

THE
ORIGINS
OF THE KURDS
AND
THEIR LANGUAGE

by Col. T. WAHBY

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"The unity of the Kurds must be explained by a Median basis."

Professor Vladimir Minorsky

Colonel Wahby, the foremost Kurdologist of the present time, presented this lecture to the K.S.S.E., U.K. branch conference on 22nd December, 1964. His first major work was the pioneer Kurdish grammar, *Dastûr i Zemân i Kurdî* published in 1929-30. His latest is the Clarendon Press — Oxford, *Kurdish-English Dictionary* of which he is co-author with C. J. Edmonds.

KURDISTAN

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When I was invited to speak here today my hosts kindly left me the choice of subject on which to speak. I decided that the best choice for this audience, would be to speak on the first and most important question in Kurdology, that is, the origins of the Kurds and their language.

Those Islamic historians who dealt with the origins of the Kurds did so in terms of myth and legend. Their work was without historical or intellectual value. But in recent centuries, particularly in the present one, European scholars have become concerned with the problem and begun research which continues today. Among those whose work and opinions we must take into account is Professor Vladimir Minorsky. In a paper presented to the 20 International Congress of Orientalists in Brussels in 1938. Professor Minorsky spoke on the origins of the Kurds. He said at that time: "The unity of the Kurds must be explained by a Median basis". The argument made by Professor Minorsky and others in favour of a Median basis of Kurds are lengthy and, for those concerned, easily available. Rather than extensively repeat them here, it seems to me more important and also better suited to this occasion to deal with some of the objections raised against connecting the Kurds with the Medes.

If we find that such objections are based on faulty evidence we, in effect, strengthen the theory which I too support that the Kurds of today are descendants of the Medes.

The most important objections to such a belief are found in an article by Dr. D. N. MacKenzie, published in the Transactions of the Philological Society for 1961.

In this article, 'The Origins of Kurdish', Dr. MacKenzie makes comparisons between Kurdish and various other Iranian languages, including Persian, based on P. Tedesco's "Dialektologie Der Westiranischen Turfantexte". From these comparisons he deduces that Kurdish should be considered as influenced by Middle Persian which belongs to the Iranian South-West. He doubts the view taken by Professor Minorsky and other scholars, the Kurdish belongs to the Iranian North-West, the area which includes the historical home of the Medes. Dr. MacKenzie dismisses the idea that the Medes are ancestors of today's Kurds.

Dr. MacKenzie does not insist on his conclusions. He offers a hypothesis, not a proven theory. In my opinion this is just as well. Dr. MacKenzie, who is lecturer in Kurdish at the London School of African and Oriental Studies, is a linguist of repute. But I fear I must question the validity of the evidence he has collected in support of his hypothesis.

The possible identification of today's Kurds with the Medes obviously touches vitally on the Kurds sense of their historical identity and for those who believe in this connection Dr. MacKenzie's words sometimes fall harshly. He writes: "The modern Kurds approach to history is also refreshingly simple. Feeling a need for heroic ancestors, and finding the imperial Medes, so to speak, unemployed, they make no bones about casting them in the role. Indeed it is now fashionable among them to use a so-called Median era, obtained by adding to our date the figure 612, the date of the conquest of Ninevah by the Medes. In the face of this blend of little fact and much fiction the linguistic evidence gains in importance".

Well, it was not the Kurds that decided to make the fall of Ninevah the beginning of an era, it was the official Persian 'Council of Iranology' that decided to use 612 B.C. in this way.

Dr. MacKenzie, finding the historical evidence for linking the Medes and Kurds a blend of little fact and much fiction, argue that consequently the linguistic evidence increases in importance for determining the possibility of this link.

Certainly there are problems in establishing a proven historical connection. But before passing on to Dr. MacKenzie's linguistic arguments we should consider one puzzle of history for which I wish to suggest a possible solution. The puzzle is, what happened to the Medes?

The Northern Iraq of today to the eastern shores of the Tigris River was, in the end of the fifth Century B.C., a part of the homeland of the Medes (see Xenophone, *Anabasis*)(x).

