

The Kurds are not a Homogeneous Ethnic or Cultural Group

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The people categorized today under the term Kurds are various tribes that migrated west from Central Asia and settled for a considerable period of time in and around the Zagros Mountain range, western Iran. These Central Asian tribes picked along the way admixture from various ethnic, religious and linguistic tribes. This Central Asian origin appears in the Kurdish Male Y-DNA lineage haplogroups R1a-Z93/Z94/Z95/Z2125/Z2123 which have been proven to originate in Central Asia meaning that's where the Kurdish R1a ancestors came from. These haplogroups have highest frequency in Kurds in West Asia today.

Several genetic studies on Iranian population have been conducted, including one by an international research team of scientists from several European, Iranian and Australian universities. This research has shown that today's Iranian population is composed of partially highly heterogeneous ethnic groups, exhibiting a high degree of genetic variation. The results, obtained from the first genome-wide genetic characterization of the Iranian population by this team, appeared in *PLOS Genetics*. The researchers analyzed the genetic data of 1,021 volunteers whose parents and grandparents identified themselves as belonging to one of eleven selected ethnic groups from all over Iran, including Iranian Persians, Azeri, Arabs, Baluchi, Gilaki and Kurds. They found out that Iranian Persians and Kurds exhibited high in-group genetic variation.¹

The findings of the above research team is substantiated by historical accounts. History tells us that in the past millennia, the region of Iran has repeatedly received migratory influx: Indo-European language speakers settled there, Arabs entered the lands in the 7th century, and later Turkic-speaking people from Central Asia joined the population. Thus, the population of the region of Iran, including the people known as Kurds, comprises numerous ethnic, religious and linguistic groups that admixed to various degrees.² The nomad Kurds who were in the Zagros Mountains for a long time show strong genetic overlaps with Persians, Lurs, Baluchi, Azeris, Arabs and other groups. Furthermore, further genetic overlap occurred as the consequence of abduction of Armenians, Assyrians, Caucasians boys and girls that came as a result of the massacres of these latter people by the various Kurdish tribes in the last two to three centuries. This diversity in the Kurdish society leads it naturally to become a non-homogeneous society. This also explains the natural reality that the Kurdish society speaks various languages, such as Kurmanjî, Soranî, Zazakî and Pehlewani, and many of these are mixed with Arabic, Persian, Turkic. These Kurdish languages are mutually unintelligible and have distinct cultural and

¹ Accessed 3/6/2025. Distinct genetic variation and heterogeneity of the Iranian population
<https://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgen.1008385>

² Accessed 3/6/2025. Genome study shows that Iran's population is more heterogeneous than previously believed.
<https://uni-koeln.de/universitaet/aktuell/meldungen/presseinformationen/detail/genome-study-shows-that-iran-s-population-is-more-heterogeneous-than-previously-believed>

sometimes even ethnic markers³ and reflect notable differences in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and the writing script.

This non-homogeneous structure of Kurdish society is asserted by several historians.

Michael Gunter writes, “... *the Kurds themselves are notoriously divided geographically, politically, linguistically, and tribally. In all of the Kurdish revolts of the 20th century, for example, significant numbers of Kurds have supported the government because of their tribal antipathies for those rebelling. In Iraq, these pro-government Kurds have been derisively referred to as josh (little donkeys), while in recent years the Turkish government created a pro-government militia of Kurds called village guards. Thus, their mountains and valleys have divided the Kurds as much as they have ethnically stamped them.*”⁴

In an interview by Joedi Tejel in March 2007 with Rashid Hamo, one of the founders of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria in 1957, the Kurdish leader asserted, “*the concept of a Kurdish community, defined as a group distinguished by one trait, linguistic or denominational, which the group considered as ‘specific’ and a ‘border’ of demarcation from the ‘others’ during a period of conflict, was not a reality at the beginning of the 1920s. On the other hand, patrilineal relationships, local, religious, and tribal ties determined the social practices and the mobilizations of the Kurds.*”⁵ Later we read that, “... *the Syrian Kurds, because of their geographic origins, their history, their lifestyle (nomadic/sedentary), and their settlement of diverse environments did not constitute a homogenous group at the beginning of the twentieth century.*”⁶

The monumental study about the Kurds by Garnik Asatrian states, “*the term Kurd, as an ethnonym, is traditionally applied to an ethnic conglomeration whose various parts reside in the bordering areas of a number of Near Eastern countries. The approximate number of this great and—in many aspects—not homogeneous mass, featured, nonetheless, under the label of Kurds, constitutes around 20-23 million people.*”⁷ Later, Asatrian states, “*the Kurds are far from being a homogeneous entity—either ethnically, culturally, or linguistically ...*”⁸ Prof. Zeynep Kaya tells us that “*the early 20th Century Kurdish revolts against the Ottomans give significant insights to how Kurdish tribal leaders defined their territoriality. However, these revolts were the result of tribal leaders’ efforts to maintain their territoriality in the face of Ottoman centralisation policies, but these efforts were not underlined by nationalist sentiments in the way nationalism was defined in Europe in the nineteenth century or defined by Kurds today.*”⁹ This enigmatic and confusing interpretation of the Kurdish national question and identity is explained clearly by Omer Tekdemir. He states that Kurdish political identity is a central issue in Kurdish rights’

³ Garnik Asatrian. Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds. In *Iran and the Caucasus* 13 (2009). Page 58.

