

Kerim Yildiz and “The Kurds in Iraq”

[Fred Aprim](#)

January 10, 2025

Kerim Yildiz published a paper in 2004 titled, [The Kurds in Iraq: The Past, Present and Future](#), published by Pluto Press and KURDISH HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT.

On page 7, the author states:

“The Kurds are native inhabitants of their land and as such there are no strict ‘beginnings’ for Kurdish history and origins. In modern times, Kurds as an ethnic group are the end product of thousands of years of evolution stemming from tribes such as the Guti, Kurti, Mede, Mard, Carduchi, Gordyene, Adianbene, Zila and Khaldi, and the migration of Indo-European tribes to the Zagros mountain region some 4,000 years ago.”

This paragraph is full of misleading information and manipulation of historical facts.

1. The author says, **“The Kurds are native inhabitants of their land and as such there are no strict ‘beginnings’ for Kurdish history and origins.”**

What does that mean? Since 1976, there are Kurds in Nashville, Tennessee. Does that make the Kurds native to Nashville? The phrasing of words by the author is carefully constructed to confuse the readers. The Kurds are not native to Iraq.

2. The author says, **“In modern times, Kurds as an ethnic group ...”**

Does the author approve the believe of many scholars and historians that the [Kurds were not an ethnic group](#) in earlier times and that this materialized strictly after nationalism spread in the Middle East in the 20th Century?

3. The author says that the Kurds, **“... are the end product of thousands of years of evolution stemming from tribes such as the Guti, Kurti, Mede, Mard, Carduchi, Gordyene, [Adianbene](#), Zila and Khaldi, and the migration of Indo-European tribes to the Zagros mountain region some 4,000 years ago.”**

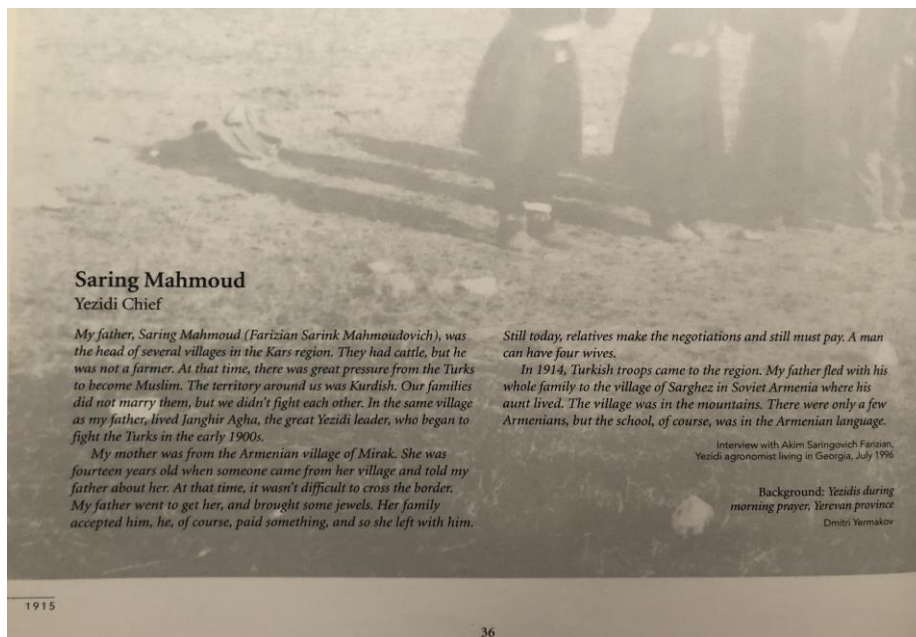
The author mentions that the Kurds are the product of many ancient people. Many argue that this path of argument is practiced frequently by writers when they cannot prove that the Kurds are the descendants of a particular group, so they claim that Kurdish history is a mix of [Mede](#), Kurti, Guti, [Carduchi](#), [Gordyene](#), etc, etc. to confuse the reader and muddle the topic. However, they never explain how these groups became “Kurds”.

Then on page 8, the author writes, “The Kurds are not homogeneous religiously”. **He claims that while the majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims, but there are a number of other**

different religious affiliations among the Kurds such as Jews; Christians; Alevi, Shi‘I, and Yazidis.

The author is misleading the readers, again. First of all, the people known as Kurds are not homogeneous ethnically, but could be considered as such religiously. The Kurds of Iran, Turkiye and Iraq are not only ethnically non-homogeneous, but are historically against each other. This is due to the fact that the Kurds of various regions belong to the earlier tribes that were always fighting each other. Consider the continuous confrontations between Soran and Bohtan and more recently between the Barzani and Talabani in northern Iraq. Consider that the Barzani requested assistance from Saddam Hussein to battle Talabani in 1996 during the Kurdish civil war (1994-1997) to control the Assyrian historic city of Arbil (Arbella), which resulted in the killings of thousands of Kurds from both sides.

