The Linguistic History of Kurmanji Kurdish: Origins, Evolution, and Influences

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The Kurdish language group represents a major branch of the West Iranian languages, spoken by a significant population across a vast, historically contiguous region often referred to as Kurdistan, which spans parts of modern-day Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, as well as diaspora communities worldwide.[1] Within this linguistic complex, Kurmanji, also known as Northern Kurdish, stands out as the most widely spoken variety, used by an estimated 15 to 20 million people.[1] It serves not only as a daily vernacular but also as a significant literary and cultural medium for many Kurds.[1] This report aims to provide an expert analysis of the history of the Kurmanji Kurdish language, with a specific focus on elucidating its linguistic origins, tracing its evolution, and examining the diverse linguistic and cultural influences that have shaped it over centuries.

1.2. Scope and Structure

The historical trajectory of Kurmanji is intricate, marked by scholarly debates and complexities inherent in reconstructing the past of a language whose earliest written records are relatively recent compared to its presumed antiquity.[2] This report will navigate these complexities by systematically addressing several key areas. It begins by establishing Kurmanji's linguistic classification within the Indo-European family and the Iranian branch, exploring the ongoing discussion regarding its position relative to Northwestern and Southwestern Iranian subgroups. Subsequently, it delves into the question of Kurmanji's origins, examining its relationship with ancient Iranian languages like Median and Parthian, the challenges posed by the lack of direct predecessors in Old and Middle Iranian periods, and the earliest attestations of the language. The report then maps the geographical spread of Kurmanji and analyzes its dialectal diversification, considering the impact of major historical events, such as the Ottoman and Persian imperial periods and the formation of modern nation-states. A significant portion is dedicated to investigating the profound linguistic influences exerted on Kurmanji through sustained contact with neighboring languages, including Arabic, Persian, Turkish (Ottoman and modern), Armenian, and Aramaic/Syriac varieties. Finally, the history of writing systems employed for Kurmanji is traced, with particular attention given to the development and adoption of the Latin-based Hawar alphabet. Throughout this analysis, diverse linguistic sources will be synthesized, and conflicting scholarly perspectives will be

critically evaluated.

1.3. Significance

Understanding the history of Kurmanji Kurdish is crucial not only for the field of Iranian historical linguistics but also for appreciating the cultural heritage and identity of the Kurdish people.[3] The language serves as a vital vessel for transmitting cultural values, oral traditions, and collective memory across generations.[5] Its evolution reflects the complex sociopolitical history of the region, marked by periods of cultural flourishing, imperial divisions, migrations, and varying degrees of language suppression and revitalization.[3] Analyzing Kurmanji's origins and the influences it has absorbed sheds light on the intricate tapestry of linguistic and cultural interactions that have characterized the Middle East for millennia.

2. Linguistic Classification and Position of Kurmanji

2.1. Indo-European Framework

The Kurdish language group, including Kurmanji, belongs unequivocally to the vast Indo-European language family. Within this family, it is situated in the Indo-Iranian branch, which encompasses languages spoken across the Iranian plateau, the Indian subcontinent, and parts of Central Asia.[1] Further classification places Kurdish within the Iranian sub-branch, distinguishing it from the Indo-Aryan languages.[1]

2.2. West Iranian Context

Within the Iranian sub-branch, a primary division is made between Western and Eastern Iranian languages. Kurdish is consistently classified as belonging to the Western Iranian group, alongside languages such as Persian, Balochi, Luri, Gilaki, and Mazandarani, and distinct from Eastern Iranian languages like Pashto, Ossetic, and the Pamir languages.[1] This classification is based on shared phonological, morphological, and lexical features that differentiate the Western languages from their Eastern counterparts, reflecting developments traceable back to the Middle Iranian period (c. 400 BCE – 900 CE).[7]

2.3. The Northwestern vs. Southwestern Debate

While the placement of Kurdish within West Iranian is secure, its precise position within this group has been a subject of considerable scholarly discussion. Western Iranian itself is conventionally subdivided into Northwestern (NW) and Southwestern (SW) branches.[12] The most common classification places Kurdish, including Kurmanji, within the Northwestern Iranian languages.[1] This grouping historically stemmed from the observation that Kurdish dialects share certain conservative phonological features with Parthian, a major attested Middle Iranian language of the NW group, features that distinguish them from Persian (the primary representative of SW Iranian).[8] Key features often cited as indicative of NW affiliation include:

- The development of Proto-Indo-European (PIE) voiced velars (*$g^{(u)(h)}$) before front

vowels into *ž* (e.g., Kurmanji *jin/žin* 'woman', compare Parthian *žan*, New Persian *zan*).[8]

- The development of PIE voiceless velars (*k⟨ᵘ⟩) before front vowels in postvocalic position also into *ž* (e.g., Kurmanji *ji/ži* 'from', derived from Old Iranian **hača*, compare New Persian *az*).[8]

However, this straightforward NW classification has been challenged and nuanced over time. Several scholars propose that Kurdish occupies an intermediate position between NW and SW Iranian.[1] This perspective arises from the recognition that Kurdish, while exhibiting NW traits, also shares numerous characteristics and even specific linguistic innovations with SW languages, particularly Persian.[1] Some analyses further differentiate within Kurdish, suggesting that Kurmanji leans more towards the NW profile, while Central Kurdish (Sorani) and Southern Kurdish show stronger affinities with the SW group.[18]

Evidence for SW connections includes shared phonological developments and morphological features:

- ****PIE *tr/tl > Proto-Iranian θr > Old Persian ç:** In the development of this cluster, Kurdish aligns with the SW outcome, typically yielding *s* (e.g., Kurmanji *sê* 'three', compare Avestan *θrāyō* (NW-like), Old Persian *çi-* related form, New Persian *se*).[8]
- **Word-initial Proto-Iranian *w- > b-*:** This change, particularly before *ā*, is characteristic of New Persian and is also found in Kurdish (e.g., Kurmanji *ba* 'wind', New Persian *bād*, compare Avestan *vāta-*).[8] This is considered a post-Middle Iranian development shared between the two.[8]
- **Preservation of Proto-Iranian word-initial *fr-*:** Both Kurdish and New Persian typically preserve this cluster, often with an epenthetic vowel, whereas many other NW languages show different developments (e.g., Kurmanji *firotin* 'to sell', New Persian *forūختan* /forūxtan/).[8]
- **Past Stem Formation:** A significant number of verbs in Kurdish, Persian, and Balochi form their past stems using a suffix containing the vowel *ī* (often realized as *-īd* in Persian, *-ī* in Kurdish, *-it* in Balochi), a feature considered a relatively old shared innovation visible already in Middle Iranian.[8]

Pioneering work by Paul Tedesco (1921) already noted connections between Persian and Kurdish.[8] D. N. MacKenzie's influential 1961 study, based on a selection of isoglosses, proposed a model where Kurdish was relatively close to Persian, challenging the traditional strict NW categorization.[7] Later scholars like Gernot Windfuhr and Pierre Lecoq also supported a closer link between Kurdish and Persian or Central Iranian dialects.[8] Ludwig Paul summarized a common contemporary view, suggesting that Kurdish likely originated as a NW Iranian language but subsequently absorbed numerous SW traits due to long and intense historical contact with Persian.[1]

The persistent ambiguity in classifying Kurdish as strictly NW or SW is not merely a taxonomic puzzle. It reflects the complex linguistic past of its speakers. The co-existence of features associated with both branches strongly suggests a history that involved more than simple divergence from a single proto-language node. It points towards significant interaction, language contact, and possibly migration, where speakers of an originally NW-leaning variety

came into prolonged and intensive contact with SW-speaking groups, leading to linguistic convergence and the adoption of numerous SW features. Thus, the classification debate itself serves as linguistic evidence for a dynamic history of interaction between different West Iranian populations.

