomy and the capacity for historical self-representation. While influenced by the prevailing traditions of Islamic historiography (focusing on political, military, and dynastic events), the *Sharafnama* provided an invaluable, albeit subjective, record from a Kurdish perspective.[5] The cultural vitality evident during the era of the principalities—in language, literature, and historiography—highlights that periods of political self-governance, even fragmented, were essential for the development and preservation of distinct Kurdish cultural expressions. This reinforces the connection, noted by later scholars like Qaftan [5], between political status and cultural flourishing, a connection tragically severed for much of modern Kurdish history due to state suppression.[1]

3. Dimensions of Kurdish Cultural Heritage: Beyond the Mainstream

The cultural heritage of the Kurdish people is rich and diverse, encompassing distinct languages, literary traditions, unique art forms, resonant folk music, and sophisticated material culture. However, much like their political history, significant aspects of Kurdish culture have been marginalized, suppressed, or overlooked within the dominant narratives of the nation-states they inhabit. Exploring these underrepresented dimensions is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of Kurdish identity and historical experience.

3.1. The Tapestry of Kurdish Languages: Dialectal Diversity and Literary Histories

The Kurdish language (Kurdî) belongs to the Northwestern branch of the Iranian languages, within the larger Indo-European family.[15] It is linguistically distinct from the Semitic Arabic and Turkic Turkish languages spoken by neighboring majority populations, sharing closer ties with Persian and Pashto.[15] The classification is complex; while generally considered Northwestern Iranian, it exhibits significant influence from Southwestern Iranian languages like Persian due to prolonged contact, and some scholars posit Median or Parthian connections.[28]

Crucially, "Kurdish" is best understood not as a single, monolithic language but as a continuum of dialects, some of which are not mutually intelligible.[28] This dialectal diversity reflects historical, geographical, and political fragmentation. The main dialect groups are:

- **Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish):** This is the most widely spoken group, with an estimated 15-20 million speakers primarily in Turkey, Syria, northern Iraq, and parts of northwestern and northeastern Iran.[28] It is typically written using a Latin-based script, the Hawar alphabet, standardized in the 1930s.[28] Kurmanji boasts a rich classical literary tradition, being the medium for poets like Ali Hariri, Malaye Jaziri, Faqi Tayran, and the influential Ahmad-e Khani.[3]
- **Sorani (Central Kurdish):** Spoken by an estimated 6-7 million Kurds, mainly in Iraqi Kurdistan (where it is an official language alongside Arabic) and Iranian Kurdistan.[28] It is written using a modified Arabic script, the Sorani alphabet.[28] Sorani emerged as a major literary standard more recently, particularly in the 20th century, partly supplanting the older literary role of Gorani in some regions.[42]
- **Southern Kurdish (Xwarîn / Pehlewani):** This group encompasses dialects spoken primarily in the southern parts of Iranian Kurdistan (Kermanshah and Ilam provinces) and adjacent areas of eastern Iraq (Khanaqin district).[28] Laki, spoken in Iran's Lorestan province, is often grouped with Southern Kurdish but possesses distinct features.[28]

Beyond these core Kurdish groups lie **Zazaki** (also known as Dimli, Kirdki, Kirmanjki) and **Gorani** (including the **Hawrami** dialect). Linguistically, these are generally classified separately from Kurdish proper, forming the distinct Zaza–Gorani branch within Northwestern Iranian.[28] Zazaki is spoken mainly in eastern Turkey by an estimated 2 million people, while Gorani is spoken by around 300,000 people in parts of Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan.[43] Despite the linguistic classification favored by most linguists [43], the vast majority of Zazaki and Gorani speakers self-identify as ethnic Kurds.[28] This highlights a complex situation where ethno-national identity transcends strict linguistic boundaries, shaped by shared culture, history, and political experience.[28] The Hawrami dialect of Gorani holds particular historical significance, having served as an important literary language and court language, especially in the Ardalan principality, from as early as the 14th or 16th century, with a tradition of epic poetry (e.g., the *Kurdish Shahnameh*).[1] However, its literary prominence declined in the 20th century, largely replaced by Sorani.[42]

The historical trajectory of all Kurdish linguistic varieties has been profoundly impacted by political marginalization. Under the Ottoman and Persian empires, Kurdish languages were overshadowed by the dominant administrative and literary languages (Turkish, Persian, Arabic).[1] The establishment of modern nation-states brought active suppression and assimilation policies, banning or restricting the use of Kurdish in public life, education, and media.[1] This hindered the standardization and development of the languages and delayed the emergence of modern literary forms like the novel (the first Kurdish short story appeared in 1913, the first novel in 1935).[1] The Kurdish diaspora, particularly in Europe, played a crucial role in nurturing modern Kurdish literature and publishing when opportunities were severely limited in the homeland.[1] Early written attestations of Kurdish, such as the 9th-century

translations of agricultural texts mentioned by Ibn Wahshiyya [28] or a 15th-century religious manuscript in Armenian script [28], represent tantalizing but often overlooked fragments of a longer written history disrupted by political circumstances.

3.2. Lesser-Known Literary and Artistic Traditions

While figures like Ahmad-e Khani or Malaye Jaziri are relatively well-known within Kurdish literary history, the focus on major dialects and prominent poets can obscure regional variations, less-studied genres, or literary movements that may have been suppressed or simply failed to achieve wider recognition due to historical circumstances. Further research is needed to uncover these potentially "lost" literary threads.

Conversely, the representation of Kurds within the literary traditions of dominant neighboring cultures offers another lens, albeit often distorted. Studies of post-revolutionary Persian novels in Iran, for instance, reveal a tendency to depict Kurdish characters through stereotypes—as primitive, criminal, or exotic—effectively depoliticizing their identity and reinforcing state-sponsored narratives that marginalize Kurdish political aspirations and cultural specificity.[20] Such representations contribute to the "forgetting" or misremembering of Kurdish realities within the broader societies.

Similarly, traditional Kurdish visual and folk arts have often been overlooked or under-documented in mainstream art history. The work of self-taught or "naïve" artists, such as the terracotta sculptor Khatoozin from Iranian Kurdistan whose work drew heavily on Kurdish mythology, represents a stream of artistic expression rooted in local traditions but largely absent from broader art historical discourse.[46] Research on traditional Kurdish crafts, particularly those practiced by women like pottery and sculpture, remains sparse, despite a rich heritage evidenced by archaeological finds.[46] This lack of documentation contributes to the perception of these traditions as marginal or non-existent. Recent efforts by Kurdish artists and writers, like Hama Hashim's publications on art history in Kurdish [47] or the work of contemporary diaspora artists like Lukman Ahmad who consciously use their art to educate about Kurdish culture and history [48], represent attempts to counteract this historical neglect and assert the value of Kurdish artistic heritage.

3.3. The Resonance of Folk Traditions: Music, Dengbêj, and Oral Narratives

In a context where written language and formal historical records have often been suppressed or controlled, oral traditions have played an exceptionally vital role in preserving Kurdish culture, language, and historical memory. Central to this is the tradition of the *Dengbêj*.[6] Dengbêjs are Kurdish folk singers, bards, and storytellers who traditionally performed long epic songs (*stran* or *kilam*), often unaccompanied by musical instruments.[7] Their repertoire encompasses a vast range of themes: tales of heroism, love, betrayal, tribal feuds, historical events, migrations, natural disasters, and, significantly, the struggles and suffering resulting from conflict and state oppression.[7]

Dengbêjs functioned, and to some extent still function, as living archives, repositories of

collective memory passed down through generations via an apprenticeship system.[8] They were not merely entertainers but chroniclers, educators, and guardians of cultural identity and linguistic heritage.[7] In regions and periods where Kurdish language was banned and history was rewritten by the state, the Dengbêj tradition provided a crucial, resilient alternative space for articulating Kurdish experiences and perspectives.[7] Their performances, often at communal gatherings, reinforced social bonds and transmitted cultural values and historical consciousness.[6] The very act of singing in Kurdish, recounting stories of resistance or lamenting losses, became an act of cultural preservation and defiance against assimilationist pressures.[7]

However, this vital tradition is currently endangered. Factors such as mass displacement due to conflict, urbanization, the influence of modern media, socio-economic changes, and a perceived lack of interest among younger generations have led to a decline in the number of active Dengbêjs and the transmission of their vast repertoire.[7] Recognizing this loss, efforts have been made to preserve the tradition, including the establishment of Dengbêj houses or cultural centers where performers can gather and sing [7], and projects aimed at recording and archiving their performances.[9] Kurdish folklore more broadly, encompassing myths, legends, proverbs, and folk tales, is also increasingly recognized as a valuable resource for understanding indigenous knowledge systems and as a tool for language revitalization efforts.[1] The potential disappearance of these oral traditions represents not just a cultural loss, but the erasure of unique historical archives embedded within the spoken word.

