

THE ORIGINS OF KURDISH

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IN a paper presented at the 20th International Congress of Orientalists, in Brussels, 1938, Professor V. Minorsky¹ reviewed all the available historical evidence, and some linguistic, relevant to the origins of the Kurdish people. The subject is germane to the present study, for if the origins of the Kurds were known with any certainty the history of their language might be easier to follow.

It may be as well first to dispose of some of the more far-fetched theories in this connexion, for despite Professor Minorsky's paper many of them live on. A number were listed by the late Basile Nikitine in the first chapter of his comprehensive study on the Kurds.² Xenophon's *Καρδοῦχοι* have always been the favourite choice of those seeking the progenitors of the Kurds,³ but we find attempts to link them with the *Xalde* of Urartu, the *Sagarti*, or *Zikirtu*, and even the *Guti* peoples, always on the strength of 'une consonance plus ou moins évidente avec le nom actuel de ce peuple'. *Xaldi*, happily, has been removed from the field, as it is known to be the name of a god and not a nation.⁴ The other connexions all seem to suffer from inherent impossibility.

In fact the only evident references to the Kurds in the classical authors before our era would seem to be those of Polybius, Livy, and Strabo to the *Κύρτιοι*, or *Cyrtii*,⁵ respectively. The two historians mention them only as contingents of slingers in the armies of Media and Asia Minor, while Strabo, more explicitly, names them as wild mountaineers

¹ 'Les origines des Kurdes,' *Actes du XX^e Congrès International des Orientalistes*, Louvain, 1940, 143.

² *Les Kurdes, étude sociologique et historique*, Paris, 1956, 2-16.

³ See, for example, G. R. Driver, 'The Name Kurd and its Philological connexions,' *JRAS*, 1923, 393, and most recently I. M. Oranskij, *Vvedenie v iranskiju filologiju*, Moscow, 1960, 316.

⁴ See A. Goetze, *Kleinasiën*, Munich, 1957, 191, n. 6.

⁵ See Driver, 'The Name Kurd,' 397.

living in Media and Armenia, but also in Persis. With this solitary exception, all the positive evidence points to the Kurds being a Median people—a view which Professor Minorsky strongly endorses.

If we take a leap forward to the Arab conquest we find that the name Kurd has taken on a new meaning, becoming practically synonymous with 'nomad', if nothing more pejorative. Professor Minorsky quotes, for example, the ninth century geographer Ibn Rusta, who described the Lombards as 'living in the deserts in tents, like the Kurds'.¹ Today, with the growth of Kurdish nationalism, the name is used to embrace almost all the peoples and tribes living between the Turks and Arabs on the west and the Persians proper on the east. Among Iranian peoples this includes the Lurs and the various Goran tribes. The modern Kurds' approach to history is also refreshingly simple. Feeling a need for heroic ancestors, and finding the imperial Medes so to speak unemployed, they make no bones about casting them in the rôle. Indeed, it is now fashionable among them to use a so-called Median era, obtained by adding to our date the figure 612, the date of the conquest of Nineveh by the Medes.

In the face of this blend of little fact and much fiction the linguistic evidence gains in importance. Even here the field is by no means clear, for the celebrated Professor N. J. Marr once hoped to see in the modern Kurdish vocabulary survivals of a 'primitive Kurdish' which would be of the K'art', or Georgian, group of the Japhetic branch of languages.² All that need be said of such a theory is that it still awaits the 'faits réels' to corroborate it that time was to bring to light. Meanwhile we are at liberty to consider Kurdish as a normal Iranian language. My first task then should be to define Kurdish (Kd.), by establishing the features which distinguish it from other Ir(anian) dialects. Unfortunately I have to admit at the outset that my findings are largely negative, for almost

¹ *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum*, Tome VII, 128.

² Quoted by Nikitine, *Kurdes*, 4.

every feature of Kd. has its counterpart in at least one other Ir. dialect.

The most obvious feature is the development of post-vocalic *-m*, in the first place to *-v*, then in some dialects to *-w*, e.g.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|---|-------------------------|
| Kd. ¹ <i>nāv/w</i> | 'name' | < | Av(estan) <i>nāman-</i> |
| <i>hāv/wīn</i> | 'summer' | < | <i>hāmīna-</i> |
| <i>dū(v)</i> | 'tail' | < | <i>duma-</i> |
| <i>kav/wān</i> | 'bow' | : | Pers(ian) <i>kamān</i> |

There are a few examples of this development already in Manichaean Parthian, as was shown by Paul Tedesco in his article 'Dialektologie der Westiranischen Turfantexte'.² A similar development also occurs sporadically in Balochi and Luri, and regularly in Vafsi.³ But there can be no question of it being an inherited common feature of all these dialects. In Kd. and Vaf(si) it is found in an appreciable number of recent loanwords from Arabic, e.g.

