

## Kurd is Not Related to Qardu, Kardu, Kardukh, Carduni, etc.

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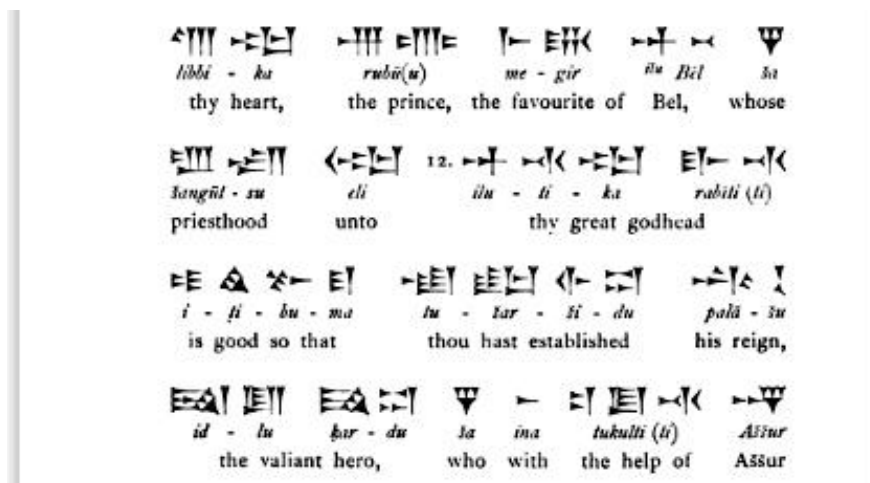
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Kurdish historians, politicians and sympathizers argue that the Kurds are ancient people. They have built their case on the foundation that certain words: Cardu or Qardu, Coruene, Carduni (Karduni), etc. that have appeared in an ancient texts meant Kurd.

What do we know about these many words that sound like Kurd? What do they mean? Where did they come from?

### Qardu

The word Qardu was not used by the Assyrians to reflect a certain ethnic people. In the Assyrian Akkadian language, the word Qardu meant “Valiant” or “Valour”, with the root word of “Qardutu”.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Assyrians used the word “qarduti” to describe their brave soldiers.<sup>2</sup> *See kur-du in the last line below.*



Also, the Assyrian word Qardu appeared in the Middle Bronze Age Sumerian as Karda. In the Assyrian form Qardu, it referred to a region in the Upper Tigris basin, which appeared in the corrupted Arabic form as Gudi. This Cudi would be continued as the first element in the toponym Corduene, mentioned by Xenophon as a tribe in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC. *See more on this in the section Karduk (Armenian for Kardukh) as this tribe was not kurds rather Armenians.*

### Cardu (or Kardu)

What makes two words to be derived or originated from each other? We have to ask linguists and not rely on claims by nationalists. One of the most expert on Kurdish history, Basile Nektine, stated that

<sup>1</sup> Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD, Volume 13-Q) on page 129

<sup>2</sup> [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.a0000381566&seq=170&fbclid=IwAR3PlwuRBlcu6d-3N1O81SvOzBRYLcEsmfuVCyxfx0nDQOCrCV\\_8rYQIFU\\_aem\\_AfAED4R\\_xIjJKYUq1k-zA8gVUtC\\_KUjVxiklcQz4uLdeTTupp2lu9qFTVDxMODS324FoJAT6Ux9LGhM0cN3VoRDY](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.a0000381566&seq=170&fbclid=IwAR3PlwuRBlcu6d-3N1O81SvOzBRYLcEsmfuVCyxfx0nDQOCrCV_8rYQIFU_aem_AfAED4R_xIjJKYUq1k-zA8gVUtC_KUjVxiklcQz4uLdeTTupp2lu9qFTVDxMODS324FoJAT6Ux9LGhM0cN3VoRDY)

linguists such as Hartmann and Weissbach have asserted “*Kurd is not a linguistic form of Cardu (Kardu)*”.<sup>3</sup>

حدثنا المؤرخ الاغريقي كزينوفون عام ٤٠٠ ق . م . عن  
الكردوخيين وهم شعب عاش في منطقة الكردستان . وكان  
الاعتقاد السائد أنهم أجداد الأكراد . فهم جيليون فرسان  
مثلهم ، يقطنون نفس البلاد ولهم اسم شبيه بلسهم . ولكن  
أبحاث بعض المستشرقين أمثال نولدكي في كتابه عن الأكراد ،  
وهارتمان وويسباخ أثبتت أن لفظة كـردـي ليست لغوياً من  
صيغة لفظة كـردو التي تعني : « قوياً كالبلط » . ويرى هؤلاء