3.4. Material Culture: The History and Significance of Kurdish Textiles (Kilims, Carpets)

Kurdish textiles, particularly handwoven kilims (flatweaves) and pile carpets, represent another significant, yet often underappreciated, dimension of Kurdish cultural heritage and a form of tangible historical record.[11] The origins of weaving in the mountainous regions of Kurdistan are ancient, linked to the necessities of nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoral life stretching back millennia.[11] Rugs and kilims provided essential protection, served as furnishings (floor coverings, wall hangings, storage bags, saddle blankets), and were integral to daily life.[11]

Kurdish weavings are often characterized by their bold, geometric designs, although floral and animal motifs also appear, frequently stylized and drawing inspiration from the natural environment.[11] Historically, they were known for their use of vibrant, saturated colors derived from natural, plant-based dyes – with deep reds and blues often prominent, but also pinks and oranges – applied to high-quality, lustrous wool from local sheep breeds.[12] The weaving itself, traditionally undertaken primarily by women [11], often exhibits a certain spontaneity and charming irregularity compared to more formalized urban workshop productions, reflecting their folk art origins.[52] Unlike some other traditions in the "rug belt," Kurdish textiles were historically woven mainly for personal, family, or tribal use rather than primarily for commercial export.[53]

Beyond their utilitarian function, these textiles served as powerful carriers of cultural identity,

symbolism, and memory.[11] The intricate motifs woven into kilims and carpets constitute a visual language, conveying meanings passed down through generations.[11] Symbols might relate to protection (against the evil eye), fertility (hands-on-hips, ram's horns), the natural world (animals, plants, water), tribal identity, or mythological beliefs.[11] The act of weaving was deeply embedded in the lives of women, with pieces created for dowries, homes, and children, marking life cycle events.[11] Regional variations in design and technique also exist, reflecting interactions with neighboring cultures (Caucasian, Persian, Turkoman) while retaining distinct Kurdish characteristics.[51] For example, weavers in Northwest Iran/Caucasus adopted Kazak-style designs but with unique Kurdish execution [52], while Quchan Kurds in Northeast Iran incorporated Turkoman and Baluch elements.[52] Town weavers in Bijar and Senneh developed finer, denser weaves, sometimes responding to urban market demands, yet still retaining Kurdish aesthetics.[52]

Like the Dengbêj tradition, Kurdish traditional weaving is facing a severe decline, threatening the loss of this tangible cultural heritage.[12] The disruption of traditional lifestyles through forced settlement, displacement due to conflict (particularly devastating campaigns in Iraqi Kurdistan [51]), economic hardship, assimilation policies pressuring cultural expression [12], the breakdown of intergenerational knowledge transfer [51], and the widespread adoption of synthetic dyes replacing traditional methods [51] have all contributed to this erosion. The fading of this craft signifies not only the loss of an art form but also the disappearance of the historical narratives, cultural meanings, and communal memories intricately woven into these textiles. Initiatives like the Kurdish Textile Museum in Erbil represent efforts to preserve this endangered heritage.[51]

4. Navigating Empires and Nation-States: Obscured Histories

The modern history of the Kurds is inextricably linked to their position straddling the frontiers of major empires and, later, their division among newly formed nation-states. This geopolitical reality has profoundly shaped their historical trajectory, often resulting in the obscuring or deliberate distortion of their experiences within official narratives. Uncovering these obscured histories requires examining the impact of imperial divisions, the consequences of modern border treaties, and re-evaluating key events from perspectives beyond those of the central states.

4.1. Kurds Under Ottoman and Persian Rule: Division, Administration, and Early Resistance

For centuries, the Kurdish-inhabited lands formed a vast, often contested, frontier zone between the Ottoman Empire to the west and the Safavid (and subsequent Persian dynasties) to the east. The formalization of this division, notably through the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639 which established a lasting border, had significant long-term consequences for the Kurds.[3] It solidified the partition of Kurdistan, subjecting Kurdish communities and principalities to the

competing influences and interventions of Istanbul and Tehran.[3] This division fueled centuries of intermittent warfare across Kurdish territories, leading to economic devastation, destruction of settlements, forced migrations, and the manipulation of Kurdish groups by both empires seeking strategic advantage.[3]

The administrative approaches of the two empires towards their Kurdish populations varied over time but initially often involved a degree of indirect rule. The Ottomans, particularly in the earlier centuries, governed many Kurdish areas through existing local structures – the autonomous or semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates and powerful tribal chieftains (aghas and sheikhs).[3] This system allowed considerable local autonomy in exchange for loyalty (often fluid) and military service. However, the 19th-century Ottoman modernization and centralization policies, known as the Tanzimat reforms, sought to dismantle these traditional power structures and bring Kurdish regions under direct state control.[14] This shift provoked significant resistance, leading to some of the first large-scale Kurdish uprisings with proto-nationalist elements, such as the revolts led by Bedir Khan Bey of Botan (1847) [41] and Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri (1880).[14] These early rebellions, often framed by the Ottomans simply as tribal insubordination or religious reaction, represented a crucial response to the erosion of traditional Kurdish autonomy.

Similarly, the Safavid and later Persian states employed various strategies to manage their Kurdish populations. The Ardalan principality, centered in Sanandaj, was incorporated as a semi-autonomous frontier province, with its rulers (wālīs) navigating a complex relationship with the Safavid shahs while occasionally shifting allegiance to the Ottomans.[31] Persian rulers also utilized forced migration as a tool of control and strategic policy. Shah Abbas I, for instance, moved large numbers of Kurdish tribes, including the ʿAmmārlū, from Kurdistan to Khorasan in the northeast to act as a buffer against Uzbek incursions.[59] Later, Nader Shah reportedly moved other ʿAmmārlū groups to the Tarom region of Gilan.[59] These relocations, while serving imperial interests, fragmented Kurdish populations and disrupted traditional settlement patterns. Sharafkhan Bidlisi, writing his *Sharafnama* in the late 16th century while having ties to both Ottoman and Safavid spheres, provided a contemporary Kurdish perspective on the nature of Kurdish society and its leadership during this era, though his views may have been shaped by the discourses of the imperial courts he interacted with.[35]

4.2. The Fracturing of Kurdistan: Treaties, Borders, and the Rise of Nation-States

The aftermath of World War I marked a catastrophic turning point for the Kurds. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to the carving up of its territories by the victorious Allied powers and the nascent Turkish Republic. This process resulted in the formal division of the Ottoman-controlled parts of Kurdistan among the newly created or redefined states of Turkey, Iraq (under British Mandate), and Syria (under French Mandate), adding to the existing division with Persia (Iran).[3] This partition, largely formalized through treaties negotiated without meaningful Kurdish participation, laid the foundation for a century of conflict, displacement, and the denial of Kurdish rights.

The **Treaty of Sèvres**, signed between the Allies and the defeated Ottoman government on August 10, 1920, initially offered a glimmer of hope for Kurdish aspirations.[14] Articles 62-64 of the treaty outlined provisions for local autonomy for the Kurdish areas of southeastern Anatolia and the possibility of independence within a year if the Kurds demonstrated a desire for it, with the potential for Kurds in the Mosul Vilayet (then under British control) to voluntarily join this state.[21] However, this potential "Kurdish state" was geographically limited, excluding large Kurdish-inhabited areas, and was conceived within the framework of Allied imperial interests, particularly British influence.[21] Furthermore, the treaty was signed in the context of the ongoing Turkish War of Independence led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, whose nationalist movement vehemently rejected the dismemberment of Anatolia envisioned by Sèvres.[17] The Kemalists gained strength, securing agreements with France (Franklin-Bouillon Agreement, 1921) and the Soviet Union, effectively isolating the Ottoman government and rendering Sèvres unenforceable.[21] While often lamented as a "missed opportunity," the failure of Sèvres was arguably rooted in the unrealistic nature of its provisions given the rise of Turkish nationalism, the competing interests of the Allied powers, and potentially a lack of unified Kurdish capacity or desire for the specific centralized nation-state model being imposed.[21]
The **Treaty of Lausanne**, signed on July 24, 1923, replaced Sèvres and established the boundaries and international recognition of the modern Republic of Turkey.[16] Crucially, Lausanne made no mention of Kurdistan or Kurdish autonomy, effectively nullifying the promises of Sèvres and condemning the Kurds to minority status within the new nation-states.[16] From a Kurdish perspective, Lausanne represents a historic betrayal, where their aspirations for self-determination were sacrificed on the altar of great power politics.[17] Allied powers, particularly Britain, prioritized securing Turkish cooperation, stabilizing the region against potential Soviet influence, and defining the borders of Mandate Iraq (including the oil-rich Mosul Vilayet) over fulfilling commitments to the Kurds.[21] The treaty solidified the division of the Kurdish people and homeland, inaugurating an era defined by the denial of Kurdish identity, forced assimilation, and violent suppression by the central governments in Ankara, Baghdad, Tehran, and Damascus.[1] Other agreements further cemented this division, including the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 which prefigured the partition [21], and the Anglo-Iraqi-Turkish Treaty of Ankara in 1926, which formally incorporated the Mosul Vilayet (Southern Kurdistan) into Iraq, against the wishes of many Kurds but aligning with British strategic interests.[16]
The immediate and lasting impact of this new political map was the transformation of Kurds from inhabitants of a geographically contiguous, albeit politically fragmented, homeland into often persecuted minorities within states actively hostile to their distinct identity. The following table outlines some key examples of assimilationist policies and events targeting Kurds in the post-Lausanne era:

