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The Modern Kurdish Short Story

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Abstract

The focus of this study is on the Kurdish short story, read from the viewpoint of literary history. The political course of events in Kurdistan, and the political and social circumstances which followed, have without question strongly influenced the Kurdish short story both in content, style, and language. The Kurdish short story has its origins in the second decade of the twentieth century. Kurdish prose arose in the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are few examples of Kurdish prose from that time; in every case, they are non-literary.

Kurdish journalism played a central role in the development of the short story. The origin of the art of the Kurdish short story is directly related to Kurdish journalism. This development cannot be isolated from very conscious attempts to further the Kurdish short story with the help of translations of short stories into Kurdish from other languages – European languages in particular.

This essay is an attempt to study the development of the Kurdish short story from its start until the beginning of the first decade in the 21st century.

Keywords: Kurdish literature, Kurdish short story, Kurdish journalism, contents and forms of Kurdish prose

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To Zerya, Ziryan and Yar
This universe would be imperfect without your love

هه و النامهى كتيب

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Preface

This study has its own history, which however I do not intend to relate in this context. The greater portion of this essay was written in the beginning of the 1990s. At that time, the political and cultural climate in Kurdistan was altogether extremely insecure. For this reason, I chose to let this study proceed from the body of works written up to 1988, the year those ghastly atrocities took place in Kurdistan. During the following few years, developments were altogether too quick and the consequences of this were great, both politically and culturally. The collected production of Kurdish short stories during the last decade of the 20th Century has been so extensive and diverse that, when I presented the text to fulfill the requirements of philosophical licentiate in 2002, I recognized the necessity of a new chapter treating this unprecedented period.

Now that I prepare the essay to be published as a book some 14 years later, I have a feeling that there are topics related to Kurdish literature that need to be explained. These questions are not confined to this study, but can be relevant also in other contexts when Kurdish literature is discussed. The significance of these topics is derived from the fact that they constitute an important part of the historical and factual background against which we can comprehend every development in the cultural and literary sphere in Kurdistan.

A Semi-Independent Kurdistan

The years from the beginning of the 1990s and up to now constitute a new and decisive period for Iraqi Kurdistan, but also for other parts of Kurdistan. The establishment of a semi-independent federal region and the constant strive to found and enhance political, economic and cultural institutions are remarkable. There are uncountable educational and cultural bodies: radio and TV-stations, magazines and newspapers, universities, associations, centres, publishers, book fairs and so on and so forth. The freedom of expression is respected to some extent and the government supports the writers and the artists generously. The region has practically become a haven for thousands of Kurds from other parts of Kurdistan, among them a large number of freedom fighters, students, writers and artists.

The abundant change in the conditions of Kurdish culture in Iraqi Kurdistan has influenced to a large extent the Kurds in various parts of Kurdistan and

abroad. The rapid progress of information technology has minimized the effect of the borders that separate different parts of Kurdistan and has made the culture produced in one part a wealth that is shared commonly by other Kurds everywhere. The satellite TV broadcasts enable the Kurds wherever they live to follow even the minute events and developments in Kurdistan, and the Internet makes it possible for Kurdish readers around the world to have access to most of the newspapers, magazines and books published in Kurdistan, and materials in Kurdish published elsewhere.

Nevertheless, it should be admitted also that there are disturbing signs that must be dealt with seriously. The most relevant in the context of this study is the absence of a cultural policy and language planning. It is probably astonishing to know that the number of newspapers, weeklies, monthlies and periodical magazines, has already surpassed 600, which is unreasonably high for a small population of about 6 million with a high level of illiteracy. The negative effect of some superficial aspects of Western culture is also obvious in the daily life of people and in the programmes of most of the TV-channels.

The condition of Kurdish language has deteriorated noticeably because of the prevailing chaos in the mass-medial and educational institutions. A generation of students has already been brought up who doesn't command any language other than a poor Kurdish. Articles that are published in the press contain a great deal of grammatical, orthographical and typographical errors. Furthermore, many journalists and writers publish the same text in several magazines and newspapers and receive royalties from each. The state of corruption that has gained ground in many sections of the Kurdish administration is obvious even in the fields of culture transmission and education.

In the span of nearly two decades now a new generation of short story writers has made its presence felt. These are, partly, writers who have experienced the worst form of cruelty and brutality used by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party against the Kurdish people. Obviously there are also among them several who have only vague recollections from that time or do not have any at all. But all share and experience one rare and important living memory; to live in a free Kurdistan that is ruled by the Kurds themselves. It would be a difficult task to map all the details of and about this generation that is still being shaped and reshaped, but it is sure that there are among them talents that will contribute very much to Kurdish literature.

The writers of this generation are particularly eager to approach the themes of their stories from another and a new point of view, other than those consumed by the writers of previous generations. An example is the history of the Kurdish people that they no more consider as sacred and untouchable. They attach significance to imagination and fantasy, to an extent with which

the realities of the Kurdish society are not recognized in the texts they produce. The form is less important for these writers. They have abandoned the popular but complicated forms of the 1970s which, they think, put a burden on the texts rather than giving them a modern appearance. Among the known writers of this generation are Jamal Jabar Gharib, ‘Ata Muhammad, Twana Ami and ‘Izzaddin Yousif.

In The Former Soviet Union

The Kurds of the former Soviet Union founded in the third decade of the last century their “own” Kurdish literature that lasted some 60 years and vanished with the collapse of the Soviet system. As an ethnic minority, the Kurds enjoyed some cultural rights within the framework of the Armenian and Georgian Republics, whereas the Turkish Azerbaijan Soviet Republic denied the very existence of the Kurds. These rights included publishing books in Kurdish and learning Kurdish language at schools a few hours a week. An advantage of that situation was the contact with various cultures and languages and the access they had to Russian literature, since Russian was the common official language for all the peoples of the Soviet Union.

The Kurdish writers of the Soviet Union and the literature they created were severely restricted by two obstacles; firstly, as Soviet citizens they didn’t have the freedom of being in contact with Kurds from various parts of Kurdistan and, secondly, the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed on their language that practically made it impossible for them to read any other Kurdish literature, and other Kurds couldn’t read the literature they produced. The literature of the Kurds of the Soviet Union remained a local literature that never became a vital and integrated part of the greater Kurdish literature.

Most of the writers of the Soviet Union were poets who published abundantly a poetry that was Kurdish only in its language. Otherwise the meter and the metaphors hadn’t the slightest ties with the aesthetical and musical roots of Kurdish poetry. The contents, for the most part, were superficial and simple. The stories and the novels, on the contrary, were more advanced in their structure and seemingly had derived benefit from the rich heritage of the Russian narrative art. The texts that dealt with the recollections and the past, be it individual or collective, were packed with genuine feelings, as an expression of the national sentiments that otherwise hadn’t a sphere to utter. Among the most renowned short story writers were Hajī-yê Jindī, Qachakh-ê Mirad, Mīro-yê Asad, Khalīl Muradov, Usiv-ê Bako, Baba-yê Kalash, ‘Alī-yê Abdul-Rahman, Sa‘īd-ê Ibo, ‘Amarīk-ê Sardar, Tosin-ê Rashīd and Wazīr-ê Asho.

