



KURDISTAN

PHOTO: N. KASRAIAN

TEXT: Z. ARSHI
K. ZABIHI

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Kurdistan is one of the most inaccessible areas of the world, and little known internationally. The Kurds are one of the largest communities in the Middle East today, with an estimated population of 20-25 millions in five countries.

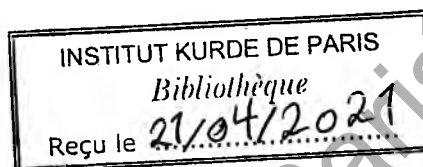
Geographically situated in the heartland of the Middle East, Kurdistan is endowed with a wealth of natural resources, and covers an area nearly the size of France.

This volume, with its more than 127 colour photographs and knowledgeable text, gives the reader an insight into the customs, history and way of life of the Kurds.

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FACE TO FACE WITH KURDISTAN

This is a simple narrative, avoiding tales of heroic struggles for self-determination, of a land with ancient secrets.

It is the simple story of a people and their sense of history. A people who have struggled continuously to preserve their ethnic identity, to retain the secrets of their past, secrets carved on the face of the rocks, revived in ancient ceremonies, chanted in forgotten songs and performed in symbolic dances.

This is a glance at a land and moments in the lives of her people; a silent rider, a lonely, unruly tree, a bird in a cage, a cry in the wind and the ruins of a temple to the goddess of fertility or to the god of light and brightness, now long forgotten.

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Introduction

Kurdistan, this ancient land of haughty mountains and fertile plains, of cold winters and moderate rainy summers, of hard won passes and narrow sloping valleys with hundreds of rivers flowing deep in the bottom, is where a brave people live. This is where a warlike, unruly, dynamic people have inhabited the Zagros mountain range and mingled with the natives since the dawn of the history. This is where snow-covered mountain paths await tragedies at winter dawns and dusks; and where the eternal calm of the mountains and the roaring of the free souls rule.

In the cool tranquility of the dreamlike mountains, where silence is occasionally broken by a cock's crow or a mule's neighing, thunderous gun-shots are not a rare sound. An age-old, surprise awaits you at each corner. Penetrate inside and you will listen to its mystery. You can understand the simple, eastern Kurdish soul; a soul filled with the paths, orchards and villages among the rocks that you find in their land, like a winding road passing through the valleys, listening to the rush of the rivers, or a pilgrim walking long roads in the hope of joining a saint buried in a grave on top of a hill and decorated with black stones and green and white flags.

This land is a plain composed of hundreds of colourful patches of earth where remote villages are found here and there resting in the morning fog sheltered by a rock, or located on top of a hill. The villages are full of earthen huts and pyramids tablets of cattle-droppings. There are vast wheat fields ready to be harvested by farmers' hands and sickles, or an open space where golden hay separated from wheat grains flies through weary fingers which have worked the soil. There is the busy market-place in a town that is feverish and armed to the teeth; a town where old, pastoral songs can be heard and magical spells as old as mankind, rise from the tambourine, its crescendo rhythm challenging every man to deny the material life as he moves into a strange dance. Arms open to the tambourine beats, hair flying in the wind mocking the man's pain and body, stabbing one's stomach with a dagger, piercing one's lips with a sword to prove that a man can say "no" to his bodily cage.

Kurdistan is a mountainous area, her landscape is formed by high altitudes, sloping valleys, and fertile plains. Mountains become higher and valleys deeper and unfit for agriculture as we go towards the Northwest. Towards the East, however, valleys become wider and there are cultivable plateaus of fertile soil.

People of the mountains are cattle-raisers and breed goats and sheep; the plains people are farmers and raise crops such as wheat, barley, rice, tobacco, alfalfa and corn.

In a cultural-historical context, Kurds can be recognized as an ancient people who have resisted various invasions and deadly confrontations during their history. Their spirits reflect their nature. The bright colours of their land wrap their souls and bodies. A golden sun shines on the plains and steppes surrounded by mountains and green valleys lying in the bottom of snow-capped peaks, where cattle are milked in a village sunset when flocks of herds return to their fold. One can smell fresh bread in the narrow alleys, and hear men talking about politics in the light of the lantern sitting at the supper-cloth spread, bread, yogurt and tea.

Remnants of old forests with occasional trees of bitter almond and wild pistachio can be found in the region, while forests of oak, ash, wild tamarisk, and a rich wild life still exist in Kurdistan.

Despite the wind-swept, rain-washed petrographs on the weary face of her rocks, the history of this land is a mixture of truth and fable. It is, however, clearly understood that they are people of Indo-European stock who have lived in a constant struggle with the plains people while inhabiting the higher altitudes of Mesopotamia, and who have at times either conquered the regional Empires or been vanquished by them. This land has been overrun by Sullukies, Parthians and Sassanids in ancient times, and by the Arab Caliphs and Mongol invaders and Ataban Turks in the Middle Ages. The last blow against them was after the First World War, when their land was divided among the five countries of Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria and the U.S.S.R.

"Kurdistan" is under the control of the central governments and the affiliated offices are mostly managed by the non-Kurds. Despite all this, "Kurds" are still alive, and each Kurd reviews the dream of autonomy in his mind, singing it in Kurdish along with his fellow kinsmen while placing their hands at each other's back and tapping their feet on the ground in a dancing motion.

Town settlers constitute half the Kurdish population and are mainly merchants or civil workers. There are no industrial firms or productive companies in Kurdistan. It is also short of natural resources, but there is an abundance of water here, as many rivers and mountain streams flow in the district. In the

past, nomadism was a prevalent way of life in Kurdistan, but now most nomadic tribes lead a sedentary life.

Most Kurdish tribes have become sedentary since the last century, without losing their national identity and tribal ties. The Kurds of the mountains had preserved their tribal attitude until recent times. However, this tendency was much less among the plains people where feudal laws used to rule. Today, these relations are replaced by capitalistic ones. The Kurdish tribes come together under the patriarchal leadership of a head (Raiz) who is known as "Bag" or "Agha" and who takes authoritative measures in the absence of the legal statutes.

Sources of income in Kurdistan include fruit growing (apples, pears, pomegranates, quince, figs, walnuts, almonds, cherries, sour cherries, and peaches are grown in the area), bee-keeping and local handicrafts. The latter plays an important role in the economy of this district & differ from one place to another depending on the nature of the region.

Local handicrafts include carpets and rugs, Guelims, Jajims, shawls, brocaded silk, Guivahs (kind of light cotton shoes), felt mats, embroideries, leather products, turnery, mat-weaving, and metal tools such as knives and weapons.

Kurds are mostly Sunni Moslems today, but one can observe the remnants of Mithraism and Zoroasterianity in most of their customs. Some Kurd are Shiite Moslems and some are "Yazidis" whose religion is Syncretistic. The "Peacock Angel" (Malak Tawus) is worshipped as "alter ego" of God. Mysticism is also an important faith among the Kurds.

The Kurdish language belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and has its own grammar and it is close to ancient Iranian language. Because of the mountainous nature of the

region, there are a few Kurdish dialects.

The Kurdish spirit is revealed in strange ceramic pots made by the weary hands of a woman with who fires them in a home-made kiln. In the picture frame on a top shelf a family history is portrayed. The family has been moved and separated by the Iran-Iraqi war but the picture reveals a man in Kurdish dress, another in army uniform, a third in Iraqi-Kurdish dress and a fourth is at a Turkish University; a family that is essentially and irrevocably Kurdish. One of them is a "Pesh-Marga"*, another a civilian freedom fighter.

Women look at the pieces of "once-a-family" hundreds of kilometers away, and it is clearly understood that they will always be united no matter how far away they are from one another.

This spirit is crystallized in a mother's "grief-to-come" for the one she has given life to and has brought up to be taken away from her in "not-a-distant" future. It is revealed in the short life of men and women who find it more pleasing to live their lives in moments of climax than to succumb to an ordinary, quiet life. These are people who dream sweet dreams of reaching their goal; people who postpone the "grief-of-failure" to the promised moment and FACING DEATH, CHANT THE EPIC OF LIFE.

One hears the cry; "It is still not over! Still not over! Take off your black costume; put on purple dress and a colorful head-band and a beautiful shawl, lest the enemy finds out our mourning shall never be over. Mourn even less over your beloved ones, so the sound of your moaning is lost in a war march. Let every one remember that "OUR LAND IS FOREVER".

* Kurdish "Pesh-Marga" (those who face death) are guerrillas who fight for an autonomous Kurdistan.

ON THE PASSAGE OF THE HISTORY

The mountains above Mesopotamia have always been inhabited by people who fought, and at times defeated, the empires of the plains such as Babylonia and Assyria. These people who are the cultural progenitors of the modern Kurds, were settled in the heart of Kurdistan through assimilation or displacement of the previous inhabitants. Minorsky (1934, pp. 1132-49) writes that on the basis of linguistic and historical data, Kurds are generally classified among the Aryan (Iranian) nations. In a brief historical summary by Soane (1912, p. 369) it has been suggested that Kurds are the descendants of the ancient Medes who first stepped across the threshold of history as Cardouchioi of Xenophon's *Anabalis* (Carduchi or Karduk). It is maintained that for 3500 years, this exclusive race has withstood the armies of every conquering power in the Middle-Asia, retaining their language intact, and keeping their blood free from contamination (Hay, 1921). Thanks to the same exclusiveness, they have also maintained a stagnant literary and political existence.

Kurdistan, in turn, formed part of the empires that followed; the Sullukies (331-129 B.C.), the Parthians (247 B.C.-A.D. 226), the Persian Sassanids (A.D. 226-636), the Arab Caliphs (636-1258), the Mongols and Turkmen (1258-1509). Through the vicissitudes of the many wars between the Ottoman and Persian Empires from the 15th to the 19th century, the Kurdish principalities and tribes remained partially independent. Hostile armies marched along the great valleys but the Kurds remained unmolested, although their country was included in the lands conquered by either side. In the 16th Century the frontiers between the Ottoman and Persian Empires were more or less stabilized leaving about three-quarters of Kurdistan in the Ottoman Empire and one quarter in Persia.

THE DESCENDANTS OF THE SURVIVORS

The story of the creation of a people who have lived on the high passage of man's civilization since the dawn of history is the myth of a tribe that has left the world of antiquity behind, riding their fast horses, so as to take a rest in this high plateau. The old men of the tribe narrate the story of the creation of the Kurdish people as brought in one of the myths related to the Iranian nation in the "Book of the Kings" (Shah-namah)

composed by the Persian epic poet Ferdowsi. According to the story, "Jamshid" who was one of the first fictional kings of Iran, ruled over seven countries of the earth and that of the giants and the fairies. Under his rule, the earth became organized and habitable and the casts were formed and jobs and professions created. In his time, men and creatures would not die and the plants and water would not dry up, and abundance was boundless. There were no signs of cold or heat, old age or death, and also the greed that was created by the Devil. All this persisted for as long as "Jamshid" kept to his religion and worshiped the Lord; but when he became proud and called himself the Lord, the divine right left him and the world turned into chaos and the people elected "Zahak" their king.

"Zahak" was ill-set, unclean and frivolous, but at the same time brave and ambitious. He was the son of a good man called "Mardas" who lived on the plains of the lancer-riders (Arabia), and was referred to as "Bivar-Asp" because of the ten thousand horses he owned. "Zahak", deceived by the Devil, killed his father. The Devil, dressed like the cooks, came to him and kissed his shoulders on which two snakes grew. He then hid himself, and once again reappeared to "Zahak" disguised as a sage and advised him to remedy the snakes by feeding them the brains of two youths, so the human race would become extinct. Two pious men, "Karmail" and "Armail", who were in charge of the task realized that if they fed the snakes with a brain of one youth and a calf, no one would find out, and thus they could save a youth each day. They would then provide a herd for these youths and send them to the mountains. These young people gave birth to children who started the Kurdish nation.

It is also told that a blacksmith called "Kavah" who lived at that time had nine children who were sacrificed to the snake-shouldered king. By the time his last child was to be sacrificed, the father lost his patience and hung his leathern apron on a stick and went to the people to incite to rise them against the king. The people granted his call and rushed to Zahak's palace, destroying the fortress with the aid of "Fereidoun", a man of royal descent blessed by the Lord. They imprisoned "Zahak" in Mt. Damavand where he was to remain in chains until the last day.⁽¹⁾ The event was celebrated by all, and the celebration which is referred to as "Nawroz" has remained to this day among the Kurds and Iranians.

THE MARRIAGE OF MAGIC AND BEAUTY

According to another tale, Kurds descend from the "Jinns". An Arabic proverb says "Kurds are a tribe of the Jinns", and it is said that Solomon ordered five thousand young Jinns in his service to travel to the far ends of the world and never return unless they brought with them five thousand virgins from amongst the most beautiful girls. Jinns went in search of the beautiful girls for many years and by the time they returned with the five thousand of the most beautiful women of the world, Solomon had died. Since the Jinns liked these beautiful

women, they married them and begot beautiful children from whom the Kurdish nation was formed. It is also said that the Kurds had descended from the young slaves of Solomon's court who had mingled with the Devil "Jassad" (who was dismissed from Solomon's court).

Whatever the story of the beginning of the Kurds, they and the mountains are inseparable. And where the plain starts, the Kurd leaves his place to the Arabs, Turks and Iranians, and withdraws from the territories around the "Van" lake to leave them to the Armenians.⁽²⁾

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Notes

1. According to a narrative, this event took place on 21th of March 612 B.C., that is the year of the fall of "Ninava", with the aid of the Medes, the descent of the Kurds.
2. V. Nikitin. "Kurd and Kurdistan" 1956.

MOUNTAINS; THE SHELTER OF THE FREE

The boundaries of Kurdistan are described in a Kurdish poem;
"Would you, the Kurd, like to know where your friends live?

I shall tell you now;

Kurdistan's boundary in the west stretches to "Eskandaroun"
and "Torus" mountains towards the black Sea.

In the north to the Black Sea, "Ardahan" and the River Aras.

In the east to the "Alvand" peaks and River Aras,

and from "Ahvaz" to Euphrates.

And its southmost border stretches along the "Hamrin"
mountains, "Sanjar", and the "Nassibin" road".⁽¹⁾

And the borderless Kurdistan, where despite its inhospitable,
unkind features, the Kurd has taken refuge, is a mass of huge
rocks and sky scraping peaks with steep, uneven slopes, and
wonderful, scenery, situated above the Fertile Crescent.

The heart of the original Kurdistan is the rocky Zagros
mountain range stretching from north west to south east. In the
west, these mountains terminate in hills sloping towards
Mesopotamia. In the north, the mountains gradually join the
high plateau called "Armenian Anatolia".

Kurdistan's landscape is formed by huge mountains, sloping
valleys, and fertile plains. Mountains become higher and
valleys deeper and unfit for agriculture as we go towards the
west. Going eastward, valleys become wider and there are
cultivable plateaus of fertile soil. In southern Kurdistan, the
peaks reach three thousand feet. Further north they rise from ten
to twelve thousand feet with the highest being Mt. Ararat at
seventeen thousand feet.⁽²⁾ The plateaus on which these
mountains rest are also high; lake Van, on the north of
Kurdistan, is over six thousand feet above sea level.

In summer, the heat is intense, especially in the valleys and
plains. In winter, the cold is penetrating and bitter. The country
as a whole may be divided into the following regions;

1. A subtropical area in the south, where winters are
temperate and summers intensely hot. The region is extremely
dry, and the prevailing wind, the "Black Wind" (Rasha-baa),
blows from the north east.

2. The high plains, where winters are relatively severe and
summers dry and hot. During the winter, snow and heavy rains
fall for three months.

3. The mountainous area with extremely severe winters.
Snow falls to a depth of several feet, closing most of the passes
for 2 to 3 months at a time. In spring time, it is still cold and

snow is visible on the peaks until August. Summers are mild
and temperate.

Kurdistan's fauna include the ibex, lynx, gazelle, deer, wolf,
fox, leopard, bear, wild boar, hare, squirrel, jerboa,
stonemarten, hedgehog and common rodents. Snakes, frogs and
lizards are plentiful in certain localities. Fish are abundant in all
rivers. The most common birds are; grouse, snipe, goose,
duck, crane, plover, pigeon and stork, known as
"Haji-Lak-Lak", as it is supposed to go on a pilgrimage to
Mecca during the August migration. Insects abound in quantity
everywhere. Scorpions are common as well as the large spiders.

Coal, salt springs, rock salt mines, sulphur springs,
gypsum, soft sandstone and limestone are obtainable
throughout the mountain range. Oil seepages are said to have
existed from prehistoric times. South Kurdistan contains some
of the richest oil fields in the world which are located in
Kirkuk, Ain-zaleh and Khaneqein. There are oil reserves in
Kurdistan-Turkey, Iran and Syria. Iron ore and natural gas are
developed in the Kurdistan-Iraq, but most of Kurdistan's mineral
wealth such as coal, copper, gold and silver lie largely
untapped. There are also reports of uranium deposits. Another
undeveloped resource of Kurdistan is water. The numerous
rivers and mountain streams offer a great potential for improved
irrigation and electric power.

At present, the Kurdish settlement forms a wide strip
stretching from south to north along the Iran-Iraq border
starting from "Mandali" to the east of Baghdad and continuing
towards the border separating Iran and Turkey and as far as the
Ararat Mountains. In the north, it extends towards the borders
of Transcaucasia (Armenia and the Soviet Azarbaijan). Kurds
used to live in the Armenian plateau until W.W.1. The
northern border of "Arz-e-Rom" constitutes the northern border
in Turkey, and in the south Kurds are restricted by the borders
of Mesopotamia. They are limited in the west by the
Euphrates. Kurds have penetrated into Asia Minor and have
almost gone as far as the Mediterranean Sea by forming small,
isolated communities near "Qunieh" and "Sollukieh" (Silici).

In Iran, Kurds are found on the north east, particularly in
Khorassan where they were moved to fight against the
Turkmens under "Shah-Abbas", and "Qazvin" and the "Fars"
province, where they were exiled under "Nader-Shah" from
Afshar dynasty. They are also scattered in Mazandaran region
and even at the foot of the "Taftan" volcano in Sistan and

Baluchistan province situated on the remote south eastern corner of Iran near the border with Pakistan. Today, Kurds live mainly in the north west of the country and are scattered in Kermanshan, Illam and Kurdistan provinces and the "Garrous" region and most parts of west Azarbaijan province.

In Turkey, Kurds live in the east of the country along the "Zagros" mountains and their branches. They reside in the provinces of "Van", "Bitlis", "Sanjaq" and "Hakari" with the majority living in "Diarbakr" and "Kharpout". All together, they live in 17 provinces of the total 67 belonging to this country.

In Iraq, they occupy the north eastern part of the country and the provinces of "Dehuk", "Zakhou", "Mazuri", "Emadeih", "Akra", "Sanjar", "Sheikhan", "Karkuk", "Arbil", "Soleimani", "Dialleh", "Khaneqein" and "Mandali".

In Syria, they live in the north of the country along the southern side of a highway which constitutes the border of the country, and another region stretching from "Kurd-Daq"

mountains to the east of Euphrates.

Today, Iran is the only country that recognizes a part of her land as Kurdistan. In all other countries, Kurdistan is a forgotten word for the governments and authorities, and they avoid writing this name in geographical atlases. In Turkey, they use the word "East-Anatolia" for Kurdistan; in Iraq, they refer to it as the northern province; and in Syria, it is known as "Island" province. ⁽³⁾

From the point of the view of the 5 countries that contain parts of the Kurdish people, their population is regarded merely as a matter of politics, and since they have tried to integrate them into the other peoples and provinces, there are no separate statistics available. At present, the question of population has become a complex political issue and subject to negotiations.⁽⁴⁾ The opposition faction estimates the Kurdish population to be around 20 to 25 Million, whereas the governments believe it to be half this figure.⁽⁵⁾

Notes

1. Prince-Sharaf-Khan-e-Betlisi, "SHARAF-NAMAH", "Tarikh-e-Mofassal-e-Kordestan", in Kurdish translated by Hazhar, Najaf-Iraq in 1973, Tehran-Iran in 1980.
2. Ararat, an extinct volcanic massif dominating the Armenian plateau consists of two peaks, the higher summit, Great Ararat, reaching 16,945 ft and the lower summit Little Ararat 12,877 ft above the sea level.
3. Islamic Encyclopaedia, Kurds".
4. All the Kurds interested in the "Great Kurdistan" and her independence are on the other side of this question with their exaggerated figures of the population.
5. According to the population census released in (Oct. 1986), Iranian Kurds who are mainly considered to be living in Kurdistan province, are reported to be around 1,073,298. It is important to note that this province only constitutes a part of the Kurdish settlements in Iran. Should we take the provinces of Kermashan, Illam and most regions of W. Azarbaijan into consideration, a population figure of five million may be closer to the facts.