Table 2: Key Assimilation Policies/Events Targeting Kurds in Modern Nation-States

Country	Period/Event	Key Policies/Actio	Stated Goal (Official	Impact on Kurds	Key Sources

		ns	Narrative)	(Documented Effects)	
Turkey	1920s–Present	Denial of Kurdish identity ("Mountain Turks"); Ban on Kurdish language in public, education, media (partially eased later); Forced Turkification (name changes, resettlement); Suppression of Kurdish culture; Military suppression of uprisings (Sheikh Said, Ararat, Dersim); Destruction of villages; Assimilation through boarding schools (Dersim)	Creating a unified Turkish nation; Maintaining territorial integrity; Modernization; Combating separatism/terrorism	Massacres; Displacement; Loss of language & culture; Trauma; Erosion of identity; Political disenfranchisement; Ongoing conflict	[1]
Iraq	Mandate Era (1920s-32)	Initial British recognition of Kurdish rights/language (influenced by League of Nations); Later shift towards Arab-centric nation-building	Establishing Iraqi state; Managing ethnic groups	Temporary autonomy/rights; Subsequent marginalization under Arab nationalist governments	[14]

Iraq	Ba'athist Era (1968-2003)	Arabization campaigns (esp. Kirkuk & oil-rich areas): displacement of Kurds, settlement of Arabs; Linguicide policies; Anfal Campaign (1986-88): genocidal attacks, mass killings, chemical weapons (Halabja, 1988), destruction of villages; Suppression of political movements	Arab unity; Securing control over resources/territory; Eliminating opposition	Genocide; Mass displacement; Destruction of thousands of villages; Long-term environmental & health effects from chemical weapons; Cultural trauma	[1]
Iran	Pahlavi & Islamic Republic Eras	Deprivation of political & cultural rights; Restrictions on Kurdish language education (despite constitutional provisions); Imprisonment of language teachers/activists; Suppression of uprisings (Simko, Mahabad Republic, post-1979);	National unity (Persian-centric); Maintaining state control; Combating separatism/counter-revolution	Limited cultural expression; Political repression; Economic hardship; Assimilation pressures; Ongoing conflict/resistance	[1]

		Militarization/securitization of Kurdish regions; Economic neglect/de-development; Stereotyping in media/literature			
Syria	Ba'athist Era (1963-Present)	Arabization policy (esp. from 1960s); "Arab Belt" project (1970s): displacement of Kurds, settlement of Arabs in northern border regions; Denial of citizenship to large numbers of Kurds (statelessness); Restrictions on Kurdish language, culture, property ownership; Suppression of political activity	Arab national unity; Securing border regions	Displacement; Statelessness and associated lack of rights (voting, travel, services); Cultural suppression; Economic marginalization	[1]

This pattern of state-sponsored assimilation and suppression across all four countries underscores how the creation of modern nation-states in the region, predicated on centralized authority and ethno-national homogeneity, fundamentally clashed with Kurdish identity and aspirations, leading directly to the "loss" and active erasure of their history and culture from official recognition.

4.3. Re-examining Key Events: Narratives of Uprisings and Movements

The historical accounts of significant Kurdish uprisings and political movements in the 20th century are often heavily biased by the perspectives of the states they challenged. Official narratives frequently portray these events as mere tribal revolts, banditry, or religious fanaticism, thereby delegitimizing their political and nationalist dimensions and obscuring the grievances that fueled them.[2] Recovering a more complete picture requires critically examining these state narratives alongside alternative sources, including Kurdish accounts, oral histories, and analyses by independent scholars.

- **Simko Shikak Revolt (Iran, 1918-1922, 1926):** Simko (Ismail Agha Shikak), chieftain of the powerful Shikak tribe, led major uprisings in northwestern Iran during a period of central government weakness following WWI.[70] Iranian state historiography, and some Western accounts, often depict him primarily as a tribal leader interested in personal power and plunder, highlighting his documented brutality, including massacres of Assyrians (notably the assassination of Patriarch Mar Shimun XIX Benyamin in 1918).[69] While acknowledging these violent aspects, other perspectives, particularly within Kurdish narratives and recent scholarship, emphasize the political and nationalist dimensions of his movement.[68] Simko established a de facto autonomous zone, appointed governors, allied with other Kurdish tribes and nationalist figures (like Seyyed Taha Gilani and Abdurrazaq Bedir Khan), and reportedly articulated demands for Kurdish self-rule, comparing them to European national movements.[70] He also undertook initiatives like co-founding a Kurdish school and newspaper, and using Kurdish as an official language within his domain.[75] His movement represented a significant challenge to the nascent Pahlavi state under Reza Khan (later Shah), which eventually suppressed the revolt and orchestrated Simko's assassination in 1930 under the guise of negotiations.[69] The conflicting portrayals highlight the difficulty in assessing figures like Simko, whose actions combined tribal power politics, violence against minorities, and elements of early Kurdish nationalism in a complex, transitional period.
- **Sheikh Said Rebellion (Turkey, 1925):** This major uprising in southeastern Anatolia, led by Sheikh Said, a prominent Naqshbandi Sufi leader, occurred shortly after the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate by the new Turkish Republic.[14] The official Turkish narrative has consistently framed it as a religiously motivated, reactionary revolt against secularism and modernization, aimed at restoring the Caliphate and instigated by external (British) forces to undermine the republic.[63] However, many Kurdish sources and independent analyses view it as primarily a nationalist uprising, albeit with strong religious undertones and leadership, reacting against the Kemalist government's increasing centralization, Turkification policies, suppression of Kurdish identity, and closure of religious institutions (madrasahs).[14] The rebellion was supported by the Kurdish nationalist organization Azadî.[63] Sheikh Said's call to rise in the name of Islam appealed to a broad base, but the movement's aims included Kurdish autonomy or

independence, with Darhini declared a provisional capital.[63] The rebellion was brutally suppressed by the Turkish military, followed by mass arrests and executions conducted by the Independence Tribunals, further solidifying Ankara's control over the Kurdish regions.[64] The debate over the rebellion's primary character (religious vs. nationalist) continues, reflecting the intertwined nature of religion and identity in Kurdish society at the time and the conflicting historiographical agendas.

- **Ararat Rebellion (Turkey, 1927-1931):** Centered around Mount Ararat (Ağrı Dağı) in eastern Turkey, this rebellion represented a more explicitly organized nationalist effort led by the Xoybûn (Independence) party and commanded militarily by Ihsan Nuri Pasha, a former Ottoman and Turkish officer.[67] In October 1927, Xoybûn proclaimed the independent Republic of Ararat, establishing a provisional government and seeking international recognition, though none was forthcoming.[67] The rebellion involved numerous Kurdish tribes (Jalali, Hesenan, Haydaran, etc.) and represented a significant military challenge to the Turkish state.[78] Turkey responded with overwhelming force, mobilizing tens of thousands of soldiers (estimates vary, possibly 10,000-15,000 up to 66,000) and, crucially, employing extensive aerial bombardment against rebel positions, villages, and fleeing civilians.[67] Ihsan Nuri himself documented the devastating psychological and military impact of the Turkish air power in demoralizing the Kurdish forces.[78] Turkey also secured cooperation from Iran, which controlled the eastern flank of Lesser Ararat, allowing Turkish troops to encircle the mountain and cut off rebel supply lines, leading to a border adjustment ceding the area to Turkey.[78] The rebellion was ultimately crushed by September 1930 (or 1931). The memory of the Ararat Rebellion continues to resonate, with recent ethnographic work exploring how its defeat is remembered and reanimated by Kurdish communities in the region today.[84]
- **Dersim Events (Turkey, 1937-1938):** The events in the mountainous Dersim region (modern Tunceli), inhabited primarily by Alevi Kurds and Zaza-speakers, represent one of the most brutal episodes of state violence in the early Turkish Republic.[65] Official Turkish history long portrayed it as the necessary suppression of a feudal-tribal rebellion led by Seyit Riza against the modernizing, centralizing state.[65] However, survivor testimonies, diplomatic reports (like the British consul's account comparing it to the Armenian massacres [65]), oral histories, and critical scholarship increasingly frame the events as a pre-planned massacre or genocide aimed at eliminating the region's distinct ethno-religious identity and resistance to assimilation.[65] Dersim had long been viewed by Ottoman and Turkish authorities as an unruly, inaccessible region outside effective state control.[65] The 1937-38 military operations, triggered by minor incidents like the burning of a bridge [65], involved tens of thousands of troops and systematic violence, including large-scale aerial bombardment, mass executions of surrendered individuals, the burning of villages with inhabitants locked inside (including women and children), and mass deportations aimed at Turkification.[65] Estimates of the death toll range from the official figure of around 12,000 to scholarly estimates of 20,000-40,000 or even higher.[66] The targeting of Dersim was also linked to its

population having sheltered Armenians during the 1915 Genocide.[65] The collection and preservation of oral histories from survivors and their descendants have been crucial in challenging the state's narrative and documenting the scale and nature of the atrocities.[65]