2.4. Relationship with Other Kurdish Varieties

Within the broader Kurdish language group, Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish) is recognized as one of the three major dialect clusters, alongside Sorani (Central Kurdish) and Southern Kurdish (also known as Xwarîn, Pehlewani, or Kermanshahi).[1] Laki is sometimes grouped with Southern Kurdish [1] but is often considered distinct by linguists.

These varieties form a dialect continuum across Kurdistan, meaning that geographically adjacent dialects tend to be more mutually intelligible than those spoken far apart.[1] However, the divergence between the major groups, particularly between Kurmanji on one hand and Sorani/Southern Kurdish on the other, is significant enough to impede mutual intelligibility for monolingual speakers.[1] Philip G. Kreyenbroek famously compared the linguistic distance between Kurmanji and Sorani to that between English and German, highlighting fundamental grammatical differences: Kurmanji retains grammatical gender (masculine/feminine) and a two-case system (direct/oblique), features largely lost in Sorani.[1] Pronunciation and vocabulary differences, while perhaps not as vast as between English and German, are also considerable.[1] Linguistically, Kurmanji is generally considered to be more conservative than Sorani and Southern Kurdish in its phonetic and morphological structure, having retained more features from earlier stages of Iranian.[1] Sorani, conversely, shows influences from closer cultural proximity to other languages in its region, including Gorani.[1]

Despite these linguistic differences, these varieties are commonly referred to collectively as "Kurdish." This usage reflects a sense of shared ethnic identity and unity among their speakers, as well as their common linguistic origin.[1] However, it is also noted that some speakers may primarily identify their language by its specific dialect name (Kurmanji, Sorani, Kermanshahi, etc.) rather than the broader term "Kurdish".[1]

2.5. Distinction from Zazaki and Gorani

While speakers of Zazaki (also known as Dimli or Kirdki/Kirmanjki) and Gorani (also known as Hawrami) often identify ethnically as Kurds, linguistic analysis consistently classifies these as distinct West Iranian languages, separate from the Kurdish group (comprising Kurmanji, Sorani, Southern Kurdish).[1] Based on historical phonology and clear linguistic boundaries in morphology and syntax, Zazaki and Gorani are considered to have originated separately from Kurdish, although they have mutually influenced Kurdish (and been influenced by it) over long periods of contact.[2] Gorani, in particular, served as an important literary language, especially for poetry associated with the Ardalan principality and the Ahl-e Haqq religion, before being largely supplanted by Sorani in the 20th century.[1]

This distinction between linguistic classification and ethno-political identity is significant. It underscores that the term "Kurdish" operates on multiple levels. For historical linguists, it

typically refers to the language family descended from a common proto-Kurdish ancestor, encompassing the Kurmanji-Sorani-Southern continuum. For many speakers within the broader cultural sphere, including Zaza and Gorani speakers, "Kurdish" functions as an ethno-linguistic identifier encompassing the languages spoken by peoples who consider themselves Kurds.[1] Recognizing this dual usage is essential for navigating discussions about the Kurdish language(s) and their history.

3. Origins and Early Historical Development of Kurmanji

3.1. The Problem of Ancestry

A fundamental challenge in tracing the history of Kurdish, including Kurmanji, is the absence of known direct linguistic predecessors from the Old Iranian (before c. 400 BCE) and Middle Iranian (c. 400 BCE – 900 CE) periods.[2] While languages like Old Persian (Achaemenid era) and Middle Persian (Sasanian Pahlavi), as well as Parthian (Arsacid era), are attested through inscriptions and texts [12], no equivalent documentation exists for the language(s) that directly evolved into modern Kurdish dialects. The extant written Kurdish texts, primarily in Kurmanji and Sorani, generally date back no earlier than the 16th century CE, with only fragmentary earlier attestations.[6] This significant chronological gap means that the earlier stages of Kurdish evolution must be reconstructed primarily through the comparative method, analyzing shared features and divergences between Kurdish dialects and other related Iranian languages, both ancient and modern.[8]

This lack of early textual evidence for Kurdish, contrasting sharply with the situation for Persian and Parthian, carries important implications. It suggests that the historical circumstances of the speakers of proto-Kurdish may have differed significantly from those of the groups associated with the major attested Old and Middle Iranian languages. Potential reasons include the possibility that the direct ancestor(s) of Kurdish were simply not written down, that any written records have been lost over time, or that Kurdish itself emerged as a distinct linguistic entity later, perhaps through a complex process of dialect convergence among groups who were less centralized or literate in the Old and Middle Iranian periods compared to the Persians or Parthians. Consequently, any reconstruction of Kurdish history prior to the 16th century relies heavily on indirect linguistic evidence and carries a greater degree of uncertainty than reconstructions of languages with continuous written traditions.

3.2. Relationship with Ancient Iranian Languages

Given the lack of direct ancestors, scholars have explored potential connections between Kurdish and the major attested ancient Iranian languages, primarily Median, Parthian, and Old/Middle Persian, based on shared linguistic features and geographical proximity.

- **Median:** Median was the language of the Median Empire (c. 700-559 BCE), spoken in western and central Iran.[27] Early Iranian dialectology sometimes grouped Kurdish under the geographical label "Median" due to its location within the former Median territory.[8]

However, Median itself is poorly attested, known mainly through loanwords in Old Persian and references in other ancient sources (like Herodotus' mention of *spaka* 'bitch').[27] While some non-Persian words in Old Persian, often presumed to be Median, share phonetic characteristics found in NW Iranian languages including Kurdish, there is no conclusive linguistic evidence proving direct descent of Kurdish from Median.[8] Some scholars, like Windfuhr, have proposed a Median substratum underlying Kurdish dialects, which he identified primarily as Parthian.[1]

- **Parthian:** Parthian was the language of the Parthian Empire (c. 247 BCE – 224 CE), originating in the northeast but becoming a major language across the Iranian plateau. As discussed in Section 2.3, Kurdish shares several phonological conservatisms with Parthian, characteristic of the NW Iranian group.[8] This has led some scholars, notably Windfuhr, to classify Kurdish dialects as essentially Parthian.[1] However, while Parthian influence or a shared NW heritage is likely, Parthian itself is generally not considered the direct ancestor of modern Kurdish.[8] The relationship is viewed more as one of collateral descent or areal influence within the broader NW Iranian linguistic zone.
- **Old/Middle Persian:** Old Persian was the language of the Achaemenids, originating in Fārs (Persis) [12], and Middle Persian (Pahlavi) was the language of the Sasanians.[12] These represent the SW Iranian lineage. As detailed in Section 2.3, despite its NW features, Kurdish shares significant innovations and vocabulary with Persian, suggesting intense and long-standing contact or convergence.[7] Lexical similarity studies indicate a close genetic relationship (around 51.5% similarity using the Leipzig-Jakarta list between Kurdish and Persian), but this figure is well below the threshold typically indicating a dialectal relationship (usually >85%).[7] Older views proposing Kurdish as merely a dialect of Persian are now widely rejected by linguists.[7]