The Kurds are religiously homogenous for all practical purposes. The overwhelming majority of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims (around 96%) with about 3% Shia Muslims known as Feili Kurds and a small Alevites. There is absolutely no such thing as [Jewish Kurds](#).^{1 2} In addition, the [Yezidis \(Yazidis\) are not Kurds](#). Many of the Yezidi leaders assert that they are not Kurds.³ Yezidi leaders, such as Saring Mahmoud, has asserted strongly that Yezidis and Kurds were different and did not intermarry.⁴



¹ See also, <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2024/Kurdish%20Jews%20is%20wrong%20hyperlined.pdf>

² See also <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2023/Yaccov%20Maoz%20and%20Kurds.pdf>

³ W. Francis Ainsworth. The Assyrian Origin of the Izedis. Originally published 1861. Isha Books. New Delhi. Reprint 2013.

⁴ Susan Meiselas. Kurdistan. Random House. New York. 1997, p. 36.

Jean Spiro, a professor at the University of Lausanne writes: *“I forget to mention a very strange tradition among the Yezides, of which I was informed a few days ago. Several of them, who were with me, insisted on leaving in order, they said, to go and observe their fast. But what fast? I asked them. They answered me: that of Nineveh.”*⁵ We know that the Assyrians observe the Fast of Ninevites from the time immemorial. Consider also, for example, Prince Anwar Mu’awiya of the Yezidis in Mar 11, 2000 at the occasion of the establishment of Assyria TV talks about the brotherhood of Assyrians and Yezidis.

Also, many observers argue, if the Yezidis were Kurds, why is it that the Kurdish leaders did not help the Yezidis in Sinjar. The attack of ISIS on Sinjar was hardly a surprise. The Kurdish Peshmerga had seized the arms that were left by the Iraqi army as it withdrew in disarray from Mosul. Thus, the Peshmerga were relatively well equipped, but they did not fight. More damning is the fact that when the Peshmerga withdrew one day before the attack of ISIS on Sinjar, they not only did not get involved in a fight with ISIS, but prevented the Yezidis from evacuating with them. Additionally, for years since the tragedy and genocide in Sinjar, international aid was still not being allowed to reach the Yezidis in northern Iraq, because the federal and local Kurdish authorities didn’t really care about the Yezidi population.

[The massacres of Yezidis by the Kurds](#) is well-documented. These massacres took place in 1832. The Yezidis even today commemorate the Yezidis’ massacre by Kurdish tribal leader Bedr Khan in the village of Khtara (Khatuniye). The Kurds returned later to massacre the Yezidis in 1840-1844. The Yezidis, who today live in Armenia, Georgia and Russia, are the descendants of those who fled the massacres by Kurdish leaders. In 1891-1892, the Hamidiye cavalry of Kurdish recruits attacked the Yezidis again in the Lalish Valley.

If the Yezidis were Kurds, why would the various Kurdish tribal leaders attack and massacre the Yezidis.

Since the establishment of the No-Fly Zone and the Kurdish self-rule region in northern Iraq in 1992, but mainly since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq and the creation of the Kurdistan Region of the Federal Iraq, the Yezidis have been used as pawns by the Kurdish leadership, because it suits their own plans. The Kurdish leaders have paid few Yezidis handsomely to claim that they are Kurds.

Furthermore, the conversion of a few Kurds to Christianity is very modern, which has occurred through the influx of many American and European missionaries onto the Kurdish federal region of northern Iraq. The numbers of these converts is very

⁵ Jean Spiro. Les Yezidi: Les Adorateurs Du Diable. Neuchatel. 1900.

small and the purpose is politically motivated by the Kurdish leaders to reflect the positive image of diversity in the region, when the [reality is otherwise](#).

And on page 10, the author states: **“Historically, the Kurds have enjoyed a considerable degree of semi- autonomy under the various regional powers seeking to exercise territorial control over the lands inhabited by Kurdish tribes”**.

This paragraph is misleading as well. The Kurds as an ethnic group, never had any sort of autonomy before the 20th Century and the experience in Mahabad Republic and the northern Iraq Kurdish federal self-rule region since 2003. What the author should have stated is that tribes of claimed Kurdish ancestry enjoyed some kind of local self-rule within their related principalities. The term Kurd originated from the Middle Persian Kwr̥t, which meant “tent-dweller nomad”⁶. The term Kurd simply meant ALL the nomads that roamed the Zagros Mountains and not a specific ethnic group. The Kurd as an ethnic term has only materialized after the spread of nationalism in the Middle East.

Kerim Yildiz’s paper is full of inaccuracies and misinformation. I only made references to the first ten pages. It is unfortunate that the scholarly world remains silent while such lies are being spread.

The scholarly work is not based on historical claims that are formed from personal opinions or politician’s claims. What makes the scholarly world unique is that it supports and accepts material that is based on genuine historical fact, substantiated documentation and archeological findings.

⁶ Garnik Asatrian. Prolegomena to the Study of the Kurds. Iran & the Caucasus. Vol. 13, No. 1 (2009), pp. 1-57. 2009.