- ٢٠ -

العلماء أن الأكراد ينحدرون من السريين الذين ذكرهم سترابون  
وغيره من المؤرخين وقد كانوا يسكنون بلاد ميديا الصغرى  
وبلاد بريسيس . ثم إن العلامة ليهان بوت وهو من أشهر  
الباحثين المختصين بالموضوع ، أثبت في كتابه عن أصل الجيورجيين  
أن الكـردوخيين هم أجداد الجيورجيين - الكرتاليين « سكان  
جبال القوقاز اليوم » وأنهم كانوا يقطنون المنطقة التي يلتقي  
بها الفرع الشرقي من دجلة وهو يوهتان سر بالفرع الغربي .  
فالشعب الكردي إذاً لا يمت بصلة لشعب الكـردووخ . وقد  
يرهن العالمان نولدكي وهارتمان أن الأكراد أتوا من بلاد  
فارس واستوطنوا نفس المنطقة .

Some similarity in pronunciation happens all the time between languages. Scholars Nöldeke, Weissbach, Hartmann and others have stated that the Kurds cannot claim descendecy from ancient people just because they are living on the lands of those ancient people. F.C. Andreas, a German/Armenian, is perhaps the first scholar that suggested a connection between kurt, or perhaps kurti, to Cyrtii (Cyrtaei) who were localized within the borders of the Armenian historical province Korcayk.<sup>4</sup> However, this is still a theory that scholars struggle to prove without a doubt.

### **Kardukh (Karduk)**

Regarding the term Kardukhs mentioned in Mesopotamia by Xenophon's Anabasis and the retreat of ten thousand men in 400/401 BC, scholars assert that it is not related to Kurds. This connection, writes Prof. Asatrian, must be considered now as obsolete. The connection was thoroughly discussed and rejected by Theodore Nöldeke just on the threshold of the 20th century. Two decades later G. R. Driver attempted to revive the correlation, nonetheless, it was not accepted within iranological academic circles for phonetic and historical reasons.<sup>5</sup>

3 Nekitine, Basile. Les Kurdes (The Kurds). Paris, 1956. Arabic Translation, Beirut. 1958. page 20.

4 Garnik Asatrian. “Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds”, Iran and the Caucasus Vol 13, No. 1. Yerevan State University. Brill, 2009, page 26.

5 Garnik Asatrian. “Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds”, Iran and the Caucasus Vol 13, No. 1. Yerevan State University. Brill, 2009, page 25.

A people called the Carduchoi inhabited the mountains north of the Tigris as they lived in well-provisioned villages. The Greeks suffered great troubles while trying to traverse the country of the Carduchians. They have been also mentioned as *Gordi* by Hecataeus of Miletus c. 520 BC. However, in the Armenian sources, the region of Corduene was called Korduk'. In these Armenian records, unlike in the Greek ones, the people of Korduk' were loyal to Armenian rule and the rulers of Korduk' are presented as members of the Armenian nobility. A prince of Korduk' served in the counsel of the Armenian king Trdat and helped to defend Armenia's southern borders and there has been an Armenian Apostolic Church in that region.<sup>6</sup>

Other scholars assert that the name Kardukhs is in reality the same as the name of Georgians Cartu. Eminent scientist Carl Friedrich Lehmann-Haupt said that the Karts (Iberians) were formed as a result of the merging of the Kardukhs from northern Mesopotamia.<sup>7</sup> Kardukh is also mentioned in the above reference by Nektine where scholars Hartmann and Weissbach have asserted that it does not refer to Kurds.<sup>8</sup>

### **Cordyene (Corduene)**

Many writers have claimed that Kardukhi or the land of the Kardukh mentioned earlier, became known as Cordyene with time. Wigram enforces the fact that the Latin Cordyene was a province ceded to Rome by Persia after the 298 Battle of Satala, which took place in Armenia, in which the Roman army commanded by Caesar Galerius won a crushing victory over the Sassanian troops headed by King Narseh. The Assyrian term for Cordyene is Qardu writes Wigram. This province included many Christians at this early day of Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

### **Carduni**

Carduni which is located to the south of Assyria, the area here termed “Karduniaš (elsewhere termed Babylonia) incorporated several smaller regions and former city states from where the Tigris and Euphrates come the closest near Baghdad. The name Karduniaš was given to the region during the Middle Babylonian period under its Kassite rulers (ca. 1500 –1150), and is the only geographical term known to have encompassed the entirety of the region. The region was otherwise known to its inhabitants as “the land of Sumer and Akkad” from the end of the third millennium until the Persian period—a phrase that refers to two separate districts within the broader expanse of Karduniaš.<sup>10</sup>

### **Final Thoughts**

There has been no presence of Kurds in Mesopotamia in ancient times. The most critical argument to make here is that archeology does not support the claim and because we know that the Kurds are the

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6 Marciak, Mark, *Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene: Three Regna Minora of Northern Mesopotamia Between East and West*, 2017.

