REVIEW ESSAYS

The Kurds

Bulloch, John, and Harvey Morris. *No Friends But the Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds.* London: Viking, 1992.

van Bruinessen, Martin. *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan.* London: Zed Books, 1992.

Entessar, Nader. *Kurdish Ethnonationalism.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992.

Hassanpour, Amir. *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985.* San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992.

Izady, Mehrdad R. *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook.* Washington: Crane Russak, 1992.

Kreyenbroek, Philip G., and Stefan Sperl, eds. *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview.* London: Routledge, 1992.

Laizer, Sheri. *Into Kurdistan: Frontiers Under Fire.* London: Zed Books, 1991.

McDowall, David. *The Kurds: A Nation Denied.* London: Minority Rights Group, 1992.

Olson, Robert. *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1989.

The sudden emergence of the Kurdish issue in world politics following their tragic refugee plight at the hands of Saddam Hussein has spawned a number of timely and useful studies. The Bruinessen, Hassanpour, and Izady volumes break new ground and will become scholarly classics in the field. The collection of edited articles by Kreyenbroek and Sperl offers a number of current analyses of the Kurdish situation and thus updates a valuable contribution similarly made more than a decade ago by the series of articles edited by Gerard Chailand, *People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan,* (1980). Bulloch and Morris, Entessar, and McDowall offer very readable and current introductions to the overall problem, while Laizer presents an interesting, journalistic impression that is part travelogue and part political editorial. Olson's study is an objective, historical analysis of the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 in Turkey that was published just before the 1991 Gulf War and is thus *sui generis* among the other books reviewed here.

Although still only in his forties, Martin van Bruinessen has clearly established himself as the current dean of Kurdish scholars. Based on many years of

extensive fieldwork in Kurdistan and comprehensive reading of primary and secondary sources, Bruinessen's numerous socioanthropological and political studies have greatly increased our knowledge of the Kurds and are the standard by which other studies of this largest nation in the world without its own state are judged.

Bruinessen's *magnum opus* is *Agha, Shaikh and State*, a revised edition of his doctoral dissertation of the same title originally published in very limited quantities in 1978 and thus until now difficult to find. The present edition admirably maintains the earlier edition's high standards of academic scholarship with valuable updatings to the text and bibliography. Without making any substantial changes to his major findings, Bruinessen has also rewritten certain parts and eliminated some of the excessive detail of his earlier edition. In the case of the *nurcu* [followers of *Nur*, the divine Light] movement (pp. 257-59), significant reinterpretations have been made based on new findings. The volume is richly documented and has an extensive bibliography and useful index. The family trees of some of the major shaikhly families of Kurdistan, such as the Barzinjis, and the Barzanis are listed in the appendixes. Spellings of Kurdish terms have been standardized and modernized in contrast to the earlier edition. Unfortunately, however, the unique photographs of the original edition have been omitted from the present one.

As Bruinessen himself asserts, "this book deals in the first place with the primordial loyalties" (p. 7) of tribes and dervish orders. Following an introductory chapter that also contains a concise analysis of the Kurdish national movement up to 1991, Bruinessen analyzes the structure of the Kurdish tribe and its subdivisions. He demonstrates that "the terms of standard anthropological usage, 'tribe', 'clan', and 'lineage', appear to be a straightjacket [sic] that ill fits the social reality of Kurdistan. Possibly, inspection of the terms used by the Kurds themselves and the way they are applied will provide a better insight." (pp. 59-60) In describing specific tribes, Bruinessen shows how leadership and conflicts are closely interrelated. He also finds that "the manipulation of the central state in order to get the upper hand in a local, tribal conflict is a recurrent theme in Kurdish history." (p. 75)

In the next chapter, Bruinessen presents historical material to illustrate that the contemporary Kurdish tribes are not autonomous units, but largely creations of surrounding states:

> The impact of the state on the tribes is, in fact, much more varied and penetrating than has become clear so far; the . . . destruction of the emirates, punitive campaigns against unruly tribes, forced settlement and the levying of taxes are only a part of the entire spectrum. (p. 134)

Chapter 4 deals with the political role of such religious figures as the shaikhs and the Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders they lead. "Who does not have a shaikh, his shaikh is Satan," is a revealing maxim still repeated in parts of Kurdistan. "Because of the respect they enjoy they [the shaikhs] are ideal mediators, in conflicts, which in turn gives them political leverage." (p. 210) The demise of the Kurdish emirates in the middle of the nineteenth century, "suddenly propelled the shaikhs into the role

of political leaders." (p. 229) This and its ability to create new shaikhs more efficiently than the older Qadiri order, Bruinessen argues, helps to explain the rapid rise of the Naqshbandi order in the nineteenth century.

Referring to the Shaikh Said rebellion in Turkey in 1925, Bruinessen observes that "without the Naqshbandi network he could not have mobilized so many warriors; without the belief in his sanctity they would not have fought so fanatically." (p. 211) Even more revealingly, Bruinessen concludes that the influence provided by the Naqshbandi order

> later assured them key roles in Kurdish nationalism. Shaikh Ubeydullah of Nehri, Shaikh Said of Palu and Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the leaders of important nationalist movements, were the descendants of shaikhs who received the Naqshbandi *tariqa* [spiritual path] through Mawlana Khalid. (p. 224)

Jalal Talabani, who with Barzani was and still is the other major Iraqi Kurdish leader of the twentieth century, also owes his family's original position to its religious role as Qadiri shaikhs.

