The Enduring Embrace: How the Taurus and Zagros Mountains Shaped Kurdish Lifeways Before 2010

I. Introduction: The Kurds and Their Mountain Stronghold

A. The Enduring Symbiosis

The Kurdish people, one of the largest ethnic groups in the world without a sovereign state, are intrinsically linked to the formidable mountain ranges of the Middle East, primarily the Taurus and Zagros.[1] These vast, rugged landscapes, stretching across present-day Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, have been more than a mere geographical backdrop to Kurdish history; they have been a crucible, shaping their identity, culture, socio-political structures, and historical trajectory for millennia.[3] The mountains have served as both a sanctuary, offering refuge from external pressures and a space for cultural continuity, and a source of isolation, contributing to internal fragmentation and distinct local adaptations.[4] This enduring symbiosis between the Kurds and their mountainous homeland is fundamental to understanding their lifeways before the significant geopolitical shifts of the early 21st century. The mountains, therefore, transcend their physical reality to become a central, albeit complex, metaphor in the Kurdish collective consciousness, embodying both the sanctuary of freedom and the crucible of hardship. This inherent duality arises from the very nature of the terrain: while offering protection and fostering a spirit of independence, the same ruggedness historically impeded broader political unification and exposed communities to the challenges of a demanding environment. This complex interplay between refuge and isolation, empowerment and fragmentation, forms a recurring theme in the Kurdish experience.

B. Thesis Statement

This report argues that the mountainous environment of the Taurus and Zagros ranges was a primary determinant in shaping Kurdish lifeways before 2010. It profoundly influenced their socio-political structures, particularly the resilience of tribalism; their subsistence strategies, dominated by pastoralism and specialized agriculture; their unique cultural expressions, rich in mountain symbolism; and their historical trajectory, characterized by both fierce independence and complex interactions with larger imperial powers.

C. Scope and Methodology

The scope of this analysis is focused on the traditional and historical lifeways of the Kurds as impacted by their mountain habitat, specifically within the Taurus and Zagros ranges, up to the year 2010. The report draws upon a synthesis of ethnographic, historical, and geographical data derived from existing scholarly works and regional studies to provide a comprehensive overview of this profound environmental influence.

II. The Mountainous Milieu: Environment and Ecology of Kurdistan

A. Geographical Overview of the Taurus and Zagros Ranges

The traditional homeland of the Kurds is dominated by the Taurus-Zagros Mountain system, an extensive and geologically complex series of ranges that arc across southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, northern Iraq, and parts of Syria.[1] These mountains are characterized by their ruggedness, with numerous peaks exceeding 2,000 to 3,000 meters above sea level, interspersed with deep, incised valleys and intermountain basins that have historically cradled Kurdish settlements.[2] The average height of the mountains in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, for instance, is around 2,400 meters, with the highest peak, Halgurd, reaching 3,660 meters.[8] Geologically, the region is marked by tectonic complexity, including shared aquifer systems along political boundaries, such as the Halabja-Khurmal, Central Diyala, and Zakho Basins.[7] These mountains serve as the headwaters for major river systems, including the Tigris and Euphrates and their significant tributaries like the Greater and Little Zab rivers, which traverse Kurdistan and are vital for the wider Mesopotamian plain.[1] The orientation of the ranges varies: east of the Greater Zab River, mountains and valleys typically align in a northeast-southwest direction (the "Zagros direction"), while to the west, they shift to an east-west orientation (the "Taurus direction").[7] This structural geography has inevitably influenced patterns of human movement, communication, and the strategic defensibility of different areas.

B. Climatic Conditions

The climate of the Kurdish mountains is generally characterized by stark contrasts: cold, snowy winters and long, hot, dry summers.[1] Extreme temperature fluctuations are a hallmark, with winter temperatures in some areas plummeting to -25°C or even -30°C, and summer temperatures soaring to 45°C.[1] Mean annual temperatures in areas like Dahuk, Halabja, and Zakho range from 10°C-15°C, while in lower regions like Kirkuk, they are higher, around 20°C-25°C.[7]

Precipitation is concentrated in the colder months, from mid-October to early May, with January typically being the wettest month.[7] There is virtually no precipitation during the summer (June-September).[7] Rainfall amounts vary considerably with altitude and geographical position, generally decreasing from the northeast to the southwest.[2] For example, annual rainfall in Iraqi Kurdistan can range from 500 mm in Erbil to 900 mm in Amadiya.[2] At higher altitudes, a significant portion of winter precipitation, up to 75%, falls as snow.[9] This heavy winter snowfall is crucial, as its meltwater in spring and summer feeds the rivers and springs, replenishes aquifers, and sustains the lush highland pastures (zozan) vital for pastoral life.[9] The climate is broadly classified as semi-arid continental, with some areas, particularly at lower elevations or further south, exhibiting Mediterranean characteristics with dry summers and rainy winters.[2]

C. Vegetation and Biodiversity

The diverse topography and climate of the Taurus and Zagros mountains support a varied flora. Vegetation types range from grasses and herbaceous plants in open areas to short scrub bushes and, historically, more extensive forests.[9] Oak scrub forests, particularly featuring Persian oak (*Quercus brantii*), are the most common forest type, covering over 50% of the Zagros mountains in Iran and estimated to have covered 10-15% of Ottoman Kurdistan's mountains in the late nineteenth century.[9] These forests often extend to lower altitudes on gentler slopes, though many such areas were cleared for farmland.[9] Steeper slopes and deep canyons, less accessible to humans and livestock, sometimes harbored "high forests" with larger, gnarled oak trunks.[9] Juniper and various wild fruit trees, including walnuts, almonds, and pears, also grow on the slopes.[1]

The mountains are also a natural habitat for wild progenitors of many staple crops, such as wheat, barley, and lentils.[1] However, centuries of human activity, including overgrazing and deforestation for fuel and timber, have led to significant degradation of vegetation cover in many areas, with thorny Astragalus species often colonizing degraded forest lands.[9]

D. Water Resources

The mountains of Kurdistan are critical "water towers" for a vast region. Snowmelt is the primary source for the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and their numerous tributaries, which originate in these highlands.[7] Groundwater is also a significant resource, exploited in intermountain basins through wells and naturally discharging via numerous springs.[7] Shared aquifer systems, such as the Bekhme and Pila Spi systems in the Halabja-Khurmal Basin, underscore the transboundary nature of these water resources, with recharge often occurring in the high mountains of one country and flowing towards another.[7] The annual recharge in these basins can be substantial, for example, 214 MCM in the Halabja-Khurmal Basin and 188 MCM/yr in the Zakho Basin.[7] These water resources are indispensable for drinking water, irrigation for agriculture in the valleys and plains, and sustaining the pastures essential for the Kurdish pastoral economy, with their influence extending downstream into Syria and Iraq.[9]