By the end of the seventh century the name of a nation called the Mâd (Medes) was no longer known in Iran. There exist, however, historical records showing that by the end of the Sassanian period the name 'Mâd' (Mede) continued in the developed forms of 'Mây' and 'Mâs'. In the early Islamic period the name survived as 'Mâh'. All these forms were names of areas. In addition the Christian Aramaic records kept the name in its original form 'Mâdây' up to the end of the sassanian period; 'Mâdâyâ' in Aramaic meant the Mede (Median). What then were the events that erased from memory this once imperial people? We do not know of any catastrophe in the Sassanian period which could have caused

(x) See also the map (p. 14) in Xenophone, translated by Rex Warner, 1957.

the annihilation of the Medes. I would suggest that if the name Mâd disappeared the Medes themselves have certainly survived. The present sedentary Kurds are in my opinion the descendants of the Medes. The strong Indo-Iranian Kurdish tribes together with other kindred nomads, with whom they afterwards mixed, threatened Media from early times. The Greek historian Polybius (c. 205-125 B.C.) describing Media in his General History says that all boundaries of the Median country were covered with Greek towns built, after Alexander's conquest, to check the neighbouring barbarians. In the reign of Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 B.C.) the mountaineer tribes who had strongholds were beyond the control of the Greek government as Hasan Pir Niya, the Iranian historian tells us.

All through the Seleucid period, the government was unable to control the nomadic and semi-nomadic people. Under the Selucids' successors, the Arsacids, whose loose rule ended in 224 A.D., the local feudal rulers were more powerful and the nomadic domination increased over the peasantry. It seems that towards the end of Parthian rule the Aryan Kurds predominated in and around the mountainous parts of Media.

This suggests itself as the reason for the attack on and subjugation of Media as the first goal of the first Sassanian King, Ardashîr i Pâpakân (225-241 A.D.) when he set out to impose his rule throughout the Parthian empire. The Kâr-nâmak i Arthaxshîr i Pâpakân a mixture of history and legend, which records Ardashîr's conquests, shows clearly that the two names 'Mâsi' (Mâdi) and Kurd denoted one and the same nation. At least this was so at the end of the sixth century A.D., the date attributed to the Kâr-nâmak. The work, written in Pahlavi, and giving details of Ardashîr's attack on the Medes narrates: "Ardashîr (after killing the Parthian King Ardavân V) collected a large army from Zâbul and went to fight Kurdân(1) Shâh i Mâsi (Kurdân Shâh the Median); V-1"

The Kâr-nâmak in the same chapter says: "The Median army believed that they were safe from Ardashîr who was defeated and had retreated to the Persian country." The narrative continues: "Ardashîr prepared four thousand men and made a surprise raid on them (the Medians). He killed of the Kurds one thousand men, took prisoner the remainder who were broken and wounded, and captured from the King of the Kurds and his sons many goods"; (V-9-11).

(1) With the Pahlavi 't'.

It is to be understood from the above quotations that the Kárnâmak's author of the end of the 6th century looked at the Me'ēs and the Kurds as the same people, as we have already mentioned.

According to a fifth century Aramaic History of Erbil 'The Sassanian King Shâhpuhr I, in the first year of his reign (242 A.D.) fought the Medes of the mountains and conquered them in a violent battle'.

These mountaineer Medes must be Kurds.

Among fourth century Aramaic ecclesiastical records of Erbil I have found a personal name suggesting an affinity between Kurdish and Mediae. The name is Kor-kshêd, who was governor of Erbil in 372 A.D. His name is developed from 'Xvar-Xshêd' which derives from Avestic 'hvare xshaeta' (the shining sun). Here 'x-' has developed to 'k-', a development characteristic of the Kermânjî language.

Among the Middle Persian documents in the Turfan-trove this same word is given in its Persian form 'xor-shêd'.

The Avestic 'hvare xshaeta' in Sassanian Pahlavi developed to 'xorshêt' and in New Persian to 'xurshîd' (sun). The governor's name indicates that he was not a Persian. Un-Persian in form his name is familiar to Kurdish. If not actually a Kurd, he was a Mediae.