Although seemingly an arcane discourse on how the Sulemani subdialect of the Sorani dialect is becoming the standard Kurdish national language in Iraq, Hassanpour's richly detailed analysis proves much more importantly a groundbreaking analysis of the *Kurdayeti*, or Kurdish national movement. Hassanpour repeatedly credits Ahmadi Khani (1650-1706) and Haji Qadiri Koyi (1817-1897) for their attempts toward achieving this goal through the sword (political power) and the pen (literary language). In this way only might Kurdish independence be achieved and maintained.

The states which rule the Kurds, however, consider the unrestricted usage of the Kurdish language as a threat to their security and territorial integrity. Accordingly, "in spite of its considerable numerical strength (fortieth language of the world by number of speakers) and progress in standardization, the Kurdish language . . . since the 1920s . . . suffered from various degrees of planned linguicide in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria." (p. 466)

To analyze his subject, Hassanpour adopts a "holistic" (p. xxv) approach that considers much more than mere political phenomena. His first four chapters present background information and analysis concerning the Kurdish speech area, population, and dialects; a review of the literature regarding Kurdish nationalism and language standardization; a survey of the social, economic, political, and cultural development of Kurdish society; and the literary evolution of the Kurds before the twentieth century.

Hassanpour explains that Kurmanji and Sorani are "the two [main] dialects or, rather, dialect groups." (p. 19) Two other, now very minor groups exist, however: "one called Hawrami by the Kurds (Avrami or Avamani, in Persian) and Gorani/Gurani [or Dimili/Zaza] in Western literature; the other . . . called, here, Kirmashani after the name of the major city Kirmashan." (p. 19)

According to Hassanpour, "Literary production began in the Hawrami dialect and soon after in Kurmanji. Although the Sorani dialect was the last to develop literature, its growth has continued uninterruptedly." (p. 69) "Sorani-speakers in contact with Hawrami (or Gorani) consider this latter dialect the 'purest' and 'oldest' variety of Kurdish. They are shocked to find out that [many] European scholars class Hawrami and the related Dimili (or Zaza) dialects as non-Kurdish tongues." (p. 25) "The idea of a Kurdish nation distinct from, and at war with, the ruling Turks, Persians and Arabs was formulated for the first time by Ahmadi Khani in his *Mem u Zin*." (p. 56) Considered the Kurdish national epic, this work is written in Kurmanji.

Hassanpour's fifth chapter analyzes the policies of the states containing Kurds toward their language. To do so, he examines the importance of status planning or "decisions and actions meant to establish, influence or change the roles of a language in society." (p. 102). With the exception of the period from 1918-26 when the British were trying to encourage Kurdish nationalism against the ambitions of the Turks, Hassanpour demonstrates how the Kurdish language was constantly restricted by the Iraqi regimes which were trying to integrate the Kurds into the new Iraqi state. "During the period under study, linguicidal measures of varying degrees undertaken in all the countries concerned [Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey] have threatened the very survival of the language." (p. 147)

Hassanpour's following chapters deal with the standardization of the Sorani dialect after World War I when Kurdish was given some limited regional official status in Iraq. The situation in the other states is covered much more briefly. First Hassanpour analyzes how the usage of Sorani in the mass media, education, administration, science, cinema, theater, and phonograph records affected its standardization. He follows with a technical discussion of how Sorani has been codified in terms of phonology, orthography, morphology, vocabulary, syntax, and literary forms, and then surveys its acceptance in Iraq and other states.

Finally, Hassanpour analyzes urbanization, literacy, the rise of a middle class, language planning, and the creation of a Kurdish diaspora. Despite the emphasis on the standardization of Sorani, he concludes "that Kurdish is, like Armenian, Norwegian, Albanian and a number of other languages, a bi-standard language, with one standard for Kurmanji and another for Sorani." (p. 463)

Hassanpour's lengthy study also contains sixty-five different tables, forty-two figures, fourteen maps, and a bibliography. Unfortunately there is no index, an oversight that is particularly burdensome in a book containing so many different names, titles, and concepts. There is also a tendency for redundancy in the text and disparaging characterizations of other authors and sources. Edmund Ghareeb, who wrote the classic study *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, (1981), for example, is unfairly said to possess a "pro-Ba'th perspective," (p. 29) while the *Institut Kurde de Paris* is called "uncooperative." (p. 41) Nevertheless, these problems prove very minor when compared to the magnitude of the impressive and valuable study Hassanpour has produced.

In many ways Izady's study is the most valuable of all the books reviewed here because of its broad scope and non-technical writing style. Indeed, I learned more about the Kurds from Izady than I did from all the other books combined. The problem with Izady, however, is that in surveying his subject in terms of geography, history, human geography, religion, language, literature, society, political and contemporary issues, economy, and culture and arts, he sometimes claims too much. The blatant assertion "that agriculture was almost surely invented in Kurdistan, as was the domestication of almost all basic cereals and livestock, with the notable exceptions of cows and rice," (p. 227) is an example.

First, however, let us sample some of the many invaluable strengths of this major study. The very cover of Izady's book enigmatically portrays two Kurds gazing up at a skillful carving on the living rock at Taq Bustan. Early in his narrative, Izady explains that this monument represents a momentous event in Kurdish history, the fall of the last Kurdish kingdom of the classical era, the House of Kayus in 380 AD. "This event (despite an as yet unexplained discrepancy of seven years) marks the beginning of the Kurdish national calendar, according to which we are now (1992) in the year 1604." (p. 40) Izady speculates that "the extra seven years may be connected with the veneration with which the number is held in the native Kurdish religions." (pp. 241-42)

Whether Izady is correct or not on the meaning of the seven extra years in the calendar he discusses, his analysis of the native Kurdish religions is *unique* because even the best of the other writers, such as Bruinessen, have mentioned only in passing "heterodox, syncretistic sects," (p. 23) and *invaluable* because of the new insights it gives to Kurdish culture and character.