The varied altitudes and microclimates within the Taurus and Zagros ranges create a mosaic of distinct ecological niches. This environmental diversity, from high alpine pastures to sheltered agricultural valleys and forested slopes, resembles a "vertical archipelago." Each "island" in this archipelago presents unique resources and challenges, fostering highly localized adaptations in subsistence strategies. While this diversity allowed for a range of economic activities, it also likely reinforced local identities and may have limited the development of large-scale, uniform economic or social systems across the entire mountainous region. Such niche differentiation could contribute to the social fragmentation observed in Kurdish history, as different groups became closely tied to specific altitudinal resources, potentially reducing intensive interaction with those in vastly different ecological zones and making broad, centralized control more challenging to impose or maintain.

Table 1: Ecological Profile of the Taurus and Zagros Mountain Ranges Inhabited by Kurds (Pre-2010)

Feature	Taurus Range	Zagros Range

	Characteristics	Characteristics
Terrain	Rugged mountains, deep valleys, some intermountain basins; peaks often over 2,000 m.[7] Southeastern (SE) Taurus part of Ottoman Kurdistan.[9]	Rugged mountains, long linear folds (High Folded Zone, Low Folded Zone), deep valleys, intermountain basins; peaks often over 2,000 m, Halgurd at 3,660 m.[2]
Dominant Peaks	Generally over 2,000 m; specific major peaks not detailed for the entire range in snippets.	Generally over 2,000 m, rising to 3,000–3,300 m in places; Halgurd (3,660 m), Cheekha Dar (3,611 m).[2]
Climate Type	Mediterranean climate: dry summers, rainy winters; temperatures vary with elevation – warm coastal winters, cold high mountain/interior winters.[12]	Semi-arid continental/temperate: cold, snowy winters, long dry summers; extreme temperature fluctuations (-30°C to 45°C).[1] Some areas Mediterranean.[2]
Avg. Winter Temp.	Cold in high mountains and interior.[12] Western Armenian highlands (part of broader system) have severe winter temperatures.[9]	Cold, often below -25°C in coldest periods.[1] Mean annual 10-15°C in Dahuk/Halabja.[7]
Avg. Summer Temp.	Dry and warm/hot depending on elevation.[12]	Long, dry, and hot, up to 45°C.[1] Mean highs in July/August 39-43°C, can reach 50°C.[8]
Annual Precip. Range	Varies with elevation; rainy winters.[12] Bitlis/Çapakçur (lower depression chain) highest in Ottoman Kurdistan (948-1046 mm).[9]	400 mm to 800 mm, mostly in winter/spring.[10] Kurdistan Region (Iraq) 375-724 mm [8]; up to 900 mm in Amadiya.[2]
Key Vegetation	Oak scrub forests, juniper, wild fruit trees. Forests on 10-15% of Ottoman Kurdistan mountains (late 19th c.).[9]	Oak forests (esp. *Quercus brantii*), pistachio, almond, wild fruit trees, steppe shrubs (Astragalus, Salvia), grasses. Many crops grow wild.[1]
Primary Water Sources	Snowmelt feeding rivers (e.g., Tigris, Euphrates headwaters), springs, shared aquifers.[1]	Snowmelt feeding rivers (Tigris, Greater/Little Zab, Sirwan), springs, shared aquifers (e.g., Halabja-Khurmal, Diyala,

		Zakho basins).[2]

III. Living with the Heights: Subsistence, Adaptation, and Resource Management

The challenging yet resource-rich environment of the Taurus and Zagros mountains profoundly shaped the subsistence strategies of the Kurdish people. Their lifeways were characterized by a sophisticated adaptation to the vertical ecology, primarily revolving around pastoralism, supplemented by agriculture in suitable locales, and governed by traditional systems of resource management.

A. The Centrality of Pastoralism: Nomadic and Transhumant Lifestyles

For centuries, pastoralism, particularly the herding of sheep and goats, formed the backbone of the Kurdish economy and social life in the mountainous regions.[1] Until the widespread introduction of modern agricultural techniques, it was the dominant economic pursuit in these highlands.[15] Kurdish society traditionally distinguished between nomadic pastoralists, who lived in tent camps and undertook extensive seasonal migrations with their herds, and settled agriculturists, who, while primarily farmers, also typically maintained livestock.[1] Nomadic groups utilized heavy, black woolen tents as their primary shelter, especially at winter pasturages, and lighter tents when migrating to and from summer pastures higher in the mountains.[1]

A key feature of this pastoral adaptation was transhumance, a specialized form of mobile pastoralism. This involved the seasonal movement of herds between distinct ecological zones: higher altitude summer pastures, known as *zozan*, and lower altitude winter pastures.[9] This vertical migration was essential for accessing the nutritious, high-calorie meadow grasses that flourished in the highlands during the warmer months, sustained by the melting snows.[9] The products of their herds—wool, meat, and dairy—were not only for subsistence but also formed the basis of trade with settled communities and local markets, where they were exchanged for grains, sugar, tea, and other manufactured goods.[1] Other domesticated animals, including cattle, donkeys, mules, and horses, also played roles in their economy and transportation.[1]

B. Agricultural Practices in Mountain Valleys and Slopes

While pastoralism dominated the higher elevations and more rugged terrains, agriculture was practiced in more favorable locations. Settled Kurdish communities cultivated staple crops such as wheat, barley, and lentils in villages situated on plains at the foot of mountains or within fertile mountain valleys.[1] Tobacco was also raised as an important cash crop in some areas.[1] The diverse microclimates of the mountains allowed for the cultivation of various fruits, notably walnuts, and vegetables, depending on local conditions.[1] Indeed, the Zagros mountains are a region where wild varieties of many common crops like wheat, barley, lentils, almonds, walnuts, pistachios, apricots, plums, pomegranates, and grapes can still be found, indicating the area's significance as a center of plant biodiversity and potential origin for domesticated species.[14] Most agricultural communities also engaged in livestock rearing,

integrating animal husbandry with farming in a mixed agro-pastoral system.[1] Mountain villages, though generally smaller in terms of household numbers compared to those on the plains (often fewer than fifty households), could support relatively large livestock populations due to the proximity of abundant and nutritious grasslands.[9]