In modern Kurdish 'sun' is 'xor' with the original xv-šhv-. But Kurdish still keeps the form 'kor' to mean (sun) in such words as 'kelâw-qorî' (sun-hat), 'qorî' or 'qorîtân' (chameleon); qorî < xori (related to the sun)(2)

Another interesting name, found in an Aramaic martyrology of 362 A.D., is the place name 'Qsatrâ Bêt Zabdây'. 'Qsatrâ Qshatra Qshatra' is developed for Avestic (Median) 'xshathra' (kingdom, dominion). But 'qshatrâ' could also mean district or town. Bêt Zabdây of the Aramians being a district in the classic Corduene, it may have been identical with the Kurdish town Stalka < *Xshatra-ka on the Tigris mentioned by classic Armenian writers.

'Qshatra' (Kshatra) would then have been a Kurdo-Median pronunciation of the fourth century A.D.

The areas where the Kurds imposed themselves were to become the modern Kurdistan in the widest meaning of the term. But the Kurds did not impose their name on all Medes. In what became Northern Azarbayjan, a part of the inhabitants were later to become Turkified.

(2) 'r' in 'qorî' is rolled.

Other areas around the north west and western shore of the Caspian Sea and in Central Iran were not called Kurdish, although some of these dialects are related to Kermânjî. But over a wide area the name of Kurd embraced that of Mede and of other Aryan tribes. I would suggest that the name Mede was absorbed under the Kurds in a way reminiscent of developments in France, where the name of Frank superseded that of Gaul(x).

After the disappearance of the name 'Mâd', we do not know exactly when, a distinction began to be made between the Kurds proper, as it were, and the sedentary Kermânjs.

The first, calling themselves 'Kurd', referred to the sedentaries as Kermânj. The name 'Kermânj' has continued to be used by the people themselves.

The Zâzâs call themselves 'Kerd', while they call the Kermânjs 'Kerdâsî' (Kemal Badilli, *Kürtçe Gramerî*, p.6, n. 2.). Perhaps '-âsî' is derived from 'âsâ', if it is so then 'Kerdâsî' may mean 'in the manner of Kurds, similar to Kurds, Kurdish'.

In the Sorân and Mukrî provinces villagers today are referred to as Kermânj, but as used by tribal people and town dwellers the name connotes 'Serf'. The people of the Iranian province of Kurdistan that is of Sena and the people of Khânaqîn refer to those living to their respective west and north (other than the Gorâns) as 'Kermânj'. The people of Sulaimani and Karkuk have forgotten the name although the non-Gorân sedentary elements of those provinces were doubtless Kermânj. Those who have forgotten the name Kermânj, call their villagers (serfs), 'Meskên' which may have meant (dwellers of village). The Kurds north of the greater Zâb, in particular describe themselves as 'Kermânj' and their language as 'Kermânjî'. The author of the epic Mam u Zîn (1693), the greater Kurdish poet Ahmad i Khânî, writing in Northern Kermânjî uses the names Kurd and Kermânj interchangeably :

Dâ xalq na bîzhaten ku akrâd,
Bê Mârîfaten, bê asl u benyâd.
Let men not say that the Kurds,
Are without knowledge, without origin.
Befker, zhe Arab hatâ va Gurrjân.
Kermânjî ya, bû ya shebh i burjân.
See, from the Arabs as far as the Georgians.

(x) My two articles in *Gala'w'ezh Magazine* No 2 & 3, Baghdad 1940, discuss the absorption of the Name 'Mede' by the Name 'Kurd'.

There are Kermânj who are become like towers.

The name Kermânj is being replaced throughout Kurdistan by 'Kurd'. As this social and linguistic change continues the word Kermânjî may be preserved in use by our application of it to the greater Kurdish dialect. This greater Kurdish dialect is divided into three main groups:

1. Northern Kermânjî. (Bayazidi — Heba'ri' — Botani — A'shiti — Badirani etc.).
2. Southern Kermânjî (Sorânî—Mukrî—Sulaimani—Senayî)
3. Kirmanshahî (Kalhurî—Lakî—Peshtkûhî).

The boundary between the Northern and Southern Kermânjî runs approximately from the southern end of Lake Razâiyya to the nearest point on the Great Zâb, and thence along that river to its mouth. I have mentioned the distribution of the dialects to check the widespread present mislocation of Sorânî. I first described in detail this distribution in my article on the Kurdish dialects in the Magazine of Galâwêzh, No. 4 April 1940, Baghdad.