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------|------------------|
| Kd. <i>hav/wīr</i> , | Vaf. <i>hawīr</i> | 'dough' | Ar. <i>xamīr</i> |
| <i>šivāt</i> | | 'assembly' | <i>šamā'at</i> |
| <i>tawāw</i> | | 'complete' | <i>tamām</i> |
| (<i>šam</i>), | <i>šawa</i> | 'candle' | <i>šama'</i> |

In Bal(ochi)⁴ it is restricted to the Northern dialect, the furthest developed of all, and to intervocalic *-m*. Moreover, nasalization is often recorded in the preceding vowel.

| | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------------|
| N. Bal. <i>hāwag</i> : | S. Bal. <i>hāmag</i> | 'raw' | Pers. <i>xām</i> |
| <i>nyāwā</i> : | <i>nyāmā</i> | 'between' | <i>miyāna</i> |
| <i>nawāš</i> : | <i>namāš</i> | 'prayer' | <i>namāz</i> |

Where Kd. does seem unique is in the development of the groups *-šm* and *-xm* to *-v*, or *-w*, according to the dialect. Incidentally this serves to point the lateness of the change of *-m* to *-v/w*, for the loss of the first consonant of these groups is quite common, e.g.

¹ All Kd. examples are from personal notes.

² *Monde Orientale*, XV, 208.

³ A dialect from east of Hamadan; see M. Mughaddam, *Gūyīshā-yi Vafis va Āstiyān va Tafriš*, *Irān Kūda* 11, Teheran, 1949.

⁴ Examples from W. Geiger, *Etymologie des Balūči*, Munich, 1890.

Pers. *čašm* 'eye', for which Kd. has *čāv/w*, is in Bal., Gorani,¹ Vaf. *čam*, Gilaki² *čum*, Ormuři³ *cimī*, Pers. *tuxm* 'seed', Kd. *tōv/w*, is in Bal., Gor. *tōm*, Pashto *tōma* 'yeast', Pers. *šuxm* 'first ploughing', Kd. *šōv*, *šōw*, *šēf*, is in Bal., Gor.⁴ *šōm*, Vaf. *šūm*.

What appears at first sight to be a uniquely Kd. feature is the occurrence of initial *k*- corresponding to common Ir. *x*-, Sanskrit *kh*-, e.g.

Kd. *kar* 'donkey' : Pers. *xar*, Av. *xara-*
kanān 'to laugh' : *xandādan*, Ir. \sqrt{xand}
kānī 'spring' : Vaf. *xānīa*, Av. *xan-*

It is true that similar forms occur in the east, e.g.⁵

S. Bal. *kar*, Parachi *khör* 'donkey'
kandag, *khan-*, Wakhi *kānd-* 'laugh'

but in these dialects they are paralleled by a similar development of the other initial fricatives, *f*-, *θ*-, of which there is no sign in Kd. But any hope that Kd. has somehow preserved a 'pre-Iranian' initial aspirate stop, **kh*-, is dashed by the verb 'to buy', Kd. *kirīn*, Pers. *xarīdan*, ultimately derived from Ir. **xrī*-, Skt. *krī*-, and IE **q^urei*. This shows that the initial *k*- in all the Kd. examples is developed from a common Ir. fricative.

One feature distinguishing Kd. from all its near neighbours is the preservation of an archaic form of the root *čyu*- 'go'. It is safe to say that all Kd. dialects have *č*- in the stems formed from this root, whereas in other West Ir. dialects it had early developed into *š*-. The older form lived on, however, in East Ir., as the following forms testify :

¹ Gor(ani) examples are taken, whenever possible, from personal notes of the Hawrāmī dialect (of Hawrāmān-i Luhōn), which is consistently the most archaic. Other examples, where the dialect is specified, are from O. Mann's material, *Mundarten der Gūrān*, . . . bearbeitet von Karl Hadank, Berlin, 1930.

² A. Christensen, *Contributions à la dialectologie iranienne*, Copenhagen 1930, 288.

³ G. Morgenstierne, *IIFL*, I, 390.

⁴ See my 'Bājalānī', *BSOAS*, XVIII, 435.

⁵ *IIFL*, I, 37; II, 457.

Pashto *j-*,¹ Wakhi *čāw-*,² Parachi *čh-*,³ Ormurī *caw-*,⁴
Ossetic *caw-*.

In short, apart from this *č-*, and the treatment of *-šm* and *-xm*, I can find no feature which is both common to all the dialects of Kurdish and unmatched outside them. To isolate Kurdish convincingly, therefore, would seem to entail comparing it with at least each West Ir. dialect, listing the common and divergent features. For practical purposes, however, taking Kurdish as 'that which is generally recognized, by Iranists, as Kurdish', it is necessary to consider for comparison only its immediate neighbours, past and present.

This last distinction is made in order to recall Tedesco's article, in which he has shown conclusively⁵ that Balochi, although today spoken mainly in the extreme south-east of the Iranian area, was originally a North-West Ir. language, and a close neighbour of Kd. Beside the many features that they have in common, listed by Tedesco, there is one major difference that suffices to distinguish Bal. from all other W. Ir. languages, including Kd. This consists in the almost complete conservatism of Bal. with regard to intervocalic consonants, compared with the varying degrees of development elsewhere. Compare :

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------|
| -p- | S. Bal. <i>āp</i> | : | Kd. <i>āv/w</i> | : | Gor. <i>āvī</i> | 'water' |
| -t- | <i>dīta</i> | : | <i>dī</i> | : | <i>dī</i> | 'seen' |
| -č- | <i>rōč</i> | : | <i>rōž</i> | : | <i>rō</i> | 'day' |
| -k- | <i>zamīk</i> | 'crops' | : | <i>zav/wī</i> | | 'field' |
| -d- | <i>wād</i> | : | <i>xwē</i> | | | 'salt' |
| -j- | <i>drāj</i> | : | <i>dirēž</i> | | | 'long' |
| -g- | <i>rōgan</i> | : | <i>rōn</i> | : | <i>rūan</i> | 'fat' |

The linguistic neighbours of Kurdish in the south at the present day are the Luri dialects, including the Bakhtiari.⁶

¹ Morgenstierne, *EVP*, 77; *AO*, I, 268.