The coexistence of nomadic or transhumant pastoralism and settled agriculture within the mountainous landscape created a dynamic of necessary interdependence, but one that was also inherently prone to tension. Pastoralists relied on agricultural communities for essential grains and other goods, while agriculturalists benefited from animal products.[1] However, the expansion of agricultural land could encroach upon traditional grazing routes or pasturelands, increasing the distances pastoralists needed to travel and potentially leading to disputes over access to land and water resources.[15] The sharing of certain grazing areas, like the *zom* near villages, by both groups suggests established local mechanisms for managing these interactions, but the underlying potential for conflict over resource allocation remained a constant feature of mountain lifeways.[9]

C. Traditional Management of Communal Resources: Water, Pastures, and Forests

The sustainable use of mountain resources necessitated traditional systems of communal management. Pasture land was often held communally by a village or, in the case of nomadic groups, by the clan within the tribe's designated territory.[1] The coordination of large-scale seasonal migrations of herds was frequently managed at the tribal level, indicating a degree of collective organization and decision-making regarding resource use.[1]

Specific ecological niches, such as the *zom*—local grazing areas usually situated within a few hours' walk from farmlands, allowing for daily grazing—were utilized by both pastoralists and agro-pastoral peasants.[9] The shared use of such resources points to established, albeit perhaps informal, rules and robust intercommunal relationships in these areas.[9] Forests provided essential resources: timber for construction and tools, firewood for fuel, and other products like oak galls, which were used in dyeing and tanning processes.[9]

Water, originating from snowmelt-fed rivers and springs, was a lifeblood for all mountain communities, essential for drinking, for livestock, and for irrigating croplands.[7] The existence of complex, shared aquifer systems further underscores the interconnectedness of communities through water resources.[7] The systems developed for managing these communal resources were not merely economic adaptations; they were fundamental to the social fabric of mountain communities. These systems could foster cohesion through shared rules, mutual dependencies, and collective responsibilities. However, when these rules were breached, or when resources became scarce due to environmental pressures or population growth, these same resource management systems could become focal points for conflict, both within and between communities or tribes. The authority of tribal leaders was often linked to their ability to effectively manage these resources and mediate such disputes.

Table 2: Mountain-Adapted Subsistence Strategies of the Kurds (Pre-2010)

Subsistence Type	Key Characteristics/Pract	Primary Mountain Resources Utilized	Associated Social/Economic

	ices		Elements
Nomadic Pastoralism	Herding sheep, goats; seasonal migration between high summer (*zozan*) and low winter pastures; living in woolen tents; minimal agriculture.[1]	Highland pastures, water sources (springs, rivers), some forest products.	Tribal/clan-based organization of migration; trade of animal products for grains/goods; flexible land use within tribal territories.
Transhumant Pastoralism	Seasonal movement of herds (sheep, goats, cattle) from permanent/semi-permanent village bases to highland summer pastures and back.[9]	Highland pastures (*zozan*), village-adjacent pastures (*zom*), water.	Village-based social structure, often combined with some agriculture; reliance on established routes and pasture rights.
Settled Agriculture	Cultivation of wheat, barley, lentils, tobacco, fruits (walnuts), vegetables in mountain valleys or lower slopes; often combined with livestock.[1]	Arable land in valleys/slopes, irrigation water, local forests for fuel/timber.	Village-based communities; land ownership (tribal or peasant); local markets for surplus/exchange.

IV. Society Forged in the Peaks: Social Structures and Kinship

The formidable mountain landscapes of Kurdistan did not merely shape how Kurds sustained themselves; they were instrumental in forging their very social fabric. The isolation afforded by the rugged terrain, combined with the demands of a pastoral-agricultural lifestyle, reinforced specific forms of social organization, leadership, and settlement that characterized Kurdish society for centuries before 2010.

A. The Enduring Role of Tribalism and Patrilineal Kinship Systems

Tribal organization has been a cornerstone of Kurdish society, particularly prominent among nomadic pastoralist groups but also influential among settled communities.[1] Kurdish tribes are traditionally understood as socio-political and often territorial units, fundamentally based on notions of descent and kinship, whether actual or putative.[18] These tribes typically exhibit a hierarchical internal structure, subdividing into sub-tribes, which in turn are composed of clans, lineages (often referred to by terms such as *'a'ila* or *mal*), and ultimately, individual households.[18]

Central to this tribal structure is a deeply ingrained system of patrilineal kinship.[1] In this system, descent, social identity, inheritance (particularly of land and status), and group membership are traced primarily through the male line.[19] A significant proportion of the social

categories that animated daily life in the Kurdistan Region were patrilineal, passed from fathers to their children, with category membership based on tracing biological patrilineal links at least three generations deep.[19] This patrilineal emphasis fostered strong male-centric kinship bonds and clear lines of authority. Even as individuals or families migrated from mountain villages, adherence to identity claims developed patrilineally often persisted.[19]
The very geography of Kurdistan, with its "rugged terrain," is seen to have "forced the Kurds to live in cut-off, isolated tribal structures".[4] While this isolation contributed to a lack of overarching political unity on a larger scale, it concurrently strengthened local loyalties and the cohesion of these smaller tribal and lineage units. Within this framework, a traditional distinction sometimes existed between tribal agriculturists, who often owned the land they worked, and non-tribal peasants who might be subservient to these landowning tribals, indicating a degree of social hierarchy even within the broader tribal system.[1] The combination of the isolating mountain environment and the strong internal bonds of patrilineal tribal structures created highly resilient, often self-contained socio-economic units. These patriclans or lineages, controlling specific mountain valleys or pasture areas, possessed strong internal cohesion due to kinship ties and often commanded a defensible territory. Resource management, including access to pastures and water, was typically organized along these kinship lines.[1] This structure proved highly adaptable for survival and defense in a challenging environment but also made these numerous, dispersed, and fiercely independent units resistant to easy co-option or control by external centralized powers.