Now let us return to our subject: Dr. Mackenzie writes: "In fact the only evident reference to the Kurds in the classical authors before our era would seem to be those of Polybius, Livy and Strabo to the «Κύρτιοι» or 'Cyrtii' respectively. The two historians mention them only as contingents of slingers in the armies of Media and Asia Minor, while Strabo, more explicitly, names them as wild mountaineers living in Media and Armenia but also in Persia. With this solitary exception all the positive evidence points to the Kurds being a Median people, a view which professor Minorsky endorses".

Scholars who have studied a connection between «Καρδοῦχοι» and «Κύρτιοι» and between them and the name 'Kurd', all agree that the «Κύρτιοι» are the ancestors of the Kurds. But they differ about Xenophon's «Καρδοῦχοι». Some believe that «Καρδοῦ» and «Κύρτιοι» both are older forms of the name 'Kurd', while others deny «Καρδοῦχοι» has a connection with the name 'Kurd'.

One supporter of the first position is G. R. Driver. Driver giving a long list of names taken from the classical writers, says that these names bear the root of the name 'Kurd', (The Name Kurd..., JRAS, 1923). Here are a few of those classical names as examples:

Καρδ - οῦ (- χοι)	«Καρδοῦχοι»
Κύρτ - ι (- οι)	«Κύρτιο.»
Cord-u (-eni)	'Cordueni'
Gord-y (-aeon)	'Gordyaean',
Gord-i (-aei)	'Gordiaei'
Cord-u (-ena)	'Gorduena'
Syriac:Qard-û	'Qardû'.

Driver has gone beyond that: "It is" he says "not unlikely that the earliest trace of Kurds is to be found on a Sumerian claytablet of the third millenia B.C.". on which 'the land of Kar-da' is mentioned".

This tablet belongs to the reign of King Shu-Sin of Ur (1778 - 1760 B.C.), and the name is possible to be read also 'Kardaka' (Ignate, HAS., 38).

The vowels which follow the dentals of the root in all those classical names seem to me of interest. They are either 'i' or 'u' which I conjecture to have been evolved from '-aka-'. It is possible then, if I am not mistaken, to imagine that 'Kard-u', 'Gord-i', «Κύρτ-ι» - 'Cord-u', as all the other names in the list, could be developments of the form 'Kardaka' mentioned in the Sumerian tablet.

This development came to my attention through its similarity to one of the characteristics which today separate the different Kermânjî dialects from each other. To give only one example: the original form of the word for (house) has been 'xân-ak'. This word, in the Northern Kermânjî Group of dialects, the Sorânî dialect and in the Kirmanshahî Group of dialects, has become 'xân-î', in the Mukrî and Sulaimani dialects it is 'xân-û' while in the Senayî dialect the form is 'xân-eg' which is the second step in the evolution from xânak: xân-ak > xân-ek > xân-eg > xân-û, xân-î. Many other examples could be shown, particularly the past participles. The Kurdish '-aka' is the well-known Indo-Iranian suffix which is originally Indo-European.

Dr. MacKenzie in setting out his hypothesis is concerned with linguistic evidence rather than with history. Indeed he admits that he cannot provide an historical time when and where, as he suggests, Kurdish might have come under the influence of the Middle Persian Language. So he offers only linguistic evidence to support this idea, an idea unsympathetic to our belief that the Kurds of

today are descended from the Medes.

Although very little is known about the Median language its principal dialect appears to have been the Avestic. Certainly Median was the basic language of what we call the North West Group of Iranian Languages, and it is generally agreed among linguists that modern Kurdish is indeed a language of the North West Group. The forerunners of modern Kurdish included Aryan Old Kurdish and Avestic-Median.

On examining Dr. MacKenzie's evidence I find it to be something less than compelling.

Among evidence of a Middle Persian influence on Kurdish, Dr. MacKenzie raises two points familiar to students of Iranian languages.

One is the change in Persian, Kurdish and Baluchî languages from the archaic 'y' at the beginning of words to the present 'j', while in the Gorânî dialect, which shows the northern characteristics, this change did not take place. As the change in Kermânjî, Baluchî and Persian, then Kurdish, Dr. MacKenzie feels, must have been influenced by Middle Persian. But would Dr. MacKenzie, using the same reasoning, argue the same cause for the change from an initial 'y' in Baluchî and other Iranian dialects? Gorânî, which is supposed to have kept the archaic form, does in fact show the change in one of its dialects, Hawrâmî. One word showing this change is the word for 'feast', it is now 'jashn' in Hawrâmî (Persian 'Jashn'). A few other words showing the change are 'yâma', meaning (glass), now 'jâm'; 'yavan', meaning (young), is now 'jwân' meaning (beautiful) and 'yâtu', (sorcerer), now 'jâdû', old Persian, 'yauviyâ', (stream), now 'jo'.