² *IIFL*, II, 519.

³ *IIFL*, I, 244.

⁴ *ibid.*, 391.

⁵ 'Dialektologie,' 252-3.

⁶ Bakht(iari) examples are taken from D. R. Lorimer, *Phonology of the Bakhtiari . . . Dialect . . .*, London, 1922, 102-6.

These are sufficiently like modern Persian for the two to be considered together. They are distinguished from Kd., Bal., and the other N.W.Ir. dialects by a number of phonological developments well known to be specifically Persian. One can quote the Pers. *d* corresponding to common Ir. *z*, e.g.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Pers. <i>dānistān</i> , | : Kd. <i>zānīn</i> , | ‘ to know ’ |
| Bakht. <i>dūnistān</i> | Bal. <i>zānag</i> | |
| Pers. <i>dāmād</i> , | : Kd. <i>zāv/wā</i> , | ‘ bridegroom ’ |
| Bakht. <i>dāmā</i> , <i>dowā</i> | Gor. <i>zamā</i> | |

Then there is Persian *h*, arising from older *θ* (or *s*) and *δ*, to which Kd. and the rest oppose *s* or *z*, e.g.

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------|
| Pers., Bakht. <i>āhan</i> | : Kd., Bal. <i>āsīn</i> | ‘ iron ’ |
| Pers. <i>āhū</i> , Bakht. <i>āhī</i> | : Kd., Bal. <i>ās(i)k</i> | ‘ deer ’ |
| Pers., Bakht. <i>māhī</i> | : Kd. <i>māsī</i> , | ‘ fish ’ |
| | Gor. <i>mās[āwī]</i> | |
| Pers. <i>xwāh</i> -, Bakht. <i>xō</i> - | : Kd. <i>xwāz</i> -, | ‘ want ’ |
| | Gor. <i>wāz</i> - | |

and finally Pers. *z* from older *ǰ*, preserved in Bal., while Kd. has *ž*, e.g.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Pers. <i>zan</i> , Bakht. <i>zēna</i> | : Kd. <i>žin</i> , Bal. <i>ǰan</i> | ‘ woman ’ |
| Pers. <i>zīstān</i> | : Kd. <i>žīn</i> | ‘ to live ’ |
| Pers. <i>zih</i> | : Kd. <i>žē</i> , Bal. <i>ǰig</i> | ‘ bowstring ’ |

The last neighbours of Kd. to be considered are the closest. In fact ‘ neighbour ’ is not perhaps the best word, for the Gorani dialects in question are now reduced to a few speech islands in a sea of Kurdish. Where Gorani shows Northern characteristics Kurdish often agrees with the Persian dialects. One such case is the development of initial *y*- to *ǰ*- in Pers., Kd., and Bal., while it is preserved in Gor., e.g.

| | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Gor. <i>yawa</i> | : Pers. <i>ǰau</i> , Kd. <i>ǰō</i> | ‘ barley ’ < Av. <i>yawa-</i> |
| <i>yahar</i> | : <i>ǰigar</i> , <i>ǰarg</i> | ‘ liver ’ < <i>yākar-</i> |

Both these Kd. words may be borrowed from Pers., but this can hardly be true of Kd. *ǰār* ‘ time ’ which can only be compared with Middle Persian *ǰār*, Parthian *yāwar*.¹

¹ Tedesco, ‘ Dialektologie,’ 193.

In the development of original initial *hw-* to *w-* Gorani agrees with Bal., while in both Kd. and Pers. the outcome is *xw-*, e.g.

Gor., Bal. *wān-* : Pers. *x^oān-*, Kd. *xwēn-* 'read' < \sqrt{hwan}
 Gor., Bal. *war-* : Pers. *x^our-*, Kd. *xō-* 'eat' < \sqrt{hwar}
 Gor. *wē-*, Bal. *wat-* : Pers. *x^oud*, Kd. *xō-* 'self' < Av. *x^oatō*

It is worth noting, in passing, that in this case Kd. does not accord with one peculiarity which may be ascribable to Median, viz. the development of *hw-* to *f-*.¹

This partial agreement with both camps gives some idea of the original position of the Kd. dialects—or rather of their supposed common ancestor—in relation to other W.Ir. dialects, but the subject needs to be pursued further. It has already been touched upon by Tedesco,² although he was mainly concerned with the 'Nordwest-Dialekt' of the Turfan texts, i.e. Manichaean Parthian, which he showed to be a uniform but composite dialect.³ It is now possible to amend Tedesco's findings in a few details, but his main conclusions still stand. He made a table of his 'Hauptbeispiele', the criteria for his grouping of the dialects, and this table I have converted into a diagram. It is certainly over-simplified on the right-hand side, as far as the labels 'Caspian' and 'Central' are concerned, but the left-hand side represents the situation fairly, in my opinion, with Kurdish holding a position between proto-Balochi and Persian.