Another “Kurdish literature”

There is a global phenomenon in the literature resulting from the occupation of many of the countries and peoples of Asia and Africa by European colonialists, which is the phenomenon of writing in the language of the colonizer or the occupier. When the colonial power imposes its own language and culture on the occupied country and prevents the people from using their own language, the result will be that a generation of writers grows up who doesn't command, in writing at least, any language other than the language of colonial power and that language becomes their sole and effective weapon in defending themselves and their case. It happens that some of those writers become great creators in writing stories and novels to the extent that they reach high literary levels and obtain recognition of their literature in the cultural circles worldwide.

Many of the writers of the Indian subcontinent wrote, and still write, in the English language, and a great number of Africa authors write in English, French and Portuguese. The most prominent example in the Arab world is the writers of the Maghreb, and some of the writers of Lebanon, who produced, and still produce, great literature in French. This phenomenon was and still is the subject of extensive studies and theoretical debates by researchers and historians of literature. The most important question in this regard is: Where does the literature that is produced by the writers of the colonized people who write in in the languages of the colonialists belong to? Let's ask the question in a simpler form: Is the literature that has been, or is, written by Mouloud Fir'awn, Katib Yassin, Assia Djebar, Abdullatif Laabi and Salah Steitieh, a French or an Arabic literature?

This question is also being asked in Kurdistan although not with the same force in which it is asked in the Maghreb or in the Indian subcontinent. Some people do not like considering Kurdistan a country that is colonized by Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran, because the simplified definition or conception of colonizer is one with blue eyes and white skin who comes from overseas, and this does not apply to the Arab, Turkish and Persian rulers. However, what is relevant is the literature that is produced by some Kurdish creative writers in languages other than their native Kurdish. Where does this literature belong? Should it be studied as a part of Kurdish literature?

There are, however, many big names in Arabic, Persian and Turkish literatures, with Kurdish origins, who have produced a literature that is *Signs Franchise* for those languages. Brothers Mahmoud and Mohammed Taimour are of Kurdish origins and their pioneering role in the Egyptian and in Arab story as a whole is known in the history of Arabic literature. Abdul-Majeed Lutfi and Muhyiddin Zangana in Iraq were writers who have presented Arabic literature with texts that are characterized as pioneer and innovative. The writer who is the most outstanding in the contemporary Arab literature is, no

doubt, the Syrian Kurdish novelist Salim Barakat, whose books are translated into dozens of languages.

One of the most renowned founders of Iranian fiction is 'Alî Muhammad Afghani, a Kurd born in Kirmashan (Kirmanshah) in Iranian Kurdistan. The same is true with 'Ali Akbar Darvishian and Mansour Yaghuti. And when it comes to Turkish literature, no two persons disagree that the Kurdish Yaşar Kemal was the greatest international Turkish writer in the past forty years, who was a candidate to win Nobel Prize in literature for more than two decades.

I'm not here in the process of deciding on such a spiky subject, although I have my clear opinion about it. I would like to draw the readers' attention that in this study I did not want to embed that literature at all. Nevertheless, it remains one of the important issues that deserve serious consideration and answer.

Instead of Conclusions

Rarely can a researcher in the history of the literatures of various peoples find a literature that reflects the prevailing political situation and constitutes a part of its structure as is the case with Kurdish literature. The emergence of this literature and its development, and the setbacks it suffered from, constitutes perfectly a parallel image to the political situation in Kurdistan in the past six centuries.

The present study is not an attempt to illustrate this image as much as it is an inventory of the different phases in the history of artistic prose in Kurdish. The first texts were used in such fields of everyday life, which had not been related directly to culture and literature in a way. But the beginning of the new century, 20th century, formed the turning point in favor of the birth of artistic prose as represented by the short story. And later we observe the emergence and coming into view of multiple generations of Kurdish storytellers in different parts of Kurdistan. Although the lands of the Kurds were divided among four of the Middle Eastern countries, by the British and French imperialists, and although they were subjected to persecution of political and cultural destruction, the cultural relationship between the Kurds in these parts of Kurdistan remained in coherence to a large extent.

The end of the Second World War witnessed a qualitative change in the political and cultural awareness of the Kurds, whereupon political parties and organizations were formed, and these in their turn paved the way for armed movements in order to gain national rights. Subsequent stages also witnessed the establishment of contacts between Kurdish intellectuals and writers with foreign cultures, which affected the emergence of modernist currents and movements in Kurdish literature. The situation of the Kurds as a people

whose country was divided (or occupied) by several other countries, gave Kurdish readers and Kurdish intelligentsia, despite the gravity of the political situation and despite all the tragedies they suffered, the excellence of being in contact with three important languages of the Middle East – Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, in addition to Russian, Armenian and Azeri languages when it comes to the Kurds in the former Soviet Union. In the 1980s, when the political situation in Iraq, Iran and Turkey was the worst thing for the Kurds, thousands of young Kurds took their refuge to European countries, where an educated elite was formed, that had a good knowledge of the cultures of the modern world.

There is a firm belief among Kurdish politicians to the effect that if the twentieth century, the century in which the Kurds suffered the harshest persecution and oppression, tyranny and repression by the various governments, and that was characterized by the most egregious types of massacres and campaigns of genocide, the twenty-first century would be the century of the Kurdish people, and will witness the birth of the Unified Kurdish State or Kurdish states. There is hope that history will treat this people with justice, after being left in the lurch by its geographical situation for several centuries.

This may be just a political optimism or a derivation of the developments in the contemporary world, but we can preserve optimism at least when it comes to the Kurdish literature, in this new century. The situation in Iraqi Kurdistan in the past two decades, where this part of Kurdistan enjoyed a kind of independence, proved that the Kurds can be active and effective participants in all political and cultural areas in the Middle East, and even also in wider orbits. If translation constitutes an indication of the vitality of the language and culture of a people and their capability to deal with other cultures, the movement of translation into Kurdish language is as twice as what is being translated in the Arabic Iraq, for example.

The more worrying thing about the cultural and linguistic situation in Kurdistan is the lack of a cultural and linguistic policy that could repair all that happened to the culture from the ravages caused by centuries of oppression and occupation, and open up new horizons so that it participates in the enrichment of human civilization. This also may be part of a situation of instability, of which suffers the Kurdistan region as a new political body, that time will undertake stabilizing and enhancing it. However, literary creativity does not need to adapt to the laws and the formal decisions, since it is similar to an erupting flood that finds a channel in each terrain. If the Kurdish storyteller has excelled in the past, under the harshest of life and political conditions, why do not expect him/her to submit what is the more beautiful, deeper and more sophisticated?