- **Republic of Mahabad (Iran, 1946):** Established in Iranian Kurdistan during a period of Soviet influence following WWII, the Republic of Mahabad represents a key moment in Kurdish state-building efforts.[3] Led by Qazi Muhammad and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), the republic established its own government, flag, national anthem, army (with participation from Iraqi Kurds led by Mustafa Barzani), and used Kurdish as the official language.[3] Although short-lived (lasting less than a year), it remains a powerful symbol in Kurdish national memory.[3] Its demise came swiftly after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran under pressure from Western powers and the UN Security Council.[3] The Iranian army moved in, crushed the republic, and executed Qazi Muhammad and other leaders.[3] The Mahabad episode highlights the vulnerability of Kurdish political projects to the shifting geopolitical interests of major international powers during the Cold War.[3]

These events, when examined through multiple lenses, reveal a consistent pattern: Kurdish attempts to assert autonomy or resist assimilationist policies were met with overwhelming state violence, often justified by narratives that obscured the political and national dimensions of the conflicts. The international community frequently prioritized relations with the established states over Kurdish rights or aspirations. Recovering the Kurdish perspectives on these pivotal moments is essential for understanding the roots of ongoing conflicts and the enduring quest for recognition.

5. Guardians of Memory: Oral History and Archival Treasures

In the face of systematic efforts to erase or distort Kurdish history through official channels, alternative forms of memory preservation have become critically important. Oral traditions, passed down through generations, and the collection of non-state archival materials—ranging from personal papers to institutional records and digital repositories—serve as vital counter-archives, safeguarding narratives and experiences excluded from dominant historical accounts.

5.1. The Power of the Spoken Word: Dengbêj and Oral History Projects

The tradition of the Dengbêj, the Kurdish bard or storyteller, stands as a cornerstone of Kurdish oral history.[6] As discussed earlier, their epic songs and narratives have functioned for centuries as living repositories of historical events, cultural values, social memory, and linguistic richness, particularly crucial in contexts where written Kurdish was suppressed or undeveloped.[7] Dengbêj performances often provide granular, localized perspectives on major historical traumas, such as state violence, forced migration, and tribal conflicts, offering

emotional depth and experiential detail absent from official records.[9] They embody a form of subaltern historiography, challenging state narratives through the enduring power of the spoken and sung word.[9]

Recognizing the fragility of oral memory and the declining number of traditional practitioners, formal oral history projects have emerged as crucial tools for documenting specific, often traumatic, historical episodes that states have sought to silence. Two notable examples include:

- **Dersim 1937-38:** A major collaborative effort involving the Federation of Dersim Associations in Europe, the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA, and the USC Shoah Foundation has focused on collecting and preserving the testimonies of survivors of the Dersim massacres.[85] Launched in 2009, this project gathered over 350 interviews, primarily in the Zazaki language, documenting eyewitness accounts of the violence, deportations, and assimilation policies.[85] These testimonies provide invaluable first-hand evidence counteracting decades of state denial and minimization of the atrocities. They also illuminate the connections between the Dersim events and the earlier Armenian Genocide, as survivors recount how Dersim communities had sheltered Armenians and were subsequently targeted partly for this reason.[65] This project exemplifies a community-driven initiative to reclaim and archive a suppressed history through the voices of those who lived it.[66]
- **Yazidi Genocide (2014):** The genocide perpetrated by the Islamic State (ISIS) against the Yazidi community in northern Iraq not only resulted in mass killings and displacement but also severely endangered the community's unique oral traditions.[49] In response, the TewTew Archive was established by Yazidi poets Emad Sharqala and Zêdan Xelef Îsmaîl to systematically record and preserve Yazidi storytelling, songs, and religious knowledge.[49] This project aims to safeguard this intangible cultural heritage for future generations in the face of existential threats, recognizing the vital role of oral tradition in maintaining Yazidi identity and historical continuity.[49]

These projects, alongside a broader trend towards utilizing oral history methodologies in Kurdish Studies [9], underscore the indispensable role of spoken testimonies in accessing marginalized experiences and constructing histories from below, particularly when dealing with state violence, trauma, and silenced pasts.

5.2. The "Archival Turn": Unearthing History in State, Institutional, and Personal Collections

Parallel to the focus on oral history, Kurdish Studies has experienced what scholars term an "archival turn".[23] This signifies a growing engagement with archival sources beyond the traditional reliance on the state archives of the dominant powers (Ottoman/Turkish, British, French, Russian, Iranian, etc.).[23] While state archives remain important, they inherently reflect official perspectives, political agendas, and the limitations of state surveillance, often marginalizing or misrepresenting Kurdish agency and experiences.[23]

The "archival turn" involves a diversification of sources, seeking out materials held in

non-state repositories that offer alternative viewpoints and richer documentation of Kurdish social, cultural, and political life [23]:

- **Institutional Archives:** These include the records, publications, and documents generated by Kurdish political parties, cultural organizations, publishing houses, and research centers, particularly those established in the diaspora. Examples of significant institutional collections include:
    - The **Kurdish Institute of Paris**, founded in 1983, which houses a library with thousands of historical documents, periodicals, and pamphlets, and publishes the linguistic journal *Kurmancî* and the research journal *Études Kurdes*.[86]
    - The **Centre for Kurdish Studies (CKS) at the University of Exeter**, which holds the extensive **Omar Sheikhmous archive**. This collection contains rare Kurdish newspapers and journals from Europe and the Middle East, books, theses, and a significant body of material related to Soviet Kurds, including scholarly works and issues of the newspaper *R'ya Teze*.[87]
    - The **Kurdistan Center for Arts & Culture (KCAC)** based in Erbil, which maintains a growing digital archive of books, manuscripts, photographs, and periodicals from various collections within Kurdistan.[88]
- **Personal Archives:** Increasingly, scholars are accessing the private papers of key Kurdish figures – intellectuals, activists, writers, political leaders – especially those who migrated or lived in exile, forming the Kurdish diaspora (e.g., the student migrations of the 1960s).[23] These collections can contain invaluable materials like personal correspondence, unpublished manuscripts, meeting minutes, diaries, photographs, and personal libraries, offering intimate insights into the evolution of Kurdish movements, transnational networks, and intellectual history.[23]

The growing availability and use of these diverse archives offer rich resources for documenting previously neglected aspects of contemporary Kurdish history, including diaspora life, transnational activism, social history, and cultural production.[23] However, accessing and utilizing these archives presents unique challenges. Many remain in private hands, raising issues of accessibility, preservation, property rights, and ethical considerations regarding sensitive information.[23] Political factors also intervene; the confiscation of archives from the Mezopotamien publishing house and Mir Multimedia in Germany in 2019 serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing vulnerability of Kurdish cultural repositories to state actions.[23] Digitization efforts are crucial for preservation and wider access but require significant resources.[23]

5.3. Digital Frontiers: Online Archives and Language Revitalization Efforts

The digital revolution has significantly impacted the preservation and dissemination of Kurdish history and culture. Online platforms and digital archives are creating new possibilities for access and engagement, transcending geographical borders and state controls. Initiatives like the KCAC digital archive [88], online repositories like the Kurdish Digital Library [89], and digitized

collections potentially available through institutions like Exeter [87] or the Kurdish Institute of Paris [86] make historical documents, literature, and cultural materials more accessible to researchers and the Kurdish public globally.

Furthermore, digital technology has become a powerful tool for Kurdish language revitalization, directly countering historical suppression. The advent of Kurdish satellite television channels, beginning with MED TV in 1995, created a virtual public sphere, achieving what scholar Amir Hassanpour termed "sovereignty in the sky".[1] This allowed Kurds divided by borders to connect, fostered the development and standardization of Kurdish language varieties (particularly Kurmanji and Sorani for broadcasting), and increased the language's visibility and legitimacy.[1] Subsequently, the proliferation of Kurdish TV channels, websites, social media platforms (like YouTube and Facebook), and language-learning applications has created unprecedented opportunities for learning Kurdish, engaging in digital language activism, and fostering a sense of shared identity across the diaspora and the homeland.[1]

While these digital frontiers offer immense potential, they also coexist with the ongoing challenges faced by traditional forms of cultural transmission. The ease of digital access may inadvertently contribute to the decline of embodied practices like attending Dengbêj performances or learning intricate weaving techniques, posing a complex paradox for cultural preservation efforts.[7] Nonetheless, the combined power of oral history projects, diverse archival recovery, and digital dissemination represents a significant shift, enabling Kurds and scholars to actively reclaim and reconstruct histories long relegated to the margins.