3.3. Theories on Urheimat/Origin Location

The geographical origins of the Kurdish language (Urheimat) remain speculative. Various hypotheses have been proposed:
- Some theories suggest an eastern origin, possibly linking Kurdish to eastern or central Iranian dialects, based partly on Windfuhr and Frye's interpretations.[1]
- Other hypotheses favor an origin within Western Iran. The intermediate NW/SW linguistic profile has led some to suggest an origin zone geographically between these areas.[8] One specific suggestion posits North Isfahan as a possible homeland, with subsequent northward and westward migration into modern Kurdistan, during which NW Iranian features were absorbed through contact.[18]
- The difficulty in pinpointing a precise origin is compounded by the continuous migration of Iranian peoples throughout history and the pervasive effects of language contact, particularly the strong influence of Persian across the region.[8]

3.4. Earliest Attestations of Kurmanji

While the deeper origins are obscure, the earliest potential mentions and textual evidence

specifically for Kurmanji emerge in the medieval and post-medieval periods:
- The first possible reference comes from the 10th-century Chaldean author Ibn Wahshiyya in his work on alphabets.[6]
- The 13th-century geographical dictionary *Mu'jam ul-Buldān* by Yaqut al-Hamawi contains a passage with a few identifiable Kurmanji words, though the text is largely indecipherable.[6]
- The earliest known *proper* text identified as Kurmanji is a Christian missionary prayer dating from the first half of the 14th century, written using the Armenian script.[6] Another source points to a similar text, described as a "Median" translation of an Armenian prayer, from the early 15th century.[25] The existence of this early Christian text is noteworthy. While the later, more established Kurmanji literary tradition that flourished from the 16th century onwards developed primarily within an Islamic milieu [2], and the sacred texts of the Yazidis are also in Kurmanji [6], this 14th/15th-century Christian attestation hints at the language's use across different religious communities during its formative stages. It suggests avenues for literacy and written use that existed prior to the emergence of the famous Islamic Kurdish poets, reflecting the diverse environments where Kurmanji was spoken.
- A growing interest in using Kurmanji for literary purposes seems to have begun around the 14th century, coinciding with periods of relative political stability in parts of Kurdistan.[6] However, a distinct and recognizable Kurmanji literary tradition, marked by poets like Melayê Cizîrî, Feqiyê Teyran, and later Ehmedê Xanî, firmly established itself only in the 16th century.[2]

4. Geographical Expansion, Historical Context, and Dialectal Diversification

4.1. Key Geographical Regions

Kurmanji Kurdish is spoken across a wide and geographically diverse area, primarily concentrated in the northern parts of the traditional Kurdish homeland. Its main territories include:
- **Southeastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan / Bakur):** This constitutes the largest area, encompassing provinces like Diyarbakır, Van, Mardin, Hakkâri, Şırnak, Batman, Ağrı, Erzurum, Muş, Malatya, Adıyaman, Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa.[1]
- **Northern Syria (Western Kurdistan / Rojava):** Predominantly in the Al-Hasakah and Aleppo Governorates (especially regions like Afrin and Kobanî).[1]
- **Northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan / Başûr):** Mainly in the Dohuk Governorate (the Badînan region) and parts of Erbil and Sinjar districts.[1]
- **Northwestern and Northeastern Iran (Eastern Kurdistan / Rojhilat):** Spoken in parts of West Azerbaijan province (e.g., near Urmia, Maku, Salmas) and North Khorasan province.[1]

- **Caucasus:** Significant communities exist in Armenia and historically in Azerbaijan and Georgia.[1]
- **Central Anatolia:** Scattered enclaves of Kurdish speakers, often descendants of historical deportations or migrations, exist in provinces like Konya, Ankara, and Aksaray.[2]
- **Diaspora:** Large Kurmanji-speaking diaspora communities have formed, particularly in Western Europe (Germany, Sweden, France, UK, etc.) and urban centers of western Turkey since the mid-20th century.[1]

4.2. Historical Periods and Events Shaping Kurmanji

The geographical distribution and internal diversity of Kurmanji have been profoundly shaped by historical events and political contexts:

- **Medieval Period (Post-Islam):** The rise of various Kurdish principalities and dynasties (e.g., Shaddadids, Marwanids, Ayyubids) between the 10th and 13th centuries occurred within the Kurmanji-speaking heartlands.[6] While these periods may have provided environments for the language's use, administrative and high cultural functions were often dominated by Arabic or Persian.[6] The migrations and Turkic/Mongol invasions from the 10th century onwards also reshaped the demographic and linguistic landscape.[32]
- **Ottoman and Persian Empires (c. 1514–1918):** The Battle of Chaldiran in 1514 led to the long-term division of Kurdistan between the Ottoman and Safavid (later Qajar) Persian empires.[31] Under Ottoman rule, many Kurdish emirates initially enjoyed significant autonomy, providing a context for the flourishing of classical Kurmanji literature in the 16th-18th centuries.[2] However, Ottoman centralization policies in the 19th century led to the suppression of these emirates, contributing to the decline of this literary tradition and sparking numerous Kurdish revolts, which were often tribally based assertions of local authority rather than modern nationalism.[6] The Ottoman state did not have a systematic policy targeting the Kurdish language itself during much of this period, but Turkish, Arabic, and Persian remained the languages of administration and high culture.[31] Kurdish territoriality remained largely localized and defined by tribal structures.[33]
- **Post-Ottoman Era (20th Century – Present):** The collapse of the Ottoman and Qajar empires and the drawing of new national borders (Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran) after World War I had devastating consequences for the Kurdish language, including Kurmanji.[3]
  - **Turkey:** The establishment of the Turkish Republic led to systematic suppression of Kurdish identity and language. Kurds were officially categorized as "Mountain Turks," and the use of Kurdish in public life, education, and media was banned for decades.[4] Place names were changed, forced resettlements occurred, and speaking Kurdish could lead to imprisonment.[36] This policy of linguicide aimed to create a homogenous Turkish-speaking nation-state.[37] While restrictions eased somewhat from the 1990s, significant limitations remain, particularly regarding mother tongue education.[36]
  - **Syria:** Similar policies of Arabization were implemented, prohibiting Kurdish

language use in official contexts and suppressing cultural expression.[4] The establishment of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (Rojava) has recently allowed for greater use and development of Kurmanji.[1]

- ○ **Iraq:** Under British mandate and early Iraqi statehood, there were attempts to use Kurdish (initially favoring Sorani over Kurmanji, partly due to Turkish diplomatic pressure to prevent cross-border linguistic unity) in administration and primary education in Kurdish areas.[35] However, subsequent Ba'athist regimes pursued Arabization policies, restricting Kurdish language rights.[39] The establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 1992 allowed for official status and development, primarily for Sorani but also increasingly for Kurmanji (Badini) in its sphere.[1]
- ○ **Iran:** Policies have fluctuated, with periods of suppression (e.g., under Reza Shah) alternating with limited tolerance, but Persian remains dominant.[39]
- ○ **Soviet Union/Caucasus:** In Soviet Armenia, Kurmanji initially received state support with dedicated schools, publications, and the development of Armenian and later Cyrillic scripts.[30] However, deportations under Stalin and later conflicts (like Nagorno-Karabakh) significantly impacted these communities.[30]
- ○ **Diaspora:** Exile communities, particularly in Europe, became crucial centers for Kurmanji language maintenance, publication (using the Hawar alphabet), and media development, especially when the language was suppressed in Turkey.[17]

The political fragmentation of Kurdistan in the 20th century stands as a primary driver of linguistic divergence and the hindrance of standardization. Differing state policies—ranging from outright suppression in Turkey to limited support for specific dialects (like Sorani in Iraq) in others—created distinct trajectories for Kurdish varieties. The deliberate discouragement of Kurmanji development in Iraq by Turkey, aimed at preventing linguistic solidarity across the border [35], exemplifies how geopolitical interests actively shaped the linguistic landscape. This lack of a unified political entity, coupled with inconsistent educational and media policies, reinforced the separation between dialect groups like Kurmanji and Sorani, preventing the emergence of a single, overarching standard Kurdish language.