If the Hawrâmî words are considered to have been borrowed from Persian, rather than having evolved within the dialect, then the same explanation would be due in the case of Kermânjî and other dialects' words beginning with 'j' instead of the initial Avestic 'y'.

I find, however, in Kermânjî traces of the archaic 'Y' in the words 'kô ζ ku-yê ζ ku-yây' corresponding to the Persian 'ku-jâ' (where), and again in the words 'amê ζ am-yây' and 'awê' ζ 'aw-yây' corresponding to the Persian 'în-jâ', 'ân-jâ' (here), (there).

On the other hand in Kermânjî the form 'jê ζ yây' is used to mean (place) as does the Persian 'Jây'. Hawrâmî

still keeps 'y' in the word 'yâ-ga' which is in Kermânjî 'jêga' (place).

The second point Dr. MacKenzie raises concerning Gorânî dialects deals with another change at the beginning of words, the change from an archaic 'hw-' to the present 'w-'. Dr. MacKenzie argues that this change in Gorânî shows that these dialects are closer to Baluchî which also shows it, while Kurdish is closer to Persian, because in Kurdish and Persian 'hw-' changed to 'xw-'. I do not believe it is possible to judge from this agreement that a peculiar affinity exists between Persian and Kurdish. Nearly all the Iranian dialects from Pâmîr in the North East to Gilân and Kurdistan in the North West as well as those of central Iran have changed the initial 'hw-' to 'xw-' just as in Persian. Exceptions to this are the Gorânî, Zâzâyî and Baluchî dialects and a single word in the Lâsgardî dialect; the word is 'wov' Avestic 'hvafna' (sleep). The Median development 'hw- \rightarrow f-' will be discussed below.

Casting further doubt on the development of Kurdish from Median, Dr. MacKenzie next writes: "It is worth noticing in passing that Kurdish does not accord with one peculiarity which may be ascribable to Median, that is to say, the development of 'hw-' to 'f-'.

This peculiarity of 'hw- \rightarrow f-' is found only in the word 'farnah' as it appears in the Median personal name, Vindafarnah, an aide of Darius in his recapture of the Axamaenid throne (521 B.C.). Median 'farnah' is derived from Avestic 'xvarenah' (splendid, glory).

The name of a hero in Arbil in the 4th C. A.D. was composed with 'far'. This hero was surnamed 'Qardâgh' (Kardak). According to Aramaic christian records his proper name was 'Gupar-Ashnasp', a metathesis of *'Par-Gushnasp', an Aramaic pronunciation of Median name *'Far-Gushnasp' (the glory of Gushnasp), meaning (the glory of the god 'Varhrân' or 'Bahrâm') whose surname means either (hero) or (Kurd), he converted to christianity and was martyred in 359 A.D.

In the New Persian there are two synonym words 'xurra' and 'farr(a)' (glory). The second one is inherited from the Median. In Kurdish we have 'far'(3) and not 'xura'; but we have a word 'wura' (moral) which seems to have developed like the Persian 'xurra' from the Avestic 'hvarenah': 'hw- \rightarrow w-'.

(3) Kurdish 'far' with rolled 'r'.

It should not, of course, be expected of Kurdish that it preserve such a peculiarity with rare exceptions lost in all the other non-Persian dialects. The exceptions are found in a village in Fars and in two small villages in the central desert of Iran.

In the Bâdînânî (a sub-dialect of the Northern Kermânjî) in Iraçî Kurdistan, however, there are places where the people say 'fâren' instead of 'xâren' (to eat). In the Northern Kermânjî and also in Hawrâmî 'âfer' is used rather than 'Axur' (manger, stable). In the South Kermânjî we have 'fênek' (cool) as compared with the Persian 'xunuk', and other words which show 'x- λ f'.