6. Writing Kurdish History: Scholars, Debates, and Perspectives

The endeavor of writing Kurdish history is fraught with complexities, shaped by a legacy of political suppression, fragmented sources, external influences, and internal debates. Understanding the evolution of Kurdish historiography, the contributions of key scholars, and the critical perspectives emerging within the field is essential for appreciating the challenges and achievements in reconstructing the Kurdish past.

6.1. Challenges and Dynamics in Kurdish Historiography

Several fundamental challenges have historically hindered the development of a comprehensive and nuanced Kurdish historiography:

- **Lack of State Support and Political Suppression:** As highlighted by Salih Qaftan and numerous subsequent analyses, the absence of an independent Kurdish state meant a lack of centralized institutions to support historical research, archive collection, and the promotion of a national narrative from a Kurdish perspective.[5] More damagingly, the nation-states controlling Kurdistan actively suppressed Kurdish historical inquiry, language, and cultural expression, viewing them as threats to national unity and territorial integrity.[1] Researchers faced obstacles, intimidation, and even imprisonment.[1]
- **Scattered and Limited Sources:** Kurdish historical records are often fragmented, dispersed across the archives of neighboring empires and states, or embedded within

sources primarily concerned with other peoples.[3] Early Kurdish written materials are scarce compared to neighboring traditions [5], and significant portions of historical memory reside in oral traditions or material culture, which require specific methodologies to interpret.[5]

- **Dominance of External Narratives:** Much of the early writing about Kurds was done by outsiders – European travelers, missionaries, diplomats, and later, academics – whose perspectives were shaped by Orientalist tropes, colonial interests, or the political agendas of their time.[91] Furthermore, state-sponsored histories in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria actively constructed narratives that denied, distorted, or minimized Kurdish history and identity.[2]
- **Influence of Dominant Discourses:** The powerful national discourses of the surrounding states inevitably influenced how Kurdish history was perceived and written, even by Kurdish intellectuals themselves. Konrad Hirschler's study of Kurdish historiography in Turkey during the 1990s, for instance, argued that its discursive space was largely defined in reaction to, or within the framework of, Turkish national narratives.[24] Similarly, analyses of Sharafkhan Bidlisi's *Sharafnama* suggest his perspective might have been influenced by the Safavid court environment in which he was partly educated.[35]
- **Internal Fragmentation:** Linguistic diversity (Kurmanji, Sorani, Southern Kurdish, Zazaki, Gorani), regional differences, political factionalism, and varying historical experiences across the divided parts of Kurdistan have made the construction of a single, unified Kurdish historical narrative challenging.[5]
- **Methodological Traditions:** Early Kurdish historiography, like that of Sharafkhan, often followed the conventions of traditional Islamic-Iranian historiography, prioritizing political, military, and dynastic events over social, economic, or cultural history.[5] While valuable, this focus can leave significant aspects of past societies unexplored.
- **Underdevelopment of Kurdish Studies:** As an academic field, Kurdish Studies remained relatively marginal for much of the 20th century, lacking dedicated resources, institutional support, and widespread recognition within broader Middle Eastern or historical studies programs.[2] This has only begun to change significantly in recent decades.

Despite these formidable challenges, a body of work dedicated to Kurdish history has gradually emerged, produced by both Kurdish and non-Kurdish scholars navigating these complex terrains.

6.2. Pioneering Voices and Contemporary Scholars in Kurdish Studies

The foundations of modern Kurdish Studies were laid, paradoxically, largely by non-Kurdish Europeans, often driven by missionary, diplomatic, or scholarly interests in the "Orient." These pioneers, while sometimes reflecting the biases of their era, performed invaluable work in documenting Kurdish languages, collecting oral traditions, and preserving early texts:

- **Early European Pioneers (18th-early 20th c.):** Figures like **Maurizio Garzoni** (Italian missionary, published first Kurdish grammar/dictionary in 1787) [91], **Giuseppe Campanile**

(Italian missionary, wrote early history) [91], **Helmuth von Moltke** (German military advisor, wrote letters about Kurds) [91], **Peter Lerch** (Russian scholar, published Kurdish texts) [91], **Auguste Jaba** (Russian-Polish diplomat, compiled dictionary and folk tales with Kurdish scholar **Mahmud Bayazidi**) [91], **Ferdinand Justi** (German linguist, wrote Kurdish grammar) [91], **Albert Socin** (Swiss linguist) [91], **Oskar Mann** (German linguist, collected folklore) [92], and **Ely Banister Soane** (British intelligence officer/linguist, wrote grammar and travelogue) [91] were instrumental in bringing Kurdish language and culture to Western attention. Russian diplomats like **Basil Nikitin** also collected manuscripts and oral histories.[31]

- **Key 20th Century Western Scholars: Vladimir Minorsky** (Russian/British scholar, major contributions on Kurdish history, language, religion (Ahl-e Haqq), influential theory on origins) [29], and the "Damascus School" of French scholars associated with Jeladet Bedir Khan in the 1930s-40s, including **Roger Lescot**, **Pierre Rondot**, and **Thomas Bois** [45], significantly advanced the field.
- **Early Kurdish Intellectuals and Historians:** Alongside European efforts, Kurdish figures played crucial roles. **Sharafkhan Bidlisi** (16th c.) authored the foundational *Sharafnama*.[3] Poets like **Ahmad-e Khani** (17th c.) [3] and **Haji Qadiri Koyi** (19th c.) [3] articulated early forms of national consciousness. In the 20th century, figures associated with early Kurdish journals and organizations contributed to historical awareness.[64] **Salih Qaftan** emerged as a key historian in the first half of the 20th century, attempting to write a comprehensive Kurdish history in Kurdish.[5] The Soviet Union also fostered a generation of Kurdish scholars, including writers and academics like **Arab Shamilov**, **Emînê Evdal**, **Heciyê Cindî** [91], and doctoral researchers like **Izzaddin Mustafa Rasul**, **Ma'ruf Khaznadar**, **Kamal Mazhar Ahmad**, **Nasrin Fakhri**, and **Kawis Kaftan** trained in Baku and Leningrad.[97]
- **Contemporary Scholars (Post-WWII - Present):** The latter half of the 20th century and the early 21st century have seen a significant expansion of Kurdish Studies, driven by both Kurdish scholars (often in diaspora) and international academics. Key figures who have made substantial contributions through seminal works and ongoing research include (among many others): **Martin van Bruinessen** (social/political structures, history, religion) [30], **Wadie Jwaideh** (origins of Kurdish nationalism) [45], **David McDowall** (modern history) [45], **Michael M. Gunter** (historical dictionaries, modern history, handbooks) [45], **Mehrdad Izady** (cultural handbook, though sometimes criticized for exaggeration) [45], **İsmail Beşikçi** (Turkish sociologist, imprisoned for work on Kurds) [65], **Amir Hassanpour** (language, media, nationalism) [1], **Abbas Vali** (nationalism, political thought) [45], **Robert W. Olson** (Sheikh Said, Ararat, Dersim rebellions) [63], **Hamit Bozarslan** [98], **Shahrzad Mojab** [98], **Janet Klein** [98], **Michiel Leezenberg** [43], **Mesut Yeğen** [2], **Taner Akçam** (work on Dersim oral history) [85], and numerous younger scholars contributing through journals and edited volumes.[30]

Table 3: Key Scholars and Institutions in Kurdish Studies (Representative Selection)

Name/Institution	Era	Key Contributions/Focus Areas	Notable Works/Initiatives	Affiliation/Type
Maurizio Garzoni	Pioneering (18th c.)	First Kurdish grammar & dictionary	*Grammatica e Vocabolario della Lingua Kurda* (1787)	Non-Kurdish (Italian Missionary)
Sharafkhan Bidlisi	Pioneering (16th c.)	First comprehensive history of Kurdish emirates	*Sharafnama* (1597)	Kurdish (Prince/Historian)
Auguste Jaba & Mahmud Bayazidi	Pioneering (19th c.)	Franco-Kurdish dictionary, collection of folk tales	*Recueil de notices et récits kourdes* (1860), *Dictionnaire kurde-français* (1879)	Non-Kurdish (Diplomat) & Kurdish (Scholar)
Vladimir Minorsky	Pioneering/Mid-20th c.	History, language, Ahl-e Haqq religion, Caucasian studies	*Studies in Caucasian History*, *A History of Sharvan and Darband*, numerous articles	Non-Kurdish (Russian/British Scholar)
Jeladet Bedir Khan & "Damascus School" (Lescot, Rondot, Bois)	Mid-20th c.	Standardization of Kurmanji (Hawar alphabet), linguistic/cultural studies	*Hawar* journal (1932-43)	Kurdish (Intellectual) & Non-Kurdish (French Scholars)
Soviet Kurdish Scholars (e.g., Rasul, Khaznadar, Ahmad)	Soviet Era (Mid-20th c.)	Literature, folklore, history (often within Marxist framework)	PhD dissertations, literary studies (e.g., Rasul on Khani)	Kurdish (Academics in USSR)
Martin van Bruinessen	Contemporary	Social & political structure, history, Islam, ethnicity	*Agha, Shaikh, and State* (1992), numerous articles, Editor *Kurdish Studies* Journal	Non-Kurdish (Dutch Anthropologist/Historian)
Wadie Jwaideh	Contemporary	Origins & development of Kurdish nationalism	*The Kurdish National Movement* (pub. 2006)	Non-Kurdish (Iraqi-American Historian)