At this juncture, I would like to express my cordial thanks to everyone who has helped me with the research and preparations for this essay, and with the production of it in its current form. I especially want to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Bo Utas, for his great patience and professional guidance.

I wish also to thank two other dedicated persons who have been involved and who have helped me very much: my colleague Professor Carina Jahani, whose constant optimism and support have always been unique and encouraging, and the Kurdish author and researcher Muḥammad Malā Karīm of Suleimani, Kurdistan, who has provided me with a great number of books and references, which have been invaluable for my work. Chris Gessner of Uppsala has been all too kind to develop my text into good and correct English. I owe him profound thanks.

I wish to direct my gratitude to everyone who has in any way helped me and taken part in the preparation of this book.

Uppsala, November 10, 2016

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System of Transcription

Consonants:

ʾ	Hamza ء، ؤ، ة
B	ب
P	پ
T	ت
Ṭ	ط
J	ج
Č	چ
H	ح
X	خ
D	د
Ḍ	ذ
R	ر
Ṛ	ړ
Z	ز
Ž	ژ
S	س
Š	ش
Ş	ص
Ḍ	ض
Ṭ	ط
Z	ظ
ʿ	ع
Ġ	غ
F	ف
Q	ق
K	ک
G	گ
L	ل
Ḷ	ڵ

M	م
N	ن
W	و
V	Kurdish ف Persian و
H	هـ
Y	ی

Vowels:

Ā	ا
U	و
A	هـ، ئه
Ū	وو
O	ۆ
Ö	وئ
i	Not represented in Kurdish alphabet
Ī	ی
Ē	ئ

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Introduction

I

The Kurdish short story has its origins in the second decade of the twentieth century. When one reads the first short stories that we have access to, one is struck by what a feeble start it was. At times, it is difficult to distinguish folk tales from the then new art of the short story. This is true not only of Kurdish literature, but also of the literature of other peoples, e.g. the Arabic, the Persian, and the Turkish. Another common quality of the literature of these peoples is that, for a very long time, poetry was long the prevailing form of literature. Other genres made their debuts relatively recently.

Kurdish prose arose in the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are few examples of Kurdish prose from the nineteenth century; in every case, they are non-literary. At the end of the 1800s (1898), Kurdish prose made great advances. This is when the first Kurdish newspaper, *Kurdistan*, began to be published. The newspaper existed only a short time (1898–1902), yet it was significant for Kurdish journalism, an enterprise which continued to survive in different parts of Kurdistan in spite of persecution and interruptions in publication.

Kurdish journalism played two important rolls. On the one hand, it served to develop Kurdish politics and ideology, thereby diffusing a national consciousness among Kurds; on the other hand, it served to develop the Kurdish language and Kurdish culture. The origin of the art of the Kurdish short story is directly related with Kurdish journalism. As journalism made its developments, it also influenced short story craft in a positive direction. The first instances of text are unsophisticated both in form and content. As time passed, content became more profound and styles became more artistic. And this development cannot be isolated from very conscious attempts to further the Kurdish short story with the help of translations of short stories to Kurdish from other languages – European languages in particular.

The political course of events in Kurdistan, and the political and social circumstances which followed, have without question strongly influenced the Kurdish short story both in content, style, and language. A simple comparison of samples from different periods shows this to be the case.

This essay is an attempt at a study of the development of the Kurdish short story from its origins until to the end of 1988. Additionally, I have included an update at the end of the essay, in which I discuss the development of the short story up to 2000. The essay is dedicated primarily to the art of the short story, since the Kurdish novel came into existence only recently. In Kurdish literature, as in the literature of other countries, it is difficult to make a clear delineation between the short story and the novel. Any effort to do this would lead to interminable discussion. Here I treat the Kurdish short story as a single phenomenon, without regard to political, geographic, dialectal, or orthographic borders. This method of study of the Kurdish short story is not without complications. The few studies of the Kurdish short story that thus far have been produced have only studied literary works from a part of Kurdistan, i.e. Iraqi Kurdistan. From the end of the Second World War until now, Iraqi Kurdistan has been the center of Kurdish literature, and most short story writers are native to that area.

A vital part of the history of the Kurdish short story consists of those short stories which were written in Soviet Kurdistan from the mid-1930s up to the present. Originally, I intended to discuss the short story from this part of Kurdistan as well. After having studied the available sources of information and having read several short stories from the area, I decided to exclude these short stories and not examine them in my essay. There are two reasons for this. The political, social, and cultural backdrop for short stories in other parts of Kurdistan has no similarities to that in Soviet Kurdistan. One reason for this is that the political system in the Soviet Union sought to prevent contacts between Soviet Kurds and other Kurds. Another reason is that the compulsory introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet in Soviet Kurdistan was a practical impediment which, together with the political obstacles, brought cultural exchange between Soviet Kurds and other Kurds to a standstill. As a consequence, there has been no exchange or influence between the two groups. The contents of the short stories demonstrate this. An exception is the novel *Šivānē Kurd* (The Kurdish Shepherd) by ‘Arab-ē Šamo, which early on was translated via French back to Kurdish and became well-known among Kurdish readers in different parts of Kurdistan. For these reasons, I consider it essential that the literature and culture of Soviet Kurdistan be made the subject of their own study, which can take into account the political and cultural circumstances which prevailed there.

II

Nowadays, since Kurdish literature has developed and most genres are established, literary terms have come into use which more or less correspond to similar terms in Western literature. This usage of corresponding terms came into being in the 1970s and developed later as a result of cultural exchange,

primarily through the translation both of fiction and of studies of the history of literature, including literature theory. This does not mean that the terms are applied so mechanically that the specific characteristics of Kurdish literature are disregarded. To take classical poetry as an example, we can see that the classical oriental terms are so efficient that they are used in their original forms even in essays written in Western languages. Terms such as *qaṣīda*, *ġazal*, *rubāʿī*, etc., cannot be avoided when writing about oriental poetry. The closer one comes to modern-day literature, the more Western literary terms and concepts become characteristic in Kurdish literature. The same relationship prevails in prose and particularly in narrative.