4.3. Internal Kurmanji Variation and Divergence

Kurmanji itself is not monolithic but encompasses considerable regional variation, forming a complex dialect continuum.[1] While a definitive, empirically grounded classification is still developing, several major dialect clusters are commonly recognized, often based on geographical location and perceived linguistic features [6]:

- ● **Northwestern Kurmanji:** Spoken in the Maraş, Malatya, Sivas regions of Turkey.
- ● **Southwestern Kurmanji:** Spoken in Adıyaman, Antep, Urfa (Turkey) and Afrin (Syria).
- ● **Northern Kurmanji (Serhed):** Spoken in Ağrı, Erzurum, Muş (Turkey) and adjacent areas.
- ● **Southern Kurmanji:** Spoken in Mardin, Batman (Turkey), Hasakah (Syria), Sinjar (Iraq).
- ● **Southeastern Kurmanji (Badînî):** Spoken in Hakkâri (Turkey), Dohuk, and parts of Erbil

(Iraq).
- **Anatolian Kurmanji:** Spoken in enclaves in Central Anatolia.

Linguistic studies comparing these varieties reveal divergence across all levels [43]:

- **Lexicon:** Basic vocabulary comparisons show significant differences. Cognate counts are lowest between the most geographically peripheral dialects (Southeastern and Northwestern Kurmanji share only ~72% of a basic list), suggesting the greatest time depth of separation. Semantic shifts are common (e.g., *poz* 'nose' vs. *difin* 'nostril/nose'; *kevir* 'stone' vs. *ber* 'stone'/*kevir* 'cliff'). Borrowing patterns also differ, with Southern Kurmanji showing more Arabic loans, Northwestern more Turkish, and Southeastern sharing vocabulary with neighboring Sorani.[43]
- **Phonology:** Systematic sound correspondences differentiate the dialects. Examples include vowel shifts (e.g., Standard *a* [a:] > NWK [ɔ:]; Standard *ū* [u:] > SEK [y:]), consonant changes (e.g., SEK lacks /v/, merging it with /w/; widespread lenition of /b/ intervocalically), differing strategies for handling consonant clusters (e.g., *ziman* 'tongue' < *zm-* becomes *ezman* in SEK vs. *ziman* elsewhere; *stêr* 'star' retains *st-* in SEK/SK but inserts a vowel elsewhere), and the presence/absence of features like pharyngealization.[16] Kurmanji uniquely features phonemic aspiration in voiceless stops, absent in most Sorani varieties.[6]
- **Morphosyntax:** Differences exist in pronouns (esp. 2nd pl.), verbal agreement morphology (SEK is particularly divergent), case marking details (e.g., on masculine singular nouns), the form and use of the ezafe construction (linking modifier to head noun), tense-aspect-mood marking (e.g., SEK has grammaticalized a progressive aspect), the inventory and use of adpositions (pre-/post-/circumpositions), and the presence of features like proximal clitics or plural indefiniteness markers.[17]

This internal variation within Kurmanji is not merely random drift but appears to reflect the complex history of its speakers. The distinctiveness of peripheral dialects like Southeastern (Badini) and Northwestern Kurmanji suggests longer periods of separation or different migration histories. The clustering of other dialects points to shared innovations or contact zones. For instance, Southeastern Kurmanji's proximity to Sorani is evident in shared lexicon, while Southern Kurmanji reflects contact with Arabic, and Northwestern with Turkish.[43] The presence of archaic morphological features in Southeastern Kurmanji might indicate a relatively stable community, whereas the simplification observed in some other dialects could potentially be linked to their historical function as lingua francas during periods of expansion, interacting with speakers of other languages like Armenian or Aramaic.[24] This dialectal map, therefore, can be viewed as a linguistic palimpsest revealing layers of migration, settlement, and language contact across the Kurmanji-speaking regions.

4.4. Relationship between Kurmanji, Sorani, and Southern Kurdish Divergence

The divergence between the three main branches of Kurdish—Kurmanji, Sorani, and Southern Kurdish—represents a deeper historical split than the variations within Kurmanji itself.[44] As noted, Kurmanji retains key features like grammatical gender and case marking, which have

been lost in Sorani.[1] Sorani exhibits stronger influences from neighboring languages like Gorani and perhaps Persian, shaping its structure differently.[1] Southern Kurdish forms another distinct cluster with its own set of dialects (e.g., Kalhori, Kermanshahi, Feyli, Sanjabi) and linguistic characteristics, such as its plural suffix *-ayl* (compare Kurmanji *-in*, Sorani *-an*) and specific phonological developments.[1] The divergence likely stems from long-term geographical separation across the vast Kurdish-speaking territory, leading to independent linguistic developments and exposure to different contact influences in the northern, central, and southern zones of Kurdistan.[1]

5. Linguistic Influences from Language Contact

5.1. Overview

Situated at a crossroads of cultures and empires, the Kurmanji Kurdish language bears the imprint of centuries of interaction with neighboring linguistic groups. This contact has resulted in significant influences, most readily apparent in the lexicon but also extending to phonology, morphology, and syntax.[8] The nature and intensity of these influences vary depending on the specific contact language, the historical period, and the geographical region.

5.2. Influence of Arabic

Arabic influence on Kurdish is profound and multi-layered, stemming from the early Islamic conquests and the subsequent role of Arabic as the dominant language of religion, administration, and scholarship in the region for centuries.[31] More recent, intense contact, particularly in Iraq and Syria following the establishment of modern states where Arabic is the official language, has added another layer of influence.[32]