The isoglosses concerned are :

- (1) that between dialects preserving a nasal present stem of the verb 'to do', *kun-*, etc., and those with a stem from the root *kar-* ;
- (2) that between dialects with forms of the past participle 'come' derived from **ā-gata-* and **ā-gmata-* respectively (and here again Kd. seems to be marked off from Median, if we can judge from the name of the Median

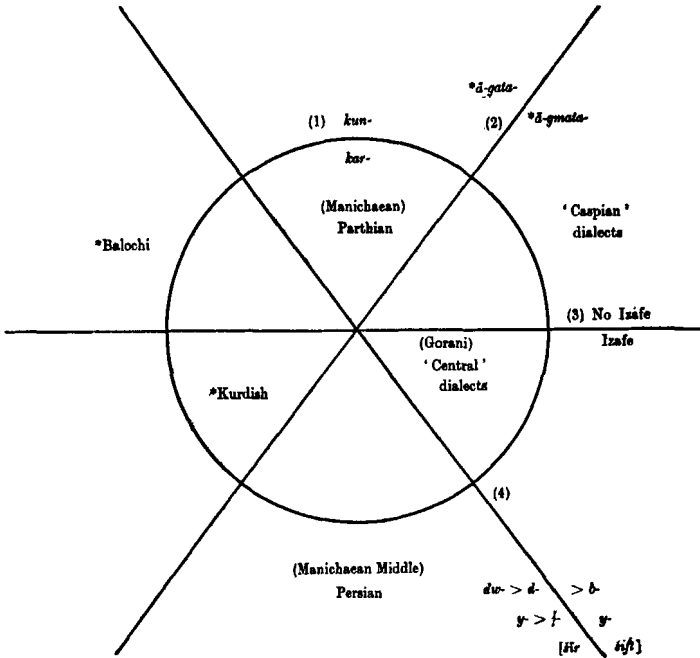
¹ E. Benveniste, 'Persica II,' *BSL*, 31, 73.

² 'Dialektologie,' 252-4.

³ *ibid.*, 246.

capital. The Greek forms *Ἀγβάτανα*, *Ἐκβάτανα*, and Old Persian *Ha(n)gmatāna-*, are generally taken to contain the same *-gmata-* form, not found in Kd.);

- (3) that dividing dialects with an *Izafe* construction, derived from the old relative pronoun, from those without; and finally a double isogloss



- (4) between dialects having *d-* or *b-* respectively from original *dw-*, and also *f-* or *y-* respectively representing older initial *y-*. These sound changes are supported by at least one item of vocabulary, viz. the word for 'milk', either *šūr* or *šift*.

The diagram, naturally, represents only one possibility, and has no geographical meaning. Any other arrangement of the dialects in question, however, would lead to a much more complicated picture, even considering only these few isoglosses.

Of the other features considered by Tedesco few help to determine the relative positions of Kd., Bal., and Persian. Thus the development of initial *w-* to *b-*, which some Kd. dialects have in common with Pers., must be a comparatively late development as it is lacking in precisely those Southern Kd. dialects nearest to the Persian. Professor K. Barr,¹ I think rightly, attributes this difference within Kd. to Gorani influence on the Southern dialects. In most other W.Ir. dialects *w-* is little modified in this position, while in Bal. it has developed into *g(w)-*, e.g.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Pers., Bakht. <i>bād</i> | : Gor., S. Kd. <i>wā</i> | : Bal. <i>gwāt</i> | ' wind ' |
| N./C. Kd. <i>bā</i> | Semnani, ² | | |
| | Zahrai ³ | <i>vā</i> | |
| Pers., | : Gor., S. Kd. <i>wārān</i> | : Bal. <i>gwāriš</i> | ' rain ' |
| N./C. Kd. <i>bārān</i> | Zahr. <i>vārūn</i> | | |
| | Semn. <i>vāraš</i> | | |
| N./C. Kd. <i>bīr</i> | : Gor., S. Kd. <i>wīr</i> | : Bal. <i>gīr</i> | ' memory ' |
| (Pers.), Bakht. <i>bēz-</i> | : Gor. <i>wēc-</i> | : Bal. <i>gēc-</i> | ' sift ' |
| N./C. Kd. <i>bēž-</i> | S. Kd. <i>*wīž-</i> | | |

Again, Kd. appears to share the development of Old Ir. *θr* to *s* with Persian. The only example Tedesco quoted,⁴ with justifiable caution, was the numeral ' 3 ', Kd. *sē*. But to this one can add a word most unlikely to be borrowed, as its nearest traceable relative is found only in the Bashkardi dialect of Makran. The Kd. word is *pē-xwās*, or *-xāwus*, ' barefoot,' Bashkardi *pā-xwāves*. Gor., in contrast, has *pā-wirwā*, and in Zahrai one finds *pā-xārowā* and *-xārapā*. All these forms can be traced back, as was kindly pointed out to

¹ *Iranische Dialektaufzeichnungen, aus dem Nachlass von F. C. Andreas*, Berlin, 1939, 144.

² Christensen, *Contributions II*, Copenhagen, 179-97.

³ Zahrā is a district south of Qazvin, near Tākistān (v. Henning, *TPS*, 1954, 159). The Zahr(ai) dialects of two centres, Bermowa (Ibrāhīmābād) and Sezjowa (Sagzābād), are described by Jelial Al Ahmed, *Tāt-nišīnhā-yi bulūk-i Zahrā*, Teheran, 1958.