There is an old Kurdish maxim that "compared to the unbeliever, the Kurd is a Muslim," while Hanna Batatu has argued in his massive tome, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, (1978) that possibly the "Kurds were more prone than Arabs to Sufism because of its consonance with their pre-Islamic beliefs." (p. 43) Among the books reviewed here at least, only Izady gives us the background information necessary to begin to understand exactly what is entailed here.

In his provocative chapter on religion, he argues that "most non-Muslim Kurds follow one of several indigenous Kurdish faiths of great antiquity and originality, each of which is a variation on and permutation of an ancient religion that can loosely be labeled the 'Cult of Angels,' *Yazdani* in Kurdish." (p. 137) Izady asserts that even today "about 30-35 percent of all Kurds follow various branches of the Cult," (p. 145) and breaks this figure down by identifying Yezidism (5 percent); Alevism, including Alawism and Nusayrism, (20 percent); and Yarsanism, also known as Aliullahi or Ahl-i Haq, (10-15 percent) as the Cult's three surviving branches. (It should be noted that others would dispute Izady's figures as greatly inflated.)

Izady argues that "to identify the Cult or any of its denominations as Islamic is a simple mistake, born of a lack of knowledge of the religion, which pre-dates

Islam by millennia." (p. 143) He contends that in ancient times the cult combated Zoroastrianism, while in the medieval era it opposed the Shiism of Safavid Persia. "The Cult still influences all the Kurds at the levels of popular culture and quasi-religious rituals. The reverence for Khidir or Nabi Khizir 'the living green man of the ponds,' is a well-accepted practice [even] among the Muslim Kurds." (p. 138)

Most scholars describe Alevism as some type of heterdoxical form of Islam. Izady, however, argues otherwise, maintaining that "the causes of this common mistake are several, but most important is the high station of Ali, the first Muslim Shi'ite imam, in both Yarsanism and Alevism.... The Cult's past attempts to absorb Shi'ism through pretensions of a shared identity have also confused many a hapless historian." (p. 143) Pursuing this reasoning elsewhere, Izady goes so far as to argue that the famous Muslim sufi mystic Mevlana, whose followers are known in the West as the "Whirling Dervishes," are "almost exclusively Alevi" (p. 161), and thus, one must conclude, non-Muslim. (I will leave the accuracy of this assertion to those more qualified than I.)

In supposedly exalting his person to a degree close to divinity during the 1920s, Shaikh Ahmad Barzani, Mulla Mustafa's older brother, has usually been called eccentric or worse. Given the Cult's emphasis on the Lord God or Creator emerging through the ages through various avatars, however, Shaikh Ahmad's claims to divinity take on new possible meanings.

The Barzani's exclusive privilege of wearing red turbans may also be partially explained by the fact that red "was also the hallmark of the [radical] Mazdakite and the Khurramite movements, which are the direct predecessors of Alevism" (p. 152). Indeed, in Turkey the Alevis have been called the "Qizilbash" or "red heads," a term which now bears a perjorative connotation.

The Cult's practices of communal ownership and social equality undoubtedly have contributed over the years to the charges of sexual promiscuity against the Alevis. Some believe that the Cult's male members share their women at certain communal religious meetings. "Even today the fiction of this notorious ceremony (called *mum sondu*, 'candle blown out' in Anatolia, or *chiragh kushan*, 'killing of the lights' in Iran) is used by the Cult's Muslim neighbors to demean its followers." (p. 141)

By erroneously identifying the ancient Yezidis with the Umayyad caliph Yazid ibn Mu'awiyya, "there is now also a movement to strip the Yezidis of their Kurdish identity by... declaring them... 'Umayyad Arabs'." (p. 157) This comical misnomer is suggestive of such other terms as "mountain Turks" and, according to Entessar, "mountain Iranians" (p. 13) so notoriously used in the past in attempts to obliterate the Kurds' very identity. In reality, asserts Izady, the term "Yezidis" "is derived from the Old and Middle Iranic term *yazata* or *yezad*, for 'angel,' rendering it to mean 'angelicans" (p. 153), a far cry from the unfair appellation "Devil Worshipers" formerly applied to them in the West.

In his valuable discussion of language, Izady differs from Hassanpour by maintaining that Kurdish may be dichotomized into only two major branches:

Kurmanji, which includes both what Hassanpour calls Kurmanji (or Bahdinani) and Sorani, and Pahlawani — an archaic Kurdish word Izady revives for this purpose — which includes Gurani and Dimili (Zaza). He schematically illustrates these linguistic relationships and their numerous subdialects with a chart on p. 169 and a map on p. 171.

Izady continues convincingly to differ more substantively with Hassanpour when he argues that these differences in the Kurdish language "are far too great by any standard linguistic criteria to warrant classification as dialects of the same language," (p. 170) and asserts that "Kurmanji and Pahlawani, like French and Italian, now qualify as two bono fide languages, and not dialects of the same language." (p. 170) He further explains that "there is no standard nomenclature for the divisions of Kurdish vernaculars, not just in the works of Western scholars but among the Kurds themselves." (p. 170) This lack of standard nomenclature, as well as legitimate differences in interpretation and emphasis, partially explain the dispute on language between Izady and Hassanpour.