THE HARD WAY OF LIFE

The myths that tell of the origins of this people, have also talked of their hard -way of life. The hard mountain is a shelter for a people who have escaped the dragon,⁽¹⁾ and have found their freedom in this remote corner of the world. The nature of this land and its ecological conditions such as the existence of high altitudes and deep valleys, the uneven quality of the land the high rate of precipitation and the existence of numerous rich pasturelands, and the grasslands located in different climatic regions, have given rise to a herding, nomadic or seminomadic mode of life in this region.

In addition to the above natural conditions, historical background, the economic and military situations, the pressures of taxation levied by arbitrary governments on sedentary tribes and farmers, the deprivation of individual and human rights including the right to land, as well as their lower economic and political status compared with the migratory societies, forced the Kurdish community to adopt migration and the tribal organization in order to create an atmosphere of social security and a more efficient economic and military ground for confrontation with the central governments.

Such conditions naturally call for a serious problem of production in this society. Livestock production in this region becomes as important as farming or even more so for three reasons; the first being the production of livestock manure used both as fuel and in agriculture; the second is the dairy products consumed as food and also exchanged; and the third is the use of goat's hair made into tent-cloth, ropes, etc., and sheep-wool used in carpet weaving and cloth-making (A. Lambton. 1954).

Sheep are of best stock, and are resistant against the cold. They take a rather short time to grow fat and have a high quality wool. (A report on socioeconomic development in Kurdistan province "Iran", the status-quo, 1982). The most important beasts and herds in Kurdistan are horses, donkeys, goats, fatty rams, dogs, camels and cows. Animal husbandry in this province is traditional and based on exploitation of the pastures in suitable seasons, and feeding the beasts in unsuitable ones. Since herding depends on nature, the other two factors, that is the man and the beast, are of lesser importance.

Primitive tools only are used in dairy production, and the man only keeps and takes care of the beasts. In such a case, the beast, the pasture and the labor force constitute the main factors of production. Herds are privately owned, and a shepherd is employed to take care of them⁽²⁾. According to the traditions and the tribal beliefs, pasturelands belong to the tribe.

When heads of the tribe took possession of the arable lands belonging to sedentary farmers and also the pasturelands, and so becoming feudal Khans of the region, the members of the tribe had to pay them a right to use the pastures. The right was allocated to every family or "Ojaq" (oven) separately.

Members of the tribe were considered as serfs belonging to the head, and the tent-dwellers would pay him some tribute in the form of goods and provide him with armed men in order to graze their herds in certain paths (Illrah) and stay on certain pastures. Tent-dwellers would pay taxation to the governments through the head of the tribe (that is when the governments could gain control of the region). This taxation would be paid in the form of military services, unpaid labour, agricultural products, livestock, or even in cash.

There are three particular forms of herding in these region ;

1. Village herding in which every family keeps a few domesticated animals in a corner of their residence in addition to farming and other activities. A shepherd takes the cattle for grazing.

2. Tribal herding suited to migratory or semi-sedentary modes of life. Winters, which are usually long in most corners of Kurdistan, are spent in the plains in houses made of straw and clay, or in valleys in stone houses. Cattle are kept in stables attached to the houses or located in the lower floor and they are dry-fed. In spring time, they cultivate their piece of land and leave a few men behind to take care of it, and then move towards summer grasslands (Yeilaq) with their herd. At times, these grasslands are located adjacent to "Qeshlaq" (winter residence).

Herdsmen who take their herd in winter for grazing at rather regular intervals, get together during migration in summer grasslands and form special groups called "Obah" or "Hovvah"

or small communities made of forty to eighty families, and employ a few shepherds to take their herds for grazing in community grass-lands. Each "Obah" has a head called "Obah-bashi" who is from among the wealthiest and most influential members of that community, and is in charge of all related affairs. "Obah" is the transitional phase between the natural, family-oriented economy (based on production for the consumption of the family or related families), and the production economy. "Obah-Bashi", who has enjoyed the advantages of the common pasture by making use of the unpaid labour of the shepherd and the free expenses of the cattle (Obah-Bashi's expenses are paid by the members), has later on become a master himself. He has integrated the sheep belonging to the sedentary people into his own cattle and thus diverted a remarkable share of the income to himself. He also enjoys a greater benefit by not accepting the beasts belonging to some of the tribe members,⁽³⁾ and practically deprives a group from the right to use the pastures. The consequent "Obah", therefore, is one with no family or tribal ties which embraces different classes and works as a merely economic unit that helps to change the socioeconomic structure. (V. Nikitin. Quoted from Vilchevski, 1936)

The heads of the tribes were weakened after the First World War with the strengthening of the power of the central governments in Iran and Turkey. The impacts of the production economy in the region and the land reform further changed their tribal structure. Pastures located in the tribal realm were manipulated in common on the basis of the "Obah"(tribe) and in accordance with tribal traditions passed from generation to generation. After the land reform in 1964 , however, and the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, pastures were converted into non-irrigated farms by the farmers who also took possession of the tribe ways (Illrahs) and pastures (due to the fact that the right to the pastures was not recognized for the tribes).

Many of the tribal members were forced to settle down and abandon migration, or lease their inherited pastures from the farmers, or those who had managed to register them. The private use of the pastures granted as grazing rights to each family was the last blow inflicted on the remaining tribal units in this region.

3. Livestock production for the market operating with the aid of modern facilities and hired labour in order to feed and take care of the herds at the same place.

Dairy and other livestock products such as milk, cooking oil, butter, cheese, whey, sour milk, yoghurt, wool and animal hair which were mainly produced in the past for family consumption or exchange with the other goods required by the tribes, is now produced for sale and exchange on the market due to the replacement of natural, self-sufficient economy with the productive one.

Labour force among the tribes is on the basis of the family, and the hired shepherd, and is divided with regard to age and sex. "Obah" is in charge of organizing and grazing the pastures. In villages, labour force is on the basis of the family and the hired shepherd with no particular organization. Techniques

regarding manipulation and maintenance are primitive and non-hygienic.

In a capitalistic relation, labour force is based on the hired labour, with implications of a more advanced technology, division of labour depending on varied skills. Animals are also dry-fed.

THE PLAIN RUINS THE KURDS ?

A Kurd will not become a farmer unless forced to under special conditions and situations (V. Nikitin. 1956). Villagers constitute most of the population of Kurdistan, and dry-farming is practised in the highlands because of the irrigation problem and the fair level of precipitation. Cultivable lands and pastures are found on the slopes and mountainsides. Only a part of the cultivable land is used for farming, and grain cultivation in the Kurdish areas plays an important role in the economy of the related countries.

1/3 of the rice crop in Iraq is harvested in the Kurdish regions; the best quality tobacco in Iraq and Turkey is also planted in the Kurdish districts with the crop planted in Iraq almost fulfilling the nationwide requirements. Grapes are planted all over Turkey, and Iran. Fruit trees are also abundant. There are pomegranates, peaches, apples, figs, apricots, and also walnut trees that thrive for hundred years . Vegetable patches can be seen at the edge of the villages. Kurds are skillful gardeners and make the best use of the smallest cultivable land. Other crops such as onions, watermelons, cucumbers, musk melons, aubergines, corn and pepper are also planted everywhere. With over half of the Kurdish people living in villages, farming and problems related to land and its manipulation are amongst the most important aspects of Kurdish life (Kurd in the Islamic Encyclopaedia).

Farming in Kurdistan is mainly practised in a traditional manner with modern machinery used in some of the processes. Vast lands with mild slopes are often ploughed by tractors, whereas the animal drawn plough is used in high, steep lands. Mechanized agriculture is seldom practised in the region; in most cases only ploughing and at times harvesting and threshing is done by the machine⁽⁴⁾ Mechanization requires the capital and expertise which are not available to the villagers.⁽⁵⁾

Prior to the First World War, most of the Kurdish territory was included in the Ottoman Empire. In 1839, military fief was abolished and the land-owning system came under the control of the Ottoman Government, and was respected until 1939 in territories included in the realm of the Ottoman Government such as Iraq and Syria. Different types of landownership included the lands belonging to the government, endowed lands, lands dedicated to the lower class people, public lands, desert areas belonging to the government, and crownlands (in Iran only). 2/3 of the lands in Turkey and 1/4 in Iraq belonged to the petty landowners. Large-scale ownership ruled everywhere, and the charges paid to the landlords were in the form of goods , unpaid labour and other rights.

LAND REFORM

1938, preparatory measures have been taken in Turkey to purchase the lands from the great landowners and divide them among the peasants. In June 1945, the Land Reform programme for the division of the lands belonging to the government and to the land owners who owned more than 500 hectares was officially declared. A new land programme was enacted in 1961 to improve the pitiable conditions of the peasants. 3/4 of the Kurdish population in Turkey, that is about 9,764,000 out of 13,600,000 were living on farming.

The land policy enforced by the monarchy in Iraq was in favour of the Kurdish and Turkish heads of tribes until 1954 when the national lands were distributed among the farmers. With the advent of the new republic in Iraq, land laws were aimed at putting an end to Feudalism and improving the level of life among the peasants, and the advancement of the agricultural practises. Kurdish farmers in different regions were more or less embraced by the Land Reform. However, the ownership of the land by itself is not sufficient, and the farmers should have access to tools and facilities in order to cultivate the land. These conditions are either non-existent or insufficient. ⁽⁶⁾

Kurds residing in the Soviet Armenia took the lands from the "Kulaks" with the aid of the peasant rebellions and the revolution. Today, the farmers cultivate the land using modern machinery in "Kolkhos". ⁽⁷⁾

AGRARIAN RELATIONS

All land relations were based on land ownership in the old socioeconomic framework bound to special limits, despite the variation in ownership, with regard to the interests of the landlord that represented a restricted natural economy.

The census released in 1973 relating to 49 sample villages in the Iranian Kurdistan region, indicates that these villages were grouped into large scale ownership, petty ownership and endowed lands as classified by ownership, before the land reform. There has been a farm-letting contract between the owner and the farmer according to which the owner's share of crop would be determined on the basis of production factors such as land, seed and water (in case of irrigated farms) and tools etc.

According to "H. Rabino", (A report on Kurdistan, published in 1911. p.1), a system called ten and two "Dah-o-Dou" has been common in Kurdistan in which the crop is divided into ten shares of which two belonged to the owner and eight to the farmer. All expenses were paid by the farmer in this case, whereas in "Niwah-Kari" system, the farmer only provides the seed and labour, and the owner pays for the taxes and the harvest, etc. ⁽⁸⁾

Village lands which are divided into "Jowts" (cultivating units with certain amounts of seed) are redistributed among the peasants every five to fifteen years. Only the owner is in charge of paying taxes to the government. He receives an arbitrary tax

from the peasants in addition to his ownership interests.

Most researchers have reported two classes existing among the Kurds; the noble class that includes the warriors and the landowners, and the armed servants and their serfs, who are almost semi-slaves. The latter class, whether referred to as serfs or "Gurans", is distinguished from the other Kurds by their appearance and language. ⁽⁹⁾

Whether the masters or nobles and their armed servants belong to the conquering race, and the serfs (the peasants) or farmers are from the defeated one, there are two distinctly different groups from the stand point of language, race and mode of life in the Kurdish society.

There is yet another theory describing the existence of these two groups on the basis of the settlement of part of the tribe. Warriors are believed to belong to the nomadic section, and the farmers who are dependant on land, to the sedentary one. According to this theory, the tribal ties have gradually destroyed, or the nomadic section became integrated into other tribes or vanished due to accidents. In any case, the general trend in the tribal Kurdish society has been towards settlement and the acceptance of the feudalistic relations of the tribe. ⁽¹⁰⁾

"Aghas" and "Bags" ruling the semi-nomadic tribes, belonged to the feudalistic system governing the Minor Asia, and were considered subjects of Iran, Turkey or the semi-independent, autonomous governors in either of these two countries. Kurdish tribes not only had to pay taxes and work unpaid for their feudal masters, but were to form armed groups under their orders. These groups would serve as military forces in the border areas and played an important role in fulfilling the non-economic requirements of the masters on their sedentary peasants.

The feudal Kurdish landlord would fulfil his requirements by exerting pressure on the sedentary people of Kurdish regions who were mostly Armenian and Nestorian Christians at that time. According to Taylor, the British Consul, who had paid a visit to these regions in 1860, these Christians constituted the only labour force and craftsmen of the area. These Christians were referred to as "Zir-Khourly" meaning bondsmen by the Kurdish heads. The term truly applied to their condition as they were subject to buying and selling exactly like the livestock, and but of their entire dependence on the land they cultivated, they were transferred together but could not be sold individually. The landlord, however, could take whatever he wished from their annual crop both in the form of cash or goods.

The "Khan" or the Kurdish feudal would exert the power he had gained with the aid of the nomadic tribes on the sedentary people of the Kurdish regions. Despite the apparent independence and the lower taxation (in comparison with the sedentary tribes) they had to pay, nomadic tribes could not escape the increasing pressure of feudalization and thus came under the heavy control of their feudal heads. The sedentary tribes, on the other hand, would try to exert more pressure on the nomads (the pastoral economy depends on agricultural products) to compensate for the economic pressure imposed on them by the head. This, in turn, had an impact on the nomadic economy. ⁽¹¹⁾

Rural hierarchy among the villagers includes the following titles with the master being at the top of the pyramid;

"Mobashers" (Supervisors), "Kay-khodas" (the heads of the villages), "Pakars" and "Mirabs" (guards watching the irrigation in regions where cultivation depends on irrigation), and the farm-labour units which mainly consist of the family in this region and is referred to as "Jowt". Co-operation in planting, maintenance and harvest is only restricted to crops that a family is not able to manage by itself.

The following land-ownerships were formed with the trend of settling and farming;

Crownlands, lands belonging to great landlords and Khans, petty landownership, endowed lands, and lands for leasing based on landlord-serf relation and the payment of possessory interests together with the exploitation of lands belonging to petty landowners by the peasants. All these created a restricted, natural economy.

The 19th century Kurdish feudalism went through changes with the advent of capitalism. However, landownership in Kurdistan was only adjusted, but had no impact on social relations until the Land Reform of the 60s which was to change this restricted, natural economy.⁽¹²⁾

Farmlands in some regions were embraced by the Land Reform, but in most areas the ownership still persisted with the following owner-farmer relations;

1. "Niwah-Kari" (half-planting) in which the main production elements, except for the land and water, were provided by the farmer.

2. Crop sharing on the basis of the ratio of productive factors provided by each side.

3. Leasing for livestock grazing (based on a triangle relationship between the owner and the farmer, the farmer and the herdsman, and the herdsman and the owner). The owner-farmer relation was usually based on the exchange of goods, but the second and the third relations were dependent on cash.⁽¹³⁾

Families involved in farming usually received some share and the crop was divided as follows;

- a. The share of the landowner based on the factors involved in production.

- b. The farmer's share based on the same factors.

The second process of the Land Reform created no basic change in the system of landownership in comparison with the first step, since the majority of the owners preferred leasing.⁽¹⁴⁾

During the third process of the Land Reform, the owners were obliged to sell the land to the lessee farmers or divide them between the farmers and themselves on the basis of the possessory interest. Only 30% of the 43 villages under study were included in the third process of the Land Reform.⁽¹⁵⁾ Governmental foundations took the place of the landlords and their representatives.

Agricultural machinery found its way into some of the villages of the region and created a new powerful social class that formed new relations in the rural communities with their production tools. This newly established class that consisted of former petty landowners or the urban and rural merchants,

became practically involved in farming through the purchase of lands, or "Niwah-Kari", or leasing the lands, and took possession of a remarkable acreage.

Thus, the Kurdish farmer entered the market and was cheated by brokers and dealers.

After the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the dispossession of the landlords who were related to the former regime, new agrarian relations came into being in some regions of the province. The land transfer board (the board appointed by the government to make decisions about the lands in dispute or those which belonged to the owners related to the former regime) founded 266 "Moshas" (temporary cooperatives in 25 villages of the province and divided 56,618 hectares of land among 4,902 farm families).⁽¹⁶⁾

In comparison with the other western regions, the labour force in Kurdistan is rather great, but the water available for irrigation is less for each worker (due to the mountainous nature of the region and the lower level of the riverbeds compared with the farmlands).⁽¹⁷⁾

In some villages of the region the low efficiency of the farm is determined by the ratio of the crop and the area of land under cultivation which together with the acreage under dry-farming (that is more than five times the irrigated lands) necessitate a change in the agriculture of the region in favour of new methods.⁽¹⁸⁾ Bee-Keeping is the other activity of the province using both native hives and those made of pottery and straw-mat kept in special rooms called "Hangdan" in winter.

Hunting and gathering are counted as a source of food among the Kurdish tribes. Gathering includes such natural products as Gum tragacanth obtained from goat's thorn, and tannin from the oak bark which is used in preparing leather, and also a kind of Manna of the Tamarisk mannifera, and edible herbs such as Salsify, "Trcho", "Mendyk", "Pekask", Sorrel, mountain spinach, mushrooms and rhubarb.

HANDICRAFTS

Handicrafts play a major role in the economy of the region. Kurdistan is not just a home for the nomads and farmers; there are also towns and cities such as "Van", "Biltilis", "Hewler" (Arbil), "Senneh" (Sanandaj), "Mahabad", "Kermanshan", "Suleymania", etc., where traditional crafts are practised. These urban centres which are purely Kurdish are suitable places for the development of all types of crafts such as those made of leather, metals, wood, pottery, etc.⁽¹⁹⁾

In the past, these crafts were made for family consumption in the framework of a natural, rural and nomadic economy, whereas today, they are produced for exchange on the market. Tools used for this purpose are primitive, and labour is organized as in the family. Production tools are at times in the possession of the producer or are rented. Carpet and Guelim weavers are women who are paid daily, on a commission bases, or to order by the carpet merchants.

Notes

1. In other narratives, the name "Azhidehk", that is the dragon, is used instead of "Zahak".
2. In the past, shepherds were paid a part of the herd (one head for every 25 head, or in the form of goods). Today, they are paid in cash.
3. This structure is still prevalent among the migrant Turkish tribes of Azarbaijan in spite of the grazing permit and the right granted to each family, "Obah-Bashi" is in charge of organizing the move and hiring the shepherd.
4. Pour Zahed, M. Mohammad. "Barr-resi-ye-Oza-e-Ejtemai-Eqtesadi- Keshavarzi" , "Socioeconomical and agricultural study " Tehran, 1986.
5. M. Azkia, A. Nik-Kholq, M. Iravan, "Khoshneshin-e-Kurdistan", "Peasants of Kurdistan", Tehran, 1974.
6. The Islamic Encyclopaedia, "Kurds".
7. Ibid.
8. Vasili Nikitin, "Kurd and Kurdistan".
9. Nikitin, quoted from Minorsky, 1914, and Mirakhorian 1885, and an article on "Guran" by Minorsky in B.S.C.A.S.
10. V. Nikitin, 1956
11. Ibid
12. "Barresi-ye-Masael-e-Damdaran-dar-Rabete-ha-Gostaresh-e-Kh adamat-e-Shahri", Sonqor, published by the Regional Studies Bureau, Iran, No.4, the planning and Budget Organization, 1st course, No. 2, (Aug. 1975).
13. Ibid
14. Azkia, Nik-Kholq, Iravani, Asgari, "Khoshneshinan-e-Kurdistan", college of Social Sciences and co-operations, Tehran University, (Feb. 1974).
15. Ibid,
16. "A report on the socio-economic development in Kurdistan", the status-quo, published by the planning and Budget Bureau, Tehran, April 1982.
17. Ibid
18. Ibid.
19. V. Nikitin, "Kurd and Kurdistan".

THE FREE ARE POOR

"what shall we do if we settle in the plain and make ourselves a house and a village, and plant vineyards and wheat, and cultivate the unutilized lands. They will levy such heavy taxes on us that all our labour will be futile. What will be left for us to do next? We shall only have to leave our homes and go to our brothers who have taken refuge in the mountains where they do not bear the oppression, and where the Lord is generous". (Badger, 1840).

The plains and their rulers require the Kurd to be obedient and a slave, whereas the rough nature of the mountains challenges him to fight. And he prefers freedom even in the shelter of the cliffs and rugged valleys facing the danger of famine, cold, starvation and death. He either dwells in villages on remote mountainsides or moves, taking his home wherever his free will leads him in his ever-lasting fight with nature, other tribes and governments.