B. Leadership and Governance in Mountain Communities: Aghas and Sheikhs

Leadership within these tribal structures traditionally rested with figures such as the *agha* or the *sheikh*.[17] Their rule was often described as firm, and they could function as feudal lords, commanding significant authority within their communities.[1] Historically, Kurdish social life was often centered around villages situated within a territory controlled by and identified with a particular tribal chief or *agha*.[19] These leaders were not merely internal authorities; their power also derived from their crucial role as mediators between their relatively isolated mountain communities and larger, often distant, state powers such as the Ottoman or Persian empires. The strategic importance of the mountainous regions as borderlands or buffer zones amplified this role.[4] For instance, the Ottoman Empire often dealt with Kurdish tribes through their leaders, granting them a degree of autonomy and official titles in exchange for services like border defense or maintaining local order.[4] This suggests that these leaders were the recognized interlocutors for external powers. The mountains provided these leaders with leverage: their communities were difficult to access and control directly, making negotiated arrangements more practical for empires than direct subjugation. The abolition of the semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates by the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, in an attempt to centralize control, paradoxically led to a strengthening of tribal social organization and an increased influence of local tribal leaders and Sufi sheikhs, who filled the power vacuum.[20] Thus, the *agha* or *sheikh* was a pivotal figure, balancing the internal needs and autonomy of their mountain-bound kin group with the demands and opportunities presented by external states.

C. Settlement Patterns: From Seasonal Encampments to Permanent Villages

Kurdish settlement patterns in the mountains reflected their diverse subsistence strategies. Nomadic pastoralists lived in mobile tent camps, following their herds to high mountain pastures in the summer and descending to lower, more sheltered areas in the winter.[1] Settled agriculturists, by contrast, inhabited permanent villages. These were often located on the plains at the foot of mountains or nestled within mountain valleys where arable land and water were available.[1] A distinctive architectural feature of many mountain villages was their construction up the sides of slopes, with houses typically made of low clay or stone walls and flat roofs, arranged in such a way that the roof of one house often served as a terrace or pathway for the house situated above it.[1] While mountain villages tended to be smaller in terms of human population (often with fewer than fifty households) compared to settlements on the plains, they frequently supported substantial livestock populations due to the proximity of rich grazing lands.[9]

Archaeological evidence attests to a long history of human habitation in the mountainous regions of Kurdistan, extending back to prehistoric times. Sites such as Shanidar Cave provide evidence of Neanderthal presence, while early Neolithic agricultural villages like Jarmo and Tell Hassuna (dating to c. 7000-6000 BCE) indicate the antiquity of settled life in the region.[2] Neolithic settlements in the Zagros often took the form of mounds (tells) located in the transition zones between mountains and plains, typically in alluvial plains near reliable water sources and cultivable land.[21] Rock shelters also served as habitation sites during various prehistoric periods.[21] This long continuity of settlement underscores the deep historical roots of Kurdish adaptation to their mountain environment.

Table 3: Impact of Mountainous Terrain on Kurdish Social and Political Organization (Pre-2010)

Aspect of Social/Political Org.	Influence of Mountainous Terrain	Key Evidence (Snippet IDs)
Tribal Structure	Reinforcement of tribalism; isolation fostered strong local loyalties and tribal cohesion; provided defensible units.	[1]
Kinship System	Supported patrilineal systems due to localized, often kin-based control of resources and territory; reinforced patrilocal residence.	[1]
Leadership	Agha/Sheikh authority often based on control of mountain resources, pastures, strategic passes, and ability to mediate with external powers or lead defense.	[1]
Political Unity	Fragmentation due to difficult	[4]

	communication and travel between isolated valleys; hindered large-scale political consolidation.	
Settlement Patterns	Dispersed, often small, defensible villages in valleys or on slopes; seasonal encampments in high pastures; utilization of rock shelters.	[1]
Inter-group Relations	Fostered both local interdependencies (e.g., shared *zom*) and potential for conflict over resources between distinct tribal groups/valleys.	[1]

V. The Double-Edged Blade: Isolation, Interaction, and Political Fortunes

The mountainous geography of Kurdistan has historically acted as a double-edged blade, simultaneously fostering cultural preservation through isolation while complicating political unity, and shaping a unique pattern of interaction with surrounding empires and lowland societies.

A. Mountains as a Bastion: Preservation of Culture, Language, and Identity

The "arid unwelcoming mountains" of Kurdistan have long served as a formidable geographic buffer, limiting the direct administrative and cultural penetration of successive regional empires, including the Persians, Arabs, and Ottomans.[6] This relative inaccessibility carved out a distinct space where Kurdish culture, language dialects, and a strong sense of ethnic identity could develop and persist with a degree of autonomy not always possible in more easily dominated flatlands.[6] The mountains provided a natural refuge, a place where Kurds could "find refuge and shelter" from assimilationist pressures and the direct reach of larger powers, thereby nurturing the continuity of their unique traditions and social structures.[4] This protective isolation, while imposing its own set of challenges, was crucial in maintaining a distinct Kurdish cultural heritage that might otherwise have been absorbed or significantly diluted by more dominant neighboring cultures.

B. Geographical Determinants of Political Fragmentation and Unity

While offering sanctuary, the same rugged and compartmentalized terrain that sheltered Kurdish culture also profoundly influenced their political landscape. The mountains forced Kurdish populations into "cut-off, isolated tribal structures," which, rather than facilitating broader Kurdish political unity, often militated against it.[4] This geographical imposition contributed to a fragmented political sociology, characterized by a mosaic of principalities,

emirates, and tribal confederations that frequently competed with each other for local dominance and resources, or allied with external powers for their own advantage.[4] The difficult terrain made communication, travel, and the projection of centralized authority—even indigenous Kurdish authority—across the entirety of the Kurdish-inhabited lands exceptionally challenging. This inherent fragmentation made it difficult for the Kurds to coalesce into a unified political entity capable of consistently resisting the encroachment of powerful empires based in the surrounding flatlands of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the Iranian Plateau.[4] Despite this historical pattern of political disunity, a discernible Kurdish ethnic consciousness was evident as early as the 16th century, as reflected in the writings of figures like Sharafkhan Bidlisi, and a more modern sense of Kurdish national identity began to crystallize in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[3] This created a paradox: the very conditions that helped preserve Kurdish cultural distinctiveness also contributed to the political fragmentation that historically hindered the formation of a unified Kurdish state. Cultural resilience was, in part, intertwined with a lack of overarching political consolidation.