⁴ Michael Gunter. AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW TO THE KURDISH PROBLEM. In “The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies”, 2013, No. 2 (4). Page 160.

⁵ Jordi Tejel. “Syria’s Kurds: History, politics and society”. Routledge, 2009. Page 4.

⁶ Ibid. Page 9.

⁷ Garnik Asatrian. “Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds”. In *Iran and the Caucasus* 13 (2009). Page 58.

⁸ Ibid. Page 66.

⁹ Zeynep N. Kaya. “Kurdish Territoriality under Ottoman Rule”. Cambridge University Press: 12 June 2020.

demands in Turkey. However, this identity is not formed in a homogeneous context and has become a ground for a hegemonic struggle between internal Kurdish groups.¹⁰

Prof. Janet Klein, an associate professor of history at the University of Akron, Ohio, states, *“Kurdish agency has been sorely lacking from narratives on Kurdish history until recently. While the concept of the Kurds as a “people divided” would really take shape in the modern period, the situation surrounding its emergence has indeed colored Kurdish history from the 16th century, and particularly since the 19th century. Outsiders have pointed to the ‘fickle’ or ‘wishy-washy’ behavior of Kurdish leaders who have negotiated with rivals or enemy states, and even Kurdish nationalists have abhorred this lack of unity and the role that Kurdish leaders have played in achieving said lack of unity”*.¹¹ Later, we read that the Ottomans attempted to unify the various groups known as Kurds to create, *“a new version of the longstanding relationship with Kurdish notables in the late nineteenth century with the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, a Kurdish tribal militia that was ostensibly formed to act as a local bulwark against Russia, but in reality was to be a local militia to be called up against Armenian nationalist activities in the region. It was also a means to bring the remote and difficult-to-govern region into the Ottoman fold, and to transform the Kurds into “civilized” Ottomans and to remove them from a nomadic lifestyle.”*¹²

This diversity has been exemplified in the continuous wars between the various “Kurdish” tribes throughout history. Consider the Soran versus Bohtan tribal wars of the 17th and 18th Centuries. Also, consider the 1994-1997 Kurdish civil war in northern Iraq. Masoud Barzani, the head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) reached out to Saddam Hussein (whom the Kurds claim to have gassed them 4 years earlier in 1988 during the Anfal¹³) and requested the Iraqi Army help against the counterpart peshmerga forces of Jalal Talabani, the head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) faction who was in control of the historic Assyrian city of Arbil at the time. In 1996, the army of Saddam Hussein together with the Barzani’s peshmerga attacked Arbil and pushed the Talabani out (retrieved to Sulaimaniya) while killing thousands from both sides in the process.

¹⁰ Omer Tekdemir. The social construction of ‘many Kurdishnesses’. Accessed 3/7/2025 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26782095> Vol. 19, No. 5 (October 2019), pp. 876-900

¹¹ Janet Klein. “Kurdish identity in the Ottoman Empire”. Paper in “THE KURDS: History - Religion - Language – Politics”. 2015 Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior. Page 10.

¹² Ibid. Page 12.

¹³ Iraq and Iran were at war (1980–1988). Both countries have chemical weapons and both countries wanted to control Halabja. The Kurds in Iraq sided with the Iranians and allowed the Iranian army into Iraqi territories. So Iraq had to protect its territories and force the Iranians out. There is possibility that Iraq used its brand of chemical weapons, the mustard gas. As the Iranians withdrew from Halabja and the Iraqi Army entered it, the Iranians bombed the town, but in this case, the Iranians used the Cyanide gas. This gas caused the greatest damage. The US officials investigated the tragedy that befell on the Kurdish civilian population in the summer of 1988 as the war was winding down. They found out that most of the killed had their extremities colored bluish. The blue color comes from the Cyanide gas (Iranian) and not mustard gas (Iraqi). That is a known fact. So Iran caused the tragedy in Halabja and not the Iraqi army.

The Kurds have received a lot of attention because they are executing the Western future plans for the Middle East. The West naturally spreads a positive and manipulated narrative about the Kurds to execute this plan. Asatrian puts it best when he states, “hardly any other field of Near Eastern Studies has even been so politicized as the study of the history and culture of the Kurds, having produced an industry of amateurs, with few rivals in other domains of Oriental studies. ... Due to the politicized nature of Kurdological disciplines, many ideological elements of non-Academic provenance, that have become a constant set of stereotypes and clichés.”¹⁴

The West cannot turn a blind eye to the cultural genocide that the Kurds are committing against non-Kurds in the Middle East, including the indigenous Assyrians and Yezidis, which was expressed truthfully by Michael Rubin.¹⁵

¹⁴ Garnik Asatrian. “Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds”. In *Iran and the Caucasus* 13 (2009). Page 1-2.

¹⁵ Accessed 3/7/2025. Stop giving Iraqi Kurds a free pass on religious freedom.

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/stop-giving-iraqi-kurds-a-free-pass-on-religious-freedom>