And this prevents his change and progress, and is the reason for the backwardness and deprivation of the Kurdish regions. Despite the present century's developments which have taken place in all countries where the Kurds are scattered, Kurds are still mostly herdsmen and farmers. Technology and industry have not yet found their way in to Kurdistan.

STATISTICS TALK⁽¹⁾

"Kurdistan is generally a farming and livestock producing region where industrial activities are minimal compared with the other provinces". (Sazeman-e-Barnameh-va-Boudgeh -ye-Kurdistan, "A report on the socio-economic development in Kurdistan province", (Iran-1982).

In the census released in 1986, 46,4% of the working population over ten years of age in this province consists of farmers, herdsmen, fishermen and hunters, 20% is employed in the public and private sectors, 6,4% are retailers, brokers, etc., 17% are in construction activities, and the rest are occupied in the other fields of business. The majority of the people in the

urban areas are employed in the public and private sectors and in rural areas they are farmers and herdsmen. There are no major factories in the province at all (the oil-rich Iraqi Kurdistan with oil installations in the Kurdish regions is an exception). Industrial activities are mostly related to construction. The majority of industrial units are managed in a primitive manner with low efficiency, and are not responsive to the requirements of the region. Raw materials existing in the province are often consumed without being converted into other products or are exported to the other provinces. Generally speaking, industry in Kurdistan has been greatly neglected (Sazeman -e- Barnameh -va-Boudgeh-ye-Kurdistan, "A report on the economic development", (1982). Lack of industry is the cause of economic stagnation which has deprived the region from the advantages of industry. (Ibid)

EDUCATION ⁽²⁾

39,2% of the total population of the province above the age of 6 are literate. The rate of literacy in the age group between 6 and 14 is 80% in the urban areas and 51% in the rural areas (the figures related to the results of the 1986 census). Boys attend school almost 2,5 times more than girls, and only one out of each 11 students attending the primary school enters the high school. By the same token, one out of each 645 high school students finds his way into higher educational institutions. There are 156 primary schools, 68 intermediary schools, 31 high schools in the towns and cities of the province, and 1440 primary schools, and 89 high schools in the villages. There are also 8 kindergartens with 474 preschool students in the urban areas, 11 technical and art schools with 2211 students, and only one higher educational institute (Teachers Training College located in Sanandaj) in which Persian Literature, Mathematics, English Language and Chemistry are taught (there were 218 vacancies in the college in the academic year 1986-87). There are also two centers for agricultural training and five religious

schools (the census commissioned by the "Sazeman-e-Barnameh-va-Boudjeh-ye-Kurdistan" Planning and Budget Organization of Kurdistan, Iran, 1986).

The language used for education is Persian in Iran (in Turkey, the language of teaching is Turkish, but in Iraq, they can use their native Kurdish tongue) and the staff are mostly Persian speakers and non-natives (particularly in recent years due to the prevailing political conditions in the province) . According to the official statistics, only 38,9% of the population in this province can speak Persian with the rate being 54,4% in the urban areas and 28,7% in the rural ones. In the whole province, the percentage of people not capable of speaking Persian is 55% (38,3% in the urban areas and 66% in the rural). The figures indicate one of the main reasons for the low efficiency of the present educational system in this province.

In the past, education has been in two forms. The first being the automatic and implied one with the goal of socializing with the rest of the tribe; the second one, however, was the official education system which involved reading and writing. The latter was only available to the sons of the upper class families in order to teach them the reading of the Koran and other religious texts. In addition to the few schools managed by the mullahs, there were other schools in which folk and epic poems were taught to the students in songs. Youngsters who had good voices would learn these songs orally and were otherwise mostly illiterate.

Modern education which started with the establishment of the first schools in towns and cities in the present century has not been efficient due to the problems of language, lack of practical training, lack of local higher and further education, extent , and the shortage of facilities.

MEDICAL CARE

Traditional medicine is not well known among the Kurds. Although the old women of the tribe were familiar with the medicinal herbs of the mountains and their properties, this sort of treatment was mostly considered as witchcraft, and the use of the charms and amulets was quite common among the Kurds. Even at present, the province is short of medical staff and medical care, and it is impossible in most regions to have access to medical care particularly in cases of emergency . There are 207 doctors working in the province of whom 130 live in the urban areas and 77 in the villages. There are also 51 dentists, 11 pharmacists, and 45 trained nurses in the province. In total, there is a doctor for every 6,457 persons, a nurse for every 19,600 persons. (Sazeman-e-Barnameh-va-Bougeh, "A report on the socio-economic development", Iran, 1982).

DWELLINGS

Kurdistan has been inhabited since the old times, both in the Stone Age when man lived in caves and during the time when

highlands and valleys were considered a natural refuge for her inhabitants. Natural caves in Kurdistan have been suitable places for Stone-Age man and people living in the Middle-Ages who took refuge there in hard times. These caves were unconquerable fictional fortresses with ramparts as great as cliffs and the high peaks. Though these wonderful caves are now shelters for the herds, the Kurdish populace still regards them as mysterious places with hidden secrets.⁽³⁾ Valleys and caves sheltering fictional treasures and jinns and demons have a special place in Kurdish fables.

There are different types of dwelling in Kurdistan, since Kurds live in towns, villages and tribal tents. Kurds residing in towns live in houses made of sun-dried brick and clay, and in stone houses in mountainous regions. All towns located in this region have a dual structure; the old parts are located around the centre that consists of a Bazar or "Arg" (the feudal's fortress), or a house of worship and a modern section built planned with streets and avenues unorganically related to the older parts.

Towns have running water, electricity, schools and health centers, governmental offices and military installations. Kurdish villages which are usually built by the rivers and waterways, are consist of houses made of straw and clay walls with wooden beamed ceilings. In mountainous villages, houses are made of stone and clay and are built in terraced rows only accessible by narrow alleys. The roof of the lower house is a yard for the upper one. Windows are small and often open inward. Walls are decorated with colourful flowers and the inside of the rooms are grouted white. There is an oven in the middle of the clay floor of the room which is used both as a stove and for heat in the winter when a wooden stool (like a table) is placed on top of it and covered with a quilt to make a "Korsi". At times they make platforms for sitting and sleeping are built all around the room and outside. Ceilings are mostly made of tree trunks thickly covered with clay and straw.

Stables are located in yards, occasionally separated from the other sections, or in the lower floor in case of the mountainous villages. They are often non-hygienic. Roofs are used for drying many agricultural products, whey, fruit and vegetables and nuts for the winter. They are also the meeting ground for women neighbours. Men meet each other on the platforms or in the only tea-house of the village. Houses located in the plains mostly have large gardens, and a large rectangular room is the living area is for the livestock and the farmer along side each other. Most villages lack public utilities such as water, electricity and other facilities.

The third type of Kurdish dwelling is a tent made of a few strips of cloth made of goat's hair, as wide as 50-60 cm, and as long as a few metres, that is woven by the tribal women on a horizontal loom. By joining a few strips of these cloths on posts as high as 2,5-3 m, a shelter is formed which is known as "Black tent". The tent does not touch the ground and beautiful fences connect the roof to the floor of the house to protect it against the wind and water. These fences are called "Chiqs". The number of the posts used in a tent varies from 9 to 15 depending on the importance and character of its owner. Men's and women's quarters are separate from each other by a

"Chiq". Women cook and take care of the children in their quarters. This type of portable accommodation is easily packed when migrating to the summer pastures (Yeilaq) and also set up quickly by the women. The interior of the tent is decorated by beautifully designed carpets and "Guellims" woven by the girls and women of the tribe. Beddings, Mashka (leather bottles), kitchen utensils, saddle-bags and food supplies are seen inside the tents. There are limited numbers of tents in one place, as there is a limit to the number of sheep that can graze in a pasture. Large camps can be seen in vast, open valleys. However, a single tent is never seen because of the security reasons. Most Kurds spend the winter time in villages in clay or stone houses, as these tents are not resistant to the winter cold.

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Notes

- 1. Figures and statistics brought in this section are derived from the official publications in Iran which may be extended to the other Kurdish regions in Iran , Turkey, Iraq and Syria with little difference.*
- 2. The population above the age of 6 is reported to be 830,513 in the province. (Kurdistan Province in Iran)*
- 3. "Shanidar" cave near "Ravandouz" in Kurdistan of Iraq and "Karaftoo" cave in Iranian Kurdistan can be mentioned as examples. These ancient fortresses still amaze the passenger who steps within, and sees the remnants of life there.*

FREE BUT NOT OF TRADITION

The social structure in Kurdistan has been mainly composed of a patrilineal, tribal system in which members identify themselves with their father ancestors who are related to the founder of the tribe. These people live in sedentary groups in towns and villages, or as nomadic, herding tribes. The transition from herding nomadism to the farming sedentary state has created little change in this structure. The first socio-economic unit in tribal organization is the family; a few related families form the "Bav" or "Bavak" or "Mal" (Hoz among the Kurdish "Jaf" tribes). A few "Bavaks" from "Kheils", a few "Kheils", "Tirehs" (subclans), and a few "Tirehs", "Khanedan" or "Tayefah" (clan). The collection of the clans gives rise to the tribe.

The organizing unit for economic production is also a kinship organization based on the necessities of a pastoral life that is formed for the purpose of co-operation in herding and migration, and is referred to as "Obah" or "Hovveh". Members are the children of one father (Bav) and are relatives. In this unit, livestock belonging to each family is supervised by a hired shepherd and grazes in the common pasture that belongs to the "Obah" or the tribe. Each "Obah" is headed by a "Sara" (Eskandari Nia, Ebrahim, 1987) or "Sar-Ovveh" or "Obah-Bashi". This position is inherited among some tribes, and in others elected. This head is in charge of management, labour division, hiring shepherds, organizing the migration, dividing the pastures among different livestock, and communicating with the other Obahs and tribal divisions (later, the head became responsible for communications with official organizations).

However, important decisions are made in consultation with the heads of the family members of the Obah. Obah is formed at the time of migration and fulfills its duties during the "Yeilaq" period. It is then disbanded at the time of "Qeshlaq". "Bav" is the largest social unit after the family and is known as "Tireh" among the "Millan" tribes.

In "Shakak" and "Harki" tribes, "Bav" is known as "Bab" and is further divided into "Tirehs". This kinship unit which has descended from a common ancestor has its own internal socio-economic relations with a head who is consulted by the families within the "Bav". Families are related to the tribe through "Bav". There are tribal camps or "Kheils" among the "Jaf" Kurds that consist of 20 to 30 related families each living in a tent, supervised, unofficially by an elder. These camps are

further divided into herding units on the basis of the extended families (F. Barth, 1953). The collection of a few camps (Kheils) forms the "tribe" which is based on maximal lineage (Hoz) and is the main political unit and is led by a "Raiz" (an inherited position). These tribes have a traditional right to certain pastures and camping grounds. "Jaf" is headed by a "Bag" or "Pasha" from the Khan's family (Ibid).

Among the "Jalali" and "Millan" and "Penianshi" tribes, a clan consists of a few "Bavs" whereas among "Harki", "Mamesh" and "Zarza" tribes, it consists of a few "Tirehs". Member families of the clan descend from a common ancestor and have common pastures. There is usually a head (Raiz) leading the tribe who has inherited his position, and known as "Mazin" among some tribes (Eskandari Nia, Ebrahim, 1987). The head enjoys an arbitrary power, similar to a king's, with no limit to his authority.

He can make full use of the possessions and the properties of his people and the life of the tribe is in his hands. His successor is determined on the basis of seniority with some control imposed on him by the elders of the tribe or their "Shoras" (councils), through consultation.

The last and the largest sociopolitical organization of the tribes is the "II" that consists of the collection of the clans. These clans consist of relatives who are the descendants of a true or an ideal ancestor. (At times, tribes are the only political unions of the clans). Most Iranian Kurdish tribes have become "Takhteh-Qapu" (wooden door, settled) since the last century without losing their ethnic culture or even tribal ties (T. Firouzan, 1983). Today, only a few, independent, nomadic Kurdish clans in Kermashan (Kermanshah), Illam, Azarbaijan and Khorassan provinces continue their migrations.

By the end of the rule of "Nasser-Al-Din" Shah of the "Qajar" dynasty in Iran, most Kurds had settled in towns and villages belonging to the heads of the tribes, under the supervision of the governor of Kurdistan. They lived an independent life, as did the Kurds of Azarbaijan, who due to the impenetrable nature of the region lived, untouched by the central government, despite their apparent obedience to the king. After the First World War, with the strengthening of the central governments of Iran and Turkey, and the delimitation of the borders, it became impossible for many tribes to move and the power of the tribal heads declined. Penetration of capitalistic relations in the region and the Land Reform

programme launched in these countries, changed their tribal structure. The political events of 1978-88 in Iran and Iraq disturbed the Kurdish regions and caused a greater settlement of the tribes in Kurdistan. As a result many families in "Khoi", "Salmas", and "Maku" settled down.

This mostly happened in insecure regions where there were conflicts between the official government forces and the Kurdish resistance. The Iran-Iraq war also played an important role in settling the Kurdish tribes. Today, Kurdish tribes residing in the other regions still live as nomads. In the last census concerning the tribes, Kurdistan tribes are not mentioned.

According to V. Nikitin;

"Kurdish society is generally divided by the researchers into two social and economic classes. One includes the "nobles"⁽¹⁾, warriors, and the land owners, and the other consists of the armed servants and their serfs who are almost semi-slaves. The latter class, whether they are serfs or belong to the other tribes, are distinguished from the Kurdish tribes by their language and physical appearance. This gives rise to the assumption that the first class represents the conquering race and the farmers are the descendants of the conquered natives⁽²⁾. Nobles live on herding and also possess a major share of the farmers products, and receive taxes and other kinds of tributes".

It has been mentioned that the farmers do not belong to any tribe, and that the farmers may be the other half belonging to the sedentary tribes who were once tent-dwellers and whose tribal ties have now been cut; the tribes, however, look down on the farmers and the sedentary class. The social status of this group is as low as a serf and the master could take whatever he wished from their annual labour both in cash and goods. The feudal master would not only impose his power (that he had gained with the aid of the nomadic tribes) on the sedentary people, but also on the nomads who at first glance looked better off than the sedentary people.

Nomads were forced to obide by a complex system in which they had to pay taxes and tributes to their master either directly or through his supervisor. The feudal master does not usually receive anything less than 2/5 of the annual income of his people, and at times the figure is even higher. (V. Nikitin)

Meanwhile, the central government would receive through the "Agha" the usual "Oshriyeh" (1/10 of the properties) in the Islamic countries (which was referred to as "Aqnam" if in the form of livestock). Kurds who were serving in wars were usually excused from paying the "Oshriyeh", but the "Agha" would receive this "Oshriyeh" from them in his own favour. (Nomadic Kurds were not only to pay taxes, but had to serve in wars in case the "Agha" or the central government needed them. This would further hurt their pastoral economy).

So, the nomadic Kurds who were apparently independent and had to pay lower taxes than the sedentary farmers, were under the control of their feudal heads who expected them to be absolutely obedient according to their tribal traditions. Kurdish feudalism destroyed the homogeneous Kurdish society. Thus, the socio-economic structure of the Kurdish tribes went through serious changes in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The only slavery a Kurd may tolerate is that of the tribal traditions. He who has fought obstinately for his freedom against the ruling powers for centuries, only kneels to the iron rules of his tribe and guards its age-old traditions, and is ready to ride his horse the moment his master commands him to. The nomad feels such great affection for his master as a fatherly figure that it is said that when the Turkish government decided to limit the power of the "Aghas" in favour of the Kurdish community, the Kurds greatly resisted this decision. Retaliation is his right and duty to his family and the tribe, in turn, defends him against the enemies and forces of nature. His dependence in his tribe makes him powerful; nothing is harder for a Kurd than losing his tribe or being dismissed from it. In his tribal circle, a Kurd is calm and obedient and faithful to his customs and tribal laws and the head. He, who is a brave and devoted warrior, sacrifices his life for his society. (V. Nikitin, 1956).

Kurdish family is usually an extended one composed of the father, mother, children and son's children. Although the father is the head of the family, he is not the absolute ruler and his wife enjoys a respectful position not observed among their Arab, Turk or Persian neighbours. Kurdish men seldom marry more than one wife. Wives are quite powerful inside the home and manage the house affairs, supervise the family members and servants, and distribute the food among the members. In the absence of a husband, his wife entertains the guests and is quite free and confident in their presence and does not cover her face as do the other Moslem women. She talks freely in gatherings and despite her nice manners, beauty and charm, she is very chaste and noble.⁽³⁾

Kurdish women, as witnessed by many, are as skillful in horse-riding and shooting as their men, and are just as facetious and jesting. They manage the heaviest tasks such as packing, unloading, setting up the tent, milking the beasts, beating the Mashka (leathern bottle used in churning), producing all kinds of dairy products, cleaning the wheat, bringing firewood, cooking and baking bread, cleaning the house, taking care of the children, sewing and weaving all kinds of carpets and "Jajims" (among the nomads), and also pottery-making. Consequently, they get weary and become old prematurely. Farm women also do most of the above mentioned tasks (except for setting up the tent and seasonal packing). As a Kurdish woman gets old, she becomes a respected maternal figure, and the women enjoy such high status in the society that parents names their sons after brave, warlike mothers.

The father also enjoys an important position in the family. The eldest son succeeds the father. A patriarchal hierarchy is observed in the tribal families. The eldest son obeys the father and the elders of the family, and the younger sons obey him. Sons inherit from the father after his death according to the Islamic law of inheritance. Every Kurd is interested in his own genealogy; even the illiterate ones know up to ten generations of thier ancestors.

Kurds mostly marry within the family, clan or tribe. Love-making outside the frame of marriage is absolutely banned. Young couples come to some sort of agreement between themselves before marriage, and their parents become

aware of their love at feasts and parties and even during some religious ceremonies. Most marriages are romantic. Despite the prevailing traditions and class differences that prevent a head from marrying his daughter to a shepherd, there are many possibilities for youngsters who are not from such extremely different backgrounds. Among the "Millans" the girl lets the boy take away her headdress, which is a colourful kerchief, from her head. By a spring or in some private place. So, the girl's father cannot marry her to some one else unless he avoids marrying her for so long that the boy becomes disappointed and marries someone else⁽⁴⁾. The age of marriage age is lower in villages and higher in towns and cities because of the young people's schooling.⁽⁵⁾

Marriage between cousins is considered the best and the one most approved. All marriage ceremonies are under the complete supervision of the parents. Under equal conditions, the "Marah-ei" or "Shir-bayi" (money dowry to the girl's family by the groom upon marriage approval) paid for a nomadic girl is much higher than that paid for a settled girl.

Today, wedding ceremonies are just shadows of the forgotten customs which are now only performed as symbols relevant to the distant beliefs. The decorated water jug only used in wedding ceremonies may be the reminder of the times when "Anahid" the God of water and fertility was worshipped. Holding a lamp and a mirror in front of the bride until she enters her husband's house, is the symbol of worshipping the God of light, and taking her round the oven at her husband's, as well as kissing the oven at her father's, are the symbols of the old times when the fire of the house was regarded as sacred.

The new family is patrilocal, and the woman belongs to her husband's family upon marriage. The Kurdish tradition of mutual assistance observed in all aspects of their lives, turns the wedding ceremony into a memorable event accompanied by dances, choral singings and heroic performances.

Ceremonies related to birth and death are also held communally, with women relatives helping in the instance first and men in the second, dedicating their time to a public and social affair. In the first case, women help the parturient mother with prayers and the burning of incense and wild rue, while using all their supernatural knowhow to save the mother from the evil ghosts that try to take her liver away. The baby is then named by the same women.

At burials men carry the corpse on their shoulders to put it in a grave dug in the soil; women accompany them. No meals are cooked in the house belonging to the dead person for three days, and the neighbours bring food for the family. A public feast is held on the third, seventh & fortieth days after death and also on the first anniversary. Friends and relatives pay for all the expenses.

The common customs among the Kurds consist of both religious, and ancient, mythical ceremonies. As well as at weddings and circumcisions, they say special prayers for the occasion, put on new clothes and visit each other for feasts such as "Qorban"⁽⁶⁾ and "Fetr"⁽⁷⁾. Another feast held by the Kurds is the "Molud" or the birthday of the prophet Mohammad celebrated with glory and importance. Alms food and a special

porridge is cooked for the occasion and distributed among the people. The ceremony is accompanied by chanting and playing the tambourine and special prayers to praise the prophet Mohammad and worship the Lord.