Regarding numbers, Izady asserts that Kurmanji, which includes what Hassanpour calls both Kurmanji and Sorani, is spoken by "about three-quarters of all Kurds, and Pahlawani . . . [by] the rest." (p. 172) He breaks these figures down by adding that "there are at present about 15 million speakers of North Kurmanji [Hassanpour's Kurmanji]" (p. 172) and concludes, therefore, that it "is spoken by a little over half of all Kurds, making it the most common Kurdish vernacular." (p. 172) "South Kurmanji, adds Izady, "is the language of a plurality of Kurds in Iran and Iraq, with about 6 million speakers." (p. 172) As for Pahlawani, Izady asserts that "the Dimili branch . . . less accurately but more commonly known as Zaza is spoken by about 4.5 million Dimila Kurds," (p. 173) while "today there are roughly 1.5 million Gurani speakers in Iran and Iraq." (p. 174)

Indicative of its former status "as the language of high culture and literature . . . *Gurani* now simply means 'lyric poetry' or 'balladry'" (p. 175) in all dialects of Kurmanji. Izady collaborates Hassanpour's main thesis concerning the standardization of Sorani (which Izady also terms "South Kurmanji) when he declares that Sorani is "the most dynamic dialect of Kurdish today." (p. 177) This situation in part arose because "South Kurmanji [Sorani] has flourished with a disproportionately large volume of printed material produced in . . . [Iraq and Iran] in the last 75 years, while North Kurmanji [Kurmanji] has been stifled in its main domain in Turkey for the same period." (p. 177)

Another valuable contribution made by Izady is his listing of hundreds of "Kurdish Tribes and Tribal Confederacies" on pp. 78-85; inclusion of forty-two maps, including the detailed one on p. 75 of "Tribes and Tribal Confederacies" and the ones on pp. 123 and 124 of "Cities and Towns in Southern, Central, and Eastern Kurdistan" and "Urban Centers of Western and Northern Kurdistan," respectively; and eight tables scattered throughout his text.

The table on p. 119 "Kurdish Present and Near Future Demographic Trends" projects that "if present demographic trends hold, as they are likely to, in about two

generations' time the Kurds will also replace the Turks as the largest ethnic group in Turkey herself," (p. 119) an occurrence that obviously would hold momentous but incalculable consequences for the future of that state.

In an interesting discussion of the Kurdish national character, Izady stresses how "the mountains have broken down the language of the Kurds to a babble of dialects, their religions to a case study in diversity, and their art and costumes to a zoo of colorful variety." (p. 188) He asserts that the "ideal" is the *pahlawan*, a "cavalier and gentleman" who possesses "extreme bravery, wit, and magnanimity," (p. 187) and speculates that this is why many Westerners "have found Kurds personally appealing." (p. 187)

Other positive characteristics include precision and attention to detail, being joyous, free-spirited, basically unbiased individuals, romantic and often reckless in love, warm and generous toward guests in their house, and stress on honor, valor, and self-sufficiency. Less admirable characteristics include being an atomist and individualist who is thus incapable of group work and group planning. Mulla Mustafa Barzani's faults of egotism, opportunism, shortsightedness, and intractability also constitute "a concise observation of any average Kurd." (p. 186)

Women have often occupied a surprisingly high status in the supposedly tradition-bond Kurdish society. From the earliest times, for example, women took part in wars. Their "participation . . . in the military continues today in Kurdistan, as nearly all Kurdish political parties (except for the fundamentalist Islamic parties) who command a fighting peshmerga guerrilla group include women in their ranks . . .. In politics Kurdish women have been similarly active from the earliest times." (p. 194)

Women also played "a primary role" (p. 195) in the native Kurdish religions of the Cult of Angels, which "includes a female among the six Major Avatars of the Universal Spirit in every one of the seven epochs of the life of the material world." (p. 195). Such female participation helped give rise to the slander of sexual promiscuity mentioned previously as sexual equality "in the surrounding communities and their religions, was not, and still is not, easily tolerated." (p. 195)

Even in his most valuable and interesting analysis of the ancient religions, however, Izady at times exhibits an unfortunate penchant to overstate the influence of the Kurds. On the grounds of supposed similarity of tribal names, for example, he speculates that the story of King Arthur and the sword Excalibur "may thus be akin to . . . the ancient Iranic rite of worshipping the deity represented as a sword stuck into the ground." (p. 151)

More troublesome is Izady's exaggerated claims of a "Pontian Kurdish Empire under King Mithridates VI [the Great], ca. 86 BC" (map, p. 37) that totally encompasses the Black Sea and included practically all of modern Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, as well as parts of present-day Ukraine and Russia. Although Mithridates may have had some Kurdish ancestry in him, to refer to him as "the Kurdish Pontian king Mithridates" (p. 38) is bound to strike most historians as iconoclastic if not simply silly.

Similarly, Armenian historians would question whether "Tigran the Great, the greatest king of the Armenians" was "of Kurdish origin . . . [and] felt his Kurdish past more than has been thought," (p. 39) or whether "an important Kurdish tribe of the late classical period, the Tirikan . . . may have also given its name to . . . Tigran." (p. 31)

In addition, Izady claims that Safavid Persia's patriarch Shaikh Safi al-Din's (d. 1334) ancestry was "clearly . . . Kurdish," (p. 50) that "many Buwayhids such as Sharaf al-Dawla Sherzil or Sherzili (r. AD 983-990) clearly have Kurdish names," (p. 44) and that "in Lebanon, the Druze political and spiritual leaders of the Jumbalat family [and] poet Khalil Gibran . . . are also assimilated Kurds." (p. 110)

As for modern political leaders, Izady argues that "the list of assimilated Kurds includes President Abdul Karim Qasim . . . [and] Saddam Hussein himself [who] is partly Kurdish through his father's family (revealingly, his brother's name is Barzan)." (p. 110) He adds that Syrian president Hafez Assad is "at least partially of Kurdish origin," (p. 110) as well as such Turkish leaders as President Turgut Ozal, and former Presidents Kenan Evren and Ismet Inonu.