⁴ 'Dialektologie,' 199, n. 1.

me by Dr. I. Gershevitch, who discovered the Bashkardi word, to Av. *x^vā.aoθra-* 'having one's own footwear', thus:

Av. *x^vā.aoθra-* > **xwāussa-* > *xwās* [in Kd.]
 > **(x)wāu(h)ra-* > **wāwir* > *wirwā* [in Gor.]
 (cf. Gor. *yarē* '3' < **hrē* < **θrayah-*, and
 the metathesis in C. Kd. *birwā* < *bāwir*
 'belief')
 > **x(w)āu(h)ra-* > **xāru-* (+ *pā*) [in Zahr.]
 (cf. Zahr. *xos-* 'sleep' < *x^vafsa-*)

But it must be remembered that Bal. also has *s* from *θr*, e.g.

pusag 'son' < **puθra-ka-*, *ās* 'fire' < **āθr-*

In short, we can add another to the isoglosses numbered (4) in the diagram.

The outcome of the groups *-rd-* and *-rz-* in the various non-Persian dialects is far from certain, words having been borrowed in every direction. There can be no doubt that the development of *-rd-* to *-l/r-* took place in many of these dialects,

e.g. Semn. *val(a)*, Gor. *wilī* 'flower' < **warda-*

Gor. (Kandulai) *zil* 'heart' < **zrd-*

But Gor. also has the preverb *hur* 'up', from Av. *θrādwa-*, corresponding to Middle Pers. *ul*. The Kd. equivalent is *hil* in the N., *hal* in the C. dialects, with the same velar *l* phoneme we find in the verb *pālāwtin*, *pālēw-* 'to filter, strain'. If we derive this from **para-dāwaya-*, which also gives Pers. *pālāy-*,¹ we seem to have a true Kd. form, with *w* preserved at the expense of *y* as in Parthian.² N.Kd. has the verb *pārzinān*, with the same meaning 'to strain', from the rival root seen also in Gor. *čāy-parzēn* 'tea-strainer', and borrowed in Armenian *parzel* 'filter, purify'. The two verbs could, of course, co-exist in Kd., but the preservation of *-rz-* is noteworthy. Tedesco³ considered that this group also became *-l-* in a number of dialects, without passing through the inter-

¹ W. B. Henning, 'Das Verbum des Mittelpersischen der Turfanfragmente,' *ZII*, 9, 209.

² Tedesco, 'Dialektologie,' 197.

³ *ibid.*, 206.

mediate stage *-rd-*. Although at first sight this seems most unlikely, it may be the case in Kd., for while it has *z* unchanged in such words as *zānīn*, *zāwā*¹ it has a larger number of words with (N.Kd.) *l* or (C.Kd.) *l̥* corresponding to older *rz* than sure cases of the preservation of this group. Thus :

| | | | |
|---------|---|---------------|--|
| Kd. | <i>bil/tind</i> ² | ‘ high ’ | : Av. <i>bərəzant-</i> |
| | <i>hēštīn</i> , <i>hēl/t-</i> | ‘ leave ’ | : \sqrt{hrz} |
| | <i>mīl</i> (only) | ‘ neck ’ | : <i>mərəzu-</i> |
| | <i>māl/tān</i> , ³ <i>māl/t-</i> | ‘ rub ’ | : \sqrt{mrz} |
| C.Kd. | <i>sipīl</i> | ‘ spleen ’ | : <i>spərəzan-</i> |
| N.Kd. | <i>bālgī</i> , <i>bālīf</i> | ‘ pillow ’ | : <i>barəziš-</i> , Pers. <i>bālīš</i> |
| | <i>gīlī</i> | ‘ complaint ’ | : \sqrt{grz} , Pers. <i>gīla</i> |
| against | | | |
| Kd. | <i>barz</i> | ‘ high ’ | < Av. <i>barəz-</i> |
| | <i>harzīn</i> | ‘ millet ’ | < * <i>h(a)rzana-</i> , Pers. <i>arzan</i> |

and possibly

N.Kd. *gāzīn(da)* ‘ complaint ’, if < \sqrt{grz}

Gorani has only *barz* in the meaning ‘ high ’, but also (Kandulai) *bālā* ‘ above ’; *mīl* ‘ neck ’ and *māl-* ‘ rub ’, as in Kd., but also *māzī* ‘ back, spine ’ from **marz-*. I do not think it is possible to be certain which is the true Kurdish development, but whether we consider the many words with *l/t* as native or loan-words their preponderance is significant.

Bal. appears to have kept both *rd* and *rz*, but on very slim evidence. For *rd* it rests on the single form *zirdē*, quoted as a poetic word for ‘ heart ’. For *rz* there is *burz* ‘ high ’, but also *barzī* ‘ saddle-bag ’.⁴ Otherwise, beside the more obvious loanwords from Pers., such as *dīl* ‘ heart ’, *gul* ‘ flower ’, *pālāy-* ‘ filter ’, there are only the problematic words *bālād* ‘ height ’, representing Ir. **barzād-*, and the verb *īlag*, *īšta* ‘ to leave ’, from \sqrt{hrz} . The difference between Kd. and Bal.,

¹ See above, p. 73.