Today the word 'far' is used in Kurdish as well as in Persian. In its colloquial Kurdish use it is always in a compound indicating the absence of the quality it represents, as an English 'couth' is used in uncouth. In the Mukrî dialect, however, 'far' is found in the compound adjective 'bad-far'. 'Bad-far' is exact modern Kurdish for the Avestic 'dush-hvarenah' meaning 'inglorious or villainous'.

To illustrate his placing of Kurdish, Dr. MacKenzie has designed a diagram derived from a table of Iranian dialects compiled by the philologist Tedesco. Dr. MacKenzie, in describing the diagrams says, "Here again Kurdish seems to be marked off from Median if we can judge from the name of the Median capital. The Greek forms 'Αγδάτανα' 'Εκδάτανα, and the old Persian Ha(n) gmatâna are generally taken to contain the same '-gmata-' form, not found in Kurdish".

Let us consider these two alternative forms. From the Avestic '-gat-' and '-gmat-' Kurdish has kept the form *'agat', to use in conjugating as in 'haten' the verb (to come). In Persian 'to come' is 'âmadan', which uses the other form *'agmat' in the conjugation. Dr. MacKenzie sees this as an indication that Kurdish is not closely related to Median, because Kurdish does not use '-gmat' while Persian does. But Kurdish in fact does have a conjugated verb using this form which in its original gives 'Hangmatâna' (the modern Hamadân).

It is a verb found in Northern Kermânjî in the transitive form 'hingâvten' and in the intransitive form 'hingivten'. In other Kermânjî dialects it is intransitive 'angûten' and the transitive 'angâvten'.

Perhaps Dr. McKenzie has seen the northern forms given in Jaba's Dictionnaire Kurde-Français. But Jaba's etymology is incorrect. Jaba writes that the verb 'hingivten' is formed from the same root as 'katen' (kaften) 'to fall'. But I am convinced that the verb originates from 'hangmata-' with the 'm' developed into a 'v' and 'w'.

'Angâwten' means (hit a mark, to score), or literally, (to bring together). In southern Kurdish there is a synonym for 'angâwten' which is 'pêkân'. This new word seems to be composed of 'pa-yak-dân' which strictly means (to bring together), (to strike together), but in practice means (to hit the mark).

'Augûten' (hingivten), an intransitive verb universal in Kermânjî and meaning to stumble, is even nearer to original 'hangmat-'. Significantly, this verb and transitive 'angâwten' do not exist in either Persian or Hawrâmî. But 'angâwten' is found in Parthian. The Parthian verb is 'angawdan', meaning to (end) or (terminate).

Another two Kurdish words derived similarly from 'hangma-': 'âkâm' (end, conclusion) and 'anjâma' (hinge), indicate a relationship with the North-West dialects.

Dr. MacKenzie suggests another characteristic which would align Kurdish with Persian while distancing it from Parthian. This is the use of izâfa in Kurdish and middle Persian but not Parthian. However, to argue from this that Kurdish is closer to the middle Persian than to Parthian is fallacious, because the izâfa, which is also used in Zâzâ, Gorânî and other central dialects, derives from the Avestic relative pronoun 'ya', feminine 'yâ'. Kurdish which follows Avestic in using this word also as relative pronoun is not responsible for the loss of izâfa in Parthian. The Kermânjî dialects of Kirmanshah, Sena, Karkuk Province and even the Jâfs have already dropped the izâfa after nouns ending in consonants.

Dr. MacKenzie again sees Kurdish as influenced by Middle Persian in the development of the original Iranian initial 'dw-' to 'd-'. This view is also unconvincing. The development appears also in Baluchî as well as in Persian. Its development in these three languages has two similar sources: 1. 'du-' of the Middle Persian, 2. 'du-' of the younger Avesta.

If 'd-' of the new Persian is taken as a development of the 'du-' of the middle Persian, why cannot the 'd-' of Kurdish and Baluchî be derived from the Avestic 'du-'?

Neither Kurdish nor Baluchî in this development are influenced by middle Persian. I wish to recall here Tedesco's words which I should have mentioned earlier: "Entwicklungen können immer unabhängig voneinander bloss parallel sein".