Although this Turkish listing is apparently valid, one wonders at some of the others. Be that as it may, Izady explains his claims by arguing that "familiarity with historical Kurdish migration patterns is perhaps the single most important tool in accurately reconstructing Kurdish history." (p. 86)

On a broader level, it should be noted that Izady's manuscript needed a close, final editorial review before it was published to eliminate a number of needless repetitions and to correct several minor errors in dates and facts, as well as omissions of contemporary political data. Izady fails even to mention, for example, the creation in 1988 of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front and its important unifying role in his discussion of political disunity among the Iraqi Kurds. (pp. 198-99, 212-15) Given the existence of a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, elections for a Kurdish parliament in May 1992, and the creation of a government in July of that year, one might also take issue with his assertion that "after a year of near independence in the 'liberated' parts of Iraq, the Kurdish political parties have again squandered the opportunity to show the outside world that an autonomous or an independent Kurdistan is a workable idea." (p. 199) In truth, Izady has the facts reversed here; it is the outside world that does not want to accept the idea of an independent Kurdish state. Izady (as well as others) would do well to heed his own observation that "with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a dozen new independent states in the area, the Kurds are just realizing that international boundaries are not as sacrosanct as they use to be, especially in their neighborhood." (p. 200)

Sorely needed, but lacking too is an index. In addition, Izady's frequent, short but often repetitious chapter and intra-chapter bibliographies should have been complemented by a more inclusive bibliography at the end.

Unique among the nine volumes reviewed here is the one by Kreyenbroek and Sperl, an edited collection of ten articles plus an introduction that successfully

"brings together many aspects of Kurdish history, politics and culture." (p. 1) The volume also contains a bibliography and an index which can be most useful for bridging together names and concepts in an edited work such as this.

Martin van Bruinessen and David McDowall, whose books are reviewed in this essay, also have articles in this collection: the former surveys broadly, deeply, and well "Kurdish society, ethnicity, nationalism and refugee problems," while the latter offers "a historical review" of the Kurdish question which could serve as an extended abstract of his book.

Kreyenbroek's article "On the Kurdish language" proves to be a useful supplement for Hassanpour's lengthy analysis reviewed above. Kreyenbroek briefly surveys the origin and early history of Kurdish, agreeing with Izady that "from a linguistic, or at least grammatical point of view . . . Sorani and Kurmanji differ as much from each other as English and German, and it would seem more appropriate to refer to them as 'languages'." (p. 71)

The author then goes on to analyze in greater depth "the recent history and present position of the Kurdish language in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, with special reference to the development of written forms of Kurdish." (p. 68) As does Hassanpour, Kreyenbroek finds that "two different standard languages have now emerged," (p. 68) of which, Kurmanji, "is one of the very few languages in the world whose modern standard form has so evolved almost entirely in exile." (p. 76) This is because of the hostile attitude of Turkey, whose Law no. 2932 of 1983 reinforcing the banning of the language, Kreyenbroek inadvertently numbers "2392." (p. 75)

In her brief piece on "Humanitarian legal order and the Kurdish question," Jane Connors in effect admits that there is little to be said here when she concludes that "it is perhaps safe to conclude that while a significant corpus of international humanitarian law exists to regulate intra-state conflict, its application in the Kurdish context is problematic." (p. 93)

In his article "Political aspects of the Kurdish problem in contemporary Turkey," Hamit Bozarslan argues that the "rapid and painful rebirth of Kurdish nationalism only occurred at the end of the 1950s." (p. 96) This was due to a number of causes: the Turkish "experiment in political pluralism, . . . a . . . combination of collective memory and a tradition of rebelliousness, . . . the new Kurdish intelligentsia . . . very strongly influenced by left-wing ideas, . . . [and] the Barzani revolt in Iraq." (pp. 96-97)

Given the subsequent development of a de facto alliance between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds following the 1991 Gulf War, Bozarslan proves prophetic when he speculates that "it is not impossible that Ankara will be forced to make contact with Kurdish political parties in Iraq in order to neutralize the PKK," (p. 109) and adds that "the fact that they [the Kurdish refugees] were accepted [in 1988] marks the beginning of the recognition by the Turkish government of a Kurdish entity and of a Kurdish problem with which it must deal on a regional level." (p. 109)

Munir Morad follows with an excellent analysis of "The situation of Kurds in Iraq and Turkey: current trends and prospects." Comparing the two states, he maintains that "while the urban middle class and the landed families provided the Kurdish movement in Iraq with most of its leaders, the leaders of the Kurdish organizations in Turkey have tended to come from impoverished families. An inevitable outcome of this situation has been that Turkey's Kurdish politics has been noticeably dominated by radical leftist ideologies." (p. 121)

He further argues that "the diplomatic confusion, breakdown of border controls and the emergence of new regional alliances, precipitated by the Iran-Iraq conflict, enabled the Kurdish militants for the first time to move relatively freely inside Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran." (p. 119) Regarding Turkey, he asserts, "a sub-economy is taking hold in many Kurdish areas, based on various shady enterprises such as smuggling, money laundering and drug processing and trafficking." (p. 120) Interestingly, however, Morad believes that "in Turkey, the prospects of an eventual easing of the state's firm grip on Kurdish affairs are strengthened by Turkey's desire to join the European Community," (p. 132) and that "despite the apparent deadlock, the prospects of a new realism *vis-a-vis* the Kurdish population in the region are not too distant." (p. 132)

In "The Kurdish movement in Iraq: 1975-88," A. Sherzad reviews the situation before 1975 and then examines the new urban-bred leadership that has emerged following the collapse of the traditional social basis in 1975. "Arbil, which four years ago had 400,000 inhabitants, now has 900,000." (p. 141)