Amir Hassanpour	Contemporary	Language policy, media, nationalism, Marxist analysis	*Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan* (1992), work on MED TV	Kurdish (Iranian-Canadian Scholar)
Kurdish Institute of Paris	Contemporary Institution	Language (esp. Kurmanji), culture, history, documentation	Library, *Kurmancî* journal, *Études Kurdes* journal	Cultural/Academic Institute (Diaspora)
Centre for Kurdish Studies, Exeter	Contemporary Institution	Archival collection (Omar Sheikhmous), research across disciplines, Soviet Kurdology	Extensive library/archive, publications	Academic Research Centre (UK)
Kurdish Studies Journal (Brill)	Contemporary Platform	Interdisciplinary peer-reviewed research on all aspects of Kurdish Studies	Biannual journal publication	Academic Journal
Decolonial Scholars (various)	Contemporary Trend	Applying decolonial theory to Kurdish history, challenging state-centrism, amplifying Kurdish voices	Articles in journals like *South Atlantic Quarterly* (e.g., 2024 issue)	Academic Approach/Network

This table provides a glimpse into the diverse individuals and institutions that have shaped, and continue to shape, the field of Kurdish Studies, reflecting its evolution from external observation to a growing body of work driven by Kurdish scholars and critical international engagement.

6.3. Critical Perspectives: Decolonial Approaches and Internal Debates

As Kurdish Studies matures, it is increasingly characterized by critical self-reflection and internal debate. Scholars are moving beyond simply documenting the past towards analyzing the power dynamics inherent in historical narratives and challenging established frameworks. A significant recent development is the **emergence of decolonial methodologies** within the field.[2] Scholars employing this approach critique the tendency to analyze Kurdish history solely through the lens of the nation-states that encompass Kurdistan (e.g., as a "minority problem"). Instead, they propose conceptualizing Kurdistan's experience through the

framework of coloniality, highlighting enduring patterns of domination, exploitation, and epistemic erasure.[2] This perspective seeks to dismantle the legacies of state-sponsored assimilation policies and Eurocentric academic frameworks, prioritizing Kurdish voices, experiences, and agency. It encourages a critical examination of concepts like "citizenship" or "minority rights" when applied to a context of ongoing structural oppression and opens space for considering political futures beyond existing state borders.[2]

Alongside these theoretical shifts, **internal debates** continue to shape Kurdish historiography:

- **Interpreting Historical Figures and Events:** As seen with Simko Shikak or Sheikh Said, there are ongoing debates about the motivations, nature, and legacies of key historical actors and movements. These often involve tensions between nationalist interpretations seeking heroic figures and critical analyses acknowledging complexities, internal conflicts, or problematic actions.[63]
- **Critiques of Foundational Texts:** Even seminal works like Sharafkhan Bidlisi's *Sharafnama* are subject to critical scrutiny regarding potential biases stemming from the author's social position or the political context of its creation.[35]
- **Nationalism vs. Critical History:** The need to construct a cohesive national history in response to denial and erasure can sometimes clash with the scholarly imperative for critical distance, nuance, and the examination of internal divisions or uncomfortable truths.[24] Kurdish oral histories and archives, while vital for challenging state narratives, must also be analyzed critically, recognizing that memory itself is shaped by social and political factors.[9]
- **Defining "Kurdish History":** The very scope and definition remain contested. Linguistic diversity raises questions about the inclusion of Zaza and Gorani histories within a "Kurdish" framework.[28] Furthermore, historical research has often focused disproportionately on certain regions (e.g., Turkish or Iraqi Kurdistan) while neglecting others, such as Iranian Kurdistan, leading to calls for more balanced and comprehensive coverage.[30]

Contemporary Kurdish scholars are actively engaging with these complexities, utilizing new archival sources and critical theoretical frameworks to produce more nuanced, multi-perspectival histories.[9] Academic journals like *Kurdish Studies* [90] and international workshops [23] provide crucial platforms for these ongoing debates and the dissemination of new research that moves beyond simplistic or purely reactive narratives. This critical turn is vital for the continued development of a robust and self-aware Kurdish historiography.

7. Synthesis and Conclusion: Reclaiming Forgotten Narratives

7.1. Summary of Key Findings on "Lost" Kurdish History

This exploration into the margins of Kurdish history reveals that the concept of "lost" or "forgotten" narratives is not merely a matter of passive neglect but often the result of active

political processes of suppression, marginalization, and epistemic violence enacted by dominant empires and modern nation-states.[1] The partitioning of Kurdistan following World War I and the rise of assimilationist nation-building projects in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria represent a critical rupture, systematically undermining Kurdish political autonomy, cultural expression, and historical self-representation.[3]

Key findings demonstrate that:

- **Pre-modern Kurdish Political Agency was Significant:** Beyond the well-known Ayyubids, numerous Kurdish principalities (Shaddadids, Marwanids, Hasanwayhids, Annazids, Ardalan, etc.) exercised considerable political and administrative power for centuries, fostering periods of cultural flourishing, including the development of literary languages and early historiography.[1] The history of these entities complicates narratives of Kurds as perpetually stateless or solely tribal.
- **Cultural Heritage Served as a Repository of Memory:** In the face of linguistic suppression and the distortion of written history, Kurdish cultural traditions—distinct language varieties (Kurmanji, Sorani, Southern, Zaza, Gorani), rich oral narratives embodied by Dengbêjs, intricate folk arts, and symbolic material culture like textiles (kilims)—functioned as vital archives preserving identity, memory, and historical consciousness.[1] The endangerment of these traditions signifies a profound loss of historical knowledge.
- **Key Historical Events are Contested Narratives:** Major uprisings and political movements in the 20th century (Simko Shikak, Sheikh Said, Ararat, Dersim, Mahabad Republic) are subject to conflicting interpretations, with state narratives often obscuring the nationalist aspirations and legitimate grievances driving Kurdish resistance against centralization and assimilation.[63] International powers frequently prioritized geopolitical interests over Kurdish self-determination during pivotal moments like the post-WWI treaty negotiations and the Cold War.[3]
- **Memory Preservation is an Active, Ongoing Process:** The recovery of forgotten histories relies heavily on contemporary efforts, including dedicated oral history projects documenting suppressed traumas (Dersim, Yazidi Genocide), the "archival turn" towards utilizing diverse non-state sources (institutional and personal archives, often in the diaspora), and the leveraging of digital technologies for preservation, dissemination, and language revitalization.[1]
- **Kurdish Historiography is a Dynamic and Critical Field:** Despite significant challenges, Kurdish Studies has evolved, marked by internal debates, the influence of external actors, and a growing critical consciousness, including the application of decolonial frameworks to re-evaluate the Kurdish past and challenge dominant narratives.[2]

7.2. The Enduring Impact of Marginalization

The historical patterns of division, suppression, and erasure documented throughout this report have profound and lasting consequences that continue to shape contemporary Kurdish realities. The denial of statehood and the forced integration into often hostile nation-states

have fueled persistent struggles for political rights, cultural recognition, and autonomy across Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria.[3] The legacy of violence and trauma associated with events like the Anfal, Halabja, Dersim, and numerous suppressed uprisings reverberates through collective memory and impacts present-day political attitudes and social cohesion.
Linguistic suppression has created communication barriers between different Kurdish communities and hindered the development of unified educational and cultural institutions.[1] Economic marginalization and underdevelopment, often resulting from deliberate state policies in Kurdish regions [12], contribute to ongoing grievances and instability. Furthermore, the historical manipulation of Kurdish groups by regional and international powers continues to influence contemporary geopolitics, often leaving Kurdish actors vulnerable to shifting alliances and betrayals.[3] The "lost" histories are not merely historical artifacts; they are deeply intertwined with the ongoing political, social, and cultural struggles faced by Kurds today. Understanding this historical context is crucial for comprehending the complexities of the "Kurdish question" in the Middle East.