Tedesco, pointing to the North-Western word for milk, 'shift' observes that the South-Western word is 'shîr' and that 'shîr' is the word used in Kurdish. Dr. MacKenzie takes this as another mean to align Kurdish with middle Persian. But the 'shîr' is not used only in Kermânjî and Baluchî, it is used also in Gahwârayî and Bâjalânî which are Gorânî dialects and in the Central dialects such as Farizandî, Natanzî, Yarnî, Shahrîzâdî, as well as Gilakî.

It is seen in the Ossetic in the form of 'axshîr', and closer to the original form, in the Pâmîr dialect Munjî, 'xshîr'. On the other hand in the Kirmanshahî Kermânjî (milk) is 'Shefta'. The form 'shîr' in Kurdish may be a borrowing from new Persian or not, 'Shift' continues to be found in Kermânjî in a few words such as 'shûtî' meaning (water-melon) and sheft-a-jê' (a perennially fertile woman).

Once more Dr. MacKenzie seeks to place Kurdish closer to Middle Persian than to the North-Western Group. He writes:

"Again Kurdish appears to share the development of Old Iranian 'ôr' to 's' with Persian. The only example Tedesco quoted with justifiable caution was the numeral 'three', the Kurdish 'sê'. But to this one can add a word most unlikely to have been borrowed, as its nearest traceable relative is found only in the Bâshkardî dialect of Makrân. The Kurdish word is 'pê-xwâs' or 'pê-xâwus' (barefoot) Bâshkardî 'pâ-xwâves'. Gorânî, in contrast, has 'pâ-wirwâ', and in Zahrâi one finds 'pâ-xarwâ' and 'pâ-xârapâ'."

Dr. MacKenzie continues:

"All these forms can be traced back, as was kindly pointed out to me by Dr. I. Gershevitch, who discovered the Bâshkardî, to the Avestic x^vâ-aôθra (having one's own footwear, thus:

Avestic x^v-â-aôθra-ŋ *xwâussa-ŋ xwâs

(in Kurdish)

ʎ *(x)wâu(h)raʎ *wâwirʎ wirwâ (in Gorânî)

(cf. Gorânî, yarê '3' <*hrê < *θrayah-, and the metathesis in Central Kurdish 'birwâ' (4) < 'bâwir' (4) (belief))

ʎ *x(w)âu(h)ra-ʎ *xâru-(+ pâ) (in Zahrâi)

(Cf. Zahrâi xas- 'sleep' <x^vafsa-)".

The etymology of pê-xwâs, etc. is not so complicated, indeed it is simple:

Let us see beginning with the Gorânî form 'pâ-wirwâ'. This word is a compound adjective apparently composed of pâ-wê-rwâ, (a person who goes on his own feet or a barefoot man). The Zahrâi 'pâ-xarwâ' seems similarly composed from 'pâ-xa-rwâ' and has the same meaning as a second Zahrâi form 'pâ-xa-rapâ', with the Avestic? form 'rap' instead of 'raw' meaning the same as the Gorânî 'pâ-wê-rwâ'.

Now we come to the Kermânjî word and find that it is 'pê-xo-âs' meaning the same as the foregoing compounds, and made with the Avestic 'âs' instead of the Avestic 'rap'. All these forms go back to a possibly Median origin.

In these circumstances there seems no reason to accept that Kurdish has followed the Persian pattern in changing 'θr' to 's'. In passing the number 'thirty' in Hawrânî is 'sî' which is the Persian form.

Dr. MacKenzie mentions still other forms to show Kurdish may be closer to Persian than to Median. On the way he attributes an imaginary origin to the Kurdish word 'pâlâwten' (5) (to filter). Instead of the imaginary *'para-dâwaya-', I suggest as more likely the Avestic 'apa-raethwa' which in the southern language Pâzand is 'pârûdan' and in Sassanian Pahlavi and Persian 'pâlûdan'. But Kurdish 'pârzûn' and Hawrâmî 'parzên' seem derived from the Avestic 'pairi-heretz' meaning (to filter thoroughly). Dr. MacKenzie finds a tendency in Kurdish for the '-rz-' to become an '-l-' as in Persian. He presents a list of words showing in their Kurdish form the allegedly more Persian '-l-' and in Baluchî the more north-western '-rz-'. He writes that: "The difference between Kurdish and Baluchî in this respect suggests that proto-Kurdish was in closer contact with the middle Persian South."

(4) Withe rolled 'r'.

(5) With velar 'l'.