In this connection, it is evident that most terms of Arabic origin have been drawn from Arabic roots signifying “to speak”, “to tell”, “to relate”, “to say”, etc.; while terms of Persian origin have to do with fantasy and myths. The poet Malā-yē Jazīrī (1570–1640) uses the words *riwāyat*, *fasāna*, *qiṣṣa* and *dāstān* in his poems when he refers to his love story.¹ In his epic *Mam u Zīn*, Aḥmad-ī Xānī (1651–1707) uses the words *ḥikāyat*, *riwāyat*, *fasāna*, and *qiṣṣa*.² The poet Faqī-yē Tayrān (1590–1660), who was a contemporary of Jazīrī’s, uses the same terms as Jazīrī.³

Šēx Ḥusain Qāzī (1791–1870) uses the word *ḥikāyat* when he refers to certain stories in his *Mawlūdnamā*, which are relevant to the context. Written about 1860, *Mawlūdnamā* is one of the first prose texts in Kurdish literature.⁴ The word *ḥikāyat* is also used by Malā Maḥmūd Bāyazīdī (1799–1867) in the collection of stories and folk-tales which he compiled and which was translated to French, printed, and given out by M. Alexandre Jaba in 1860.⁵

The most universally applicable term for short story or tale in Kurdish literature is *čīrok*. This word was clearly in use at the end of the 1800s, as it appeared in a Kurdish-Arabic dictionary printed in 1893 in Istanbul, with the title *Al-hadiyya al-Ḥamīdīyya fi’l-luġa ’l-kurdiyya*. The word *čīrok* is defined thus: *Al-ḥikāya wa ’l-qiṣaṣ wa ḥākīthā čīrokvan* (legends and tales and their narrator *čīrokvan*).⁶ The word is used here to designate verbal, non-

¹ Al-Zivingī, Aḥmad bin al-mullā Muḥammad: *Al-’iqd al-jawharī fi šarḥ dīwān al-Šaix al-Jazarī*, 2nd ed., 1987, p. 140 (alt. p. 450).

² Xānī, Aḥmad: *Mam u Zīn*, editor: M. B. Rudenko, Moscow 1962, p. 42, 174 (alt. 44, 186).

³ Sadīnī, M. Xalid: *Feqiyē Teyran (Jiyan, Helbest ū Berhemēn wī)*, Nūbihar, Istanbul 2000, p. 8.

⁴ Qāzī, Šēx Ḥusain: *Mawlūdnamā ba zimān-ī kurdī*, Baghdad 1935. I received copies of two manuscripts of this article which are kept at the *Dār Ṣaddām li’l-maxṭūṭāt* in Baghdad. Thanks herewith to good friend Muḥammad Malā Karīm who sent the copies to me.

⁵ Jaba, M. Alexandre: *Recueil de Notices et Récits Kourdes*, St.-Petersbourg 1860.

⁶ Al-Xālidī-Al-Maqdisī, Yūsuf Dīyā’ al-Dīn Pāšā: *Al-Hadiyya al-Ḥamīdīyya fi’l-luġa ’l-Kurdiyya*, 1310 (1893), p. 85.

written stories and legends, since it is made clear by denoting the word *čīrokvan* as the term for the person relating them.

The word *čīrok* is used for the first time as the term for a written story in 1913, when the Kurdish periodical *Rož-ī Kurd* in its first issue published a short story written by Fu'ād Tamo. The short story has no title, but is simply called *čīrok*.⁷ It is not known whether the author himself or the editorial staff of the periodical chose this word as the title of the text. It seems that most magazines and newspapers that were published subsequently followed *Rož-ī Kurd's* example, and used the term *čīrok* as a literary term for written stories without making a distinction between short stories and novels.

Two important periodicals which influenced the development of the Kurdish short story were *Hawar* and *Galāwēž*, in which many of the leading Kurdish short story authors made their debut. The first short story published in *Hawar*, which came out with 57 issues between May 15, 1932 and August 15, 1943, is a short story by editor-in-chief Celadet Bedirxan, entitled *Ber tevna mahfūrē* (In Front of the Weaving Frame).⁸ Throughout, the publication used the term *čīrok*.

The word *čīrok* was used consistently in *Galāwēž* as well. At the same time, however, the publication introduces the new term *čīrok nūsar*, which is used to denote “writer or author of a short story”.⁹ The word is incorrectly constructed according the rules of word construction in the Kurdish language. Such expressions are normally constructed by adding the present-form root of a transitive verb to a noun, while the expression *čīrok nūsar* is constructed with the help of the present participle form of the infinitive *nūsīn* (to write), and to that has been added the word *čīrok*.

The modern Kurdish poet Gorān is, as far as I know, the first author to use a term to distinguish between short stories and novels. In a collection of short stories which he translated from English and Arabic, Gorān uses the term *čīrok-ī kurt*, which is made of a noun and an adjective bound together in an *izāfa*-construction for shorter short stories. In the same book, Gorān uses the term *čīroknūs*, a compound noun of the proper form according to the rules of Kurdish word construction, to denote a short story author/writer.¹⁰ Gorān translated these short stories in the beginning of the 1940s while working at a Kurdish radio station in Jaffa that was set up by the Allies. Since we know that Gorān became acquainted with English literature during this period, it is likely that his bases for the two terms were the English expressions *short*

⁷ Tamo, Fu'ād: Čīrok, *Rož-ī Kurd*, no. 1 (1913 = 14 Rajab 1331).

⁸ Bedirxan, Celadet A., *Ber tevna mehūrē*, *Hawar*, 4 (July 1932), pp. 1–4.

⁹ *Galāwēž* 3 (January and February 1942) no.'s 1 and 2, p. 87.

¹⁰ *Halbižārda la Čīrok-ī Kurt-ī Bēgāna*, transl. Gorān, 1st ed. Baghdad 1953, 2nd ed. Kulturföreningen Sverige-Kurdistan, Sollentuna 1995.

story and *storywriter*. The word *čīroknūs* is by and large accepted and used in Kurdish literature in the sense of writer or author of a short story, while the commonest word for a very short story in Kurdish today is *kurtačīrok*, which is a compound noun and sounds more Kurdish. This is a corrected form of *čīrok-ī kurt*, which was coined by Gorān.

In spite of the fact that Gorān's anthology was published in 1953, Kurdish authors have never made a strict distinction between a shorter short story, a longer short story, and a novel. Muḥammad Šāliḥ Sa'īd, in the introduction to his short story *Kārwanī* (Traveller in a Caravan) published in 1957, describes four different types of story-telling: *kurtačīrok*, *čīrok*, *riwāyat*, and *ḥakāyat* as the Kurdish terms respectively corresponding to *very short story*, *short story*, *novel*, and *myth/legend*. The word *riwāyat* is the Arabic term for *novel*, but the author defines the word saying that it means a *long short story*. He calls his own story *čīrok*, a short story according to his own definition; it was published as a book of 60 pages. When Muṣṭafā Šāliḥ Karīm introduces Jamāl Bābān's short story *Xānzād*, he calls it *riwāyat*, a novel; but the author himself calls his work *čīrok*, a short story – even though it is a book of 56 pages.