7.3. Future Directions: Continuing the Search for Unwritten Histories

While significant progress has been made in uncovering marginalized Kurdish histories, much work remains. The continued exploration and critical analysis of diverse sources are paramount. Future research should prioritize:

- **Expanding Archival Research:** Continued efforts are needed to locate, preserve, digitize, and critically analyze materials from personal, family, and institutional archives, particularly those related to the diaspora, women's experiences, and social/economic history.[23] Accessing and interpreting state archives from all relevant countries (including Russia, Armenia, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, and former colonial powers) with critical methodologies remains essential.
- **Deepening Oral History Work:** Systematic oral history projects should be expanded to cover different regions, communities (including religious minorities like Yazidis, Alevis, Yarsan), and historical periods, ensuring ethical practices and long-term preservation.[9]
- **Investigating Under-Researched Areas:** Greater scholarly attention should be paid to neglected geographical areas (like Iranian Kurdistan [90]), specific linguistic communities (Southern Kurdish, Laki, Gorani, Zazaki [28]), and under-explored cultural domains (regional literary traditions, folk arts, music variations [46]).
- **Supporting Kurdish Studies:** Sustainable institutional support for Kurdish Studies programs, language preservation initiatives (including all major dialects and Zaza-Gorani), funding for research and publication, and platforms for Kurdish scholars, writers, and artists are crucial for the field's continued development.[1]
- **Applying Critical Frameworks:** Continued engagement with critical theories, including postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, can help challenge ingrained biases and produce more nuanced and ethically grounded historical interpretations.[2]

Reclaiming the "lost" and "forgotten" narratives of Kurdish history is an ongoing, collaborative endeavor. It requires meticulous research across linguistic and disciplinary boundaries, a commitment to amplifying marginalized voices, and a critical awareness of the political forces

that shape historical production. By continuing this work, a more complete, complex, and just understanding of the Kurdish past—and its enduring relevance for the present and future—can be achieved, contributing not only to Kurdish Studies but to a broader understanding of global history from the margins.

Works cited

1. Challenging assimilation and marginalisation: the case of the ..., accessed April 17, 2025, https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/challenging-assimilation-and-margination-the-case-of-kurdish-language/
2. The Decolonial Turn in Kurdish Studies: An Introduction | South ..., accessed April 17, 2025, https://read.dukeupress.edu/south-atlantic-quarterly/article/123/4/655/391744/The-Decolonial-Turn-in-Kurdish-Studies-An
3. The Kurdish Experience - MERIP, accessed April 17, 2025, https://merip.org/1994/07/the-kurdish-experience/
4. Part 7. Nation States and Stateless Nations – Keys to Understanding the Middle East, accessed April 17, 2025, https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/religionsofmiddleeast1/chapter/nation-states-and-stateless-nations/
5. Salih Qaftan and The Process of Kurdish Historiography in The Middle Centuries, accessed April 17, 2025, https://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/eltarikh/article/viewFile/14518/5788
6. The Kurdish Storytellers / Turkey / Areas / Homepage - Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Turkey/The-Kurdish-Storytellers-163457
7. Dengbêj: the tradition of storytelling in Kurdistan - Global Rights, accessed April 17, 2025, https://globalrights.info/2010/07/dengbej-the-tradition-of-storytelling-in-kurdistan/
8. The Dengbêj: Keepers of Kurdish Memory & History, accessed April 17, 2025, https://nlka.net/eng/the-dengbej-keepers-of-kurdish-memory-and-history/
9. Archived Voices, Acoustic Traces, and the Reverberations of Kurdish History in Modern Turkey - Cambridge University Press, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/comparative-studies-in-society-and-history/article/archived-voices-acoustic-traces-and-the-reverberations-of-kurdish-history-in-modern-turkey/DF69A78C065F340ECE9BC61804737C37
10. Archived Voices, Acoustic Traces, and the Reverberations of Kurdish History in Modern Turkey | Peace in Kurdistan, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Archived-Voices-Acoustic-Traces-and-the-Reverberations-of-Kurdish-History-in-Modern-Turkey.pdf
11. A Guide to History, Significance and Different Styles of Handwoven Kilim Rugs,

accessed April 17, 2025, https://rugandkilim.com/blogs/a-guide-to-history-significance-and-different-styles-of-handwoven-kilim-rugs/
12. The art of kilim, the embroidered memory of Kurdistan, is disappearing - ANF, accessed April 17, 2025, https://anfenglishmobile.com/culture/the-art-of-kilim-the-embroidered-memory-of-kurdistan-is-disappearing-72400
13. Salih Qaftan And The Process Of Kurdish Historiography In The Middle Centuries, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366386218_Salih_Qaftan_And_The_Process_Of_Kurdish_Historiography_In_The_Middle_Centuries
14. Kurdish nationalism - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_nationalism
15. Kurd | Syria, Language, Map, Women, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, History, & Culture | Britannica, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurd
16. The Turkification of Kurdistan: the world looks on - the Loop: ECPR, accessed April 17, 2025, https://theloop.ecpr.eu/the-turkification-of-kurdistan-the-world-looks-on/
17. Remembering the Treaty of Lausanne | Washington Kurdish Institute, accessed April 17, 2025, https://dckurd.org/2019/08/06/remembering-the-treaty-of-lausanne/
18. The Time of the Kurds | Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.cfr.org/article/time-kurds
19. History of the Kurds | Middle East And North Africa, accessed April 17, 2025, https://africame.factsanddetails.com/article/entry-344.html
20. Full article: The absence, marginalization and culturalization of the ..., accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13530194.2024.2443906?af=R
21. From Sèvres to Lausanne: Kurdish Society and the Nation-State Model, accessed April 17, 2025, https://nlka.net/eng/from-sevres-to-lausanne-kurdish-society-and-the-nationstate-model/
22. The Treaty of Sevres and the Ignored Right of Kurds - KURDSHOP, accessed April 17, 2025, https://kurdshop.net/en/history/2550
23. An “Archival Turn” in Kurdish Studies? - IISMM, accessed April 17, 2025, https://iismm.hypotheses.org/files/2025/02/archives_workshop-Berlin.pdf
24. Defining the Nation: Kurdish Historiography in Turkey in the 1990s - SOAS Research Online, accessed April 17, 2025, https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/4188/1/Hirschler_-_Defining_the_Nation,_2001.pdf
25. An “Archival Turn” in Kurdish Studies? New sources and approaches to Kurdish diasporas, transnational networks and social history | EHESS, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.ehess.fr/fr/atelier/%E2%80%9Carchival-turn%E2%80%9D-kurdish-studies-new-sources-and-approaches-kurdish-diasporas-transnational
26. ʿAnnazid dynasty | Middle East, Iraq & Iran - Britannica, accessed April 17, 2025,

https://www.britannica.com/topic/Annazid-dynasty
27. Kurds - ROOTSHUNT, accessed April 17, 2025, https://rootshunt.com/aryans/indiairanandaryans/iranianpeople/kurds/kurds.htm
28. Kurdish language - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_language
29. Minorsky, V. (1927). Kurdistan, Kurds. In The Encyclopædia of Islam, EI1 A Dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Muhammadan Peoples. - References, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=1273683
30. Kurdish Studies, accessed April 17, 2025, https://kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/download/91/81/82
31. BANĪ ARDALĀN - Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bani-ardalan-a-kurdish-tribe-of-northwestern-iran-now-dispersed-in-sanandaj-senna-and-surrounding-villages
32. Shaddadids - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaddadids
33. Hasanwayhids - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasanwayhids
34. Annazids - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annazids
35. The Kurdish Community from the Abbasids to Safavids; Sharafkhan Bedlisi's Perspective, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353888661_The_Kurdish_Community_from_the_Abbasids_to_Safavids_Sharafkhan_Bedlisi's_Perspective
36. The Kurdish Community from the Abbasids to Safavids; Sharafkhan Bedlisi's Perspective - Revista GEINTEC, accessed April 17, 2025, http://revistageintec.net/old/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2456.pdf
37. Ḥasanwayhid dynasty | Kurdish Dynasty, 10th Century Empire - Britannica, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hasanwayhid-dynasty
38. تاریخ مردم کرد - ویکی‌پدیا، دانشنامهٔ آزاد, accessed April 17, 2025, https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AE_%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85_%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF
39. A History of the Kurdish Marwanid Dynasty AD 983-1085: Part I - ProQuest, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/history-kurdish-marwanid-dynasty-d-983-1085-part/docview/216674618/se-2
40. Marwanids (Diyar Bakr) - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marwanids_(Diyar_Bakr)
41. Questions about Kurdish History? : r/kurdistan - Reddit, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.reddit.com/r/kurdistan/comments/1imc2za/questions_about_kurdish_history/
42. Gorani language - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gorani_language
43. Building a Corpus for the Zaza–Gorani Language Family - Sina Ahmadi's, accessed April 17, 2025,