Another ancient feast is the "Nawroz" or the New Year celebration held on 21st March, the beginning of the spring. "Nawroz" which is the national Kurdish feast is the most important celebration for the Kurds as well as all Iranians. The occasion is celebrated as in the other parts of Iran by spreading a "Haft-Sean"⁽⁸⁾ tablecloth and setting plants, fruit and customary refreshments on it as a symbol of the termination of winter and the start of growth and rejuvenation of nature.

This ancient feast which is attributed to "Jamshid", the Iranian mythical king, takes 12 days during which friends and relatives visit each other in their new clothes. On the 13th day, which is considered unlucky, everybody spends their time in the countryside as on a picnic to avert bad fortune.

There are other customs and traditions held by the Kurds which have taken root in their mythical beliefs and religions, such as the pilgrimage to the saints' shrines and the celebration of Pir-e-Shaliyar's wedding.

Notes

1. The Kurdish noble class is composed of the following five groups;

- a). the descendants of the Mullahs respected for their knowledge and their exceptional way of life.
- b). the descendants of the Sheikhs (religious leaders).
- c). the descendants of the "Bags" or great influential families,
- d). the descendants of the "Aghas", the heads of the tribes who are less important.

e). "Zivehdars" or the sacred families.

2. These slaves might be the descendants of the natives and the early residents of the region who were defeated by the warlike tribes and were turned into slaves (The Islamic Encyclopaedia, "Kurd").

3. There is no equivalent for the word "prostitute" in Kurdish language, and there are no brothels in Kurdish cities. "V. Nikûin 1956"

4. Kidnapping the girl is still customary despite the existing dangers.

5. In some regions of Kurdistan, children are still engaged for one another since birth, and the boy's family financially supports the girl until she reaches the age of marriage, and they send the girl presents at feasts.

6. "Qorban" feast is celebrated by the end of the "Haj" ceremonies (that is the pilgrimage to "Kaaba", the house of the Lord, in "Mecca", Saudi-Arabia). On this occasion, the "Hajis" sacrifice a beast in commemoration of "Abraham" and his sacrificing of a sheep instead of his son "Ismail" as written in the old Testament and the Koran.

7. "Fetr" feast is held by the end of the month of "Ramazan", the Moslem month of fasting.

8. "Haft-Sean" refers to the seven articles placed on the tablecloth that begins with "S" sound in Persian language.

THE RUSH OF MODERNISM

In the early 19th century, capitalistic socioeconomic relations created many changes in the Kurdish society. Social, economic and political relationships in the sedentary rural or urban communities went through great changes in relation to the expansion of commercial and industrial investments in the world. Newly established economic forces that could not tolerate feudal and tribal relations and apposed them. It was expected that many limitations and tribal, feudalistic obstacles in the way of modernism and economic expansion would be destroyed, and that minimal political freedoms would be recognized in the light of the new capitalistic relations. However, of all new changes occurring in countries where the Kurds lived, only the modern methods of suppression were bestowed on them.

Of 8,817 villages mentioned in the official census commissioned in Turkey in 1960, over half were deprived of running water, schools, tea-houses and inns. Light was provided in a primitive manner, and the health and sanitary services were insufficient. Drinking water-wells were close to the lavatories, and hundreds of villages lost contact with the outside world in winter due to the shortage of transport facilities. In 1976, there were 12,275 doctors working in Turkey of whom only 2,500 were serving in the "East-Anatolia" (the Kurdish section of Turkey), and of 60,196 vacancies in the hospitals, half belonged to Istanbul, Ankara and Ezmir. Education in Kurdish, and publications in that language, as well as the wearing of traditional Kurdish costumes were banned. Malaria was quite widespread in the Kurdish regions.

In the Iraqi Kurdistan, among the thousand villages in "Soleimani", "Arbil" (Hawler) and "Karkuk" where an official census was commissioned, only 324 villages had electricity and running water, and the medical services were of the lowest level. Malaria accounted for 25% of deaths in 1970. (The Islamic Encyclopedia, "Kurd".) It is estimated that about 3,000 Kurdish villages have been leveled during the past 15 years, to expedite the Iraqi war effort. (Dagens Nyheter, 23 March 1990)

The Iranian Kurdish regions are also deprived of well-distributed running water, garbage collection, sewage, and a sanitary waste disposal. Only a few of the villages in the province are provided with running water, public baths, and other sanitary facilities. ⁽¹⁾

Only 469 villages out of 1,814 are supplied with electricity, 900 of them have running water, and 30 villages can use telecommunications. In September 86, 62,1% of the 194,838

families residing in this province used electricity, 56,2% running water, and 17,4% had a bath in their own residence. ⁽²⁾

There are 8 gymnasiums, 3 football grounds with grass and 9 without, a swimming pool and ten libraries with 84,086 volumes and 6,377 members in this province. ⁽³⁾

51,8% of the common fuel used for cooking purposes in cities is supplied by gas-capsules and 62,1% of the fuel used for the same purpose in villages is provided by kerosene. 95,5% of the fuel used for heating in the urban areas and 48,9% in the rural areas is supplied by kerosene. Firewood, coal and animal manure ⁽⁴⁾ are also used. In general, it can be said that nothing has yet been done to increase the standard of living for the people of Kurdistan which is counted among the deprived regions of Iran and is located very far from the other relatively developed provinces of the country. ⁽⁵⁾

Shortages of goods and the distrustful atmosphere of the people towards central governments, together with real shortcomings and ecological restrictions (climate, long cold season and frost, mountainous landscape, land and water limitations) which have hindered economic development and have kept this province in a backward socioeconomic position. This position has worsened daily in comparison to the other relatively developed provinces. ⁽⁶⁾

The Kurdish question became acute first after 1957 under different regimes in Syria and also after the "Arab Belt" plan (1963) according to which they confiscated the lands belonging to the farmers under the pretext of Land Reform. 120,00 Kurds lost their border citizenship. They were deprived of state employment, prevented from sending their children to public schools and refused in hospitalized the public hospitals. Kurdish books and music were banned, and the Kurdish names of the villages were changed into Arabic ones. Arabs were accommodated in these villages instead of the exiled Kurds. ⁽⁷⁾

Notes

1. Sazeman-E-Barnameh-va-Boudgeh, "A report on the socioeconomic development in Kurdistan province in Iran, the status-quo", April 1982.

2, and 3. Sazeman-e-Barnemeh-va-Boudgeh, "Statistics related to Kurdistan province in Iran", the status-quo", April 1986.

4. Animal manure mixed with straw which was then formed into tablets and left in the sun to dry were gathered in dome-shaped heaps beside each house.

5. Sazeman-E-Barnameh-va-Boudgeh, "A report on the socioeconomic development in Kurdistan province in Iran, the status-quo", April 1982.

6. Sazeman-e-Barnemeh-va-Boudgeh, "Statistics related to Kurdistan province in Iran", the status-quo", April 1986.

7. The Islamic Encyclopaedia, "Kurd".

THE DEVIL AND THE LORD

The center of Kurdish residence, that is the east side of Tigris and the regions around the "Van" and "Wirmê" (Urumieh) lakes and also the north and east of Iraq, had been a part of the Persian Sassanid Empire (224-642 A.D.) before the advent of Islam. Zoroastrianity had been the official religion of the country and the above mentioned regions, at that time. However, before this period, that is under the Persians, Christian missionaries had fought against a group of dualists who worshiped the tree and prayed to the sun and gave sacrifice for the Devil.⁽¹⁾ The Arab geographers considered the mountainous "Aljabal" region to include the cities of "Ray", "Esfehan", "Hamedan" and as far as the "Azarbaijan" borders. Most of the people residing in these mountains regions were Kurds as they are today. The province located between Kermashan and Azarbaijan, was known as "Ardalan", with its most important town "Senneh" (Sanandaj). In the middle-Ages, "Dinavar" had been the important city of this region. It took four days to travel from "Dinavar" to "Zour" on the south east of today's "Soleimani", not far from the present Iranian border. Among the Iranians, "Zour" was known as "Nim-Rah" (half-way) as it was located half way from "Madayen", the ancient capital of Iran, to "Shiz" (Azar-goshnasb fire-temele located on the south section of Azarbaijan, that is the place where the ruins of "Takht-e-Soleiman" can still be observed, at a place 9000 ft. above the sea level).⁽²⁾

Herodotus says of the Iranian religion; "As I know, these are customs of the Iranians. They know it inadmissible to set up houses of worship, and statues and altars, and consider those who do it foolish. This is because the Iranians do not envisage the Gods similar to man in features and nature, as do the Greeks who climb the highest peaks to worship "Zeus". All heavens are called "Zeus" by the Iranians (refers to "Ahura", the God of Gods). They pray to the sun, the moon, the earth, the fire, the water and the winds. Iranians have praised these gods (Baq) since the Old Times"⁽³⁾

In a similar manner, Strabo says, Iranians do not set up statues and houses of worship, but hold sacrifice at ceremonies in a high place, and believe the heavens to be "Zeus". They also praise the sun which they call "Mehr" and the moon and Aphrodite (Anahid), and the fire and the earth, and the winds and water.

Zoroastrians believe that before the rush of the Devil to the Mazdamade universe, the sun and the moon and stars were

suspended still between the earth and the sky.⁽⁴⁾ Peace and tranquillity ruled everywhere, and it was always midday - time was at a standstill. "Kioumars" (the first man) and the cow (the first beast) were the only living creature on earth that kept each other's company, and experienced their immortal, inactive life living through the eternal midday in a land where there were no ups and downs. And when the Devil and his army rushed in, followed by the death of "Kioumars" and the cow, the sky turned dark as with the rush of wolves, and the night came,⁽⁵⁾ and the eternal calm of the midday was broken, changing into the continuous and worrisome turn of the day followed by night until the last day.⁽⁶⁾ The moon and the stars trembled and the rotation started. Mountains came into being and there came the flood, and the plants grew from the refined sperm of the cow, and from the Man's, there grew two plants that gave rise to the first man and woman.

And this is how he Devil indirectly caused the creation of our familiar world, and the creatures, and the activity and reproduction.

"Angra-Mainyava" (Ahriman or Devil) rose against "Spento-Mainyava" (the holy Mainyava), and the world is their fighting ground ever since.⁽⁷⁾ "Angra-Mainyava" and "Spento-Mainyava" are of the same essence, that have chosen the good and the evil of their own free will.^{(8),(9)} Thus the duality between the light and the darkness, the good and the evil, and the right and the wrong remained in the beliefs of all Iranian Nations.⁽¹⁰⁾

With the fall of the Sassanid dynasty in 642 A.D., conditions became suitable for moslemizing the country. The Islamic religion which had emerged in Arabia, progressed in the Persian Empire, and the Kurds eventually were converted to Islam after long fights in which they conspired with the Sunnite Moslems, and at times with the apostate "Khavarej". They became Moslems of Shafii sect. However, Kurds remained faithful to their ancient religion, Zoroastrianity, until 842 A.D.⁽¹¹⁾

Kurdish people with its inherent genuineness and intelligence has preserved its outstanding character from the religious point of view.⁽¹²⁾

The people have managed to protect and create their special spiritual values under the mantle of the Islamic religion. These values, on the basis of which the Kurdish nation has at least

succeeded in obtaining its status, remove away doubts about the outstanding character of the Kurds.

With the role they have played in the cultural reforms of the ancient Asia, Kurdish nation are unjustly forgotten and are called the forgotten nation of history. ⁽¹³⁾

Although the Kurdish leaders such as "Salah-Al-Din -e-Aiyoubi" (1137-1193) have always shown a special interest and care for their religion regardless of their national interests, the Kurdish populace adjusts this religion in favour of their tribal interests and beliefs. Kurdish celebrities, however, are distinguished from their other counterparts because of their ideological, gnostic and mystic beliefs. In general, Kurdish intelligence and mind make them go in search of God (a common characteristic of all Iranian nations). The variations in their beliefs are not restricted to Islam sensitivity of the cross because of their settling at roads of religions in the ancient land of Asia. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Kurds who seem to be strict Moslems were at times raised by their masters such as the Ottoman rulers and the other Kurdish fundamentalist leaders against the followers of the other religions. However, one can observe the highest degree of religious variations among the Kurds themselves.

Remnants of beliefs in Gods such as "Mithra" (the God of light, prosperity, and the guard of the warriors) and "Anahid" (The God of fertility and water) have somehow remained in the Iranian nations beliefs up to the present time, mostly among the Kurds. "Mehr", the ancient Vedaic God that has gathered the people and watches over the fields with his ever-open eyes, is not only responsible for prosperity, but is a warlike God who guards the promises and is the ultimate judge ^(Rih Veda 15).

He, who is the saviour God, visits the earth occasionally to sacrifice the cow (in Mithraistic beliefs) or guide the people (in Manichaeism) to save and bless them. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Sacrificing the cow by Mithra is the focal point of Mithraistic beliefs. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Sacrifice is the symbol of creation. The death of the cow gives rise to a new life; it is the inspiration for all ancient mystic secrets. All these beliefs point to the question of life, death and resurrection most beautifully illustrated in nature that rejuvenates each year and begins life afresh. Wheat is sown and the golden clusters harvested. (It may be said that the sacred cow is "Mithra" who kills himself to enrich the life with his rebirth). ⁽¹⁸⁾

The death of the sacred cow gives rise to 55 different types of grains, 12 kinds of medicinal plants, and all kinds of useful beasts. Thus, the followers of "Mithra" sacrifice a cow and shed its blood in an annual ceremony to maintain life in nature.

Spirit is the essence of life in this belief; body is mortal and not eternal, and disintegrates into the four constituent elements of water, soil, wind and fire after death. Spirit which is a beam of the eternal "Mehr" (Mithra), however, will travel in to eternity.

After a man's death, his spirit passes through seven passages or doors in order to unite with "Mehr", but it cannot return to its origin until it is free from the uncleanness of the material world and reaches pure awareness.

Since death is not an end to life (in this belief), for the beams to refine, they enter into different bodies after each death

until they eventually enter the body of those who shall live pure and free of materialistic interests, and after whose death the soul is able to become free and reunite with its origin. (These rebirths occur many times before the accomplishment of spiritual goals). This belief, which is a theme for reincarnation and is followed by many basic mystic principles, is observed among many of the sects common among the Kurds.

Frederick Spiegel, in his book "The Ancient Iranian Monuments", has come across beliefs common among "Dushik" Kurds from "Dersim", that refer to Mithraism and the worship of Anahita. Some Kurdish tribes from "Yazidi" sect belong to this group. They are called the worshippers of light as they do not pray to anything but the sun and its light. "Yazidi" believe that the God is the creator of the universe but does not interfere with its affairs, and they say that his first creation, who is the same in essence as the God himself, is "Malek-e-Tavous", the head and the manager of the world together with six other angels. "Malek-e-Tavous" is wickedness personified. ⁽¹⁹⁾ "Yazidi" followers do not regard wickedness as absolutely evil, but believe that the original divinity had later turned into evil, and that it will eventually come at peace with the Lord. ⁽²⁰⁾

"Malek-e-Tavous" which is of divine essence, manifests itself in religious saints. It is told in their fables that "Makel-e-Tavous" or Satan who was first denounced by the God because of his rebellions and unruliness, was sent to Hell. He wept for 7,000 years such that 7 large jars were filled with his tears; the Lord then had pity on him. Thus the followers of "Yazidi" do not believe in eternal agony, and regard wickedness to be mortal. Also, some Moslem Sufis of the 11th and 12th centuries such as "Ainol-Qozat-e-Hamedani", "Abdol-Qader-e-Guilani" (1077-1166 A.D., the founder of "Qaderiyeh" which is one of the mystic sects of Kurdistan today), "Hallaj", and "Ebn-e-Arabi", and "Ahmad-e-Qazalli" thought over the subject of the devil being damned, and believed the reason for Satan's disobedience to bow to the man was merely because of his love and obedience to the Lord.

So, they believe the Satan admirable and thus the conflict between the abandoned Vedaic Gods, Mithra, the cow killer who gives life (in Mithraism), and the wicked Devil that kills the cow and unknowingly starts the growth in "Avesta" in Zoroastrianity, is clarified in the Islamic mysticism.

In the following centuries, Mithraists were converted to different sects which still exist in Kurdistan. These still hold ceremonies practising symbols and customs of Mithraism. Some of these sects include "Naqshbandi" ⁽²¹⁾, "Qaderi", "Ahl-e-Haq" or "Yarestan", "Yazidi" and "Ali-Allahi" dervishes. These sects still hold ceremonies of initiation, rebirth, life, going through the seven steps of mysticism and sacrificing the cow of their passions to the God of light accompanied with the tambourine beats and dances and chants and ecstasies. Other ceremonies include Pir-e-Shahriyar's wedding held in Hawraman in the Iranian Kurdistan, at the time of awakening of the earth, 45 days before the spring. These ceremonies start at sunrise (announced by the children), by sacrificing some beasts. During the feast, they cook a stew made of the meat of the sacrificed

beasts and distribute it among the visitors. The ceremonies follow by chantings, singings, the playing of the "Daf" (tambourine) accompanied by dances and going into ecstasy. One week later, they continue with the rest of the ceremony by visiting the graves of the Saints (Pirs) and eating bread and yoghurt, the two symbols of prosperity.

Notes

1. V.Nikitin, 1956.
2. "Tazkereh-ye-Geografiya-ye-Tarikhi-ye-Iran", V.Barthold, translated by Hamzeh-ye-Sardadvar, Qods publications. 1979.
3. Herodotus, the 1st book, paragraphs 131 & 132.
4. T. D. Anklesavia, *The Bundahishn*, Chapter 2 paragraph 1, Bombay, 1908.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. "Gathas", "Majmoua-Ye-Avesta", Zoroastrian Hymns, Reported by Pourdavoud, Teheran University, 1975.
8. Ibid.
9. Some believe that these two Mainyavas represent the two forms of organization existing in Zoroaster's society. "Spento-Mainyava" is the symbol of pastoral, rural community of the time, who were sedentary people and lived on farming and making the land useful and raising livestock, "Angra-Mainyava", on the other hand, is the representative of a herding, tribal community that caused the destruction of the livestock, men and crop, and their very existence was a threat to life. These were the people with whom Zoroaster was in a constant struggle, whereas he supported the first community. (Samadi, Mehrangiz. "Mah-Dar-Iran-Az

-Qadimitarin-Ayam-ta -Zohour-e-Eslam", Scientific and Cultural Publications, 1988).

10. In his religion, Zoroaster only accepted "Ahura-Mazda" as his own God, from between the two ancient Vedaic Gods (the religion of Indo-Iranian people), and rejected the rest. since then, "Davahs", the ancient vedaic Gods, were changed from real god to abandoned ones and the symbols of wickedness.

Their followers were regarded as the worshippers of the Devil by Zoroaster. These Devils appeared in the form of "Ahrimans" (Satans) in the new religion. It so seems that the worshippers were caught in duality between the Satan and the God ever since, and thus the Satan became the vague question of the story of creation in all religions which later came into being in this land.

11. "Sheikh-Mohammad-Mardoukh-e-Kordestani", "Tarikh-e-Mardoukh, Tarikh-e-Kord-va- Kordestan" , Vol.2., Qarifi Bookshop, Sanandaj, 1952.

12. V. Nikitin, "Kurd & Kurdistan", 1956.

13. V. Nikitin, Quoted from professor N.Marr.

14. V. Nikitin 1956.

15. Bahar, Mehrdad. "Pazhuheshi-Dar-Asatyr-e-Iran", 1st Vol., Tous publications, Teheran, 1983.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. M.J. Vermaseren.

19. According to Arthur Christenson, Mithraists and those sects which had greatly changed the principles of Zoroastrianity, believed in "Zurvanism". Some of these sects worshipped the Satan (Angra-Mainyava).

A. Christenson, "Iran under the Sassanids", translated by Rashid-e-Yasami, Tehran, 1972.

20. Rashid-e-Yasami, "Kord-va-Peivastegi-ye-Nezhadi-va-Tarikhi-ye-Ou", Ebn-e-Sina publications, Tehran.

21. "Naqshbandi" sect was founded by "Mohammad-Bahae-Din-e-Bokharai" (1317-1389 A.D.). Today in Kurdistan, they have the largest followers besides the "Qaderis", "Ali-Allahis", and "Ahl-e-Haq".