It is interesting to note, considering the short story's length and the number of pages, that this type of short stories was part of a trend which many Kurdish authors followed in the 1950s and early 1960s. Muḥarram Muḥammad Amīn, Muḥammad Šāliḥ Sa'īd, Muṣṭafā Šāliḥ Karīm, Jamāl Bābān, Jamāl Nabaz, Muṣṭafā Qaradāgī, Xālid Dilēr, Muḥammad 'Alī Madhoš, and Raḥīm Qāzi were among the short story writers who wrote similarly lengthy short stories. All of these used the term *čīrok* and none of them called their works *novels*, even though the art of the novel was well established in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature, to at least one of which languages all Kurdish authors and readers had access. In addition, one of them, Jamāl Nabaz, was familiar with English literature and had already translated works from English to Kurdish; and Raḥīm Qāzi lived in the Soviet Union, an area where the *novel* had developed in the 1700s and become established.

The word *romān* was used for the first time in a Kurdish text in the 1870s by the poet Ḥājī Qādir-ī Koyī (1817–1897). In a poem praising the Kurdish national epic *Mam u Zīn* and its author Aḥmad-ī Xānī, Koyī writes, "In our times, novels and newspapers are the objective, and they are well-known."¹¹ The poem may have been written during the first years following his arrival in Istanbul, when he came into contact with the princely family Bedirxan and read the epic *Mam u Zīn*. The word *romān* was already in use in Turkish

¹¹ Mīrān, Sardār Ḥamīd and Karīm Mistafā Šārazā (publishers): *Dīwān-ī Ḥājī Qādir-ī Koyī*, 1986, p. 106.

literature about 1870, when the first short story was translated to Turkish and Turkish writers themselves began to write short stories.

Even though Koyî's poem was published as early as 1898 in the first Kurdish periodical *Kurdistan*, and a collection of his poems had been published in book form in Bagdad in 1925, the word *romān* did not come into use in Kurdish literature before the start of the 1970s.

Considering the uncertainty surrounding literary terms in Kurdish literature, I intend in this study to use only the expression *short story*, regardless of the length or structure of the text. Nevertheless, there will be cases in which the text, in my opinion, clearly can be called a *novel*. Furthermore, I shall use the term *novel* when the work's author calls the text a *novel*, and use the term *short story* when its author calls it that.

III

In this essay, I have used many sources: essays, articles, interviews, short story collections, and novels. The primary sources are as follows.

- (1) Husain 'Ārif: *Ĉīrok-ī Hunarī-y Kurdī 1925–1960* (Artistic Kurdish Short Stories 1925–1960), Bagdad 1977, 178 p.

This is the first and most serious study of the art of the short story in southern Kurdistan between 1925 and 1960. In this book, 'Ārif, one of the most successful short story writers, has subdivided the short stories into three periods. He has carefully described each period, and placed each of them in their political and social contexts. 'Ārif has furthermore dedicated a large part of his book to the Kurdish short story's content, form, and language, particularly during the period 1950–1960. This book is important because 'Ārif has taken up every work and author from southern Kurdistan for the period which the book comprises. On the other hand, he has not provided any significant analyses. In his work, 'Ārif had a significant advantage in the simple fact that he lived in southern Kurdistan and had access to all the sources, especially to the periodicals and newspapers which were published during the nearly forty-year period that he examined. He carried out his work on behalf of an official government authority. In spite of that, he was the target of political pressure. When he discusses the *Galāwēž*-generation in the book, he only mentions two short story writers and not the third, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad – a great Kurd author and one of the founders of the Kurdish short story – because he was a political leader as well, and lived at the time in exile. In 'Ārif's book, he is mentioned only once, and then only as a translator.

A shortcoming in 'Ārif's book that cannot be ignored is that he did not sufficiently take into consideration the political and social conditions which prevailed during the three periods. Considering the political conditions for Kurds in Iraq, particularly during the years when 'Ārif wrote and published his book, one can quickly conclude that this deficiency was not due to the author's lack of knowledge, but was the result of the regime's oppression and censorship.

- (2) 'Umar Ma'rūf Barzinjī: *Lēkoḷīnawa w Bībliogrāfyā-y Ārok-ī Kurdī 1925–1969* (Study of the Kurdish Short Story Including Bibliography, 1929–1969), Kurdish Science Academy, Bagdad 1978, 221 p.

Barzinjī followed 'Ārif's pattern and divided Kurdish short stories into different periods. He added a fourth period that he calls *The Years of Silence* – the years between 1962 and 1969. The last part of the book is a bibliography which contains much information about short stories published from 1925 to 1969 without regard to whether they were published in a periodical or in book form. When one compares Barzinjī's book to 'Ārif's, one sees that Barzinjī does not offer more facts than 'Ārif, rather, he merely treats a nine year longer period. The analyses in Barzinjī's book are very weak in spite of the author's assertion that he has employed a "scientific" method. Most of his views are rather simple and politically colored.

- (3) Ḥusain 'Ārif: *Al-Wāqi'iyya al-intiqādiyya fi'l-Qiṣṣa al-Kurdiyya* (Critical Realism in the Kurdish Short Story), published in the magazine *Al-aqlām* No. 2, 14th annual volume, Nov. 1978, pp. 112–131.

This study is originally a presentation by 'Ārif at a five-day seminar on "The Iraqi Short Story" in Ṣalāḥ al-dīn, August 20–25, 1978. In this article, 'Ārif studies the social criticism content of Kurdish short stories from the beginning of the 1940s until the mid-1970s. He gives a detailed discussion of the problems of Kurdish society – which was the focus of many authors' short stories.

- (4) Supplement to the magazine *Al-aqlām* no. 2–3, 19th annual volume, Feb.-March 1984.

Al-aqlām, which was published in Arabic by the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, dedicated 58 pages of this issue to the Kurdish short story and to the study of it. The supplement consists of four articles and ten short stories in Arabic translation. Among the articles, two are important for this essay:

- (a) Dr. 'Izz al-dīn Muṣṭafā Rasūl: *'Ārā'un fi'l-Qiṣṣa al-Kurdiyya* (Viewpoints on the Kurdish short story).

The author describes the development of the art of the Kurdish short story from its origins until the beginning of the 1980s. He concentrates on the contents of the short stories, and bases his discussion upon a Marxist analysis of literature.

- (b) Ḥusain 'Ārif: *Aṣkal al-Taknīk al-Ḥadīṭa fi'l-Qiṣṣa al-Kurdiyya 1970 wa mā Ba'dahā* (New techniques in the Kurdish short story after 1970).

The author devoted his article to questions of technique and form. This study can be viewed as a complement to his article, mentioned earlier, on critical realism. These two articles were published later in the book *'Iṣrūna Qiṣṣa Kurdiyya* (Twenty Kurdish Short Stories) by the magazine *Kārwan* (Caravan), Arbīl, 1985.