https://sinaahmadi.github.io/docs/articles/ahmadi2020zazagorani.pdf
44. KURDISH LANGUAGE i. HISTORY OF THE KURDISH LANGUAGE ..., accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kurdish-language-i/
45. The Kurds - Islamic Studies - Oxford Bibliographies, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/abstract/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0161.xml?rskey=VoOc9Y&result=127&print
46. Full article: Khatoozin – a naïve woman sculptor from Bagbasi village, Kurdistan, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311983.2025.2473137
47. Kurdish Artist Hama Hashim Publishes Three New Books on Art and Aesthetics, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/833799
48. Telling the Kurdish Story Through Art - Goodwin Living, accessed April 17, 2025, https://goodwinliving.org/blog/telling-the-kurdish-story-through-art/
49. Stories from the Kurdistan Region - The Dial, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.thedial.world/articles/the-reporters-notebook/winthrop-rodgers-interview
50. A Nomad's Art: Kilims of Anatolia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://museum.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs6286/files/A%20Nomads%20Art%20Catalogue.pdf
51. Rugs and kilim in Iraqi Kurdistan, accessed April 17, 2025, https://encyclocraftsapr.com/rugs-and-kilim-in-iraqi-kurdistan/
52. The Weaving of the Kurdish People - Claremont Rug Company, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.claremontrug.com/antique-rugs-information/antique-persian-rug-guide/kurdish-rugs/
53. Memory, conflict, and carpets in Iraqi Kurdistan | Middle East Institute, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.mei.edu/publications/memory-conflict-and-carpets-iraqi-kurdistan
54. Kilim Rug Guide - Little-Persia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.little-persia.com/pages/kilim-rug-guide
55. An Abbreviated History of Kilim and Flat Weave Rugs, accessed April 17, 2025, https://rugandkilim.com/blogs/an-abbreviated-history-of-kilim-and-flat-weave-rugsx/
56. The Role of Myths in Iranian Handwoven Carpets • Let's Go Persian, accessed April 17, 2025, https://letsgopersian.com/blog/the-role-of-myths-in-iranian-handwoven-carpets/
57. KÜRT MİLLİYETÇİLİĞİNİN GELİŞİMİ VE ULUSUN İNŞASI Politik Şiddet, Yayıncılık ve Aydınların Rolü - Kürd Araştırmaları, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.kurdarastirmalari.com/yazi-detay-oku-170
58. en.wikipedia.org, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Kurds#:~:text=The%20Kurdish%20ethnonationalist%20movement%20that,threatened%20the%20power%20of%20local
59. ʿAMMĀRLŪ - Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 17, 2025,

https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ammarlu-a-kurdish-tribe-of-gilan-and-khorasan
60. Dîroka Başûrê Kurdistanê - Wîkîpediya, accessed April 17, 2025, https://ku.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%AEroka_Ba%C5%9F%C3%BBr%C3%AA_Kurdistan%C3%AA
61. Kürt sorununun tarihsel kökenleri ve bölgesel dinamikler: Rojava, Kürdistan Bölgesi, İran'daki durum ve Öcalan'ın çözüm önerileri - Kurdistan24, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.kurdistan24.net/tr/opinion/499924
62. تاريخ من الظلم.. لماذا يقع الكرد دائماً ضحية للتفاهمات الإقليمية والدولية؟ - ANF, accessed April 17, 2025, https://anfarabic.com/%D8%A2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%88%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA/tarykh-mn-alzlm-lmadha-yq-alkrd-daymaa-dhyt-lltfahmat-alaqlymyt-waldwlyt-111163
63. Sheikh Said rebellion - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheikh_Said_rebellion
64. SHEIKH SAID CASE: REBELLION OR REVOLT? - Şeyh Said Vakası: İsyan Mı, Kıyam Mı? - DergiPark, accessed April 17, 2025, https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/3613248
65. The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937-38) - DSpace, accessed April 17, 2025, https://dspace.library.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/1874/20698/bruinessen_94_suppressionofthedersimrebellion.pdf?sequence=1
66. Visualising the Dersim Massacre - Dr Paul Reilly, accessed April 17, 2025, https://drpauljreilly.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/visualising-the-dersim-massacre.docx
67. The Kurdish Dilemma in Turkey - Washington Kurdish Institute, accessed April 17, 2025, https://dckurd.org/2023/01/26/the-kurdish-dilemma-in-turkey-2/
68. Why did other Kurdish regions fail to support the Kurdish uprising against Iran?, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.kurdishpeace.org/research/civil-society/why-did-other-kurdish-regions-fail-to-support-the-kurdish-uprising-against-iran/
69. Simko Shikak revolt (1926) - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simko_Shikak_revolt_(1926)
70. Simko Shikak revolt (1918–1922) - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simko_Shikak_revolt_(1918%E2%80%931922)
71. Simko Shikak - History Of Kurdistan, accessed April 17, 2025, https://historyofkurd.com/english/2022/02/27/simko-shikak/
72. Simko Shikak - History Of Kurdistan, accessed April 17, 2025, https://historyofkurd.com/english/2022/03/03/1301/
73. Why Kurdish nationalists recognizing the genocide cannot be deemed 'genuine'. : r/armenia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.reddit.com/r/armenia/comments/5k1ir4/why_kurdish_nationalists_recognizing_the_genocide/
74. Political Struggles of Kurds in Iran: A Historical Overview - MexicoHistorico.com, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.mexicohistorico.com/paginas/political-struggles-of-kurds-in-iran-a-

historical-overview-5d241e29.html
75. The Kurdish image in statist historiography: the case of Simko - Taylor & Francis Online, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00263206.2017.1341409
76. Simko Shikak, an Independent Revolutionary Figure - KURDSHOP, accessed April 17, 2025, https://kurdshop.net/en/history/2518
77. Simko Shikak; A Revolutionary Figure for the Independence of the Kurds - Part 2, accessed April 17, 2025, https://kurdshop.net/en/history/2176
78. Ararat rebellion - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ararat_rebellion
79. Ararat rebellion - Wikiwand, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.wikiwand.com/en/articles/Ararat_rebellion
80. Republics of Ararat and Ihsan Nuri Pasha - History Of Kurdistan, accessed April 17, 2025, https://historyofkurd.com/english/2020/04/15/republics-of-ararat-and-ihsan-nuri-pasha/
81. THE ARARAT REBELLION AND THE KURDISH QUESTION - Armenian-History.com, accessed April 17, 2025, https://armenian-history.com/ararat-rebellion-kurdish-question/
82. Mount Ararat - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Ararat
83. Mount Ararat İnfo, accessed April 17, 2025, https://ararattours.com/mount-ararat-info
84. "The Dream of Kurdistan is Buried Here": History, Violence, and Martyrdom in the Borderlands of the Modern Middle East - TSpace, accessed April 17, 2025, https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/108099
85. Dersim 1937-38 Tertele Oral History Project - Article .::. UCLA International Institute, accessed April 17, 2025, https://international.ucla.edu/Institute/article/260185
86. Kurdish Institute of Paris - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_Institute_of_Paris
87. Library and Archive | Centre for Kurdish Studies - University of Exeter, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/centres/kurdish/library/
88. Kurdistan Center for Arts Culture – An organization based in Erbil dedicated to building an inclusive global community that celebrates, preserves, and promotes Kurdistan's heritage, culture, and art., accessed April 17, 2025, https://kcac.org/
89. books kurdish digital library, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.noor-book.com/en/tag/Kurdish-Digital-Library
90. Kurdish Studies Archive - Brill, accessed April 17, 2025, https://brill.com/display/book/9789004506152/9789004506152_webready_content_text.pdf
91. Kurdology - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdology
92. KURDISH LANGUAGE ii. HISTORY OF KURDISH STUDIES - Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 17, 2025,

https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kurdish-language-ii-history-of-kurdish-studies/
93. Knights of the East": Diplomats, Kurdology, and Russian-Kurdish Relations, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.kurdistanchronicle.com/babat/3090
94. The Kurds - Kurdish Studies, accessed April 17, 2025, https://kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/download/165/153/154
95. The Kurds in The Encyclopedia of Islam (Method and Information Sources (132-656) (750-1258) - ZANCO Journals, accessed April 17, 2025, https://zancojournal.su.edu.krd/index.php/JAHS/article/view/295
96. Vladimir Minorsky - Wikipedia, accessed April 17, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Minorsky
97. Kurdish Studies, accessed April 17, 2025, https://kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/download/32/26/26
98. Kurdish Studies Journal | Brill, accessed April 17, 2025, https://brill.com/view/journals/ksj/ksj-overview.xml
99. The Political and Cultural History of the Kurds | Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations - University of Toronto, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.nmc.utoronto.ca/research-publications/faculty-publications/political-and-cultural-history-kurds
100. Journal Detail - CEEOL, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.ceeol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1516
101. About Journal - Kurdish Studies, accessed April 17, 2025, https://kurdishstudies.net/about-journal/
102. International Journal of Kurdish Studies | 64 Publications | 144 Citations | Top authors, accessed April 17, 2025, https://scispace.com/journals/international-journal-of-kurdish-studies-1nvds4pu
103. Kurdish - (History of the Middle East – 1800 to Present) - Vocab, Definition, Explanations | Fiveable, accessed April 17, 2025, https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/history-middle-east-since-1800/kurdish
104. تطور الفكر القومي الكردي.. نظرة عامة - الجزيرة نت, accessed April 17, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.net/2006/05/23/%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%83%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A9
105. الواقع السياسي الكردي والتأثيرات الإقليمية والدولية | مركز الجزيرة للدراسات, accessed April 17, 2025, https://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/reports/2018/08/180823083348322.html