7 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350354050\\_Ancient\\_Georgian\\_People\\_-\\_Facts\\_and\\_Hypothesis\\_History\\_of\\_Georgia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350354050_Ancient_Georgian_People_-_Facts_and_Hypothesis_History_of_Georgia)

8 Nektine, Basile. *Les Kurdes (The Kurds)*. Paris, 1956. Arabic Translation, Beirut. 1958

9 W.A. Wigram. *An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church or the Church of the Sassanid Persian Empire 100-640 AD*. London, 1910. p. 46

10 See, Adrienne L. Spunaugle, *Empire and Ethnicity: A Social History of Deportation in Assyria and Karduniaš during the First Millennium BCE*. A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Near Eastern Studies) in the University of Michigan, 2020.

inhabitants of the Zagros Mountains in Western Iran. Most critically is that there are no archaeological remains of people known as Kurds anywhere in Mesopotamia. In an interview by Egyptian Researcher Dr. Ahmad Saad Zayid with Dr. Khazal Al-Majidi about civilizations, Al-Majidi asserts that the Kurds are not Sumerians, not Akkadians, not Babylonians, not Medes, etc. He asserts, Kurds are Kurds, no more no less.<sup>11</sup>

Also, the word Kurd in this Latin format poses the question of its original form. We find the answer in the Persian native form KWRT, which means "Tent-Dweller". The earliest occurrence of this term in written sources is attested in the form of KURT (KWRT-) in the Middle Persian treatise. The plural form of this KWRT (KURT) is KURTAN. Both Kurtān meaning "shepherds, nomads, tent-dwellers" and martohm-ikurtān meaning "nomadic group, transhumant populace" appeared in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD Pahlavi texts. Meanwhile, kurd(ān), akrād meaning "nomads, cattle-breeders, brigands, robbers, highwaymen" appeared in the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD in Arabo-Persian Texts.<sup>12</sup>

In his 1968 Ph.D. dissertation presented at the History and Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, John Limbert states that philologists feel that the word Kurd is not related to Kardū, Kyrti, Kyrtiae, Corduene, Kart'veli.

In spite of the apparent similarity between the words Kurd and Kardū, Kyrtiae, and Corduene, philologists feel that the older terms are distinct from Kurd by reason of the final short vowel which is part of the root of these words, i.e., Kardū (kardū-karduw) and Kyrti. The initial K or Kardū may actually represent Q, in which case there is a connection with the Semitic root QRD\*, meaning brave or strong. Furthermore, Kardū may be related to Kart'veli, the indigenous name for the Georgians. The name Kurd probably comes from the Persian Gord, meaning "hero", which would be an Iranian interpretation of the local name, Kardū or Qardū.<sup>2</sup>

It is a mystery how and why the Latin form Kurd emerged. But, we know that within the same Latin language words that sound the same but are completely different. Consider, By, Buy, Bye and consider To, Two, Too and many more. Making casual statements about the descendancy of people based on coincidental similarity in pronunciation is primitive.

Finally, historically, the word Kurd meant different thing in different places. Asatrian writes, Kord (kurd) in the South Caspian area seems to denote exclusively "shepherd of small cattle" in semantic opposition to gales, "shepherd of neat cattle", a fact, which is emphasized almost by all native

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11 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9HayJo6nx4>

12 Garnik Asatrian. *Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds*, Iran and the Caucasus Vol 13, No. 1. Yerevan State University. Brill, 2009. Page 28.

observers. Kurd, as is well-known, had a rather indiscriminate use in the early mediaeval Arabo-Persian historiography and literature, with an explicit social connotation, meaning "nomad, tent-dweller, shepherd" as well as "robber, highwayman, oppressor of the weak and treacherer".<sup>13</sup>

Many scholars have shown that the Kurds appeared in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century with the rise of Islam, including Asatrian and Dr. Khazal Al-Majidi<sup>14</sup> and Asatrian.<sup>15</sup> This is substantiated in a different manner during the Sassanid Period (224 to 651). We read that unlike the settled people in the Sassanid Empire, there was little information about the nomadic people. It is known that these unsettled people were called "Kurds" by the Sasanians, and that they regularly served the Sasanian military, particularly the Dailamite and Gilani nomads. This way of handling the nomads continued into the Islamic period, where the service of the Dailamites and Gilanis continued unabated.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, just because the modern word Kurd sounds similar to terms that appeared in some ancient documents does not mean that those words and Kurd are the same — it is pure coincidental.

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13 Ibid, p. 22

14 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9HayJo6nx4>

15 Garnik Asatrian. *Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds*, Iran and the Caucasus Vol 13, No. 1. Yerevan State University. Brill, 2009. Page 25.

16 Daryaei, Touraj. *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*. I.B. Tauris. 2008.