² C.Kd. also has *bālā* ‘ stature ’, but only in *bažn-ū-bālā* ‘ figure ’ and *bālā-barz* ‘ tall ’!

³ Infinitive *mīštīn* or *māštīn* in some dialects.

⁴ Morgenstierne, ‘ Notes on Balochi Etymology, NTS, V, 41.

in this respect, suggests that proto-Kd. was in closer contact with the Persian south.

To leave Tedesco, the same deduction is possible from a number of words originally containing the group *-nd-*. We have seen *kanîn* 'to laugh' < \sqrt{xand} , and can add C.Kd. *ganîn* 'to rot' < \sqrt{gand} , N.Kd. *banî* 'servant'¹ < *bandaka-*, and probably N.Kd. *hinârtîn*, *hinêr-*, C.Kd. *(ha)nârdîn*, *nêr-* 'to send', which I compare with Man. Mid. Pers. *han(n)âr-* 'to direct (the eyes)' < *ham* + \sqrt{dar} .² Kurdish, therefore, shows the same reduction of *-nd-* to *-n-* as Man. Mid. Pers.

A last agreement between Kd. and Pers. is in the preservation of initial *fr-*, while in many N.W.Ir. dialects it has become *hr-* or the like, and in Bal. *š-*, e.g.

Pers. *furûš-* : Gor. *wurâš-* : Bal. *šawašk-* < **fra-waxš-* 'to sell'

Kd. *firôš-* Vaf. *rûš-*

Kd. *fîrmân* : Gor. *harmâna* 'work' (cf. Kd. *farmân* 'order')

In view of these leanings towards Persian it seems to me necessary at least to qualify Professor Minorsky's statement that 'le kurde proprement dit . . . appartient sans aucun doute au groupe Nord-Ouest des langues iraniennes',³ and also his further contention that 'l'unité du kurde doit s'expliquer par sa base médique'.⁴

* * *

So far we have been mainly concerned with the phonology of Kurdish, regarding it as an almost uniform whole. When we turn to morphology, however, this ceases to be possible. The morphological differences between the various N. and C. dialects of Kd. I have described elsewhere.⁵ Our knowledge of the S.Kd. dialects is still incomplete, but it is sufficient to show that they differ almost as much one from the other as they do from their northern kin. For the moment, therefore, I will restrict myself for the most part to the N. and C. dialects in seeking the reasons for their divergences.

¹ In the phrase *az banî* 'I (am your) servant'.

² Henning, 'Verbum,' 193.

³ 'Origines des Kurdes,' 145.

⁴ *ibid.*, 152.

⁵ *Kurdish Dialect Studies I*, London Oriental Series, 1961.

Of the two groups the Northern shows itself to be the more archaic in a number of ways. In phonology it is only by virtue of preserving both phonemes *v* and *w*, which coincide in *w* in the other dialects, e.g.

N. *švīn* : C. *šinēw*, *šōn* 'abuse' < *dušnām*
nivistin : *nūstin* 'to sleep' < *ni* + $\sqrt{\text{pad}}$
šav : *šaw* 'night' < *xšap-*
 but N. *bāwar*(ī) : C. *bāwir*, *birwā* 'belief' < *wāwar*
 N. and C. *mawīž*, *mēwīž* 'raisin' < **madwīča-*

At the same time the N. dialects have been more receptive of foreign phonemes, including the Semitic emphatics *g*, *t*, *z*,¹ the (Armenian?) unaspirated stops *p*, *t*, *k*, and even an ejective *č*, none of which is met in the other dialects.

In morphology, on the other hand, N.Kd. has been fairly resistant to innovation and has even tended to discard some native constructions, when we may assume it to have inherited alternatives. For example, while it has preserved a full oblique case system for both nouns and pronouns, it has almost completely given up the pronominal suffixes. In the other dialects it is the oblique case which has gone to the wall, the pronominal suffixes assuming many of its functions. Compare, e.g.

N. *wē zinē nān pāt* : C. *aw žina*, *nān-ī kird*
 'That woman baked (made) bread'
nānī bida min : *nān-im bidarē*
 'Give me bread'

Again, the past tenses of transitive verbs preserve their passive sense in its simplest form in the north, e.g.

N. *az darmān kirim* 'I was physicked'

and the construction rarely goes beyond what is found in Old Pers.

īma tya mana krtam } 'This (is) what I did'
 cf. N.Kd. *ava-ya yē min kir* }

(How far the C. dialects have departed from this will be seen below.)

¹ *h* and ' are found in both N. and C.Kd.

For the expression of a passive in the present tenses no secondary conjugation has been evolved in the north, as it has in other Kd. dialects. Instead a simple periphrasis is employed, e.g.

N. *dē hēt-a kuštīn* 'He will be killed (lit. come to killing)'

Turning to C.Kd. we find a number of morphological innovations. Some of them are of comparatively recent date. One such is the extension of the 'transitive past' construction whereby the verb takes a personal ending representing what in English would be the Indirect object, e.g.

C. *xaw-īm dīw-a* 'I have seen a dream (lit. dream-my seen-is)'

but *xaw-īm pēwa dīw-īt* 'I have seen a dream about thee (lit. dream-my about seen-art)'

The same development is found in the Haurami dialect of Gorani that I have recorded, e.g.