Ismet Sheriff Vanly, considered by many to be the "grand old man" of Kurdish academics, contributes two pieces, "The Kurds in Syria and Lebanon" and "The Kurds in the Soviet Union." In the first article he asserts that in Syria "in 1988 . . . it seems probable that the Kurds . . . numbered at least a million or 9-10 per cent" (p. 146) of the population, and "in Lebanon in 1983 . . . about 90,000." (p. 165)

Offering a personal note, Vanly owns that he was condemned to death in absentia by Syria in 1965 for "activities in international circles against Arab interests." (p. 157) The authorities did not try to implement the sentence, however, "which was rather civilized of them by comparison with the Iraqi secret service's attempt at a summary execution . . . in Lausanne in October 1976, which I survived with two bullets in the head." (p. 157)

The author argues that although Assad's "regime has conceded absolutely nothing to the Kurds as a cultural and national minority," (p. 159) it has used them to help buoy up its minority Alawite rule and has given the Turkish PKK "what may justifiably be called a strategic alliance." (p. 169)

On the matter of Arabized Kurds in Lebanon, Vanly mentions "the Jumblat, the leading family of the Lebanese Druze community in the Shouf, whose name is the arabized form of the Kurdish '*Jan-Polad*' meaning 'Steel body'." (p. 164) He also argues that "the antiquity of the Kurdish presence in Syria" (p. 145) is beyond question. Kurd-Dagh [Mountain of the Kurds] and the huge fortress known as

"Kirak des Chevaliers" or in Arabic "Hisn al-Akrad" [Castle of the Kurds] speak to this fact. Apparently "Kirak" is simply a corruption of the word "Akrad," the Arabic plural for Kurd.

On the other hand, the much smaller Kurdish community in Lebanon "is essentially composed of immigrants . . . who left the areas of Mardin and Bohtan in Turkish Kurdistan after the failure of the Kurdish uprisings in the early part of the century and settled in Beirut in the 1920s and 1930s." (pp. 164-65) "In Lebanon there is no nationalist anti-Kurdish feeling as there is in Syria, Turkey, and Iraq." (p. 165)

In "The Development of Nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan," Fereshteh Koohi-Kamali examines the historical, social, and economic background of the Iranian Kurds to help explain their persistent demands for ethnic and political recognition. In her useful and informative article, she argues that "the Islamic revolution provided a golden opportunity for Kurdish nationalism, which by 1979 had become far more politically organized than it had been in 1946." (p. 180)

The Islamic republic's "continued attachment . . . to the boundaries of the nation-state called 'Iran,'" (p. 190) even more than "the idea of the universality and expansion of Islam as outlined by Khomeini and his followers [however] . . . led to the assassination of Ghassemlou." (p. 190) Indeed, Koohi-Kamali maintains that "one of the three government delegates . . . [involved in the murder] was a high-ranking revolutionary guard said to be very close to the then Speaker of Parliament, Rafsanjani." (p. 191) Thus, she concludes that "as long as the Islamic regime retains its present political attitudes and structure, the possibility of any accommodation for the Kurds and their national demands is remote." (p. 190)

In the final article "The Kurds in the Soviet Union," Vanly examines the little-known history of "Red" Kurdistan as an autonomous region with Lachin as its capital and Gussi Gajev as its first leader from 1923 until "in 1929 the Baku government reduced Kurdistan from an *uyezd* to an *okrug*, the lowest territorial unit for the Soviet non-Russian nationalities." (p. 203) Regarding the current population, Vanly writes that "the total number of Kurds living within the USSR today is unknown. Soviet Kurds themselves give estimates that range from approximately 300,000 to a precise figure of 1,120,000." (p. 207)

Although "the Armenian response to the massacres of 1895-6 was to massacre the Kurds in Armenia and north Kurdistan during the Russian incursions of 1914-15," (p. 197) Vanly also admits that "Armenia, it must be conceded, is the only Soviet republic which preserved and protected Kurdish cultural infrastructures after the persecutions under Stalin." (p. 208)

Entessar, McDowall, and Bulloch and Morris present similar, useful introductions to the Kurdish question that offer little, however, that is new. Entessar proceeds from a scholarly point of view with ample documentation plus a bibliography and index. Bulloch and Morris offer a fast-paced, journalistic narrative which is lacking in any documentation, bibliography, or index. Thus it will have only

limited utility for scholars. McDowall, on the other hand, has updated and lengthened his earlier editions of a booklet published by the Minority Rights Group in London, *The Kurds*. Although his approach is basically journalistic, he does use footnotes and has a modest "select bibliography" and index. There are also photographs and several maps in his work.

Entessar introduces his subject by presenting an overview of Kurdish ethnicity in which his usage of such concepts as "internal colonialism and unequal center-periphery relations" (p. 8) adds analytical clarity to the subject. This is followed by individual chapters surveying the Kurdish situation in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. The concluding two chapters are perhaps the most valuable because they analyze recent events concerning the Iran-Iraq War during the 1980s; the 1991 Gulf War and its aftermath, and the relevance of international legal, humanitarian, and constitutional principles to the Kurds.

In looking to the future, Entessar maintains that "there has developed a large body of international doctrines and principles with near universal acceptability that are applicable to the Kurdish dilemma in the Middle East." (p. 164) He specifically mentions Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which declares that

> in those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

Entessar closes his analysis by recommending pluralism, federalism, and proportional representation as constitutional techniques that would help to foster a fair solution to the Kurdish problem.