KURD IS BORN A POET

The Kurdish spirit is revealed in their rich literature, folk songs, and music which have still preserved their genuineness despite the high illiteracy among the Kurds. Iranian and Arab literatures have had a great impact on the Kurdish literature. However, in the Kurdish folk songs known as "Lawj" or "Beit", a Kurd's unruly soul, which never submits to laws and regulations, reveals itself in the heroic war epics he composes, and in his love songs and complaints of separations and partings. His literature is the same as his folk songs and oral poems sung in his land for centuries, so entwined with his rich soul full of delicate feelings and bravery that charm the audience. Colourful scenes of historical events both far and near, of life and death, and of love and sorrow are portrayed to the background of tribal events.

An important chapter in the history of Kurdish literature is connected with the name of Prince Sharaf Khan Bitlisi, author of an exceptional book, SHARAFNAMAH. It is a documentary description of the time between 1290- 1597 and gives a full classification of the Kurdish history and Kurdish language⁽¹⁾. The main task of the author is to show the world that there is a Kurdish people with its national territory and history. This bright document of the epoch is about the consciousness of the Kurdish people. It was first translated and well interpreted into French by Veliaminoff-Zernoff in 1860.

The most bright talent of Kurdish poetry is Ahmad-i Khani (1650/51-1706) from Hakkari (North of Kurdistan). Khani being a great patriot dedicated his life to the Kurdish people as a teacher and poet. Khani's immortal poem "Mam-o-Zin" is based on an old folk tale. The folk language used by the poet is far from the formalities characterizing the literary works of his time. It is a very ancient subject, a love story which can happen any time, Mam-o-Zin, the story of two tragically separated lovers, comparable to "Romeo Juliet". It is also an allegory of the tragic fate of the Kurds, separated and denied. The whole poem "Mam-o-Zin" can be considered as a museum of the rich and various panorama of Kurdish life and the way of Kurdish thinking with all its moral and class aspects.

This poem he dedicated to his people:

*"So that it can not be said that the Kurds
are illiterate in their nature.
I have done all this for the Kurds so that they may
know about Love
and are not deprived, either of reality or of their
dreams."*

The epic poems, now considered as the literary heritage of the Kurds, are composed by "Lawjes", and the rhythm of these songs is determined by the fast or slow beats of their singing. Such simple, clear compositions turn the epic poems into lively events. Some attribute the excellence of these compositions to his individual, heroic nature.

Kurdish poetry reveals the free soul that describes everything in poems, and above all praises love, freedom and nation;

*A mountain mass, wild and defiant,
Has gathered blue heaven in its embrace;
The mantle of its peak is brilliant white snow,
Dark with forest are its silent dales.
Waters imprisoned in their tunnels
Flow on, nor cease their windings round the hills;
The roar and hiss of foam, the shrill song of the brook:
Lullabies for grief in the solitude of night.
The narrow footpath, feeling its way from tunnel to tunnel
Throws the wayfarer into anxiety without end;
On the track rocky stairways, on the side great boulders
That heaven has not yet sent rolling down.
Now up hill, now down hill,
The bitter and sweet of the wayfarer's world.⁽²⁾*

He praises freedom as it follows;

*The fisherman was once told by the flood.
There are many reasons for my rage
The most important one being that
I'm for the freedom of small fishes,
And against the fisher's net*

*And carves the names of all free birds of the world
in its roots. Hidden from the eyes of stars, the clouds,
the wind and the sun.*

*Where the heavens play deaf
And the mountain's and waters turn their back to them*

*Criminals are seen by a tree
That carves their names on its roots.⁽³⁾*

He, who is devoted to his ancient religious beliefs, and has not cut his ties with them even after being converted to Islam, expresses his feelings for everything through songs and music.⁽⁴⁾

Notes

1. The Kurdish language (Kurmanji) is spoken in two major dialects and two minor dialects. One of the two main dialects is Northern Kurmanji which is generally spoken in the North and West and the North-East of Kurdistan. Its subdialects are Botani, Jiziray, Hakkari, Badinani, Ashitayi, and Bayazidi. The other main dialect is Middle Kurmanji (the so-called "Sorani") which is spoken in Middle Kurdistan. Its subdialects are Sulaimani, Sinayi, Ardalani, Kerkuki, Garmiyani, Hawleri, Mokri, Sharbajeri and Pijdari.

The two minor dialects of the Kurdish language, one of them is Southern Kurmanji, which is spoken in Southern Kurdistan. Its subdialects are: Feyli, Kirmashani, Laki, Kalhuri, Khanaqini, and some other subdialects which are known as Luri. The second minor dialect of the Kurdish language is the Gorani-Zazayi. Gorani is spoken in Hawraman and in Zangana district. It is known as "Macho-Kurdish". Gorani is the holy language of the Kakayi (All-i Haqq) religious community in Kurdistan. Zazayi is spoken in Bingol, Dersim, Kharpoot, Madan and some districts in Diyarbakir and Urfa. Zazayi is mainly spoken by Alavi religious community. (According to the works by Dr. Jemal Nebiz "Die Schriftsprache der Kurden, 1975" and A.R.M. Amin Zabihy "A

The communal singing of the harvesters among the golden clusters of wheat, the echo of the songs at the time of their annual migration through the rocky valleys, the love songs of the warriors of the camp-fire, the spiritual chants and song of the village singer in a remote path, are echoes of Kurdistan.

A Kurd always sings - in chains, while free, in happiness and sorrow, at the time of fighting and feasts and prayers, he sings and dances and the echo of his voice transcends his soil to spread over the neighbouring lands in a charming melody. And when he dances, it embraces all feelings - shoulder to shoulder with a comrade in a mystic dance losing himself in the enchantment of the sound of the tambourine and communal voices.

He worships the happiness and love in a group dancing next to a pretty girl. Men and women sing and dance on the rejuvenation of nature in spring time, in worshipping the bright "Mehr" (Mithra);⁽⁵⁾ they dance for the rain and the growth, the harvest and the picking of sweet mulberries, and when the first lambs are born, and also at the time of mating the sheep, and when they begin to migrate toward the summer pastures.

Historical Preface of Kurdish Language, 1977")

As long as the written language is concerned, it has developed more in Kurdistan-Iraq, compared with the other parts of Kurdistan, from early 30's, Kurdish language has a formal status in Iraq. Nowadays Southern dialects are not used in print, that is why it sounds logical to divide Kurdish language into two main branches, namely: Northern and Southern (meaning Middle) dialects, and at the same time indicate, using two characters (Latin and modified Arabic-Persian). Phonetically, the Latin alphabet is more advanced compared to current Arabic-Persian alphabet.

2. Poet: Goran (A tour in the Hawraman)

3. Poet: Sherko Bekas (The flood, and The roots)

4. There is no place for music during the ceremonies in the Islamic religion. Music which is banned from the Islamic standpoint, has a special place in the ceremonies held by mystic sects in Kurdistan.

5. The ties between the rich contents and aspirations in group Kurdish songs are entwined with duality and idolatry (the worship of "Mehr"?). Kurdish songs seem to have inherited their essential richness from duality and idolatry ("Mehr"?), followed by numerous Kurdish tribes in the ancient times who are now converted to Islam. (V. Nikitin, 1956).

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONTEMPORARY KURDISH HISTORY

The 19th Century: The most important uprisings which might be called nationalist in a modern sense are as follows:

1- The Baban revolt, the first important Kurdish revolt of the 19th century, broke out in 1806. The Baban, an ambitious warlike tribe, under the leadership of Abdurrahman Pasha, were eventually defeated and many took refuge in Persia.

2- Mir Mohamad, sovereign of the Principality of Soran, attempted to take advantage of the difficulties of the Ottoman Empire to create an independent state in Kurdistan which lasted from 1833 until he was finally defeated in 1837.

3- In 1843 Emir Bader Khan began an attempt to gain freedom from the control of the Ottoman Empire. Together with his allies, which included the Persian Kurds of Ardlan, he fought the Ottoman army for four years. Finally Bader Khan surrendered to Osman Pasha in 1847 and was sent into exile.

4- Yazdan Sher (Yazdan Lion) sought to take advantage of the Russo-Turkish war to channel popular discontent into a movement to establish an independent Kurdistan but in 1855 the Kurdish Government of Bitlis was destroyed.

5- The last major uprising of the nineteenth Century was from 1878 to 1881 and was led by Shaikh Ubaidalla of Nehri who attacked the Persian forces with some success. The Ottoman Empire co-operated with Persia and Shaikh Ubaidalla's attempt to establish a Kurdish state came to an end.

World War I: The Kurdish revolts of the 19th century had no political organization or clearly defined program. Following the Young Turks revolution in 1908, Kurdish cultural clubs were established by Kurdish intellectuals. These clubs signaled the start of an organized political struggle in Kurdistan and clearly constituted a first attempt at the setting up modern political organizations. As soon as the First World War ended Kurdish nationalists based their appeal for Kurdish statehood on President Wilson's Fourteen Points of January 1918 (The Self-Determination of Nations), which provided for an "unmolested opportunity for the autonomous development of minorities within the Ottoman Empire". Two similar Anglo-French declarations which came later were also cited in support of Kurdish demands. The same year Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji presented Sir Arnold Wilson with a document signed by 40 tribal chiefs demanding the granting of certain rights to the Kurdish people.

The Post-War Years: The period from 1918 to 1921 presented the Kurdish people with their best ever opportunity to establish their own national state. At this time there was a total political vacuum. Kurdistan's salvation rested entirely in the hands of Britain and France, especially the former. The task of building a national state was beyond the capabilities of the Kurds themselves; they lacked the necessary organization and international support. Their fate can be contrasted with the states of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan which were not created by struggle or by political organization, but by Britain and France.

The Treaty of Sévres : In 1918 the aspirations of the non-Turkish peoples of the Ottoman Empire were encouraged by Turkey's military defeat, and by point 12 of President Wilson's 14-point "Program of World Peace" which stipulated that they would be "assured of an absolute, unmolested opportunity of autonomous development". The peace treaty signed at Sévres (August 1920) by the Ottoman government included provision for the recognition or creation not only of the Arab States of Hijaz, Syria and Iraq, but also, in what is now Eastern Turkey, of an Armenia and a Kurdistan. The Kurds of Mosul Vilayet (Iraqi Kurdistan) ,then under British occupation, were to be free to adhere to this new state. Although the Treaty did not apply to them, the Kurds of Persia could not remain unaffected by the ambitions and hopes of their kinsmen across a very artificial boundary.

The Constantinople government promised to execute the Commission's decisions and to allow self-government for the Kurds as recommended by the League of Nations. Later under the leadership of Mostafa Kemal the Turkish nationalists rejected the treaty signed by the "so called" puppet Government. The Turks forced the Allies to draw up a new peace treaty, the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which made no mention of the Kurds.

The Treaty of Lausanne: This treaty of 1923 repeated the provisions for the three Arab States but did not mention the Armenians and the Kurds. The future status of the Mosul Vilayet (Iraqi Kurdistan) was, however, excluded from the treaty and left to be solved by direct negotiation between Turkey and Great Britain, the mandatory power in Iraq. The negotiations

broke down and the dispute was referred to the League of Nations. In December 1925 the Council decided in favour of Iraq subject to certain guarantees, which were the official and legal recognition of the Kurds as an ethnic minority with certain rights of their own as Kurds. It was also stated that Kurdish officials be appointed to administrate their region, the dispensation of justice, and teaching in the schools, and that Kurdish should be the official language of all these services. The same guarantees were repeated in 1932 when Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations, and the British mandate came to an end.

Kurds in Turkey: Kurdistan in Turkey is the largest and most populous part of Kurdish territory. Here there are about 13 million Kurdish speakers, reside. Between 1925 and 1938 three major revolts occurred: by Sheikh Said of Piran, by a Kurdish liberation organization (Khoyboun) and by the Kurds of Dersim. They were all crushed. An estimated 40,000 to 250,000 people died in the suppression of these revolts. This was followed by the burning of hundreds of villages and the forcible displacement of about one million Kurds and the banning of the use of the Kurdish language, folklore and names.

Militarization of the eastern and southern provinces, which had eased considerably during the 1960s and 1970s, has since intensified. The ostensible reason for this concentration, and for NATO and US military installations in the area, is the continued sensitivity of Afghanistan-Iran-USSR border regions, and it does permit the Turkish government to control the Kurds closely, under the protective mantle of Western strategic interests. In 1979, fifteen Kurdish provinces were placed under martial law and during the Iran-Iraqi war, Kurdish guerrilla operations were reported in Turkish Kurdistan. Not surprisingly the government is anxious to avoid trouble spilling over into Turkey through Iraqi or Iranian Kurds crossing the borders, and tries to keep these borders firmly closed against refugees. An influx of nationally-minded Kurds could create disturbances.

The constitution regards all citizens as Turks, it does not legally recognize the separate development of ethnic minorities. Underdevelopment and cultural neglect of the Kurds in Turkey have been the main causes of nationalist feeling, the growth of leftist movements and migration. During the period 1950-1980 hundreds of thousands of Kurds became guest workers in W.Germany. Yet, despite the official fiction, to the contrary, there remains a strong sense of Kurdish nationality. Underdevelopment, class struggle and national identity have become central themes of discussion amongst a new, educated generation.

Kurds in Syria: The Kurds in Syria number about one million. Following effective Syrian independence in 1945, there was little persecution of minorities. The union of Syria and Egypt in 1958 triggered off the first round of oppressive behaviour towards the Kurds. Police and military academies were closed to the Kurds.

During the 1960s and 70s, when the Ba'th Party assumed power, persecution continued on account of the Kurdish revolt against Baghdad. Today the Kurds feel safer, but are still not recognized as an ethnic minority.

Kurds in USSR: The Kurds are a small minority and one of the 100 nations recognized in the Soviet Union. The estimated population of the Kurds in USSR is about 500,000 and they live in the Armenian, Azarbaijan, Turkoman, and Georgian Republics. The attention given to Kurdish culture, language and education in Armenia, has given these Kurds advantages not enjoyed in the greater part of Kurdistan.

Perestroika have had a significant impact on the many nationalities in the USSR by encouraging them to increase their demands for greater autonomy in the running of their internal affairs. This new independence can also be seen among the Kurds who are demanding a reinstatement of the autonomous region established in Nagorno Garabakh (Armenia) during the 1920s. Many Kurds who were deported to other parts of the Soviet Union during the Stalinist period now wish to return to their homeland. The present situation gives grounds for optimism but real changes may take much longer to accomplish.

Kurds in Iran: There are about 5 million Kurds in Iran that mainly live in Kurdistan province, Kermashan and Illam provinces, and in the west and south of the western Azarbaijan province. In 1600, a number of Kurds were forced by the Safavid King "Shah Abbas" to settle in northern Iran, in the Mazandaran and Khorassan provinces, where their descendants still live.

The struggle of the Iranian Kurds for autonomy dates back to the 19th century. The Kurdish principality of Ardalan, had managed to retain its autonomy until it was forcibly annexed in 1865. One of the greatest of the Kurdish revolts in the 19th century broke out in 1880, under the leadership of Sheikh Obeidullah. The revolt was crushed by the combined forces of the Ottoman and Persian armies. In October 1921 a Kurdish chief, Isma'il Simko of the Shikak tribe, rejected government authority. At first, the government in Tehran tried to reach an agreement with Simko on the basis of limited Kurdish autonomy. On 21st June 1930 he was invited to attend negotiations with the Iranian military, received with official respect and assassinated.

During World War II the Russians occupied northern Iran and the British occupied the south. The Kurds established the Republic of Mahabad under the presidency of Qazi Mohammad in January 1946. The official designation for it was the "State of the Kurdish Republic", (*Dawlati Djumhuri Kurdistan*), but it was also known as the "National Government of Kurdistan" (*Houkoumati Milli Kurdistan*). Whether or not the Mahabad Republic set upon a path to complete independence is not clear. At the time of its establishment it sought complete autonomy within Iran's frontiers. Mostafa Barzani joined the Kurdish

Republic with his army of Barzani tribesmen (from Iraqi Kurdistan). Kurdish became the official language and publications appeared. However, with the withdrawal of the Allied Forces from Iran, the Iranian army crushed the Republic. Kurdish leaders were hanged, the Kurdish language and publications in Kurdish were prohibited.

The downfall of the Shah in Feb. 1979 and the disintegration of the state apparatus provided an unrivalled opportunity for Kurds to demand autonomy. Initial negotiations with the new revolutionary regime over the granting of a measure of internal autonomy to the Kurds soon broke down because of Tehran's insistence that the Kurds should subjugate their demands to the requirements of Islamic law. Thus, the conflict between the Islamic Republic and the Kurds have persisted ever since. Dr. A.R.Ghassemlou, one of the major Kurdish leaders was assassinated in Austria in 1989.

Kurds in Iraq: Iraq was detached from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. Britain, the mandate power, eventually annexed the oil-rich Kurdish Vilayet of Mosul, with the recommendation that the Kurds should be granted a degree of autonomy and various cultural rights. The Kingdom of Iraq became nominally independent in 1931 but remained under British influence until the 1958 Revolution. In 1919 Sheikh Mahmoud, proclaiming himself King of Kurdistan, revolted against the British in Suleimani. A period of unbroken struggle against the British was carried on under Sheikh Mahmoud from 1919 to 1930. This revolt was accompanied by bloody repressions and finally the deportation of the Sheikh.

Immediately afterwards, Iraqi Kurds rose again, this time under the leadership of the Barzanis. This Kurdish struggle continued from 1931 to 1945 until, finally, Mostafa Barzani was forced to retreat to Iranian Kurdistan where he joined the newly proclaimed Kurdish Republic in Mahabad. After the collapse of the Kurdish Republic, Barzani and his followers took refuge in the Soviet Union for 11 years (1947-58).

The 1958 Revolution in Baghdad defined Iraq as a country made up of "two peoples" the Arabs and the Kurds. Barzani returned from the USSR, but relations with the new government deteriorated very quickly and in 1961 the Kurds launched a war of liberation to secure autonomy within the framework of the Republic. Between 1961 and 1968 the Kurdish struggle continued until the Ba'ath Party came to power in 1968. In 1970, the new regime signed an agreement with Kurdish leaders promising autonomy for Kurdistan. The proposals did not include the oil-rich Kirkuk area in an

autonomous Kurdistan, and the agreement was never implemented. Armed conflict broke out once more when, in March 1974, the Baghdad Government decided to implement unilaterally a restricted form of autonomy.

The war, in which the Kurdish movement enjoyed the tactical support of Iran and the U.S.A, came to an end with the Algiers Agreement of March 1975 between Iran and Iraq. The hostilities had reached the point where Iraq could not win unless Iranian support to the Kurds was cut off. Barzani, the traditional Kurdish leader unable to deal with this new situation, gave up the struggle and fled to Iran. After 5 years fighting against cancer the Grand Old Man of the Kurdish national movement died in the U.S.A.

Later, the Iraqis created a no-man's land, a belt 10 to 20 kilometres wide, along their borders with Iran and Turkey. Trees, villages, crops, were all burnt to the ground, mountain springs were blocked with cement, and Kurdish villagers were forcibly moved and resettled in the desert area of southern Iraq. This method has been used for years to "thin out" sensitive parts of Kurdistan.

A "new phase" of guerrilla operations were launched in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1979 under new leadership, in contrast to the traditional leadership of the Barzanis, and continued during the Iran-Iraq war. In 1984 new negotiations between the Iraqi government and the Kurds for Kurdish autonomy were broken off as a result of the Turkish Prime Minister's visit to Baghdad. During the 1980 to 1988 Iran-Iraq war, Kurdish areas were the major battlefield in both Iran and Iraq. A United Nations investigation in 1986 confirmed chemical weapons use in Kurdistan.

The most dramatic attack was in March 1988, when nerve gas, cyanide and mustard gas were used against the Kurdish town of Halabjah, where about 8,000 were reported dead and many more injured after an Iraqi air attack.

After the ceasefire in August 1988, the Iraqi army launched a chemical war against the Kurds, which caused the death of thousands of Kurdish civilians and about 100,000 were forced to flee to Turkey and Iran.

Later still, the old policy of large-scale deportations was extended to medium-sized towns, a policy which caused a wide spread condemnation of western human rights organizations. The policy was denounced as genocide. At the time of going to press, it was suspected that the Iraqi government was planning to depopulate a belt of territory along its borders with Iran and Turkey 50 miles wide in places. However, it so seems that the peace between Iran and Iraq does not imply peace in the area in the long run.

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1- Partridge is the favourite bird of the Kurds. They believe it brings good luck. It is favoured for its song and because it can be tamed. It is also used in hunting. It attracts other birds of its kind with its song to the place where the hunter is hiding. And it is said that partridges do not lay eggs in captivity.



2- A Kurdish villager on his way to Hajij in the Hawraman district.