- (5) An important and indispensable source for this essay consists of the short story collections and novels that were published by Kurdish authors over time. To live outside Kurdistan and study Kurdish literature is a difficult task, inasmuch as one does not have access to all the literature that has been published there. This is especially true of newspapers and periodicals. In this essay, I have not used short stories which were published in newspapers or magazines, and this is for two reasons. First, it is impossible to obtain all the different publications in which Kurdish short stories have been published; second, most short story writers have later issued their short stories in book form. In this essay, I have used about sixty short story collections and novels (see the bibliography at the end of the essay). I have been fortunate to gain access to most of the short story collections and novels which I needed to get a true picture of the Kurdish short story, largely thanks to friends and acquaintances in Kurdistan, and not least, thanks to the authors themselves.

For this essay, I have also made use of numerous lesser sources consisting of a series of books, essays, and articles. The most important of them are these:

- 1) Ṣabāh Ġālib: *Āfrat la Ĉīrok-ī Kurdīdā* (Women in the Kurdish Short Story), Baghdad 1979, 343 p.

The author has endeavoured to study short story writers' attitudes toward women, and how these are reflected in their short stories.

- 2) Ra'ūf Ḥasan: *Kirēkār u Ĉīrok-ī Kurdī* (Toilers and the Kurdish Short Story), Baghdad 1982, 88 p.

The author examines the image of toilers in the Kurdish short story.

3) Ḥasan Jāf: *Ĉīrok-ī Nö-y Kurdī* (The modern Kurdish Short Story), Baghdad 1985, 126 p.

This book is a study of the modern Kurdish short story (with focus on the 1970s) from different aspects: women and sexuality, cultural heritage, symbols, technology, language, etc.

The common denominator for these three books is that they are superficial.

4) *Muxtārāt Min al-Adab al-Kurdī* (Selection of Kurdish Literature), compiled by Ḥusain ‘Ārif, published by the magazine *Kārwān*, 1986, 456 p.

This book is an anthology offering poems, articles, and short stories, translated to Arabic. Four of the articles deal with the Kurdish Short Story.

5) *Bībliogrāfyā-y Ĉīrok-ī Kurdī 1925–1983* by Ḥusain ‘Ārif, published by the magazine *Kārwān*, Arbil 1987, 284 p.

This work is an essential source for everyone who studies the Kurdish short story. The author not only discusses short story collections and novels, but also examines all the individual short stories that were published in newspapers and magazines during the period treated by this bibliography. The book consists of two parts. In the first part, the works are listed in alphabetical order. In the second part, all the authors are listed alphabetically.

In addition to the sources mentioned, I have made use of a number of articles, essays, and prefaces published in different languages in assorted books, newspapers, and magazines, by e.g. Dr. Mārif Xaznadār, Thomas Bois, Jamšīd Ḥaydarī, Mehmet Uzun, Dr. Kamāl Maḥzar Aḥmad, and Muḥammad Malā Karīm.

Some of these articles do not deal directly with short stories, but rather with Kurdish journalism or prose, both of which have of course contributed to an understanding of the background and origins of the Kurdish short story.

IV

The sources listed above make it clear that many books, articles, and essays on the Kurdish short story have been written during the last 15–20 years. Some of these books have been dedicated to shedding light on the origins and development of the short story, while others have studied form and content of short stories. All of the books deal with the short story of southern Kurdistan, because since the beginning of the previous century, this part of Kurdistan has been the center for Kurdish culture, thus also for the Kurdish short story.

In this essay, I have chosen to discuss the Kurdish short story in general, i.e. including works written in Iranian, Syrian, and Turkish Kurdistan; but the material from these last-mentioned areas is very limited.

The traditional way of dividing Kurdish short stories into periods is to place them into decade-long partitions. I reject that method however, and attempt instead to define each generation by considering what the short story authors have in common, regarding the origins, development, and content of the short stories. There are several authors, especially those who began to write in the 1950s, who were active during the 1960s and 1970s, indeed, even into the 1980s. This is evidence that classification by decade has little to do with reality.

When I speak of different periods in the development of the Kurdish short story, I have attempted to associate this development to the political conditions of the time. In any research into Kurdish literature, it is absolutely necessary to take the Kurds' political situation into consideration, since the occupation and division of Kurdistan always have a direct effect on cultural life.

In spite of the fact that the Kurdish short story has such a short history, there are many short story authors. There are writers who have published short stories for several years, only to stop writing completely later on or perhaps to change genres. Examples of this latter are Muḥammad Rasūl Hāwār (1923–2003), Muḥammad Šālīḥ Dīlān (1927–1988), Kāmarān Mukrī (1921–1986), Šērko Bēkas (1940–2013), and Qedrīcan (1914–1974). These authors will not be discussed in my essay. Another delimiting factor is that I have chosen to take up only those short story writers who with their works have influenced the development of the Kurdish short story, and without whom it would be difficult to create a clear image of each epoch.

Due to my limited access to newspapers and magazines, I have been compelled to rely on works published in book form. However, this does not mean that I have completely excluded short stories published in periodicals and newspapers. This is applying particularly to authors who must be discussed in connection with certain periods, e.g. Celadet Badirxan, or those who did not manage to publish their short stories in book form during their lifetime, e.g. Ma'rūf Barzinjī (1921–1963) or Laṭīf Ḥāmid Barzinjī (1940–1973). In parallel with this, there are short story authors who have published in book form, but whom I have disregarded since their works, in regard to form and content, are of little significance in the study of Kurdish literature.

Since the focus of this essay is the Kurdish short story, I have excluded authors who wrote in other languages than Kurdish, in spite of being Kurdish themselves and writing about Kurdish society. Authors in this category in-

clude: ‘Abdul-Majīd Luṭfī (1905–1992), Muḥyī Al-Dīn Zangana (1940–2010), Maḥmūd Taymūr (1894–1973), Salīm Barakāt (b. 1950), and Zuhdī Dawūdī (b. 1940), who wrote in Arabic; ‘Alī Ašraf Darvīšyān (b. 1941), Mansūr Yaqūtī (b. 1948), Muḥammad ‘Alī Afġānī (b. 1925) in Persian; and Yaşar Kemal (1923–2015) and Yılmaz Günay (1937–1984) in Turkish.

In the analyses of the short stories, I have tried to point out the dominating subjects. Social and political conditions in Kurdistan have influenced the writers’ choices of subjects. During the 1940s and 1950s for example, when Iraq was a monarchy and indirectly controlled by Great Britain, the peasants’ and villagers’ struggle against feudal lords was a common theme. During the 1960s, subjects such as corruption and the oppression of women dominated. Later, authors focused on the Kurds’ fight for freedom, on philosophical and existential questions, on life in modern society, on sex, and on the problems of individuals. In addition, I have in the analyses discussed form and technique.