But in fact Kermânjî has kept '-rz-' in a number of words while Baluchî in at least one word which is not a loan word from Persian has changed '-rz-' to '-l-'. The word is 'siphulk', Avestic 'sperezan' (spleen). The changing of '-rz-' to '-l-' should not be regarded as indicating a definite South-Western formative influence. The example of such words as 'sipurz' (spleen) in the Middle Persian, and 'sepel' and 'espul' (spleen) in the Central Iranian, Gahwârâyî (Gorânî) and Kâshân dialects argue forcefully against such an assumption. It is also found in the Hawrâmî 'mel' (Avestic 'mrz'), (neck). Persian, however, has kept 'rz' of these Avestic words: 'garez' (complaint), varez (work, labour) are in Persian 'garz-', 'varz-', and in Kermânjî 'kurûz-', 'warz-'.

Dr. MacKenzie also suggests that in Kurdish the combination '-nd-' as in Middle Persian has become simply '-n-'.

The answer is that the combined sound 'nd' does not exist in Northern Kermânjî, Mukrî, or Sorânî dialects. Both sounds are pronounced separately and 'd' is not dropped. There are, however, in these dialects a very few words in which 'd' and 'g' of Sulaimani 'nd'(6), 'ng' combination are dropped, such as 'banî' (tied) ['banî' in Sena means (tied, prisoner), in Sorânî, Mukrî and Sulaimani, however, in the form of 'bandî' (prisoner)], hinak, hanêk (little), dan (sound), bân (call).

In Sulaimani 'nd'(6) is combined and interchanged with the combination 'ng' and vice versa; each is pronounced as a single sound and with something of twang 'nd' being nasal and 'ng' guttural. On the other hand in Sulaimani often and Senayî and Kirmanshahî always 'nd' becomes 'n'. Even in Hawrâmî '-nd-' has become 'n'.

(My detailed study of the development of 'd' in Kurdish be found in Galâwêzh, No. 4, 1940, where it was first published.)

Have the Kirmanshahî, particularly, Hawrâmî dropped 'd' in the 'nd' combination under the influence of the Middle Persian? Of course not. It must be noted that neither in the Sassanian Pahlavi (unlike the Manichaean Middle Persian) nor in the New Persian has the 'nd' been dropped in favour of 'n' alone.

Finally Dr. MacKenzie writes: "A last agreement between Kurdish and Persian is in the preservation of initial 'fr-' while in many North-West Iranian dialects this has become 'hr-' of the like and in Baluchi's".

(6) With softened 'd'.

But in Hawrâmî where the 'fr-' has been changed to 'har-' as in the word 'harmana' (work), the original 'f-' is kept in the infinitive 'farmâwây' (to order).

Dr. MacKenzie's point is weakened by the example of Kermânjî words in which the original 'f' in 'fr' has changed to 'h'. For example the Avestic 'frâyah', comparative adjective (more) is now in Sulaimani 'hara' (most) which is used with an adjective to make it superlative, as 'hara kurt' (shortest). Similarly the Avestic 'frâ-' meaning (forth), has become in Kermânjî 'harâ'(7) and 'râ'(7), e.g. 'harâ' kerden, 'râ kerden', to run.

Dr. MacKenzie set out on a bold and original venture of linguistic detection. Unfortunately an examination of the suggestions he offers in support of his hypothesis are, as I hope this talk has shown, not satisfactory.

Indeed investigation of Dr. MacKenzie's account reinforces the more familiar belief. In so far as we can now determine, the weight of evidence strongly indicates that the position of the Kurdish language is among the North-Western Iranian group. By an unexceptional extension we may properly assume that Kurdish is in direct descent from the Aryan Kurdish-Avestic-Median languages.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the crucially important assertion made by Professor Minorsky. For me there is no reason to qualify, as Dr. McKenzie did, Minorsky's statement that "the unity of the Kurds must be explained by its Median basis." On the contrary I see every reason to support it.

To put it another way: I would say that "while the first proto Indo-Iranian Kurds were not, the Kurds of today are Medes".

This evening I have been occupied with refuting arguments which cast doubt on a Kurdish Median connection. But on another occasion I should like to present to you positive evidence for the relationship between Avestic-Median and Kurdish, including evidence from my own observations.

(7) With rolled 'r'.

TAUFIQ WAHBY