- **Phonology:** The most striking phonological impact is the presence in Kurdish of sounds typically absent in other Iranian languages but common in Semitic: the pharyngeal fricatives /ħ/ (ح) and /ʕ/ (ع), and emphatic consonants like /ṣ/ (ص), /ṭ/ (ط), /ẓ/ (ظ).[17] These sounds are generally retained in Arabic loanwords but have, particularly in some Northern Kurdish dialects, also spread into native Iranian vocabulary (e.g., *masî* > *meʿsî* 'fish').[32] The distribution of these sounds is often strongest in the central areas of the Kurdish speech territory and weaker on the peripheries bordering Turkish and Persian zones.[32]
- **Lexicon:** Arabic has contributed extensively to the Kurdish vocabulary across virtually all semantic fields, including religion (*xêr* 'good', *şeytan* 'devil'), administration (*sultan* 'monarch', *qanûn* 'law'), daily life (*saʿet* 'hour', *ḥemam* 'bath'), kinship (*met* 'paternal aunt'), agriculture (*xox* 'peach'), and abstract concepts (*fikr* 'thought').[17] There exists a deep layer of borrowings shared across most Kurdish dialects (*kitêb* 'book', *xerab* 'bad'), alongside more localized borrowings reflecting regional contact intensity (e.g., Southern Kurmanji around Mardin shows particularly heavy borrowing).[32] Arabic nouns and adjectives are readily integrated into Kurdish grammar, often forming verbs either through morphological affixation (e.g., *ʿelimîn* 'to learn' from Arabic *ʿilm* 'knowledge') or,

more commonly, through periphrastic constructions with Kurdish auxiliary verbs like *kirin* 'to do/make' or *bûn* 'to be' (e.g., *fikr kirin* 'to think', *hazir bûn* 'to be ready').[32] Numerous function words, such as conjunctions and adverbs, have also been borrowed (e.g., *helbet* 'of course').[32]

- **Morphosyntax:** While morphological influence is generally considered less extensive than lexical, some potential impacts exist. In Iraqi Kurmanji (Badini), the tendency to assign masculine gender to recent European loanwords might be influenced by Arabic patterns, contrasting with the feminine preference in Turkish Kurmanji.[32] Syntactic influence is debated but may include the word order within noun phrases where a possessor precedes an attributive modifier (*xanî-yê Malik-î (y)ê mezin* 'Malik's big house'), an order atypical for Iranian languages but standard in Arabic.[32] More recent, localized influences, possibly affecting Iraqi Kurdish more broadly, include pattern transfers like the adverbial *nema* 'no longer' mirroring Arabic *mā ʕād*, and the adoption of Arabic word order in institutional names.[32]

5.3. Influence of Persian

As closely related West Iranian languages with a long shared history and geographical proximity, Kurdish and Persian have mutually influenced each other, although Persian's role as a dominant literary and cultural language has likely led to a greater flow of influence towards Kurdish.[8]

- **Lexicon:** There is substantial lexical overlap between Kurdish and Persian, making it challenging at times to distinguish direct borrowings from shared inheritance from a common ancestor.[7] The influence of Persian literary tradition is evident in classical Kurdish poetry, which often adopted Persian forms, meters, and imagery.[26]
- **Grammar/Phonology:** The significant number of shared phonological and morphological innovations between Kurdish and Persian (discussed in Section 2.3) points to a deep historical connection that goes beyond simple lexical borrowing.[1] This suggests either prolonged periods of intense contact leading to structural convergence or a closer genetic relationship than the traditional NW classification implies.

5.4. Influence of Turkish (including Ottoman Turkish)

Centuries of coexistence within the Ottoman Empire, followed by the political dominance of Turkish in the Republic of Turkey, have resulted in significant Turkish influence on Kurmanji, particularly in Anatolia.[4]

- **Lexicon:** Kurmanji spoken in Turkey exhibits considerable lexical borrowing from Turkish.[17] This includes nouns, verbs, and function words like discourse particles.[48]
- **Morphology:** A common process involves borrowing Turkish verb stems and integrating them into Kurmanji grammar, typically by combining them with Kurdish light verbs (*kirin*, *bûn*) or through morphological adaptation.[48] This contact situation has led to observable code-switching and language mixing patterns in bilingual speakers.[48] Some research suggests potential contact-induced changes in grammatical features like

head-directionality in mixed utterances.[48] The influence appears largely unidirectional, from Turkish to Kurdish, reflecting the sociolinguistic hierarchy in Turkey.[48]

- **Phonology:** While both languages share certain sounds like the velar fricative /ɣ/ and uvular stop /q/, these are likely areal features common to many languages in the region (including Arabic and other Iranian languages) rather than specific borrowings solely from Turkish.[23]

5.5. Influence of Armenian

Armenians and Kurds have cohabited large areas, particularly in historical Armenia (Eastern Anatolia), for centuries, leading to linguistic interaction.[30] Mass migrations, especially from the 16th century onwards, intensified this contact, resulting in widespread Armenian-Kurdish bilingualism in certain regions historically.[49] There were also significant populations of Kurdophone Armenians prior to the Armenian Genocide.[6]

Linguistic evidence suggests that Armenian influence on the Kurmanji dialects spoken in these contact zones was considerable, potentially affecting not only vocabulary but also phonetics and word formation patterns.[49] Some scholars describe Armenian as having exerted a "substrate" influence on Kurmanji in these areas, meaning the language of the original inhabitants influenced the language of later arrivals (Kurds).[49] Conversely, Kurdish influence on Western Armenian dialects appears to have been primarily lexical and less extensive.[49] The possibility of Armenian contact contributing to morphological features in Kurmanji, such as the retention or shaping of the gender system, has also been considered, though requires further investigation.[51]

5.6. Influence of Aramaic/Syriac

Kurdish has been in contact with Aramaic languages for millennia. Aramaic was the lingua franca of the region before the rise of Arabic, and distinct Neo-Aramaic dialects continue to be spoken by Christian (Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac) and historically Jewish communities living within or adjacent to Kurdish-speaking areas, particularly in northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, and northwestern Iran.[52] Prolonged bilingualism (Kurdish-Aramaic) has been the norm for many Neo-Aramaic speakers for centuries.[52]

This intense contact has resulted in profound Kurdish influence on Neo-Aramaic dialects across all linguistic levels.[52] The influence of Neo-Aramaic on Kurdish is less systematically studied but undoubtedly exists.[55] It likely includes lexical borrowings (though distinguishing these from Arabic loans can be difficult) and potentially shared proverbial expressions.[46] Some scholars have speculated that contact with Semitic languages like Aramaic (alongside Arabic) might have played a role in reinforcing or shaping the grammatical gender distinction found in Kurmanji, which is absent in neighboring Turkish and Persian but present in Aramaic and Arabic.[51] The nature of convergence varies regionally; for instance, Jewish Aramaic dialects east of the Greater Zab river (in the Sorani sphere) show more direct borrowing of Kurdish material, while those to the west (in the Kurmanji sphere) tend to adapt Kurdish grammatical patterns using native Aramaic forms.[52]

The diverse influences on Kurmanji reflect the specific historical and sociolinguistic dynamics with each contact language. Arabic and Persian exerted deep, pervasive influence due to their long-standing status as languages of power, religion, and high culture. Turkish influence, while substantial in Turkey, appears more recent and unidirectional, driven by modern state power. Armenian and Aramaic influences are products of centuries of close, often intertwined community life, resulting in more localized and sometimes reciprocal linguistic exchange, with Kurdish often acting as the dominant local language influencing these minority tongues. Furthermore, the linguistic landscape of Kurdistan is a zone of convergence where features may spread across languages not just through direct borrowing but through areal diffusion. Features shared by Kurmanji and multiple neighboring languages (e.g., certain phonemes, perhaps syntactic constructions) might represent characteristics of the broader linguistic area (Sprachbund) rather than originating solely from one source.[23] Distinguishing between genetic inheritance, direct borrowing, and areal diffusion remains a key challenge in fully untangling the threads of Kurmanji's linguistic history.