V

The system of transliteration that has been used in this essay to transcribe Kurdish, Persian, and Arabic names is indicated in a special table at the beginning of the essay. Kurdish names and titles that from the beginning were written in Latin letters, i.e. ones originating in Turkish Kurdistan, appear in their original form following the Hawar system, which largely corresponds to the system used in the Turkish alphabet. No significant abbreviations have been used. All dates are according to the Julian calendar. In a few cases, the Hijri calendar has been compared to the Christian calendar.

All quotations found in this essay have been taken from short story collections and from novels in book form, not from any possible earlier publication in a newspaper or magazine. In cases where it has been important from a historical standpoint to establish a date, I have referred to the date of first publication.

هه و النامهى كتيب

I. Historical and Bibliographical Background

A. Early Prose

For hundreds of years, poetry was the dominant genre in Kurdish literature. Not before the beginning of the 1800s did prose begin to appear. Even if the examples from that period are very few, they are essential for establishing when the Kurdish short story came into existence. It is important to note in this context that all the dates for the earliest occurrences of Kurdish prose, poetry, or short stories, are subject to change; this is because literature research is sensitive to political conditions. To take an example: until the 1970s, it was believed that the oldest Kurdish prose was that written by Šēx Ḥusain Qāzī (1790–1869). But an article by the Kurdish author Muḥammad Malā Karīm, published 1981, showed that Kurdish prose existed 40 years earlier than previously established. This change applied to the Kurdish short story as well.

The Kurdish prose texts that are important here are:

1) *‘Aqīda-y Kurdī* (Kurdish Confession of Faith). This is a religious text written by Mawlānā Xālid Naqšbandī Šārazūrī (1779–1827). In Mawlānā Xālid’s text, which he called both *‘Aqīdanāma-y Kurdī* and *‘Aqīda-y Kurdī*, he has described the foundations of Islam. It appears that Mawlānā Xālid wrote the text with the object of using it as a textbook. Since we know that he had numerous Kurdish students and disciples, it is probable that he wrote it while he still lived in Kurdistan. At the same time, it must be noted that most people in his circle were of other nationalities after he immigrated to Damascus. Therefore, it should be safe to assume that the text was written at some date between 1811 and 1823. It was published for the first time in 1981.¹²

2) *Mawlūd-nāma* (Book of Birth) by Šēx Ḥusain Qāzī. This story is about the Prophet Muḥammad’s youth, life, and battles. The text shows a high level of

¹² Malā Karīm, Muḥammad: *‘Aqīda-y kurdī-y Mawlānā Xālid-ī Naqšbandī, Govār-ī Koṛ-ī Zānyārī ‘Erāq* “Dasta-y kurd”, 8 (1981), pp. 199–222.

artistry and is written in elegant language. It has been used as a textbook in the mosques of Kurdistan. It was printed for the first time in 1935.¹³

3) *‘Ādāt ū Rusūmātnāma-ye Akrādiyya* (Kurdish Manners and Customs) by Malā Maḥmūd Bāyazīdī (1799–1867). This text is an anthropological article on manners and customs in Kurdish society but has literary qualities. It is one of the texts that Bāyazīdī left to the Russian Orientalist M. Alexandre Jaba (1801–1894). The text is preserved in the form of a manuscript in St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) and was published for the first time in 1963 by the late Kurdologist M. Rudenko.¹⁴

4) *Jāmi‘-ē Risālayān u Hikāyatān bi Zimān-ē Kurmānjī* (An anthology of articles and tales in Kurdish) by Malā Maḥmūd Bāyazīdī. The book contains five articles treating the various tribes’ situations in Kurdistan; the commonest men’s and women’s names; a brief account on Kurdish poets and their works; and a short description of Kurdish grammar. The second part of the book consists of 40 traditional Kurdish tales and legends. The author calls these *hikāyat*. Jaba, who translated the texts to French, translated the word *hikāyat* to “*récit*”, which in English corresponds to *account*, *story*, and *narrative*.¹⁵

5) *Tavārīx-i Qadīm-i Kurdistān* (The Early History of Kurdistan) by Malā Maḥmūd Bāyazīdī. This is an abbreviated translation of *Šarafnāma* by Šarafxān Badlīsī (1543–1604). Bāyazīdī delivered this text to Jaba as well. It was first published in 1986.¹⁶

6) *Paymānā Nū* (The New Testament). This is a translation of the whole New Testament into Kurdish. It was printed in Istanbul in 1872. It is worth noting that it was printed using the Armenian alphabet.¹⁷

B. Journalism

During the second half of the 19th century, many schools were opened in the part of Kurdistan controlled by the Ottoman Empire. The central purpose of these so-called *Ruṣḍīya*-schools was to educate military personnel, but it was thanks to them that so many Kurdish youths later on traveled to Istanbul to continue studying. For the diverse peoples of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul

¹³ Qāzi, op. cit.

¹⁴ Bāyazīdī, Malā Maḥmūd: *‘Ādāt u Rusūmātnāma-yi akrādiyya*, ed. M. B. Rudenko, Moscow 1963.

¹⁵ Jaba, M. Alexandre: *Recueil de Notices et Récits Kourdes*, St.-Pétersbourg, 1860.

¹⁶ Bāyazīdī, Malā Maḥmūd: *Tavārīx-i Qadīm-i Kurdistān*, ed. K. K. Kurdoev & Z. S. Musaelian, Moscow 1986.

¹⁷ *Paymān-ā Nū* (The New Testament), Istanbul 1872.

was then an important cultural and political center for intellectuals and political activists. Beside these official schools, the religious schools, the mosques, had an essential role in disseminating knowledge, educating young people, and preserving the Kurdish language and culture.¹⁸

At the end of the 19th century, Istanbul became a meeting place for many students, public officials, and politicians.¹⁹ This led to the rise of an aware and intellectual elite who had the ambition of acquainting itself with cultural developments in Istanbul and consequently with the culture and civilization of Europe. During the 1830s to the 1870s, a series of Kurdish revolts had failed. This elite wanted to learn from these events, the better to organize themselves and to develop a new strategy for continuing the struggle. Among other things, they planned to start newspapers in Kurdish.

Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd’s regime, which dawned in 1876, was blood-stained, corrupt, and tyrannical. The Sultan resisted democracy, he resisted increased freedom, and he resisted every sort of reform. As a result, the first Kurdish newspaper could not be given out in Istanbul. The first issue of the newspaper *Kurdistān* was published April 21, 1898, by Miqdād Midḥat Badirxān, in the capital of Egypt, in Cairo. But not even in Cairo did the newspaper escape Turkish persecution. Between April 1898 and April 1902, thirty-one editions of the newspaper came out, and were published in different cities: Cairo, Geneva, London, and Folkestone.²⁰ The publication of the newspaper *Kurdistān* marks the beginning of Kurdish journalism; and since then, hundreds of Kurdish newspapers and periodicals have come out both in Kurdistan and in foreign countries.