3- A view of the mountains with a forest of oak and mountain almond around Divaznar village.



4- A terraced village where the "Leopards' Castle" (Palangan) is located; a strategically unconquerable spot intended as the head-quarter of the local governors such as "Kalhors" and later, the famous "Halu Khan" from the Ardalan family. The castle was destroyed at the end of the "Safavid" era in the 17th century. Western "Zhav Roud".



5- (Top corner) A scared bird; a girl from "Palangan" village.

6- Until recently, stones were put on top of each other with no mortar in between for building houses. Since the construction of a road to the village, however, cement is used to fill the gap between the stones. The windows of a house with vines, in Hawraman.

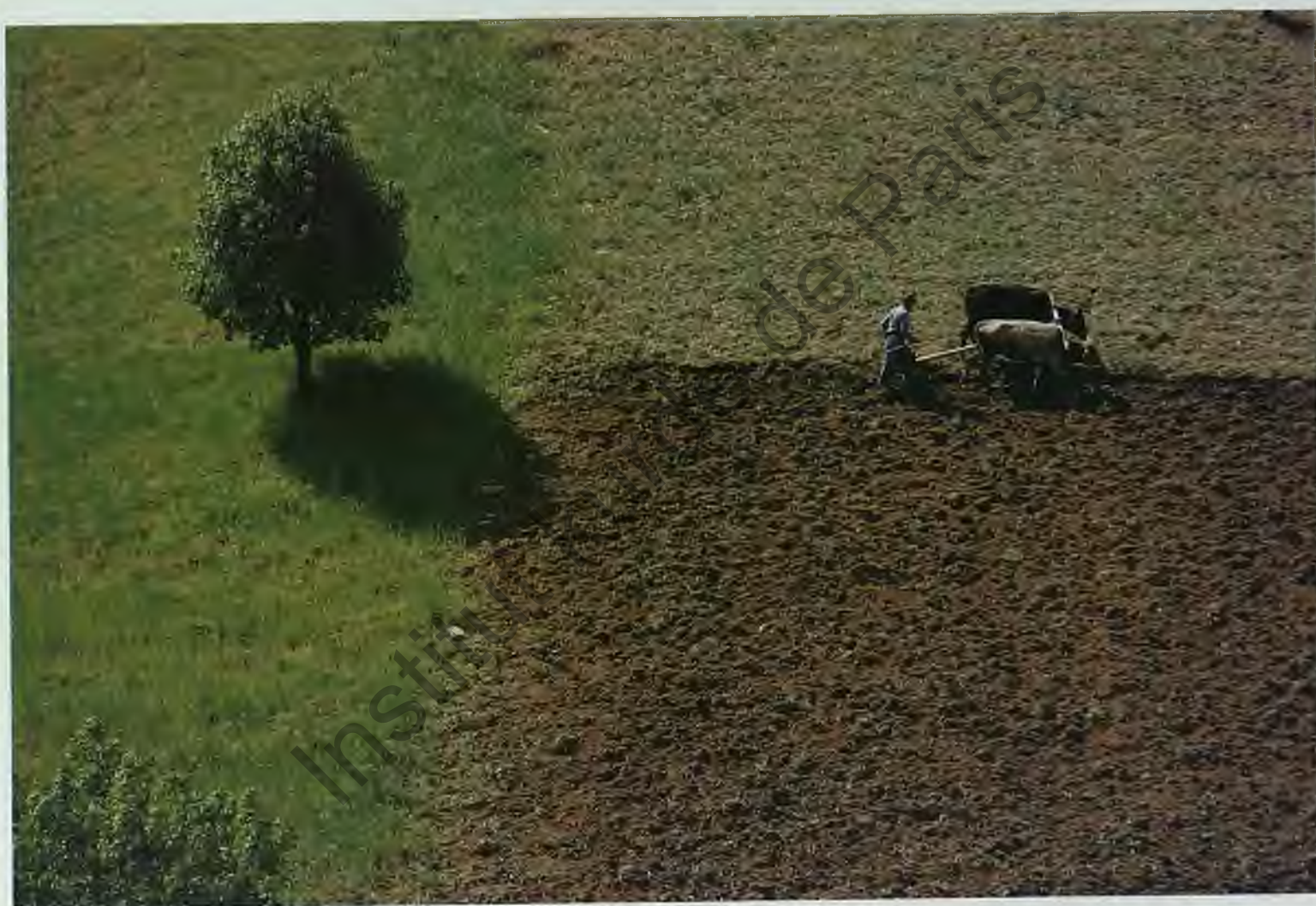


7- Early in the morning, the first rays of the sun strike a Nowin villager wearing a Ferenji (a traditional woollen jacket) in the Hawraman district.



8- (Top corner) *Two typical Kurdish boys from Boz-Bash-Kandi village between Saqqez and Tekab.*

9- *Untrustful and shy. A village girl from Shiva , between Qorvah and Bijar.*



10- Negl village between Sanandaj and Marivan. As in most parts of Kurdistan a farmer ploughs his land using traditional methods.



11- A view of the yard in a village house located on the east of Sanandaj. The next-door yard is used as a stable for keeping sheep. Beddings, the kitchen utensils and the oven in the middle of the yard enhance the rural features of the plain-house made of sun-dried bricks.



12- Late September in a village near Bijar . Traditional methods with primitive hand tools are still used in most villages in Kurdistan to harvest the wheat.



13- A Kurdish family having breakfast in a village near Saqqez . A village house made of clay and straw with platform on the outside of the only room of the house; a place for sleeping, sitting and having meals, as well as visiting friends.



14- Women from Sabadlu village near Banah, baking Saj bread.



15- (Top corner) Blond children among the Kurds is a very common . Their light-coloured eyes only amaze the strangers. Bolban Awa village.



16- (Middle right) A Kurdish woman from Sabadlu village near Banah picking "Piwaz" (a kind of vegetable similar to chives) from the garden in the porch of her house. The houses in this mountainous village are built in two parts; a lower part and an upper one. The lower part is used as a sheep cote.



17- A girl from the Novin-e -Hawraman village. At her back, there are hand-woven materials called Jajem made on the traditional weaving-machines.



18- Tapalah, the main source of energy for Kurdish villagers. It is made of dung from domestic animals. After drying it in the sun, it is stored for the long and cold winters. A village near Bijar in Kurdistan-Iran.



19- Charcoal making from dry oak wood in a village near Marivan .



20- Children playing
while an older sister works
at a carpet loom.
Bolban-Awa
village.



21- Hawraman-i-Takht village in the Hawraman region.
Weaving a traditional cloth which is used for making
Rank-O-Choukhah (The Official Kurdish dress).



22- Hajj village in the Hawraman region. An old man making Givah, a traditional and very practical shoe which ranks among the major Kurdish handicraft products.



23- Two Kurdish girls at a carpet loom; Shiva village,
between Bijar and Dehgolan.



24- A villager from Hawraman-i-Takht , going to get the Alm's porridge cooked on Moludi occasion (the prophet's birthday), early in the morning.



25- A Kurdish family resting under the Kursi (a table placed on top of the oven covered with a quilt) , to escape the intense cold of the winter. Near Divan-Darah.







28- Cattle move among the snow patches still left on the ground at the end of spring in the mountains. Havar yeilaq, Espiras (white clay) village near Oshnaviah.



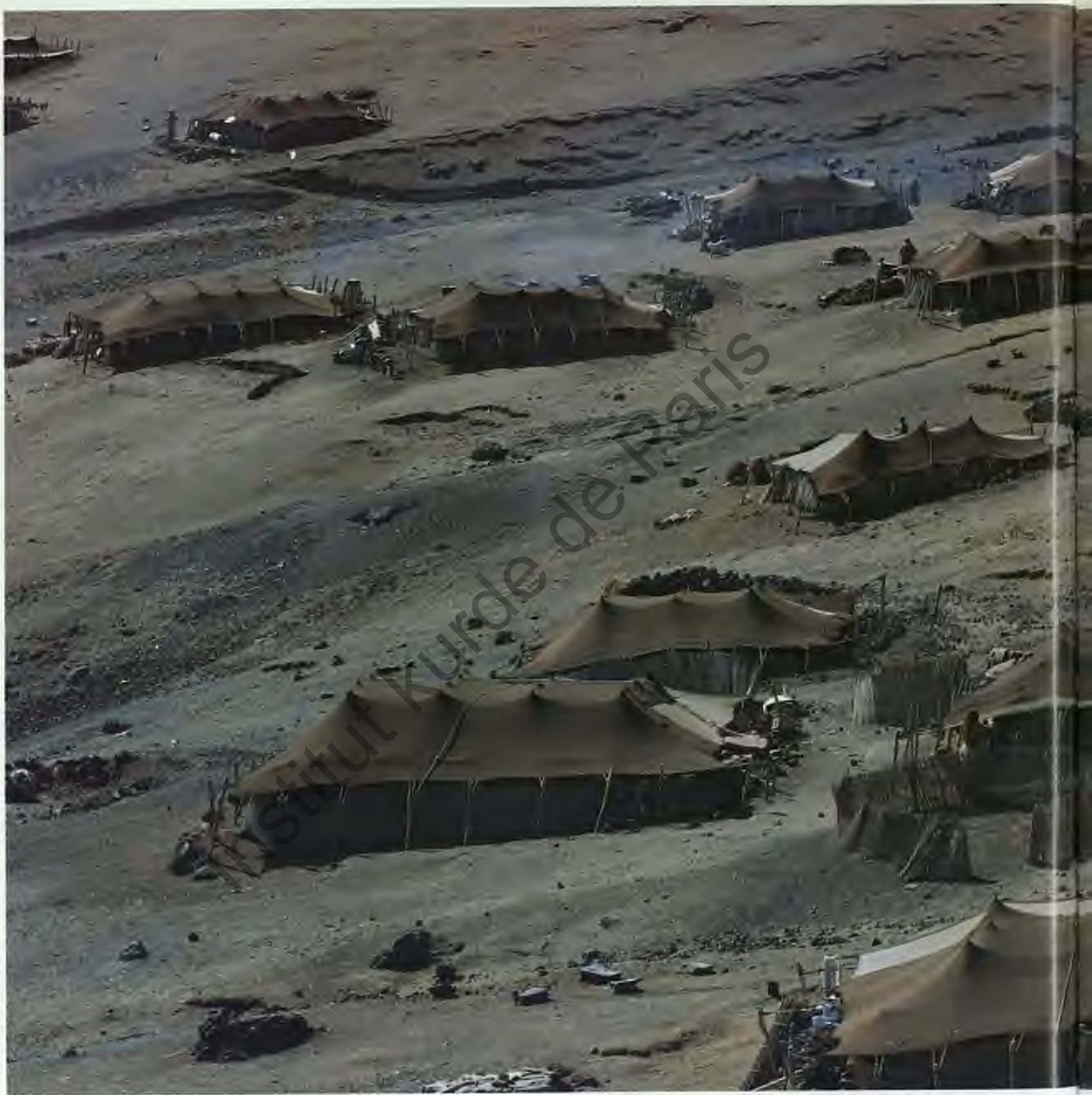
29-A portrait of a cattle-raiser from Espiras near Oshnavieh.



30- Nomadic Kurds from Jalali tribe , setting up a black tent with a wooden hammer in Yeilaq (Summer camp).



31- A Kurdish black tent near the Turkish border capable of accommodating both the inhabitants of the house and guests.



32- A camp made of tribe Kurdish tents in Agrichai near the Iranian-Turkish border. Most of these camps which are composed of up to 15 tents are herding units with a common right to use the pasture. They mostly accommodate the semi-nomadic herding Kurds.



33- (Top corner) Tents belonging to the semi-migrant, herding Kurds from Guran tribe, Qalkhani clan. Near Iran-Iraq border.

34- (Middle right) One of the survivors of the large Sanjabi tribe near Kerend . Most of the members of this tribe, one of the most important and influential Kurdish tribes, in the beginning of the present century, have now settled down.

35- Kurdish semi-nomadic women and men milking the sheep, Kani-Rash yeilq (summer camp) , in Havar near Oshnavieh .

37- Details of ancient designs on Chikh or the straw mat. Each of the straws are adorned with colourful wool before being woven into a mat. To create designs radiating the real life, and a view of the existence which has taken roots in the forgotten history of the tribe.



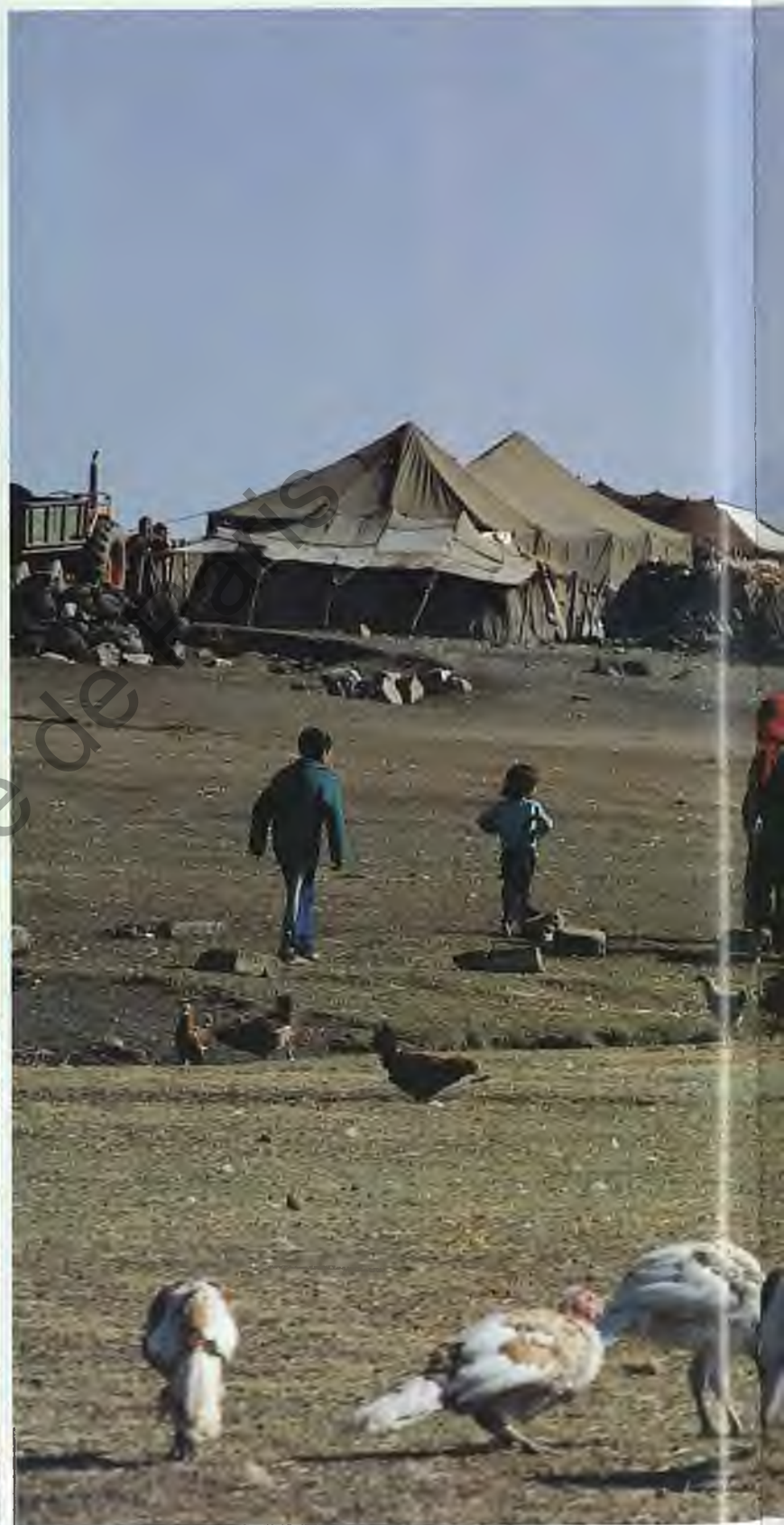
36- Kurdish woman from the Milan tribe baking bread on a Saj in front of the tent. Near Khoy.





38- (Top corner) *The profile of a young girl from the Milan tribe. Near Khoy.*

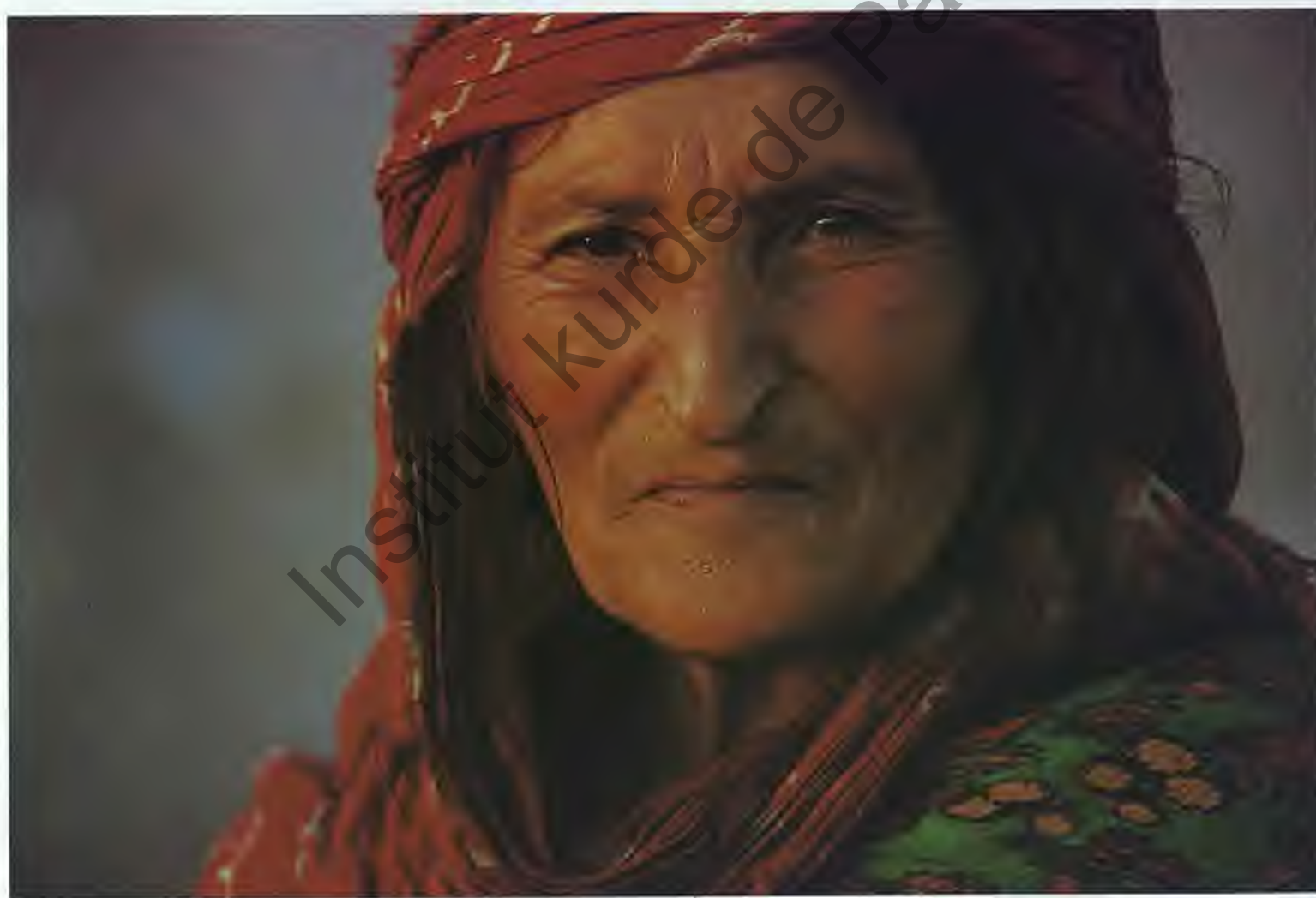
39- *Kurdish women from the Milan tribe passing their scarce moments of leisure. Near Khoy.*



40- *Summer camp of a Kurdish tribe at Makou under the shelter of Mount Ararat. Ararat, in the north of Kurdistan, at seventeen thousand feet dominates the surrounding area.*



42- A Kurdish farmer
from Pavah in front of the
Chikh or the straw
mat used around the
tents or arbours.



41- The facial expression of a Kurdish nomad woman in the
sunset - weary but determined.





43- A shepherd with his herd in the green mountainous pastures of the Yaylaq (summer location) of the Kurds of the Milan tribe, in late spring.