6. The History of Writing Kurmanji: Focus on the Hawar Alphabet

6.1. Early Writing and Scripts

Compared to neighboring literary traditions like Persian or Arabic, Kurdish has a shorter history of widespread written use, with a substantial body of literature emerging primarily from the 16th century onwards.[8] Before this period, written documentation is scarce. While highly speculative claims about ancient cuneiform usage exist [46], the earliest concrete evidence points to the use of other scripts. As mentioned previously, the oldest known coherent Kurmanji text is a 14th/15th-century prayer written in the Armenian alphabet.[6] There are also references to historical documents found in Hewraman written in an Aramaic-derived script on deer skin, possibly related to Pahlavi scripts used for Middle Iranian languages.[46]

6.2. The Perso-Arabic Script Tradition

From the 16th century until the early 20th century, the dominant script used for writing Kurdish, including the works of classical Kurmanji poets like Melayê Cizîrî and Ehmedê Xanî, was a modified form of the Perso-Arabic script.[1] This script was adapted, often inconsistently, to represent Kurdish sounds not found in Arabic or Persian. The first Kurdish newspaper, *Kurdistan*, launched in Cairo in 1898, used this script for the Kurmanji dialect.[58] The Perso-Arabic script (specifically the Sorani alphabet variant) remains the standard for Central Kurdish (Sorani) today and is also used for Kurmanji in Iraq and Iran.[1]

6.3. Soviet Era Scripts

In the Soviet Union, particularly in the Armenian SSR where Kurdish language and culture received official support for a period, alternative scripts were developed for Kurmanji. From

1921 to 1929, a modified Armenian alphabet was employed.[1] Following the broader Soviet policy of Latinization, this was briefly replaced by a Latin-based alphabet (Yañalif-like) before a Cyrillic-based alphabet was introduced in 1945.[1] This Cyrillic script, designed by the Kurdish scholar Heciyê Cindî, consisted of 40 letters and was used by the Kurdish communities in the USSR.[30]

6.4. Development of the Hawar (Latin) Alphabet

The most significant development for writing Kurmanji in the modern era was the creation of a Latin-based alphabet, commonly known as the Hawar alphabet or Bedirxan alphabet.

- **Context and Motivation:** This alphabet emerged in the early 1930s within the community of Kurdish intellectuals exiled in French Mandate Syria, following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and the suppression of Kurdish identity.[23] It was part of a conscious effort to modernize and standardize the Kurdish language, spearheaded by Prince Celadet Alî Bedirxan.[61] The move was influenced by Atatürk's language reforms in Turkey, which had recently adopted a Latin alphabet for Turkish, making a similar script potentially more accessible to Kurds in Turkey.[23]
- **Celadet Alî Bedirxan's Role:** Celadet Bedirxan (1893–1951), a prominent Kurdish diplomat, writer, linguist, and political activist from the influential Bedirxan family of Botan, was the primary architect of this alphabet.[59] Educated in Istanbul and Munich, and fluent in several languages, he aimed to create a phonetically consistent system, avoiding digraphs (two letters for one sound) where possible.[58] After an unsuccessful attempt to collaborate with Tewfîq Wehbî in Iraq, Celadet, along with his brother Kamuran, launched the alphabet in 1932.[58] His foundational Kurdish grammar book, *Bingehên gramera kurdmancî* ('Principles of Kurmanji Grammar'), was published in 1931 using his developing system.[59]
- **The *Hawar* Magazine:** The cultural magazine *Hawar* ('The Call' or 'Outcry'), published by Bedirxan in Damascus intermittently between 15 May 1932 and 1943, was the crucial vehicle for introducing, disseminating, and refining the new Latin alphabet.[41] Initially, the magazine used both Latin and Arabic scripts, but from issue 24 (1935) onwards, it exclusively used the Latin script, solidifying its role.[59] *Hawar* became a landmark publication, fostering a renaissance in Kurmanji literature and culture, and its launch date is celebrated by some as Kurdish Language Day.[42] It published diverse content, including literature, folklore, linguistic discussions, and translations.[42]
- **Features of the Hawar Alphabet:** The alphabet consists of 31 letters, based on the standard 26 letters of the ISO basic Latin alphabet plus five letters with diacritics: Ç (for /tʃ/), Ê (for /eː/), Î (for /iː/), Ş (for /ʃ/), and Û (for /uː/).[58] Each letter has an uppercase and lowercase form.[63] The vowel system distinguishes short vowels E /ɛ/, I /ɪ/, U /ʊ/ from long vowels A /ɑː/, Ê /eː/, Î /iː/, O /oː/, Û /uː/.[63] Bedirxan also proposed using ḧ and ẍ for the Arabic pharyngeal sounds /ħ/ and /ɣ/ (often representing ع and غ respectively), though their use is not universally standard.[58]

Table 1: The Hawar Alphabet for Kurmanji

Uppercase	Lowercase	IPA Value(s)	Example Word (Meaning)
A	a	/ɑː/	*agir* (fire)
B	b	/b/	*bira* (brother)
C	c	/dʒ/	*car* (time, turn)
Ç	ç	/tʃ/	*çay* (tea)
D	d	/d/	*dar* (tree)
E	e	/ɛ/	*ez* (I)
Ê	ê	/eː/	*dêr* (late)
F	f	/f/	*ferheng* (dictionary)
G	g	/g/	*gund* (village)
H	h	/h/	*hêz* (power)
(Ḧ)	(ḧ)	/ħ/	*(proposed)*
I	i	/ɪ/	*jin* (woman)
Î	î	/iː/	*şîr* (milk)
J	j	/ʒ/	*jiyan* (life)
K	k	/k/	*kurd* (Kurd)
L	l	/l/, /ɫ/	*laş* (body)
M	m	/m/	*mal* (house)
N	n	/n/	*nan* (bread)
O	o	/oː/	*roj* (day, sun)
P	p	/p/	*pere* (money)
Q	q	/q/	*qelem* (pen)
R	r	/ɾ/	*roj* (day, sun)
S	s	/s/	*ser* (head)
Ş	ş	/ʃ/	*şev* (night)
T	t	/t/	*tî* (thirst)
U	u	/ʊ/	*du* (two)
Û	û	/uː/	*kûr* (deep)
V	v	/v/	*vir* (here)
W	w	/w/	*welat* (country)
X	x	/x/	*xewn* (dream)
(Ẍ)	(ẍ)	/ɣ/	*(proposed)*
Y	y	/j/	*yek* (one)
Z	z	/z/	*ziman* (language)

(Note: IPA values can vary slightly by dialect. Ḧ/ḧ and Ẍ/ẍ are not part of the standard 31 letters but were proposed by Bedirxan for specific Arabic sounds often represented by H and X respectively).