C. Strategic Interplay: Relations with Empires and Neighboring Powers (Ottomans, Safavids)

The mountainous regions inhabited by the Kurds often lay at the peripheries of major empires, such as the Ottoman and Safavid (and later Persian) states. This peripheral location, however, did not mean irrelevance. Instead, Kurdish tribes and their leaders often found themselves in a position of "peripheral centrality." Due to their martial traditions and intimate knowledge of the difficult terrain, Kurdish groups became strategically significant to these larger powers.[4] Empires frequently sought to utilize Kurdish tribes and the mountains they controlled as frontier defense units, particularly in the long-standing rivalry between the Ottomans and Safavids, where Kurdistan formed a volatile borderland.[4] In return for services such as acting as borderland irregulars or maintaining local security, Kurdish tribal leaders were often granted considerable autonomy, official titles, and prestige by imperial authorities.[4] This allowed them to maintain a degree of self-governance and leverage their strategic position. The mountains themselves often became the primary flashpoint in these imperial rivalries, with Kurdish tribes and emirates caught in the middle or actively participating on one side or another.[4] Throughout history, various Kurdish dynasties and principalities—such as the Hasanwayhids, Marwanids, Shaddadids, the Ayyubids founded by Saladin, and later emirates like Ardalan, Baban, Soran, and Hakkari—emerged, carving out territories and navigating complex relationships of vassalage, alliance, or opposition with the dominant empires of their time.[22] These entities often relied on the military prowess of their constituent tribes and controlled significant urban centers as well as mountain strongholds.[22]

D. Highland Corridors: Trade and Exchange Networks

Despite their isolating nature, the mountains of Kurdistan were not impervious to trade and interaction. The Zagros Mountains, for instance, formed a crucial interface for trade routes that connected the Mesopotamian plains with the Iranian plateau and regions further east.[23] While the high peaks and rugged valleys significantly hindered travel, a few strategic east-west passes allowed for the movement of goods, often facilitated by the indigenous highland communities who knew the terrain.[23] Archaeological and historical evidence

indicates that these highland communities played an active role in interregional trade, with goods such as metals, colorful stones, timber, exotic animals, and food products moving from the eastern highlands to the markets of Mesopotamia.[23] This trade network appears to have intensified significantly during the Bronze Age (around 3500 BCE).[23] Archaeological investigations at sites like Kani Shaie in the Zagros region suggest that such highland settlements served as important nodes within these trade networks, possibly controlling or regulating the flow of goods through the mountains and developing administrative practices to manage these exchanges.[23] This indicates that while the mountains could isolate, they also channeled movement and interaction along specific corridors, making the communities controlling these routes important players in regional economies.

VI. Echoes from the Summits: Mountains in Kurdish Culture and Consciousness

The towering peaks and rugged valleys of the Taurus and Zagros ranges are more than just the physical setting of Kurdish life; they are deeply embedded in the cultural consciousness, folklore, artistic expression, and very identity of the Kurdish people. The mountains function as an active archive of history, myth, and identity, continually inspiring cultural forms that reinforce the profound bond between the people and their environment.

A. "No Friends but the Mountains": The Symbolic Heart of Kurdish Identity

The famous Kurdish proverb, "The Kurds have no friends except the mountains," encapsulates a worldview forged through centuries of historical experience.[5] It signifies a deep-seated reliance on, and emotional connection to, the mountainous homeland, which has repeatedly served as the ultimate refuge and protector in times of crisis, persecution, and conflict.[5] In Kurdish culture, the mountains symbolize resilience, freedom, sanctuary, dignity, and pride.[5] They are perceived not merely as inert landforms but as steadfast allies that have preserved Kurdish existence and identity against countless attempts at invasion, assimilation, and marginalization.[5]

B. Manifestations in Folklore, Mythology, and Pre-Islamic Beliefs

The mountains are inextricably linked to Kurdish folklore, mythology, and spiritual beliefs. Several peaks are considered sacred; for instance, Mount Judi is traditionally believed by some to be the resting place of Noah's Ark.[5] For the Yezidi Kurds, mountains hold particular spiritual significance and are seen as a traditional home for their religious practices.[5]

The most prominent example of this connection is the celebration of Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, which is deeply intertwined with mountain symbolism and the myth of Kawa the Blacksmith.[24] According to the legend, Kawa defeated the tyrannical ruler Zahak and announced the people's liberation by lighting a great bonfire on a mountaintop.[25] This act is commemorated in Newroz celebrations, where Kurds often light bonfires on mountainsides or, as in the town of Akre, ascend mountain slopes in torchlight processions, a powerful visual representation of freedom and renewal.[24] Firdawsi's *Shahnameh* also recounts Kurds fleeing to the mountains to escape Zahak's brutality, further cementing the mountains' role as a place

of refuge in foundational narratives.[25]

Evidence suggests that pre-Islamic cults and nature worship, with mountains as significant loci, persisted among Kurds alongside Islamic practices until relatively recent times.[26] In the 19th century, travelers reported some Kurdish tribes in remote mountain areas worshipping forest trees and maintaining stone altars in secluded mountain recesses.[26] Sacred mountains, springs, trees, and caves formed part of the local religious landscape, with popular beliefs and practices associated with these natural elements enduring, especially within indigenous traditions like Yazidism and Yarsanism.[26]

C. The Voice of the Highlands: Dengbêj Traditions and Mountain-Inspired Music

The oral traditions of the Kurds, particularly the art of the *dengbêj* (singer-poets), are rich with references to the mountainous homeland. *Dengbêjs* are revered as guardians of Kurdish history, culture, and memory, and their epic songs, or *kilams*, often narrate tales of heroism, love, loss, rebellion, and daily life, all set against the backdrop of the Kurdish landscape, with mountains frequently featuring as prominent geographical and symbolic elements.[27] The mountains in these songs are not just scenery; they are often portrayed as places of refuge for heroes and rebels, sites of important events, and an integral part of the Kurdish "geography of belonging".[27]

Kurdish music and melodies are also said to be influenced by the character of the mountains, often reflecting their ruggedness and grandeur.[5] Many folk songs express themes of longing for the mountains, experiences of exile, and the enduring spirit of struggle associated with these highlands.[5] Traditional Kurdish dances, such as the communal *Dabke*, are seen to embody the spirit of community, strength, and resilience derived from life in a mountain environment.[5]

D. Adaptations in Material Culture: Clothing and Architecture

The practical demands of life in a mountainous environment are clearly reflected in traditional Kurdish material culture. Village architecture, for instance, shows distinct adaptations. Houses were commonly constructed from locally available materials like stone and clay, built to withstand the harsh weather conditions, including severe winters.[1] A characteristic feature of many mountain villages is the terraced arrangement of houses built up steep slopes, where the flat roof of one dwelling often serves as a pathway or outdoor space for the dwelling above it.[1]

Traditional Kurdish clothing also evolved in response to the climate and lifestyle of the mountains. Men's attire typically included wide, loose trousers (*shalwar* or *sherwal*) and heavy coats or vests, providing warmth and freedom of movement, often made from sheep wool or goat leather.[5] Women's traditional dress often consisted of long, colorful, and frequently embroidered dresses, reflecting both cultural identity and adaptation to the environment.[5] These elements of material culture are not merely functional but are imbued with cultural meaning, visually expressing the Kurdish connection to their highland heritage.

