

Eleven Facts about Kurds and Kurdistan

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The following facts are important for the readers to understand, because there have been many attempts (and continue even today) to rewrite a new Kurdish history. The process of "rewriting" Kurdish history often stems from the necessity Kurdish leaders envision as they continue in the path of Kurdish state-building. These attempts would not have been an issue, but when this rewriting of history affects the history of the people surrounding the Kurds, it was important to emphasize these points:

1. Historical evidence clearly show that eponyms such as Qardu, Kardu, Corduene, Kardukh that appear in much earlier historical records, are not accepted linguistically (scholarly) as direct linguistic ancestors to the modern ethnonym "Kurd". In fact, many of the strongest supporters of Kurds see these connections as speculative that lack definitive proof.

See:

*** Rawlinson, George. *The Seven Great Monarchies Of The Ancient Eastern World. Updated 2016.***

*** McDowall, David. *A Modern History of the Kurds. 1997.***

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

*** Asatrian, Garnik. *Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds. Journal Iran and the Caucasus, 13 (2009).***

2. In this Kurdish history construction process, the Kurdish leaders and historians claim that Kurdish language is linked to that of the Medes, Mitanni or Gutian. However, Linguists assert that while Kurdish is an Iranian language belonging to the Indo-European family, there is no definitive linguistic proof linking it directly to the Mitanni or Gutian languages. The Median language, on the other hand, is classified as a Northwest Iranian language, which shares a common ancestor with Kurdish; However, because there are no surviving texts written in the Median language, it is not possible for scholars to make a comparison. Also, there is no direct, empirical linguistic proof that Kurdish is a direct descendant of the specific language spoken by the Medes. Also, while Kurdish languages may share a substratum with older regional languages, it evolved through a distinct historical process involving intense contact with not only other Iranian languages, but with other and non-Iranian languages, such as Arabic and Turkish. The historical connection is often inferred from geographical proximity rather than direct linguistic evidence and we know that shared geographical regions do not necessarily prove ethnic linkage. Many White British, Italians or Dutch live today in America and for over 200 years. Does that make them Native American Indians?

See:

* *Yarshater, Ehsan, ed. Encyclopædia Iranica. (Encyclopedia)*

* *Windfuhr, Gernot, ed. The Iranian Languages. 2009.*

* *Gershevitch, Ilya, and William Bayne Fisher. The Cambridge History of Iran: The Median and Achaemenian Periods. 1968.*

* *Kreyenbroek, Philip G. The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview. 1992.*

3. Until the Sassanid Dynasty (3rd-7th centuries) there is no mention of distinct people known under this exact ethnonym "Kurd".

See:

* *Council on Foreign Relations. [The Kurds' Long Struggle With Statelessness](#)*

4. The Sassanids applied the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) term Kwrt for the first time on ALL the nomads of the Zagros Mountains. The term functioned more like a social category that was synonymous with tent-dwellers or nomads and not as an ethnic label.

See:

* *Bozarslan, Hamit, Cengiz Gunes, and Veli Yadirgi. The Cambridge History of the Kurds. 2021.*

* *Asatrian, Garnik. The Kurds: A Concise History and Fact Book. 2009.*

* *Van Bruinessen, Martin. Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan. 1991.*

5. With the birth of Islam (7th century), the conversion of Kurds to Islam and mixing with the Arabs, the term Kwrt evolved and was adopted by the Arabs as singular Kurd and plural Akrad.

See:

* *McDowall, David. A Modern History Of The Kurds. 1997.*

6. Through early Islam, the terms Kurd and Akrad reflected often as the sociological descriptor of nomad/nomads and in some Syriac and Armenian records as bandit(s) and robber(s).

See:

* *James, Boris. The Uses and Values of the Term "Kurd" in Arabic Medieval Literary Sources. 2006.*

7. Around the 10th – 12th centuries, as these nomads integrated deeper into the socio-political fabric of the Islamic world and reflected administrative and military integration, the Arabs began to treat the term Kurd as an ethnic label.

See:

* *Read about the spread of Islam among the nomad Kurds.*

8. After the term Kurd became treated as an ethnic designation (10th – 12th centuries), the term Kurdistan (the vague land of Kurds) was born as well. The formalization of the name "Kurdistan" is widely attributed to the 12th-century Seljuk Sultan Sanjar, who established a province by that name to acknowledge the distinct personality and regional presence of the Kurdish people.

See:

**President of the Kurdish Institute of Paris.*

**McDowall, David. A Modern History of the Kurds. 1997.*

Before the Sassanids, there is no Kurdistan on maps. The Sassanian Empire shows Assyria, Mesopotamia, Adiabene, Arbil, Armenia, but justifiably does not show Kurdistan.



9. There is no linguistic unity between the languages (dialects) people known as Kurds, such as Sorani, Kurmanji, Zazaki, etc. For instance, the Kurds who live in different countries are unable to communicate and understand each other. In fact, within the

Kurdish region of northern Iraq, the Kurds of Sulaimaniya who speak Sorani do not understand the Kurds of Dohuk who speak Kurmanji. Also, the Kurds do not have a unified writing system. The Kurds of Iran and Sulaimaniya (Iraq) for example use modified Arabic farsi alphabet while the Kurds of Turkiye and Dohuk (Iraq) use modified Latin. That makes communication between the two groups difficult if not impossible. There have been efforts since late 1990s by Kurdish intellectuals and the KRG of northern Iraq to standardize the Kurdish languages and the alphabet.

See:

***McDowall, David. *A Modern History of the Kurds*. 1997.**

***Kreyenbroek, Philip G. "On the Kurdish Language," in *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*. 1992.**

***Kaya, Mehmet. *The Zaza Kurds of Turkey: A Middle Eastern Minority in a Globalised Society*. 2024.**

***Hassanpour, A. *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*. 1992.**

10. The attempt to trace a linear, unbroken etymological descent from ancient Mesopotamian groups to the modern Kurdish people is frequently viewed by modern historiography as an oversimplification that ignores the heterogeneous origins of the region's inhabitants.

See:

***Van Bruinessen, Martin. *Agha, Shaikh and State*. 1991.**

11. The Kurdish language(s) is replete with Arabic and Persian words and idioms.

See:

***Berzo Berbeyan, *Kurdish Language*.**

***Sabir Hasan Rasul. *A Shift from Arabic to English: A New Trend in Using Loanwords in Kurdish Journalistic Translation*. 2020**

***Twana S. Hamid. *Kurdish Adaptation of Arabic Loan Consonants: A Feature Driven Model of Loan Adaptation*. 2021**

***Ergin Öpengin. *The Influence of Arabic on Kurdish*. 2020.**

***Vural Genç. *The Cultural Impact of the Persian Language in and around Bidlis*. 2024**