44- The Kurdish women of the Milan tribe, washing dishes beside a river , muddy with melt water from winter snows in late spring. The Yaylaq - summer camp- belonging to the Kurds of the Milan tribe, near the village of Kalisa close to Khoi.



45- A nomadic girl in Mako belonging to the Jalali tribe.



46- Woman from one of the clans of Jalali tribe milking the beasts at the mountain sides of the little Ararat.

48- The portrait of a young bride
looking forward to the future with
hope and optimism.
Bozbash-Kandi village, between
Saqqez and Tekab.



47- Kurdish women and girls adorn themselves with gay
colourful clothes and self-made ornaments. In such a manner
that they put skillful pictures of their taste on display.





49- An exceptional wedding in the village of Bozbash-Kandi near Saqqez. Exchange of brides between two villages. A gift to the bride's family is a part of the Kurdish marriage ceremony and is paid in cash or gold. In this marriage, the gift is not paid.

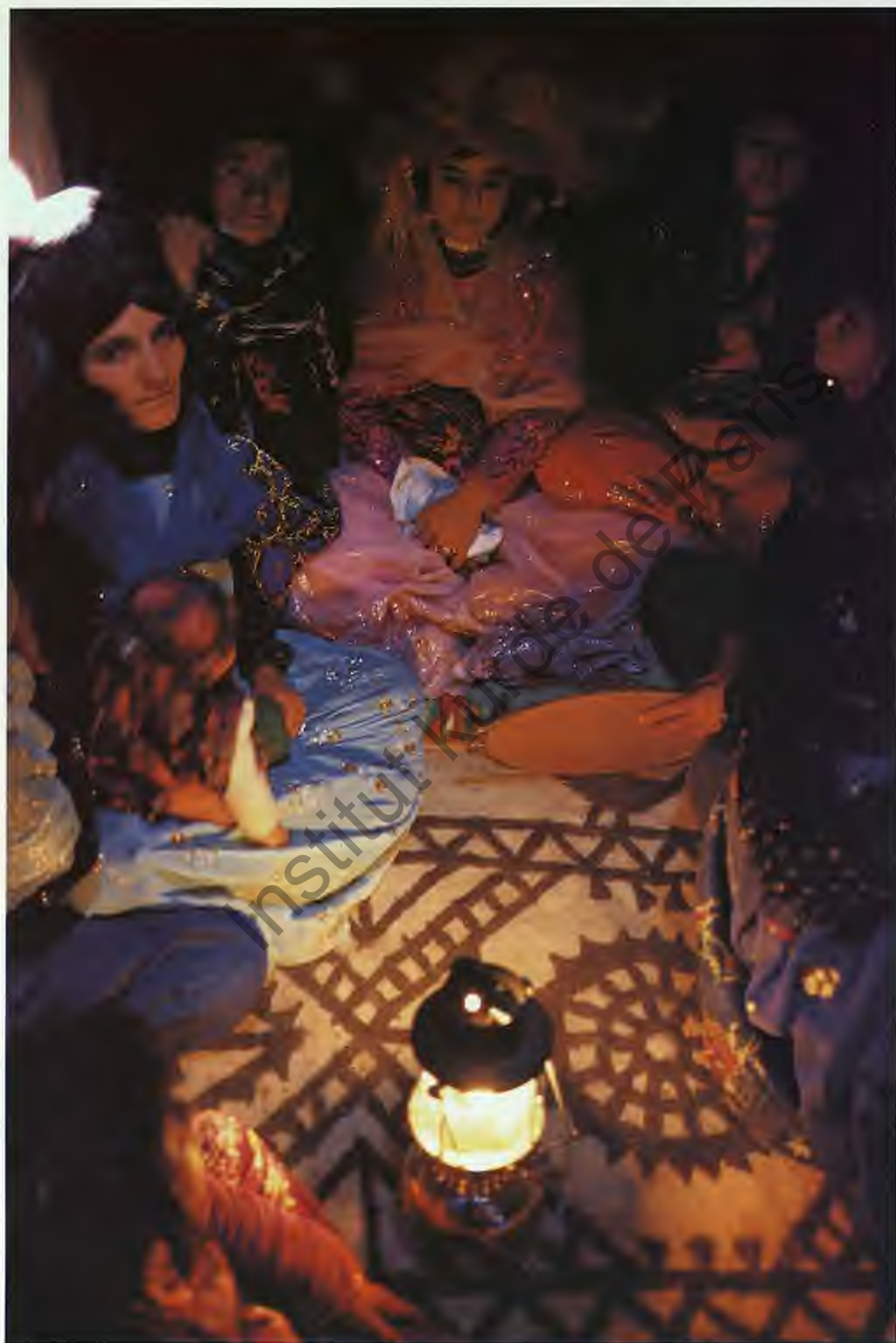


50- (Top corner) Exchanging two brides; a wedding is held between two villages and the bride is exchanged with another one to avoid paying the Shir-bayi (the money due to the bride's family upon her marriage). Bozbash-Kandi village, between Saqqez and Tekab .



51- (Middle right) The bride's companies and those who welcome her.

52- The bride enters her new house. Her new family shower the bride with coins and sweets which the wedding guests collect.



53- The bride among her relatives.



54- A Kurdish family from Zand-e-Kamar near Bijar.



55- Two of the wedding guests in their traditional costumes.



56- A Hawraman vendor of colourful brocade materials with distinct patterns. The seller who is well-acquainted with the customers' taste, has put on the traditional costume himself.



57- Wedding ceremony in Kar-Awa village near Mariwan.
The bride entering her new home.



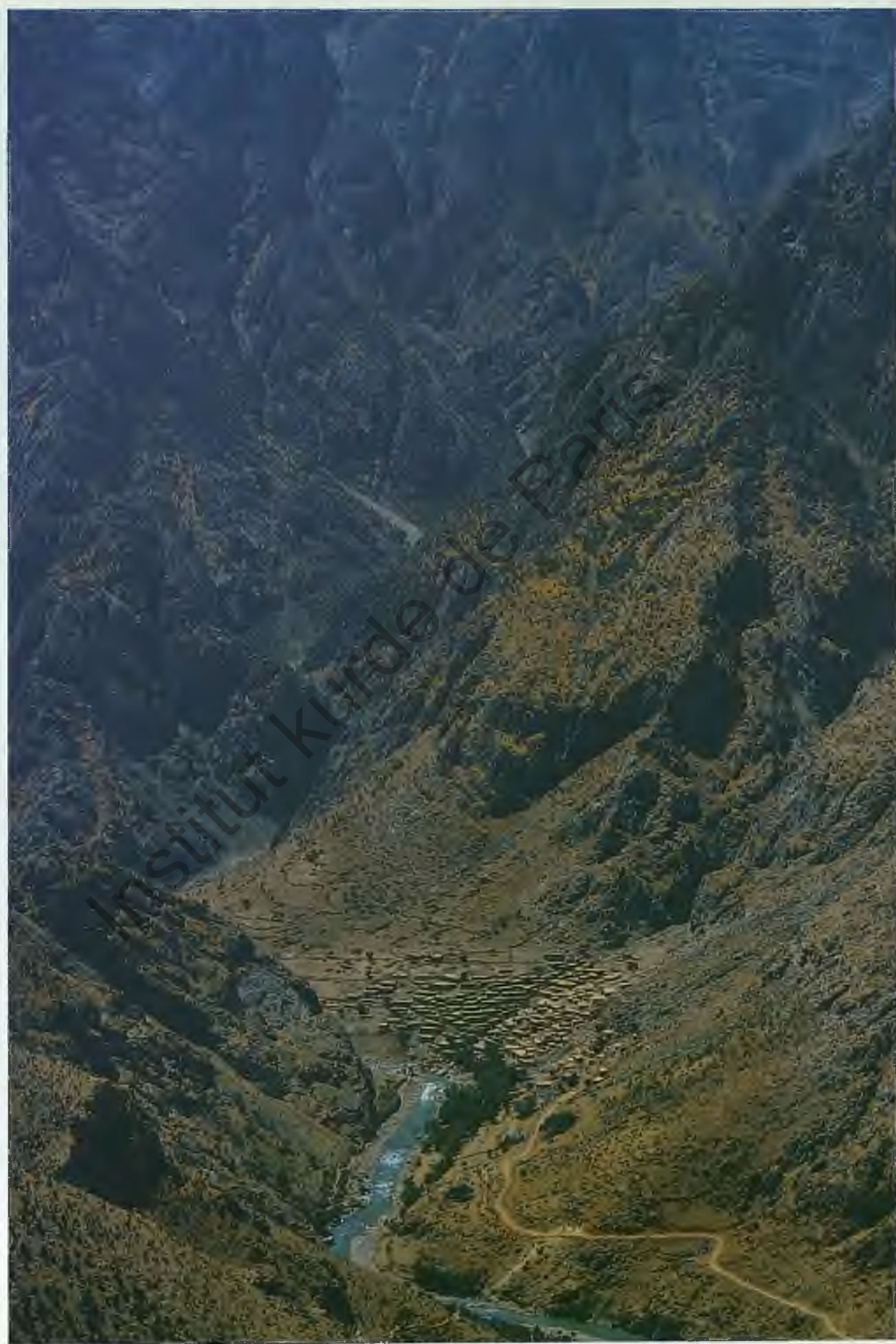
58- (Top corner) The bride and her husband among their relatives and wedding guests.

59-A decorated Jug containing water; A symbol of light and fertility made and decorated by women and used on wedding occasions. A smaller jug used as a symbol of birth-giving, completes the larger one.

61- Divaznar - a village in one of the
deep valleys of the Shahow mountain
on the river Sirvan, in the
Zhav-Roud-e-Gharbi
district.

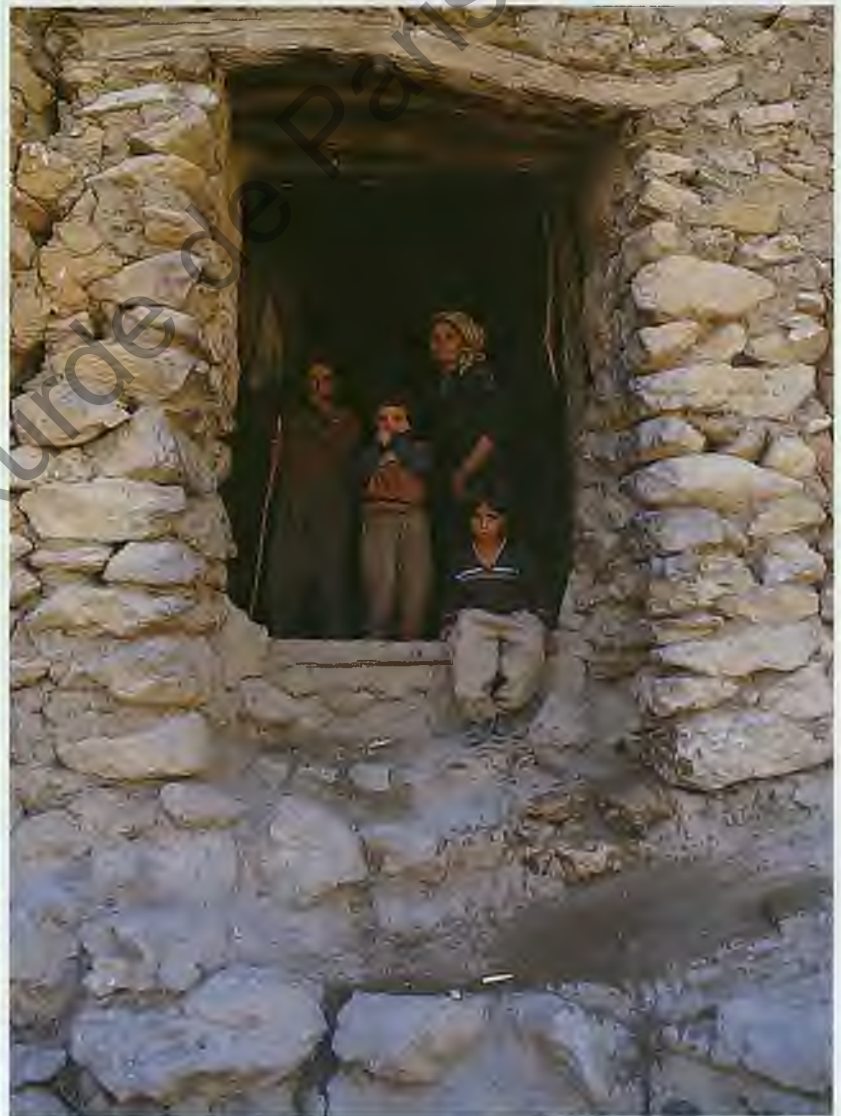


60- Cattle returning to the village at sunset. A village between
towns of Banah and Saqqez.





62- Northern part of the Bolber village in Hawraman .



63- (Top corner) The first rays of the sun on Palangan . The stream flowing through the village joins the river Sirvan.

64- The wooden door of a house in a mountainous village. Most mountain villages are made of wood and stone and have a single room with a small window for protection against cold and possible dangers.



65- *I am afraid of nothing, Galein
village, eastern Zhavroud
district.*



66- *Men's get together, friendly and unpredictable. Bozbash
Kandi village, between Tekab and Saqqez .*

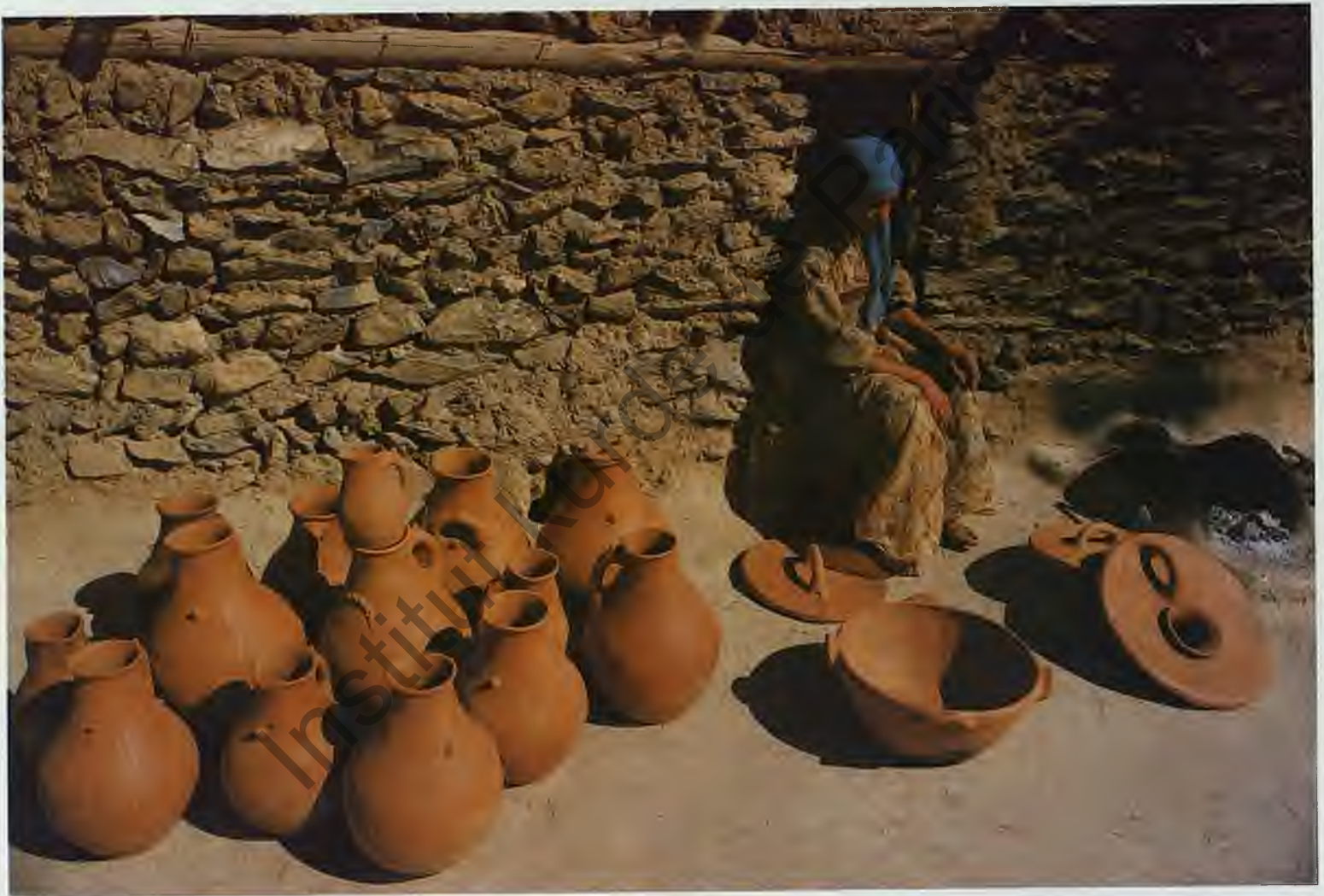


67- The entire property of a farmer from a village near Sanandaj.



68- (Top corner) A clay shelf inside the wall of a room. From a house in a village near Kamyaran.

69-A ramp on the second floor of a house in Tortvar village . These kinds of handmade flower pots are still used by the Kurds.



70- A woman potter from Hashamiz village in east Zhavroud
Pottery work which has been a female task since the
prehistoric times, still done by women in Kurdistan.
These beautiful potteries made of clay (without
the use of potter's wheel) in a primitive
manner each are used for a particular
task in daily life.



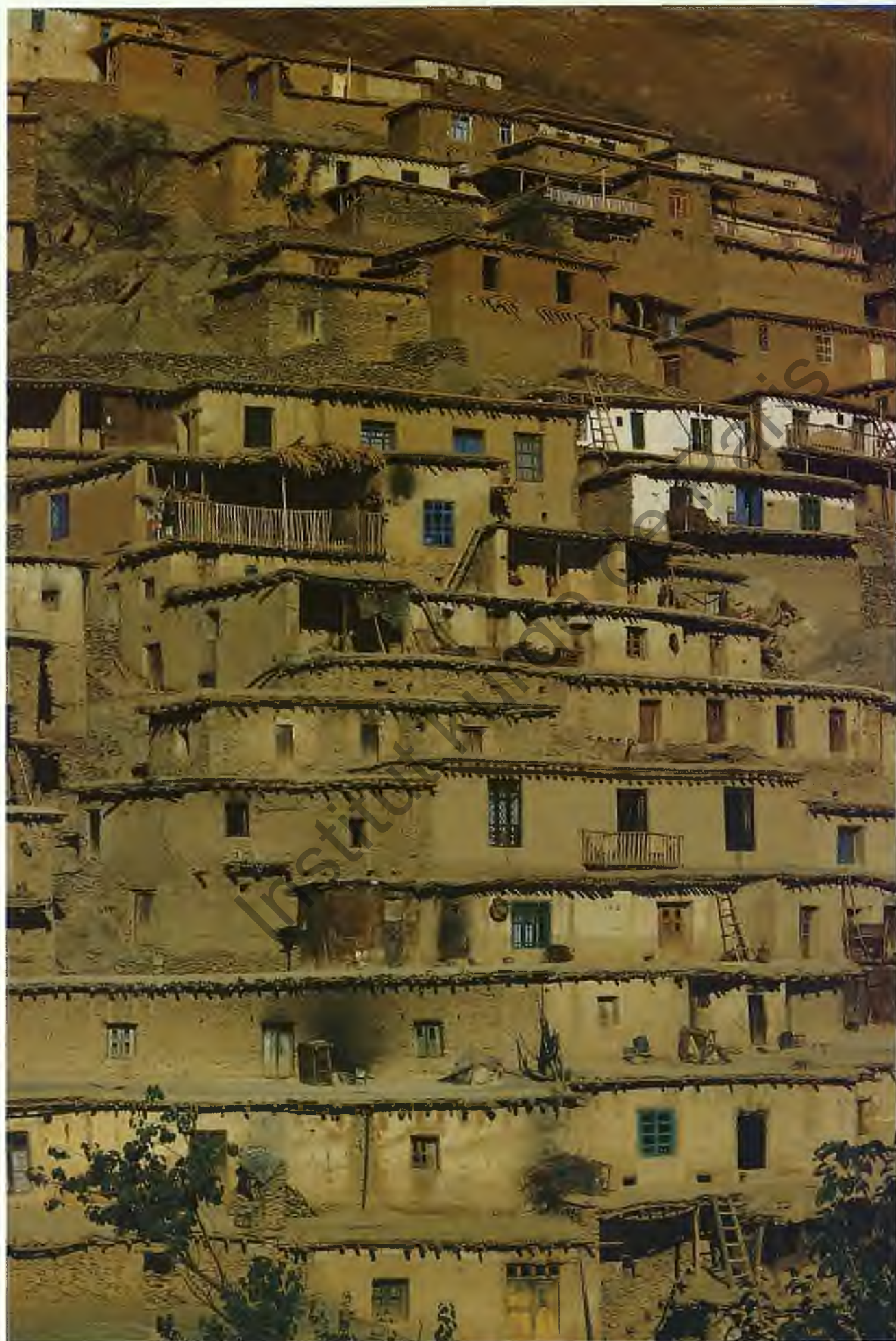
71- A textile weaver. A Kurdish man weaving a type of cloth (brocaded silk) using a technique as old as textile weaving itself. A sample of his work can be seen on the wall. Hawraman-i-Takht village.