VII. A Sanctuary and a Battlefield: The Role of

Mountains in Conflict and Resistance

The Taurus and Zagros mountains have been a constant in the long history of Kurdish conflict and resistance, serving simultaneously as a natural fortress that provided sanctuary and a challenging battlefield that shaped the nature of warfare. This "guerrilla geography" fundamentally influenced the dynamics of confrontations between Kurdish groups and various state powers.

A. Historical Significance as a Natural Fortress and Refuge

Throughout centuries of political upheaval and external pressures, the mountains have consistently functioned as a vital sanctuary for the Kurdish people.[5] Their rugged, inaccessible terrain offered a natural line of defense against invading armies and the encroachment of centralized state authority, allowing Kurdish communities to preserve a degree of autonomy and their distinct identity when lowland areas might have been more easily subdued.[4] This role as a refuge was critical during numerous historical crises. For example, after the suppression of his early 20th-century revolts by British-backed Iraqi forces, Sheykh Mahmud Barzanji retreated into the mountains.[31] Similarly, following the collapse of the 1943 Kurdish revolt in Iraq, Mustafa Barzani and his forces withdrew into the mountainous regions of Iranian Kurdistan to regroup and continue their struggle.[31] The mountains were, in essence, the strategic depth to which Kurdish resistance could fall back and endure.

B. The Mountainous Terrain as a Theatre for Resistance and Guerrilla Warfare

The physical characteristics of the Kurdish homeland—steep slopes, narrow valleys, caves, and limited road access—are ideally suited for guerrilla warfare tactics.[5] This terrain allowed smaller, more mobile Kurdish forces, intimately familiar with the landscape, to effectively challenge larger, conventionally organized, and often technologically superior state armies. Guerrilla strategies emphasizing maneuverability, ambush, and knowledge of local conditions could negate some of the advantages of conventional military power.[5]

Numerous historical instances illustrate this. Mustafa Barzani's flight to the mountains in 1960 marked the beginning of a prolonged guerrilla war against Iraqi forces.[16] During the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) insurgency from 1976 to 1979, their guerrilla units operated primarily from the highest, most inaccessible mountain regions of northern Iraq.[31] Perhaps one of the most vivid examples is the 1991 Kurdish uprising in Iraq; after initial successes in capturing urban centers in the plains, Kurdish rebels were forced to retreat back into the mountains when faced with the overwhelming retaliatory power of the Iraqi military.[31] The mountains consistently served as the operational base and ultimate redoubt for Kurdish nationalist movements and resistance fighters.[5]

This "guerrilla geography" had a profound impact on the nature of state-Kurdish relations, particularly in the 20th century. Conflicts rarely resulted in decisive conventional victories for state forces. Instead, they often devolved into prolonged, asymmetric wars of attrition. State responses to entrenched mountain-based insurgencies, such as the Anfal campaign in Iraq during the 1980s, frequently involved brutal counter-insurgency measures that targeted the civilian population suspected of supporting the guerrillas, precisely because the fighters

themselves were elusive in their mountain strongholds.[31] This created a persistent cycle: rebellion launched from or sustained by mountain bases, followed by harsh state repression, often leading to the rebels' tactical retreat and regrouping within the same mountain sanctuaries, ready to re-emerge when conditions allowed. The mountains thus ensured that Kurdish resistance, even if temporarily suppressed, could often endure and resurface, shaping a long and often tragic history of conflict.

VIII. Conclusion: The Indelible Imprint of the Mountains

The Taurus and Zagros mountain ranges have been far more than a passive backdrop to Kurdish history; they have been an active, shaping force, leaving an indelible imprint on nearly every facet of Kurdish lifeways before 2010. This report has traced the profound and multifaceted influence of this highland environment on Kurdish subsistence patterns, social organization, political dynamics, cultural consciousness, and experiences of conflict and resistance.

A. Synthesis of Mountain Influence

The mountainous milieu dictated a primary reliance on pastoralism, particularly transhumant herding of sheep and goats, ingeniously adapted to the vertical zonation of pastures. Agriculture, while present, was confined to specific niches within valleys and lower slopes, often integrated with animal husbandry. Traditional systems of resource management, particularly for communal pastures and vital water sources, were essential for survival and shaped inter-communal relations.

Socially, the rugged, isolating terrain reinforced tribal structures and patrilineal kinship systems, creating strong local loyalties and resilient, often autonomous, communities led by figures like aghas and sheikhs. While fostering local cohesion and cultural preservation, this same geographical fragmentation historically hindered the development of sustained, large-scale political unity among the Kurds. Politically, the mountains provided strategic depth, allowing Kurdish groups to maintain a degree of autonomy, engage as significant actors in the frontier politics of empires like the Ottomans and Safavids, and, crucially, to offer persistent resistance to external domination.

Culturally, the mountains are woven into the very soul of Kurdish identity, as expressed in the poignant proverb, "No friends but the mountains." They are a dominant theme in folklore, mythology, the epic songs of the *dengbêjs*, and even in the practical adaptations of material culture, from stone-built village architecture to traditional clothing.

B. The Mountains as a Defining Element

Ultimately, the mountains stand as a defining element of Kurdish existence. The challenges of steep slopes, harsh climates, and relative isolation were met with remarkable resilience and sophisticated adaptation. The opportunities for refuge, for maintaining distinct cultural practices, and for leveraging strategic geographical positions were consistently seized. This environment forged a unique and tenacious highland culture, characterized by a fierce spirit of independence and an enduring connection to the land.

The relationship, however, remains one of duality. The mountains provided sanctuary and were

the wellspring of cultural identity, yet they also contributed to the historical difficulties in achieving broader, unified political sovereignty. Understanding this complex, symbiotic relationship between the Kurdish people and their mountain stronghold is essential for comprehending their history, their enduring cultural vitality, and the socio-political currents that shaped their world leading up to 2010. The echoes from these summits continue to resonate, narrating a story of survival, adaptation, and an unbreakable bond with a formidable, yet nurturing, landscape.