In his pithy study, McDowall illustrates how the Kurds "are torn apart by internal quarrels and disputes" (p. 3) as much as from the repressive governments under whom they have lived. Concise, informative chapters follow, presenting a very readable introduction to the Kurdish problem. McDowall terms the Alevi Kurds in Turkey "a minority within a minority" (p. 57) since only one-third of the Alevis in Turkey are Kurdish. He concludes that although in Turkey "officially, the government is secular ... Sunni Islam remains perceived as the established religion, and there is a culture of hostility to Shi'ism and more particularly to Alevis." (p. 60)

In closing, McDowall recommends that "the United Nations must involve itself in the fate of the Kurdish people." (p. 132) However, "the United Nations should make it clear to the Kurdish leaderships in the respective countries that any deal struck which affords the Kurds a reasonable say in the running of their own affairs and in cultural self-expression must include Kurdish recognition of state legitimacy." (pp. 132-33)

In their first two chapters, Bulloch and Morris plunge into a description of the failed Iraqi Kurdish uprising that followed Saddam's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War.

"The Kurds believed what they heard; they were lured into a sense of false confidence by the apparently positive signals from Western capitals, and embarked on a rebellion which they assumed would have the backing of the West." (p. 3) The authors point out that "as late as the end of March a clandestine radio station called the Voice of Free Iraq was still calling on the Kurds to rise up and . . . depose 'the evil Saddam.' That station was subsidized by the CIA." (pp. 30-31) Thus the two explain: "What the president really meant, it emerged, was that the United States would like to see a compliant military regime in power in Baghdad. Kurds and Shia need not apply." (p. 12)

Discussing the overthrow of Qassem in 1963, Bulloch and Morris write that "the Baath gunmen often seemed to know who they were looking for as they searched out communist activists; according to a number of sources, this was because they had been in contact with American intelligence, which was eager to break the back of the strongest communist party in the Middle East at that time." (p. 124) This US role continued when "in 1973 Massoud and Idriss Barzani went on a secret mission to Washington, where they met Richard Helms, then head of the CIA, and Al Haig, the White House chief of staff. As a result of these meetings, Israeli advisers began operating in Kurdistan." (p. 135) (Actually the Israelis had been covertly helping the Iraqi Kurds since at least the 1960s.)

Concerning contemporary terrorism, the two authors maintain that "in 1991 Turkish secret police and intelligence agents began adopting the same methods. . . . A number of Kurdish activists and [others] . . . were killed with a single bullet through the back of the head, sure sign of an 'execution' by government death squads." (p. 186)

Not necessarily so. Although some have speculated that the Turkish government has somehow been involved in these killings through its more than 2,500 Special Team members (anti-guerrillas) being used against the PKK or gladio forces originally created in the 1950s to continue the struggle against some enemy who had conquered Turkey, the identity of the so-called "Hizballah-contras" remains uncertain. The Turkish government has denied involvement, and recently evidence has emerged that various anti-PKK groups are perpetrating at least some of the murders because they believe that the government is unable to control the PKK.

Similar is the accusation that Turkish President Turgut Ozal "spoke on several occasions as if he were ready to revive the Mosul question." (p. 189) Although Turkey has certainly taken a keen interest in the unstable situation in northern Iraq, even massively intervening there in what was in effect a joint operation with the Iraqi Kurds against the PKK in October 1992, the rationale clearly was to eliminate the PKK bases there and forestall another large influx of Iraqi Kurdish refugees fleeing to Turkey from the wrath of Saddam as has already occurred twice in the past five years.

In discussing Abdullah (Apo) Ocalan, the leader of the PKK, the two authors claim that he is "still occasionally leading fighting patrols into Turkey. He was

prominent in the underground Turkish Communist Party before joining the PKK." (p. 168) None of this is true. Ocalan himself has stated that he has not been in Turkey since he fled it shortly before the 1980 coup. Indeed common sense would dictate that he would *not* risk his life on such missions. Furthermore, although a Marxist, Ocalan never belonged to any Turkish Communist Party. As for "joining the PKK," he in truth *created* it with a few followers in November 1978 out of another group he had been leading since 1974.

Sheri Laizer, an English writer and film researcher, has written a journalistic study that is part travelogue, part political editorial and polemic, and almost entirely a Kurdish apology. In so doing, she does give her readers an interesting picture of traditional and modern Kurdish society in Turkey and Iraq against the backdrop of officially sanctioned state repression. Based on her travels and conversations *in situ*, Laizer, for example, notes the importance of such attributes as songs, folklore, the mountains, geographical isolation, and the lack of outside information about the Kurds.

Her work is so sympathetic to the Kurds and hostile to the Turks, however, that one begins to question her objectivity. She seriously argues, for example, that the "Iraqi Kurds do not torture prisoners, even to extract vital information," (p. 3) while critically noting that "the outlawed Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) of Turkey . . . has been misrepresented in international political intrigues." (p. 64) The Iraqi Kurds who fled Saddam's chemical attacks in 1988, she adds, have become "a virtual prisoner of the Turks." (p. 106)

While briefly mentioning the supposed British influence on the Kurdish revolt of 1925 in Turkey led by Shaikh Said, Laizer declares that Stephen Pelletiere's, *The Kurds: An Unstable Element in the Gulf*, (1984) is an "authorative [sic] work on the Kurds" (p. 84), which it is not, while she obviously is unaware of one of the works that is, Robert Olson's work reviewed below. In her ensuing commentary, moreover, incredibly she tells her gullible readers that "the British mandate [in Iraq] ended in 1958" (p. 84), and that "more than 25,000 [Kurdish] villages" (p. 92) have been destroyed in Iraq by the government. The actual date, of course, is 1932, while, without minimizing the extent of Saddam's anti-Kurdish measures, Laizer's second figure is five time lager than that claimed even by the Kurds themselves.