Haur. *kītēbaka-m dā-nī pana* 'I have given the book to thee (lit. the book-my given-art to)'

but as no examples are to be found in Benedictsens's Haurami material¹ this cannot be taken as a feature common to all dialects of Haurami, let alone of Gorani. For many other features of C.Kd., however, we have to look no farther than Gorani for an explanation.

First there is the defining suffix *-aká*, found in Haur. and the other major Gor. dialects recorded, and also in Zaza.² In Kd. the use of this suffix is restricted to the C. and S. dialects. In N.Kd. the only means of defining a noun is by using the demonstrative adjectives. Less, perhaps, is to be learnt from the other defining suffix, *-á*, as it is common to a large number

¹ *Les dialectes d'Awromān et de Pāvā, textes recueillis par . . . B. revus et publiés . . . par Arthur Christensen, Copenhagen, 1921.*

² The dialects of this group are, or were until recently, spoken at the extreme north-west of the Kd. area, but they are closely related to Gorani; see O. Mann's *Mundarten der Zázá, . . . bearbeitet von Karl Hadank, Berlin, 1932.*

of W.Ir. dialects, but its complete absence from N.Kd. is the more remarkable.

We have already seen ¹ that Kd. and the so-called 'Central (Ir.) dialects', including Gorani, have an Izafe construction in common with Persian, but there the similarity ends. The archaic N.Kd. dialects have an Izafe which is still recognizable and still used as a relative pronoun and, as with all pronouns in these dialects, the Izafe agrees in gender with its antecedent, e.g.

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| N. <i>bāb-ē min</i> | ' my father ' |
| <i>dī-ā min/dāyk-ā min</i> | ' my mother ' |
| <i>aw kas-ē awwilī bēt</i> | ' that person who comes first ' |
| <i>aw masalā kô az bô hātīm</i> | ' that matter (<i>masala</i> F.) about which I have come ' |

The first signs of decay in this system are seen in those C.Kd. dialects which preserve a distinction of gender.² Here the inherited forms of the Izafe, M. *-ē*, F. *-ā*, are replaced by M. *-ī*, F. *-ē*, which are identical with the corresponding oblique case morphemes, from which they are probably borrowed. All the remaining Kd. dialects have a simple and universal form of Izafe, *-ī*.

In Gorani we again find, in the Haur. dialect, two forms of Izafe distinguished, not by a difference of gender, but of function. Here there is what I call an epithetic Izafe *-ī* and a genitive Izafe *-ū*, both used for both genders, e.g.

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Haur. <i>kuř-ēw-ī řwān</i> | ' a young boy ' |
| <i>kuř-ū min</i> | ' my son ' |
| <i>kināčēwa-y řwāna</i> | ' a young girl ' |
| <i>kināčēwa-w xānī</i> | ' a daughter of the Khan ' |

It is not, I think, unlikely that the reduction of the C. and S. Kd. Izafe to the single form *-ī* is a result of the clash between the two systems. It is, of course, possible to think of Persian influence, but this would have to be literary rather than

¹ In the diagram, p. 75 above.

² Particularly Pizhderi and Mukri, see *K(urdish) D(ialect) S(tudies) I*, §§ 179.b, 183.a.

colloquial, and there is no other sign of its having affected Kd. morphology.

The Izafe is not the only means of connecting a noun with its epithet in these dialects. All Gorani shares with C. and S.Kd. what I call an 'open compound' construction, which is employed whenever the noun phrase is definite. The mark of this construction is a compound vowel *-a-*, e.g.

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Haur. <i>kuṛ-a ṣwān-aká</i> | 'the young boy' |
| <i>ā kuṛ-a ṣwān-á</i> | 'that young boy' |
| <i>kināča ṣwāna-ké</i> | 'the young girl (<i>kināčē</i>)' |
| <i>ī kināča ṣwāné</i> | 'this young girl' |

Compare

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| C.Kd. <i>kuṛ-a ṣwān-aká</i> | 'the handsome boy' |
| <i>aw kuṛ-a ṣwān-á</i> | 'that handsome boy' |
| <i>kič-a ṣwān-aká</i> | 'the pretty girl' |
| <i>am kič-a ṣwān-á</i> | 'this pretty girl' |

There is no trace of this type of 'open compound' in N.Kd.

In the matter of personal pronoun suffixes C.Kd. differs from Gorani, but to a lesser extent than it does from N.Kd. These suffixes play a similar and equally important part in the syntax of both Gor. and C.Kd. The main difference between them is one of form. For the 3rd person Gor. has the same forms as Persian, *-š*, *-šā(n)*, while Kd. has *-ī*, *-yān*. For the other persons the forms are generally the same in both groups, viz. 1st *-m*, *-mā(n)*, 2nd *-t*, *-tā(n)*. In the more conservative C.Kd. dialects, however, the original Kd. forms of the 1st and 2nd plural suffixes are preserved, *-in* and *-ū* respectively¹ (cf. Av. *-nō*, *-wō*). This state of affairs must be compared with that obtaining in N.Kd., where pronominal suffixes as such have disappeared. This is a development in N.Kd. which it shares with Zaza. The 3rd singular form *-ī* (cf. Av. *-hē*) occurs in Balochi also and we may assume, from the traces left in the absolute prepositions common to N. and C.Kd.,² that it was once common to all Kurdish. It may be inferred that the

¹ See *KDS I*, § 197.a.