6.5. Adoption and Usage

The Hawar alphabet gained widespread acceptance for writing Kurmanji, becoming the primary script used by Kurds in Turkey and Syria, as well as in the diaspora and, more recently, among Kurds in the Caucasus who shifted from Cyrillic.[1] In Iraqi Kurdistan, while the Sorani (Arabic) script remains dominant for official use and Sorani publications, the Hawar alphabet is also used to some extent for Kurmanji (Badini) materials.[58]

6.6. Ongoing Standardization

While Celadet Bedirxan laid the foundation and the Hawar magazine established many conventions, the orthography of Kurmanji in the Latin script is still subject to some variation and ongoing standardization efforts.[23] Issues such as the writing of compounds, loanword adaptation, and minor grammatical points continue to be discussed. Publications like Bahoz Baran's comprehensive *Rêbera Rastnivîsînê* (Orthography Guide, 2014) represent attempts to codify and promote a more unified standard based on the Hawar principles and contemporary usage.[61]

The development and promotion of the Hawar alphabet by Celadet Bedirxan and his contemporaries cannot be viewed solely as a technical linguistic achievement. Occurring in exile amidst the rise of Turkish nationalism and the suppression of Kurdish identity, it represented a powerful political and cultural statement. The choice of the Latin script, mirroring reforms in Turkey, was a deliberate move towards perceived Western modernity and a break from the Perso-Arabic script associated with the Ottoman and Persian past. It was an act of linguistic self-determination, aiming to create a unified, accessible writing system to foster Kurdish literacy, culture, and national consciousness, distinct from the dominant Arab, Persian, and Turkish spheres.[23]

Conversely, the persistent use of multiple scripts for Kurdish today—primarily Hawar Latin for Kurmanji in Turkey/Syria/diaspora and Sorani Arabic for Central Kurdish in Iraq/Iran (and also for Kurmanji in those countries)—is a direct reflection of the political fragmentation of Kurdistan.[1] State borders, differing official language policies, and the historical promotion or suppression of specific dialects and scripts have entrenched this division.[35] The lack of a single, universally adopted script acts as a practical barrier to pan-Kurdish communication and literacy, reinforcing the linguistic and political divisions imposed upon the Kurdish people.

7. Synthesis and Conclusion

7.1. Summary of Findings

The history of the Kurmanji Kurdish language is characterized by both deep historical roots within the West Iranian language family and a complex tapestry of external influences and internal diversification. Its linguistic classification remains nuanced, generally placed within Northwestern Iranian but exhibiting significant affinities and shared innovations with Southwestern languages like Persian, pointing to a dynamic history of contact and

convergence rather than simple linear descent.[1] The precise origins of Kurdish remain obscure due to the lack of attested direct ancestors from the Old and Middle Iranian periods, forcing reliance on comparative reconstruction.[2] While connections to Median and Parthian are debated, no direct line of descent has been established.

Kurmanji emerged as a distinct literary language relatively late, primarily from the 16th century onwards, though earlier fragmentary attestations exist.[2] Its geographical spread across northern Kurdistan and beyond has been shaped by centuries of migrations, the rise and fall of empires (Ottoman, Persian), and crucially, the political fragmentation and often suppressive policies of modern nation-states (Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran) in the 20th century.[4] This history has fostered significant internal dialectal variation within Kurmanji, as well as the deeper divergence between Kurmanji, Sorani, and Southern Kurdish.[1]

Throughout its history, Kurmanji has absorbed substantial linguistic material from contact languages. Arabic and Persian influences are deep-seated, affecting phonology and lexicon extensively, reflecting long-term cultural and religious dominance.[8] Turkish influence is particularly strong in Anatolia, impacting vocabulary and morphology, largely as a result of Ottoman rule and modern Turkish state dominance.[48] Interactions with Armenian and Aramaic/Syriac speaking communities have also left their mark, likely involving substrate/adstrate influences and reciprocal borrowing in specific regions.[49] The development of the Latin-based Hawar alphabet by Celadet Alî Bedirxan in the 1930s was a pivotal moment, providing Kurmanji with a modern, standardized script that also served as a symbol of cultural identity and resistance.[58]

7.2. Interplay of Internal and External Factors

The trajectory of Kurmanji Kurdish underscores the constant interplay between internal linguistic processes and external sociopolitical forces. Internal evolution, such as inherent sound changes and grammatical developments, has driven divergence among dialects. However, external factors have arguably played an even more decisive role. Centuries of language contact within a highly multilingual region have enriched Kurmanji's lexicon and influenced its phonology and structure. More dramatically, the political history of the region—imperial divisions, the absence of a unified Kurdish state, and state-sponsored assimilation or suppression policies—has profoundly impacted the language's status, standardization, and the very lines of communication between its speakers, actively shaping its fragmentation and resilience.

7.3. Challenges and Future Directions

Kurmanji Kurdish continues to face challenges in the 21st century. Standardization efforts are ongoing but complicated by dialectal diversity and the lack of a single political authority across its speaker base.[3] The fight for language rights, particularly concerning education in the mother tongue, remains a critical issue in several countries.[36] Political instability, conflict, and large-scale migration continue to affect speaker communities and language transmission. Despite these hurdles, the language demonstrates remarkable vitality, particularly in diaspora

communities and regions with greater autonomy, where new media, literature, and educational initiatives continue to emerge.

Further research is needed to fill gaps in our understanding, particularly regarding the precise linguistic origins, the detailed mapping and analysis of all Kurmanji sub-dialects, and the nuanced effects of historical language contact.[2] Continued documentation and linguistic analysis are essential for preserving the rich diversity of Kurmanji and supporting its future development.

7.4. Concluding Statement

Kurmanji Kurdish stands as a major world language with a complex and fascinating history. Its journey from obscure origins, through centuries of interaction within the dynamic linguistic environment of the Middle East, to its current status as the vernacular of millions across multiple national borders, offers a compelling case study in language evolution, contact, and resilience. The story of Kurmanji is inextricably linked to the history of the Kurdish people, reflecting their cultural richness, political struggles, and enduring identity in the face of profound historical change.

Works cited

1. Kurdish language - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_language
2. The History of Kurdish and the Development of Literary Kurmanji (Chapter 24), accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-history-of-the-kurds/history-of-kurdish-and-the-development-of-literary-kurmanji/1F01E2A1CDB41F3137A2FA3AD9BC384A
3. Kurdish Language - Peshmerge Morad, accessed April 14, 2025, https://peshmerge.io/kurdish-language/
4. Histories and geographies of Kurdish suppression - Respond Crisis Translation, accessed April 14, 2025, https://respondcrisistranslation.org/en/blog/ks-histories-and-geographies-of-kurdish-suppression
5. Exploring Kurdish Kurmanji Language: Understanding Dialects And Iranian Influence, accessed April 14, 2025, https://languagexs.com/kurdish-kurmanji-linguistic-journey/
6. Kurmanji - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurmanji
7. Kurdish and Persian: Dialects or Separate Languages? - International Journal of Social Science And Human Research, accessed April 14, 2025, https://ijsshr.in/v6i4/Doc/29.pdf
8. KURDISH LANGUAGE i. HISTORY OF THE KURDISH LA - Encyclopædia Iranica, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kurdish-language-i
9. KURDISH LANGUAGE i. HISTORY OF THE KURDISH LANGUAGE - Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 14, 2025,

https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kurdish-language-i/

10. KURDISH SELF-DETERMINATION: LINGUISTIC ASPECT AUTODETERMINAÇÃO CURDA - Portal de Revistas do UNICURITIBA, accessed April 14, 2025, https://revista.unicuritiba.edu.br/index.php/RIMA/article/download/5925/37137400 5

11. en.wikipedia.org, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_language#:~:text=12%20External%20links-,C lassification%20and%20origin,between%20Northwestern%20and%20Southwest ern%20Iranian.