Despite her political misperceptions, Laizer's feminist instincts prove more accurate when she critically comments about the lack of concern Kurdish men demonstrate toward birth control: "Talk about pride, vanity, and stubbornness! The male of the species is all of these fourfold." (p. 13) Later, in discussing the stifling traditional roles played by Kurdish women, she adds that "it was the lives of Kurdish women that were most in need of urgent reform." (p. 107)

In discussing the Turkish suppression of Kurdish culture, Laizer also accurately notes that although "there are highly successful Kurds in all walks of life . . . there is a price to pay. . . . It is usually the loss of Kurdish identity." (p. 72) She further comments that "for many, it is no sacrifice to deny their Kurdishness, for

Kurdishness has been equated with social inferiority by the Turks." (p. 65)

Laizer's rather short study concludes with four appendices: the Treaty of Sevres (1920), Articles 62-4 concerning a proposed Kurdish state; "An Interview with Massoud Barzani" in August 1989; "The Peoples' National Liberation Army (ARGK) and the United Kurdish Front (Political Update, March 1991)," which contains statements made by Abdullah Ocalan of the PKK; and a listing of eight "Kurdish Cultural Centres, Institutes, Archives and Contact Offices." There is also a select bibliography and short index.

Robert Olson's analysis of the Sheikh Said Rebellion in Turkey in 1925 is a dispassionate, objective analysis based largely on primary documents from the British Air Ministry files and Colonial Office records. As such, it covers very different ground compared to the eight books reviewed above.

Although the Sheikh Said rebellion was short-lived and rather easily defeated, Olson correctly maintains that it "was the first large-scale nationalist rebellion by the Kurds," (p. 153) and, given the current Kurdish insurgency in Turkey, "a harbinger of the future." (p. 122) What is more, the rebellion's mixture of religious with nationalist themes foreshadowed the Iranian Revolution more than a half century later.

As the author notes, "of the major nineteen military engagements in which the Turkish armed forces participated from 1924 and 1938, all but two were against or connected with efforts to suppress Kurdish rebellions and nationalism," (p. 127) a pattern that has continued to the present day. He states that

> the struggle against Kurdish nationalism, in which certain patterns of policies were implemented and against which certain nationalist, ideological, and psychological premises and attitudes were initially adopted in 1925, continued to play an important role in Turkey's policy decisions more than fifty years after the Sheikh Said rebellion. (p. 161)

Among these patterns, Olson notes "the consequence of Turkey's eschewing interference in the internal affairs of other countries and . . . the Turkish motto: peace at home and peace abroad," (p. 151) as well as revolutionary laws dealing with the civil code, dress and headgear, and the alphabet.

Other factors also have remained constant. The Kurds, for example, remain as divided today as they were when "none of the Kurdish notables of the town [Diyarbakir] supported the [Sheikh Said] rebellion." (p. 98) Then and now "harsh measures were partially responsible for the continuing Kurdish resistance and rebellion." (p. 120) Following the rebellion, "the independence tribunals arrested a total of 7,440 people and executed 660 . . . [and] deportations of Kurds continued throughout 1926." (p. 125)

As for the British, "although . . . various schemes had been floated to stir up the Kurds throughout 1920-1921, they had begun to be viewed with increasing

skepticism by the middle of 1921." (p. 81) Winston Churchill, for example, declared:

> 'We have not been able to liquidate all the promises given or alleged to have been given to the Arabs during the war. I am entirely opposed to creating similar difficulties with the Kurds.' By 1 December 1921, there was then, unanimous disapproval of proposals . . . to instigate Kurdish rebellion against the Turks. (p. 76)

In his conclusion, Olson argues that "the Turks . . . proclaimed a nationalism that was inclusive of the Kurds, however prejudicial, while Kurdish nationalism, imperatively so, was exclusive of the Turks and their nationalism." (p. 156) Thus, while "the Kurds and Kurdish nationalism may not be the single most important factor . . . their influence on the development of modern Turkey has been most underestimated by scholars and students of Turkey." (p. 160)

By way of criticism, it might be mentioned that at times Olson is repetitious. He tells his reader, for example, on a number of occasions that "the Sheikh Said rebellion broke out prematurely on 8 February 1925," (p. 107) and does the same with several other facts. He devotes a page and a half to such unnecessary details as listing "as of 1 April 1925, the distribution, location, and officers of the Turkish forces deployed and mobilized," (p. 105) particulars best left in the dusty archives where Olson first discovered them or placed in one of the many appendices he adds to his text.

The famous Turkish scholar, Ismail Besikci, who has spent most of the past decade in a Turkish prison for his writings about the Kurds in Turkey, is not of Kurdish origin alleged or otherwise as Olson would have it. (p. 37) Furthermore, Olson allows at least several typos concerning dates to creep into his manuscript. Thus the reader is incorrectly told "of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1888, (p. 5) "the resignation of Ismet Inonu on 22 November 1922" (p. 86) (when a paragraph earlier the text stated that the year was 1924), and Mustafa Kemal's telegraph to Inonu on 19 February 1921, (p. 88) when it is clear from the text that 1925 is meant.

On the macro level, one might question why Olson only consulted the British archives when relevant archival sources also exist both in other European states and, of course, Turkey itself. As a result, the reader often sees only what the British considered significant, while the position of the Kurds and Turks—the supposed subjects of the study—recedes.

These problems notwithstanding, Olson has brought first-rate scholarship to his subject. His analysis will be the definitive one in English of the Sheikh Said rebellion and thus an important backdrop to more contemporary events. Olson concludes his work with eight appendices, copious notes, a bibliography, and an index.

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