IX. Works Cited

1. [7] url: https://waterinventory.org/sites/waterinventory.org/files/chapters/Chapter-23-Taurus-Zagros-web.pdf
2. [1] url: https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/cultures/MA11/summary
3. [8] url: https://presidency.gov.krd/krp/english/ndisplay.aspx?sm=5yBwBg+oqQY=
4. [2] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraqi_Kurdistan
5. [10] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zagros_Mountains_forest_steppe#:~:text=The%20ecoregion's%20climate%20is%20semi,C%20(%2D13%20%C2%B0F.
6. [11] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zagros_Mountains_forest_steppe
7. [12] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taurus_Mountains#:~:text=The%20mountains%20have%20a%20Mediterranean,mountains%20and%20in%20the%20interior.
8. [13] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taurus_Mountains
9. [4] url: https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/news/schrodingers-kurds-transnational-kurdish-geopolitics-age-shifting-borders
10. [22] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Kurds
11. [9] url: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/political-ecology-of-violence/kurdistan/FC2B1343E0F848E18D7A27DF97843643
12. [21] url: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292132587_Settlement_continuity_in_Kurdistan
13. [32] url: https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/view/5575/953
14. [33] url: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265947486_The_Origin_of_Kurds
15. [20] url: https://kulturnistudia.cz/history-culture-and-politics-of-the-kurds/
16. [3] url: https://www.nationalia.info/profile/27/kurdistan
17. [15] url: https://archaeology.pku.edu.cn/__local/B/59/9B/43D975355D4A3E27D2873D9E196_B4792283_1872B4.pdf
18. [34] url: https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2100901118

19. [9] url: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/political-ecology-of-violence/kurdistan/FC2B1343E0F848E18D7A27DF97843643.[9]
20. [14] url: https://www.kurdishpeace.org/research/environment/in-the-mountains-of-kurdistan-iran-fosters-an-environmental-crisis/
21. [23] url: https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/traders-of-the-mountians/
22. [2] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraqi_Kurdistan.[2]
23. [35] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdistan_Region
24. [4] url: https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/news/schrodingers-kurds-transnational-kurdish-geopolitics-age-shifting-borders.[4]
25. [24] url: https://npasyria.com/en/95078/
26. [26] url: https://nlka.net/eng/sacred-trees-in-kurdish-culture-mythology/
27. [36] url: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13530194.2022.2025763
28. [37] url: https://dash.harvard.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/54e54300-68eb-4303-973b-d37b0644fc0f/content
29. [29] url: https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2024/02/kurdish-clothing-history-identity-and-bright-colors/
30. [30] url: https://kewsan.com/blogs/news/the-rich-heritage-of-kurdish-clothing-a-symbol-of-identity-and-culture
31. [5] url: https://azadiposts.com/en/2023-10-06-12-57-11/663-2025-03-15-20-48-08.html
32. [25] url: https://www.ejecs.org/index.php/JECS/article/download/318/pdf/1618
33. [38] url: https://libcom.org/article/mountain-river-has-many-bends-introduction-rojava-revolution
34. [39] url: https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2011/04/22/the-kurdish-issue/
35. [40] url: https://shs.cairn.info/article/E_HER_148_0023/pdf?lang=en
36. [41] url: https://brill.com/display/book/9789004708495/BP000008.xml
37. [18] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_tribes
38. [19] url: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/state-formations/patriliny-and-modern-states-in-the-middle-east/19B10A363728C6345B2B3F63D4BE83DF
39. [9] url: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/political-ecology-of-violence/kurdistan/FC2B1343E0F848E18D7A27DF97843643 [9]
40. [14] url:

https://www.kurdishpeace.org/research/environment/in-the-mountains-of-kurdistan-iran-fosters-an-environmental-crisis/ [14]
41. [27] url: https://brill.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9789004706538/BP000009.pdf
42. [28] url: https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2944875/view
43. [31] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraqi%E2%80%93Kurdish_conflict
44. [16] url: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mustafa-al-Barzani
45. [6] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds_in_Iraq
46. [42] url: https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/731723
47. [17] url: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurd
48. [22] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Kurds [22]
49. [32] url: https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/view/5575/953 [32]
50. [43] url: https://islamiclaw.blog/2020/03/03/tribal-law-as-islamic-law-the-berber-example/
51. [9] url: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/political-ecology-of-violence/kurdistan/FC2B1343E0F848E18D7A27DF97843643 [9]
52. [44] url: https://repository.upenn.edu/bitstreams/f90c9f36-00e0-44fe-8b20-7f3aaa801779/download
53. [17] url: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurd [17]
54. [45] url: https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/exported-pdf/whoselandisitfullreportfinal1.pdf
55. [20] url: https://kulturnistudia.cz/history-culture-and-politics-of-the-kurds/ [20]
56. [1] url: https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/cultures/MA11/summary [1]
57. [4] url: https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/news/schrodingers-kurds-transnational-kurdish-geopolitics-age-shifting-borders [4]
58. [9] url: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/political-ecology-of-violence/kurdistan/FC2B1343E0F848E18D7A27DF97843643 [9]
59. [20] url: https://kulturnistudia.cz/history-culture-and-politics-of-the-kurds/ [20]
60. [1] url: https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/cultures/MA11/summary [1]
61. [15] url: https://archaeology.pku.edu.cn/__local/B/59/9B/43D975355D4A3E27D2873D9E196_B4792283_1872B4.pdf [15]
62. [23] url: https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/traders-of-the-mountians/ [23]
63. [24] url: https://npasyria.com/en/95078/ [24]
64. [26] url: https://nlka.net/eng/sacred-trees-in-kurdish-culture-mythology/ [26]
65. [5] url: https://azadiposts.com/en/2023-10-06-12-57-11/663-2025-03-15-20-48-08.html [5]

66. [19] url: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/state-formations/patriliny-and-modern-states-in-the-middle-east/19B10A363728C6345B2B3F63D4BE83DF [19]
67. [27] url: https://brill.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9789004706538/BP000009.pdf [27]
68. [28] url: https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2944875/view [28]
69. [31] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraqi%E2%80%93Kurdish_conflict [31]
70. [16] url: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mustafa-al-Barzani [16]
71. [6] url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds_in_Iraq [6]
72. [17] url: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurd [17]