12. Iranian languages - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iranian_languages

13. Kurdish - Ubuntu Wiki, accessed April 14, 2025, https://wiki.ubuntu.com/Kurdish

14. 50 Iranian Languages (Old, Middle and New) | ASPIRANTUM, accessed April 14, 2025, https://aspirantum.com/blog/iranian-languages

15. Pierre LECOQ World Congress of KURDISH STUDIES - Institut kurde de Paris, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.institutkurde.org/en/conferences/kurdish_studies_irbil_2006/Pierre+L ECOQ.html

16. Kurmanjî Kurdish in - Brill, accessed April 14, 2025, https://brill.com/display/book/9789004700567/BP000015.xml

17. Kurdish (also: Kurmanji, Bahdini, Sorani) - Language Contact Manchester, accessed April 14, 2025, http://languagecontact.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/ELA/languages/Kurdish.html

18. Classification system for Western Iranian languages on an areal and genealogical basis (WIP) : r/IndoEuropean - Reddit, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.reddit.com/r/IndoEuropean/comments/1ipop4x/classification_system _for_western_iranian/

19. Middle Eranian Language(s) : r/kurdish - Reddit, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.reddit.com/r/kurdish/comments/p61tga/middle_eranian_languages/

20. Kurdish Language (KUR) – L1 & L2 Speakers, Status, Map, Endangered Level & Official Use - Ethnologue, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.ethnologue.com/language/kur/

21. Southern Kurdish - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Kurdish

22. (PDF) Automatic Kurdish Dialects Identification - ResearchGate, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/295093908_Automatic_Kurdish_Dialect s_Identification

23. Kurdish linguistics : a brief overview - FIS Universität Bamberg, accessed April 14, 2025, https://fis.uni-bamberg.de/bitstreams/b82f44d8-5454-4aa4-b2e6-aa2002b0e7b 7/download

24. (PDF) On the Linguistic History of Kurdish - ResearchGate, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385182245_On_the_Linguistic_History_

of_Kurdish

25. oldest evidence of a Kurdish language? : r/kurdistan - Reddit, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.reddit.com/r/kurdistan/comments/ioktrp/oldest_evidence_of_a_kurdish_language/

26. KURDISH WRITTEN LITERATURE – Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kurdish-written-literature

27. IRAN vi. IRANIAN LANGUAGES AND SCRIPTS (2) Documentation - Encyclopædia Iranica, accessed April 14, 2025, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/iran-vi2-documentation

28. YAZIDIS i. GENERAL - Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/yazidis-i-general-1

29. What Language Do They Speak in Turkey? - Lighthouse Translations, accessed April 14, 2025, https://lighthouseonline.com/blog-en/what-language-do-they-speak-in-turkey/

30. Kurds in Armenia - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds_in_Armenia

31. The Kurdish Language and Literature, accessed April 14, 2025, https://kurdishlessons.com/the-kurdish-language-and-literature/

32. langsci-press.org, accessed April 14, 2025, https://langsci-press.org/catalog/view/235/2541/1850-1

33. Kurdish Territoriality under Ottoman Rule (Chapter 1) - Mapping Kurdistan, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/mapping-kurdistan/kurdish-territoriality-under-ottoman-rule/C643A4B336DB71659E8A4185302BBD7A

34. The History of Kurdish Language, accessed April 14, 2025, https://kurdishacademy.org/?p=133

35. Kurdish Language and the Issue of Standardization - QWX Blog - Zahra Institute, accessed April 14, 2025, https://qwx.zahrainstitute.org/2022/04/08/kurdish-language-and-the-issue-of-standardization/

36. Kurds in Turkey - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds_in_Turkey

37. Turkey's Kurdish language policy - ResearchGate, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290553557_Turkey's_Kurdish_language_policy

38. Kurdish Language Rights During the First AKP Ruling Period from November 2002 to June 2015, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2016/Kolcak.pdf

39. Central Kurdish - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Kurdish

40. Kurdish - UC Berkeley Library Update, accessed April 14, 2025, https://update.lib.berkeley.edu/2020/08/24/kurdish/

41. KURDISH LANGUAGE ii. HISTORY OF KURDISH STUDIE - Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 14, 2025,

https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kurdish-language-ii-history-of-kurdish-studies

42. Kurdish Journals and Magazines - KurdîLit, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.kurdilit.net/?page_id=2501&lang=en

43. Regional Variation in Kurmanji: a Preliminary Classification of ... - Brill, accessed April 14, 2025, https://brill.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9789004706552/BP000009.xml

44. Updated Repost: Clearing up some misconceptions about the labelling of Kurdish languages and dialects - Reddit, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.reddit.com/r/kurdish/comments/116r9s3/updated_repost_clearing_up_some_misconceptions/

45. KERMANSHAH vii. LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS - Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 14, 2025, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/kermanshah-07-languages

46. Kurdish language ... development post-repression - 1, accessed April 14, 2025, https://hawarnews.com/en/158932752016445

47. Turkish language - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_language

48. A note on the contact between Kurmanji Kurdish and Turkish at lexical and morphological level - ResearchGate, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316321535_A_note_on_the_contact_between_Kurmanji_Kurdish_and_Turkish_at_lexical_and_morphological_level

49. Kurdish and Armenian, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/conference/07-CaucasusConference/pdf/final%20abstracts%20english/AsatrianAbstract.pdf

50. The History of Kurdish and the Development of Literary Kurmanji, accessed April 14, 2025, https://core-cms.cambridgecore.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/1F01E2A1CDB41F3137A2FA3AD9BC384A/9781108473354c24_603-632.pdf/history_of_kurdish_and_the_development_of_literary_kurmanji.pdf

51. NEG-ARAMAIC AND KURDISH - Brill, accessed April 14, 2025, https://brill.com/edcollchap/book/9789004659377/B9789004648166_s014.pdf

52. Diversity in Convergence: Kurdish and Aramaic Variation Entangled in - Brill, accessed April 14, 2025, https://brill.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9789004706552/BP000011.xml

53. Syriac language - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syriac_language

54. What Language Is Spoken In Iraq? - Talk In Arabic, accessed April 14, 2025, https://talkinarabic.com/iraqi/what-language-is-spoken-in-iraq/

55. Mîrza Mihemed / Mirza Pamat - Oral Tradition Journal, accessed April 14, 2025, https://oraltradition.org/mirza-mihemed-mirza-pamat/

56. Neo-Aramaic - Language Science Press, accessed April 14, 2025, https://langsci-press.org/catalog/view/235/1819/1845-1

57. Diversity in convergence: Kurdish and Aramaic variation entangled - ResearchGate, accessed April 14, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316362969_Diversity_in_convergence_K

urdish_and_Aramaic_variation_entangled

58. Kurdish alphabets - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdish_alphabets

59. Celadet Alî Bedirxan - Wikipedia, accessed April 14, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celadet_Al%C3%AE_Bedirxan

60. Celadet Alî Bedirxan (1893-1951) - New York Kurdish Cultural Center, accessed April 14, 2025, https://nykcc.org/celadet-ali-bedirxan-1893-1951/

61. 118 The modern Roman-based Kurdish writing system was developed by Celadet Alî Bedirxan (Djaladat Ali Bedir-Khan) in the early - Brill, accessed April 14, 2025, https://brill.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9789004506152/BP000016.pdf

62. The Blogs: A story about Norway's and Kurdistan's fight for freedom | Michael Arizanti, accessed April 14, 2025, https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/a-story-about-norways-and-kurdistans-fight-for-freedom/

63. Kurmanji Hawar orthography notes - r12a.io, accessed April 14, 2025, https://r12a.github.io/scripts/latn/kmr