72- Men and women at the end of the harvest, threshing the wheat with primitive tools. Shurab village between Qorvah and Bijar.



73- Milking the herds in group, after grazing. The shepherd is taking a rest while the women milk the sheep of the family and return home. The village is at times far away from where the herds are kept. Degaga village , near Mariwan.



74-A view of the terraced,
mountain village of Galein
eastern Zhavroud . Houses
are located in such a
manner that the roof
of one is the yard
for the other.



75- The weekly Zeker session of Qaderieh Dervishes from
Bolban-Awa village.



76- The autumn sunset in Sanandaj (Senneh) ; A view over the mountain of Abidar .



77- (Top corner) *The bazar at Sanandaj (Senneh).*

78- (Middle right) *The only tailor shop run by a woman who is rejected from her home because of bearing female children and not accepting the tradition of a second wife for her husband.*

79- *A view of a section of Sanandaj (Senneh) from the roof of Darol-ehsan mosque.*



80- A Kurdish man sitting in a parch with a canopy of vines, grape clusters are kept in little cloth bags to protect them from birds and insects, near Mariwan .



81- (Top corner) Two Kurdish men watching the town of Bowkan , indifferent to the noise of the market.

82- The owner of the tea house with his grandchildren. Sufi Mostafa pilgrimage near Saqqez, where the pilgrims go for healing.



83- Where the land is level and cultivable and there is a river not far below, Kurdistan turns into a green prosperous district. Agricultural land near Banah .

84- (Top corner) The ruins of Takht-e-Soleiman , remnants of the ancient city of Shiz the capital of the Medes where the famous fire-temple of Azar-goshasb , the guardian of the warriors, had been located.



85- (Middle right) The entrance to the Karaftau rock cave. There are about 25 rooms inside the cave some of which are natural and some made by men. Experts believe that groups of prehistoric farmers were attracted from the surrounding hilly terrain into the valley by its patches of well-watered, fertile soil.

86- Nemrod mountain, "Chiyaye Nemrod", east of Kolik (Kahta). On the top of the 2150m high mountain there is an artificial hill of stone. King Antiochos I, whose kingdom was located between Persia and the Roman province of Asia, was the one who ordered the building of a temple around the terraced hill. The ruins of the holy temple and the 8-9 m huge statues are witnesses of the strive after a divine state.

88- The followers of (Mythra ?)
 who assists the warriors, the brave
 and the farmers, cook a blessed meal
 with the sacrific's heart and liver,
 wheat, pomegranate seeds, beans,
 peas, onion, sweet basil, thyme,
 and a kind of mint in seven
 pots at the Pir's house
 (an ancient Mythrion ?)
 to pay tribute to rebirth and
 regeneration.



87-A warm tea-house in the cold mountainous village of
 Hawraman. A shelter for a friends.





89- Dancing climax with the sound of Daf (a kind of musical instrument); reaching a mystic ecstasy in which one is united in spirit with the group, bodies become one and the "Ego" is forgotten.

90- (Top corner) The sacrifice blood spurts on the soil with the first sun-rays. This is done to commemorate and follow Mythra, the God of light and prosperity, to assist resurrection and rebirth, by a person in whose family this duty is inherited.

Others Sacrifice their beasts after him. Thus prosperity, and regeneration return to earth. The one who slaughters the sacrifice receives its heart and liver as a reward. The meat is taken to the Pir's house.

91- (Middle right) A circle of men dancing in a mystic ecstasy with the rhythm played on Dafs (kind of musical instrument) in the evening of the sacrifice day. They perform this ritual dance with their hands holding and shoulders touching.



Despite the fact that most Kurds are Sunni Moslems, this dance is passed on to them from the ancient times.

92- A view of a part of the village surrounded by heavy winter snow. Although Hawraman people are now Moslems for centuries, they still hold an annual festival on the 40th day of winter to commemorate the worship of "Mythra". The celebration is held in three stages, each in a day of three consecutive weeks. This feast is apparently held in

commemoration of Pir-Shahriyar or Pir-Shaliyar, a holy man who cured a princess and married her. Pir which is the highest rank in Mythraism is the representative of Mythra on earth. On the first Wednesday of the second month of winter (21 Jan-19Feb) walnuts from the orchard dedicated to the Pir are sent as a sign of blessing to the houses of the inhabitants by the custodian. People send sugar-lump, tea, wheat, grains and other things essential for the feast in return.



93- A general view of Hawraman-e-Takht village, the centre of the mountainous district of Hawramanat ; a terraced village located in a remote spot which was only accessible by mule until recent years.



94- (Top corner) A view of a part of the Hawraman-e-Takht.

95-A window of a house in Hawraman-e-Takht.



96- Zekr rituals are held at the Pir-e-Shahriyar's house, in a hall roughly as large as 5*10m located at the extreme of the house. A man holding a Takht-e-Guiveh left from the Pir is sitting on a platform at the end of the hall so the people kiss it for blessing. Mam-Wasta (the village clergy) with his white turban, sits by the top platform. After all people gather, they play the Daf and start chanting the Zekr.

97- (Top corner) The interior of the Pir-e-Shahriyar's house with platforms at both sides occupied in the past by five different tribes who would each sit on a special place. Following many arguments, large windows have replaced the small ones on the wall of the house.

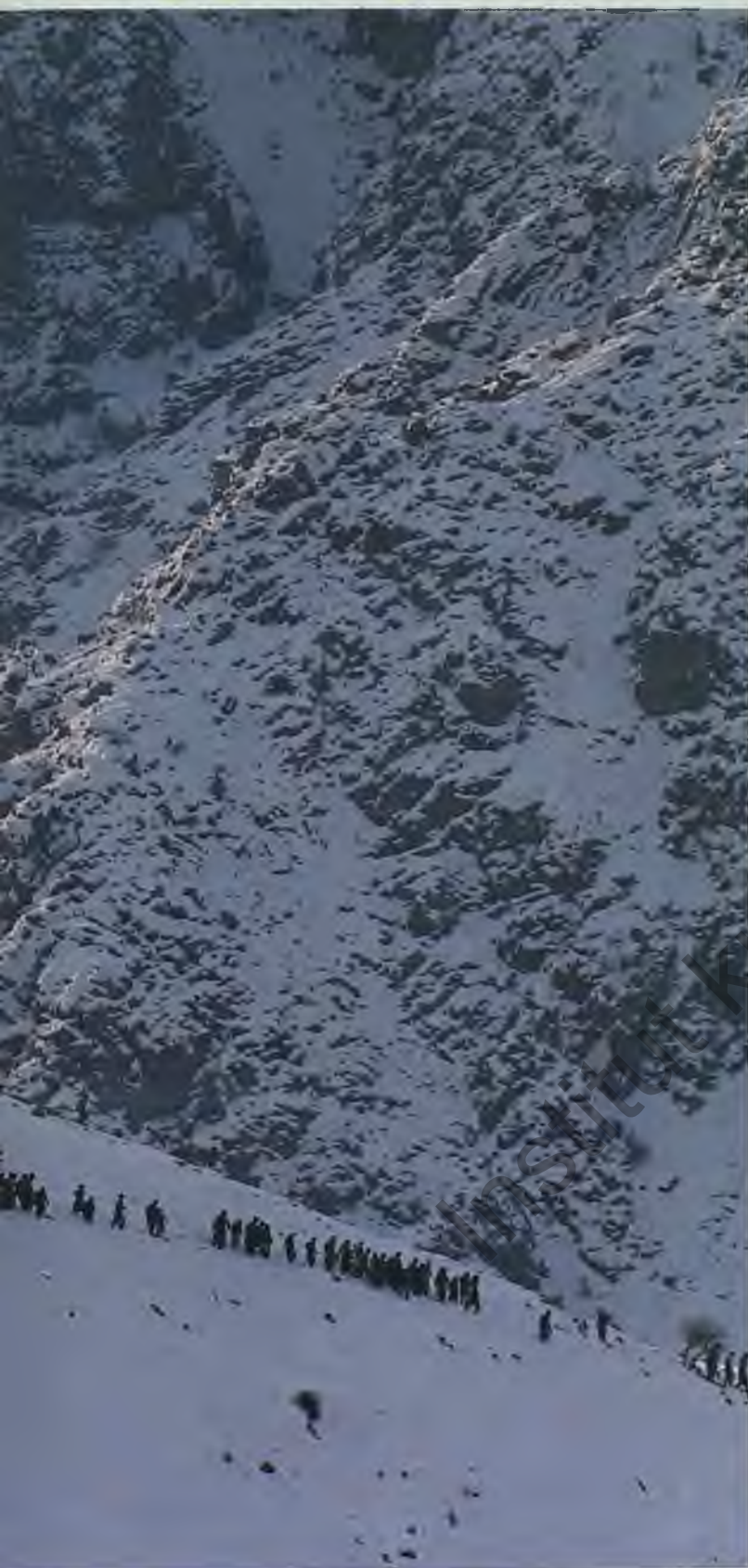


98- (Middle right) Believers, those who are in need and the sick people who wish to be cured, at the Pir's house waiting by the pots of the blessed soup. A mentally disturbed man is waiting in a corner among his relatives in anticipation of his cure.

99- On the second week of the second month of Spring (21 April-21 May) the inhabitants of Hawraman and other pilgrims take a piece from a rock located by the "Pir -e-Shahriyar's grave" for blessing and healing, and believe that no matter how much stone is taken, the rock will grow again. Hawraman village.

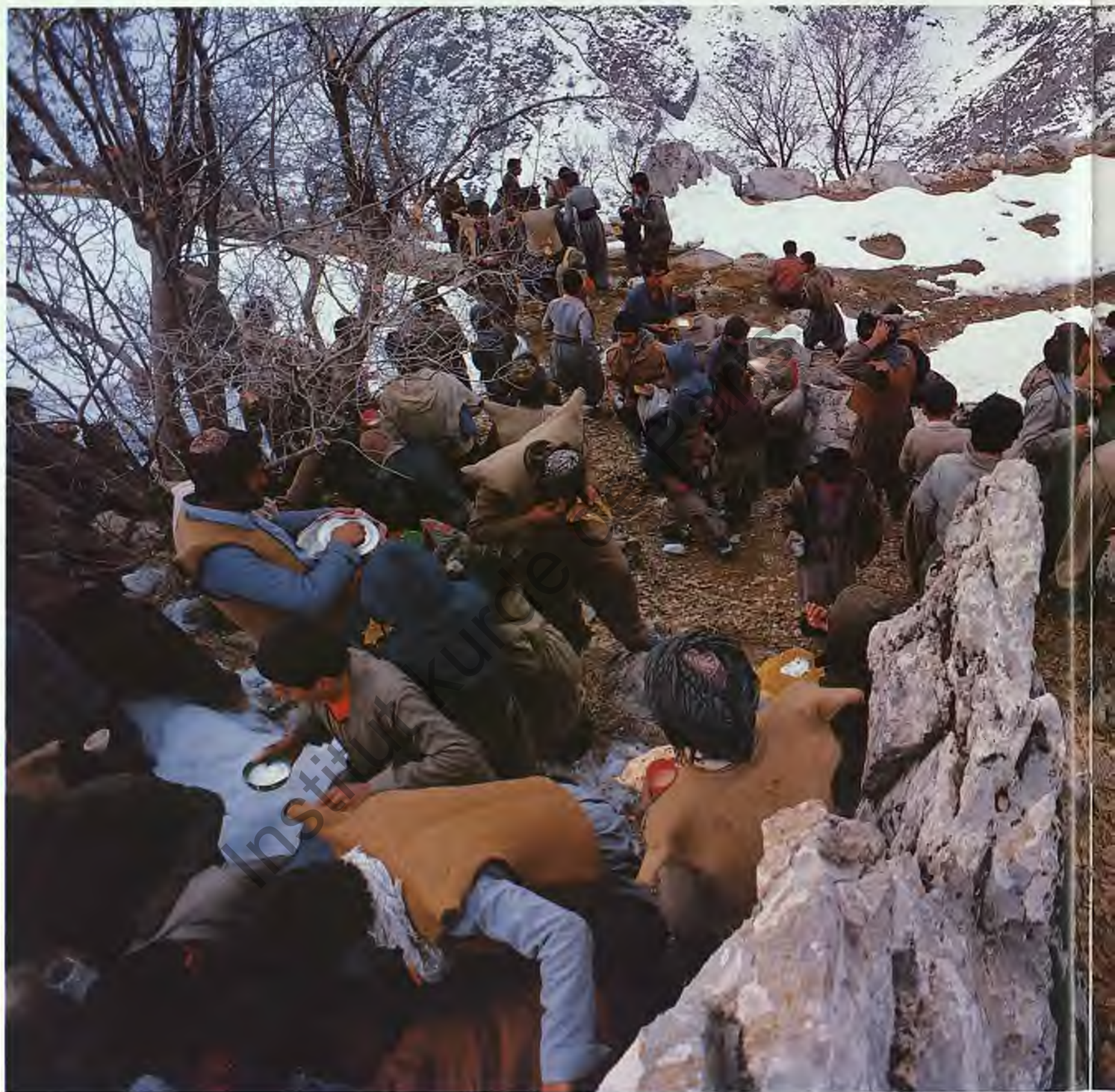


100- By the end of ceremony the followers of Pir-e-Shahriar go in groups, playing Daf and chanting Zekr towards the grave of Pir-e-Shahriar located at the end of the mountain above the river.



101- (Top corner) The ceremonial bread dividing and distributing with yoghurt among people.

102- A man has brought some of the ceremonial yoghurt to the village so the girls and women may have a share. Women use this yoghurt as a starter to make more yoghurt, and hope it brings prosperity to the dairy products in the following year.



103- Pilgrims and men eating the prosperity and health giving bread and yoghurt, at Pir-e-Shahriar grave.



104- (Top corner) A Hawrami man while vowing at a Pir's grave. Cloths placed on the grave are dedicated by those who hope their needs and wishes to be fulfilled.

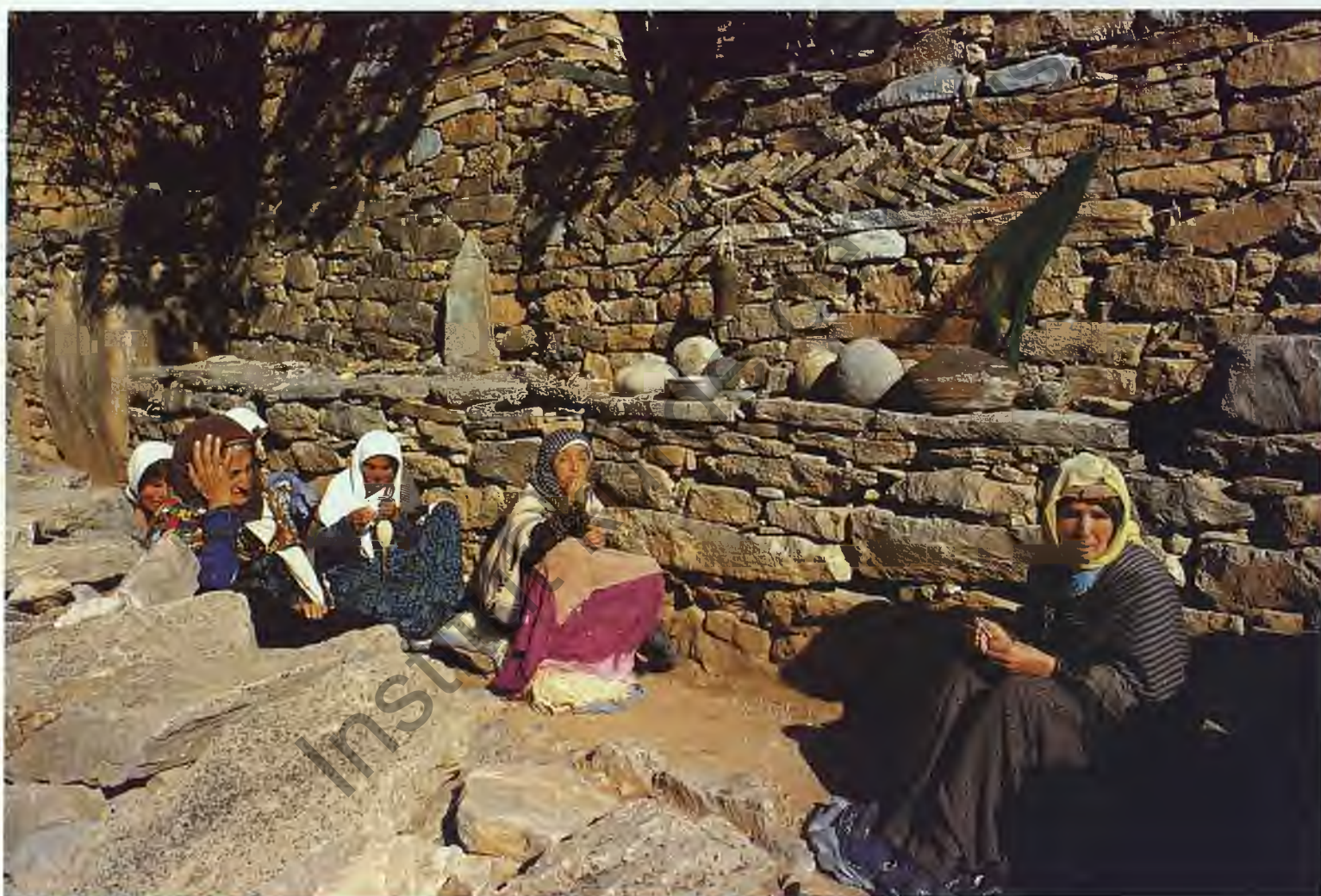
105- A view of a part of Hawraman-e-Takht village in mid winter.



106- Men at the grave of Pir-e-Siav,
opening the packs of charity bread.
A loaf of bread is given to those
who have brought the bread,
and the rest is divided
among people with
yoghurt.



107- Tomb of Sufi-Mostafa a holy place near Saqqez.
A womenbrings her sick child to this holy place and prays
for the health of her child.



108- Seven blind women, the custodians of Kouseh-Hajij a sacred place in a village called by the same name in the Hawraman district.



109- Hajij village in Hawraman. Three old men in their traditional dress Rank-o-Chwkhah.



110- The custodian of, Negel mosque, and the famous
"Koran" written in "Kuffi" script. Negel village, Marivan.



111- A Koran written in "Kuffi" script, kept in Negel mosque. The key of the mosque where this Koran is kept is given to one of the villagers each night, of which no other person knows. The keeper himself only knows the person to whom the key is next passed. Keeping this Koran is a secret, revealing the faithfulness and solidarity of the inhabitants of this village.



112- The shrine of Baba-Yadegar, an Ahl-e-Haq, surrounded by green junipers.



113- A Kurdish woman taking water from Qaslan spring, near
Baba-Yadegar shrine, near Sar-e-Pol-e-Zahab.



114- A view of green mountainous pastures in, Tavra Yeilq
(summer camp) of Milan tribe, in late spring.



115- (Top corner) A Kurdish villager from Kelisa near "Khoy", west Azarbaijan.

116- (Middle right) A young village lad returning home after shopping in town.

117- A man with a knapsack full of shoppings, returning to Dash bolaq village near , "Qorvah".



118- Shisheh-Rey-Khatoun mountain, near Sanandaj (Senneh).



119- (Top corner) *Kurdish women villagers near Sero, gathering medicinal plants, near the border of Iran and Turkey.*

120- (Middle right) *A Kurdish girl carrying fire wood from the forest for cooking and keeping the house warm.*

121- *Kurdish girl with her hair in braids.*



122- How far shall we go?



123- The day break with the rise of the bright "Mehr",
Hawraman-e-Takht village.





125- Washing beside the river. Balasur village, near the border of Iran and Turkey.



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