Works cited

1. Kurds - Summary - eHRAF World Cultures, accessed May 16, 2025, https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/cultures/MA11/summary
2. Iraqi Kurdistan - Wikipedia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraqi_Kurdistan
3. Kurdistan - Nationalia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.nationalia.info/profile/27/kurdistan
4. Schrödinger's Kurds: Transnational Kurdish Geopolitics In The Age Of Shifting Borders, accessed May 16, 2025, https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/news/schrodingers-kurds-transnational-kurdish-geopolitics-age-shifting-borders
5. Strong as Their Mountains: A Journey into Kurdish Culture, accessed May 16, 2025, https://azadiposts.com/en/2023-10-06-12-57-11/663-2025-03-15-20-48-08.html
6. Kurds in Iraq - Wikipedia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds_in_Iraq
7. waterinventory.org, accessed May 16, 2025, https://waterinventory.org/sites/waterinventory.org/files/chapters/Chapter-23-Taurus-Zagros-web.pdf
8. The Kurdistan Region is an autonomous region in federal Iraq, accessed May 16, 2025, https://presidency.gov.krd/krp/english/ndisplay.aspx?sm=5yBwBg+oqQY=
9. Kurdistan (Chapter 1) - The Political Ecology of Violence - Cambridge University Press, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/political-ecology-of-violence/kurdistan/FC2B1343E0F848E18D7A27DF97843643
10. en.wikipedia.org, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zagros_Mountains_forest_steppe#:~:text=The%20ecoregion's%20climate%20is%20semi,C%20(%2D13%20%C2%B0F).
11. Zagros Mountains forest steppe - Wikipedia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zagros_Mountains_forest_steppe
12. en.wikipedia.org, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taurus_Mountains#:~:text=The%20mountains%20have%20a%20Mediterranean,mountains%20and%20in%20the%20interior.

13. Taurus Mountains - Wikipedia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taurus_Mountains
14. In the Mountains of Kurdistan, Iran Fosters an Environmental Crisis - Kurdish Peace Institute, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.kurdishpeace.org/research/environment/in-the-mountains-of-kurdistan-iran-fosters-an-environmental-crisis/
15. archaeology.pku.edu.cn, accessed May 16, 2025, https://archaeology.pku.edu.cn/__local/B/59/9B/43D975355D4A3E27D2873D9E196_B4792283_1872B4.pdf
16. Mustafa al-Barzani | Iraqi Kurdistan, Peshmerga, Revolutionist ..., accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mustafa-al-Barzani
17. Kurd | Syria, Language, Map, Women, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, History, & Culture | Britannica, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurd
18. Kurdish tribes - Wikipedia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_tribes
19. Patriliny and Modern States in the Middle East (Chapter 19) - State ..., accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/state-formations/patriliny-and-modern-states-in-the-middle-east/19B10A363728C6345B2B3F63D4BE83DF
20. History, Culture and Politics of the Kurds: A Short Overview ..., accessed May 16, 2025, https://kulturnistudia.cz/history-culture-and-politics-of-the-kurds/
21. (PDF) Settlement continuity in Kurdistan - ResearchGate, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292132587_Settlement_continuity_in_Kurdistan
22. History of the Kurds - Wikipedia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Kurds
23. Expedition Magazine | Traders of the Mountains - Penn Museum, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/traders-of-the-mountians/
24. Kurds blend mythology, modernity during Newroz celebrations, accessed May 16, 2025, https://npasyria.com/en/95078/
25. Newroz from Kurdish and Persian Perspectives – A Comparative Study, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.ejecs.org/index.php/JECS/article/download/318/pdf/1618
26. Sacred Trees in Kurdish Culture & Mythology - The Kurdish Center ..., accessed May 16, 2025, https://nlka.net/eng/sacred-trees-in-kurdish-culture-mythology/
27. brill.com, accessed May 16, 2025, https://brill.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9789004706538/BP000009.pdf
28. scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl, accessed May 16, 2025, https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2944875/view
29. Kurdish clothing: History, identity, and bright colors - Enab Baladi, accessed May 16, 2025, https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2024/02/kurdish-clothing-history-identity-and-bright-colors/
30. The Rich Heritage of Kurdish Clothing: A Symbol of Identity and Culture, accessed May 16, 2025,

https://kewsan.com/blogs/news/the-rich-heritage-of-kurdish-clothing-a-symbol-of-identity-and-culture
31. Iraqi–Kurdish conflict - Wikipedia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraqi%E2%80%93Kurdish_conflict
32. View of The Afterlife of Sacrifice in the Kurdish Movement - Cultural Anthropology, accessed May 16, 2025, https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/view/5575/953
33. (PDF) The Origin of Kurds - ResearchGate, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265947486_The_Origin_of_Kurds
34. Herded and hunted goat genomes from the dawn of domestication in the Zagros Mountains, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2100901118
35. Kurdistan Region - Wikipedia, accessed May 16, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdistan_Region
36. Full article: Musical spirits and poetic tongues: oral traditions in the cultural politics of Kurdish intellectuals (1920s-1940s) - Taylor & Francis Online, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13530194.2022.2025763
37. Kurdish Music-Making in Istanbul: Music, Sentiment and Ideology in a Changing Urban Context - Harvard DASH, accessed May 16, 2025, https://dash.harvard.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/54e54300-68eb-4303-973b-d37b0644fc0f/content
38. A mountain river has many bends: an introduction to the Rojava revolution - Libcom.org, accessed May 16, 2025, https://libcom.org/article/mountain-river-has-many-bends-introduction-rojava-revolution
39. The Kurdish Issue - Foreign Policy Journal, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2011/04/22/the-kurdish-issue/
40. Kurdish Space: Between Unity and Diversity - Cairn, accessed May 16, 2025, https://shs.cairn.info/article/E_HER_148_0023/pdf?lang=en
41. Cross-border Kurdish Solidarity: an Endangered Aspect of Kurdishness in - Brill, accessed May 16, 2025, https://brill.com/display/book/9789004708495/BP000008.xml
42. Archaeology as Cultural Heritage in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq : Developing an Integrated Approach beyond Narratives of Catastrophe and Emergency Response | Current Anthropology, accessed May 16, 2025, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/731723
43. Tribal Law as Islamic Law: The Berber Example, accessed May 16, 2025, https://islamiclaw.blog/2020/03/03/tribal-law-as-islamic-law-the-berber-example/
44. BALUCHISTAN i. Geography, History and Ethnography, accessed May 16, 2025, https://repository.upenn.edu/bitstreams/f90c9f36-00e0-44fe-8b20-7f3aaa801779/download
45. Whose Land Is It? Commons and Conflict States - Rights and Resources Initiative, accessed May 16, 2025,

https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/exported-pdf/whoselandisitfullreportfinal1.pdf