² *ibid.*, §§ 237, 302.

preservation of the pronominal suffixes in C.Kd. is directly due to Gor. influence, the strength of which is also shown by the partial assimilation of the Kd. forms.

The secondary passive conjugations of C. and S.Kd. have already been mentioned. In S.Kd. they are formed regularly with the morphemes *-yē-* present, *-yā-* past. This type of 'y- passive' is common to Gor. and Zaza, and the S.Kd. form is probably a direct borrowing from Gorani. This cannot be said of the C.Kd. conjugation, however, for although it is identical in function it differs in form. The C.Kd. passive morphemes are *-rē-* present, *-rā-* past. They are generally agreed to have been evolved on the analogy of the inherited forms of the verb 'to do', thus :

'Transitive 'do' Passive 'be done'

ka- (< *kar-*) : *kirē-* (< *krya-* + *-īh-*) : *X-* : *X-rē-*

where *X-* represents any transitive present stem. If it is accepted that such a secondary conjugation was unknown to early Kd., the impetus for its development would seem to have come from Gorani.

A last, minor example of Gor. influence is to be seen in the replacement of the N.Kd. preverb *va* (cf. Pers. *bāz*, *vā*) by a 'postverb' *-awa* in C.Kd., e.g.

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| N. <i>va kir</i> | : C. <i>kird-awa</i> , | Gor. <i>kard-awa</i> | 'opened' |
| <i>va girt</i> | : <i>girt-awa</i> | | 'caught' |
| <i>va šārt</i> | : <i>šārd-awa</i> , | <i>šārā-wa</i> | 'hid' |

Gorani has not only the same suffix *-awa* in this function but two other 'postverb' suffixes, *-ara*, e.g.

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------|
| N. <i>rū ništ</i> | : C. <i>dā ništ</i> | : Gor. <i>nīšt-ara</i> | 'sat down' |
| N. and C. <i>dā xist</i> | : | <i>wist-ara</i> | 'let down' |

and *-ana*, not matched in Kd.

To redress the balance a little, there is one feature of N.Kd. which is much closer to Haurami than to other Kd. dialects. Whereas these have *-ān* as a general plural morpheme, much as in classical Persian, both N.Kd. and Haurami have preserved a two-case system in the plural as well as the

singular. Thus in N.Kd. $-ā(n)$ is specifically a plural *oblique* morpheme, the direct plural taking no ending, e.g.

N. *mišk dar kaftin* 'the mice came out'
az dē vā miškā dar ēxim 'I shall drive these mice out'
 Haurami has two plural morphemes, $-ē$ direct, $-ā$ oblique, e.g.

Haur. *ā kitēbē* 'those books'
ā kitēbā bāra 'bring those books'

Plainly the development in these two dialects has been parallel but independent. The other Gorani dialects, recorded by O. Mann, have undergone the same generalization of the plural morpheme $-ān$ as C.Kd., e.g.

Kandulai¹ *dizakān ramāy* 'the thieves ran'
harakān-iš basyānawa 'his donkeys were tied
 up'
 Gahwarai² *ā tūtāna kušīsin* 'those dogs were
 killed'

In some S.Kd. and Gor. dialects this comparatively recent development of a common plural ending has been taken a step further by the substitution of the 'collective' morpheme $-gal$, or its derivatives, for $-ān$.

To summarize, even ignoring the more recent developments, there are four cases in which C. and S.Kd. appear to have borrowed directly from Gorani, viz.

- the defining suffix $-aká$,
- the 'open compound' replacing the *Izafe*,
- the secondary passive conjugation,
- the 'postverb' $-awa$,

and two more cases where their difference from N.Kd. can be attributed to Gorani influence, i.e. in

—the simplification of the *Izafe* system,
 and—the preservation of personal pronoun suffixes. If we consider the present extent of C. and S.Kd. in comparison with the remaining islands of Gorani I think there is no avoiding the conclusion that these dialects of Kd. have

¹ *Mundarten der Góran*, 311 and 322.

² *ibid.*, 454.

overlaid a Gorani substratum, while the N. dialects have to a much greater extent preserved their purity.

Earlier I was at some pains to stress the essentially S.W.Ir. element in common Kurdish. The north-western character of Gorani and Zaza, in contrast, is quite undiluted. A glance at their present disposition suffices to show that both groups have undergone a considerable displacement. It is not difficult to translate these linguistic findings, if they may be so called, into geographical and historical terms. One important factor to be considered is the persistence as a relatively small and isolated unit of the Zaza people, who are known to have come originally from Dailam on the southern shore of the Caspian. Without more historical evidence it does not seem feasible to decide whether they were displaced further westward by an influx of Kurds, or traversed unscathed territory already occupied by Kurds. The former seems at least the more likely explanation.

A hypothesis in the broadest terms, therefore, seems to entail, first, a northward movement of the main body of the Kurds into Armenia, perhaps expelling the Zaza ; secondly, the occupation of the southern Zagros and the surrounding area by the Goran ; lastly, in more recent times, a secondary expansion of the Kurds, from the north, which led to their overrunning and gradually absorbing all but the surviving Goran. The difficulty arises in setting a date to these hypothetical movements, but for a solution of this problem it is necessary to look outside the linguistic evidence.