Following the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish intellectual elite, which had had Istanbul as its center, returned to Iraqi Kurdistan. In this part of Kurdistan, Šēx Maḥmūd Ḥafīd (1882–1956) led the Kingdom of Kurdistan during two periods: November 1918 to June 1919, and December 1922 to July 1924. In the independent state of Kurdistan and later, following its annexation by the newly created state of Iraq, Kurdish journalism prospered greatly. Education in Kurdish was permitted in certain parts of Iraqi Kurdistan, but the extent of the area where this was allowed was determined by the relative strengths of the Kurdish liberation movement and the central powers in Baghdad. The Iraqi regime committed itself to granting these cultural rights when southern Kurdistan was annexed. Given these new conditions, the Kurdish intellectual elite initiated many new activities; this in turn laid the foundation for the

¹⁸ Aḥmad, Kamāl Mazhar (Dr.): *Tēgayišṭin-ī Rāstī w Šōn-ī la Rožnāmanūsī-y Kurdīdā*, Baghdad 1978, p. 50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66

vital role that Iraqi Kurdistan came to play. Journalism's successes affected the art of the Kurdish short story; and the emergence of the Kurdish short story was a direct result of Kurdish journalism.

C. The Modern Storytelling

1. A Tentative Start (1913–1939)

Every researcher who has considered the Kurdish short story regards it as having connections to European literature. The same view is most likely valid for many other cultures in the Orient; the reason for this is that what we today call a “short story” is a European art form which came to the peoples of the Orient by way of translations and which subsequently affected their literature.

Kurdish authors' contacts with European literature and journalism transpired by way of Turkish, Persian, or Arabic, since it was only at the end of the 1800s that Kurdish journalism came into existence; and it would be another two decades before books in Kurdish began to appear.²¹ 'Umar Ma'rūf Barzinjī tells us that “as their source of inspiration, Kurdish authors and intellectuals in the beginning of this century had foreign languages and literature, particularly Persian and Turkish literature; and, influenced by these, they chose their subjects and styles.”²²

Following the fall of the Bābān principality and until the end of the First World War and the formation of the independent kingdom, Kurdistan was a part of the Ottoman Empire; and therefore cultural life was dominated by the Turkish language and Turkish literature. Teaching in the few public schools was conducted in Turkish. The small number of Kurdish authors and intellectuals who then existed acquired their knowledge via Turkish. Dr. Mārif Xaznadār sums up: “When the Kurdish short story came into existence after the First World War, authors had no experience of writing short stories. The source of their knowledge, especially in southern Kurdistan, must have been short stories written in Turkish or European short stories which had been translated to Turkish.”²³

Another decisive factor in the birth of the Kurdish short story is of course Kurdish journalism. Kurdish magazines and newspapers, beside their role as disseminators of knowledge and political thought, were of great significance in the development of culture. This is why 'Umar Ma'rūf Barzinjī can write

²¹ Narīmān, Muṣṭafā: *Bibliogrāfyā-y Kitēb-ī kurdī 1787–1975*, Baghdad 1977, p. 4.

²² Barzinjī, 'Umar Ma'rūf: *Lēkolīnawa w bibliogrāfyā-y Ćirok-ī kurdī 1925-1969*, Kurdish Science Academy, Baghdad 1978, p. 30.

²³ *Ćirok-ī halbižārda*, ed. Dr. Mārif Xaznadār, publ. by *Rož-ī Kurdistān*, Baghdad 1976, p. 7.

“The emergence of the Kurdish short story is directly connected to the founding of Kurdish newspapers and magazines.”²⁴ This truth becomes plain when we note that, of the 1,100 short stories published 1925–1975, 800 of them were published in newspapers or magazines. The implication is clear: “The Kurdish short story and the means of spreading them remained tied to Kurdish journalism.”²⁵

The relationship between journalism and the short story is not only a cultural or historical question, but also in some degree a question of technology. Poetry, which had been the dominant genre, spread quickly, since people knew the poems from memory. It was a different situation with the short story; because of their form and length, they had to be printed.

A reading of short stories from this period reveals a continuous thread running from the rich legacy of folk tales and folkloric epics to the modern Kurdish short story. The influence of traditional folk tales is evident in the language and structure of the short stories. Dr. ‘I. M. Rasūl has commented regarding this: “Modern Kurdish short stories are not simply an extension of Kurdish myths, nor are they a paraphrase of European literature; rather, they are a creative synthesis of our people’s oral and written heritage with other peoples’ modes of expression.”²⁶

I think that during the first period, folklore exerted a greater influence than European short stories did. In certain examples, there is an obvious imitation of, and continuation upon, the traditional tales and stories. And it has not been demonstrated that authors from this period were aware of the European art of the short story, not even by way of translations. At this point, no short stories had been translated to Kurdish. The first translations of short stories to Kurdish were made in the 1940s and their influence can be seen in the short stories from that period onward.

Short stories from this period, which stretches over 27 years, are generally characterized by their hesitating start. Their qualities vary naturally in form and content; this can be traced to each writer’s political and cultural background.

Until the beginning of the 1980s, every study regarded 1925 as the starting point for the Kurdish short story; but when previously published issues of the periodical *Rož-î Kurd* were reprinted, the debut of the short story had to be moved to a point 13 years earlier. In numbers One and Two of this maga-

²⁴ Barzinjī, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁵ Sa‘īd, Nūr al-dīn Muḥammad: *Al-Qiṣṣa al-Kurdiyya fī Multaqā Şalāḥ al-dīn, Al-‘irāq*, 764 (Aug. 28, 1978), p. 3.

²⁶ Rasūl, ‘Izz al-Dīn Muṣṭafā (Dr.): *Ārā’ fī ‘l-Qiṣṣa al-Kurdiyya, Al-Aqlām*, 2–3 (Feb.-Mar. 1984), p. 113.

zine, there is a short story with the title *Ĉīrok* (the Kurdish term used both for ‘narrative’ and ‘short story’) by Fu’ād Tamo.²⁷ At the end of the second part of the short story, published in the magazine’s second issue, is the note “To be continued”, but there is no continuation in the following issue. This three-page short story is a poor text in every way, and its only historical value consists of the fact that it was published first. Otherwise, it contributed nothing to the art of the short story.

Following this short story, we have to wait until 1925 for the publication of the next Kurdish short story, i.e. *La Xawmā* (In My Dream) by Jamāl Šā’ib (1887–1951), who is rightly credited as being the founder of the Kurdish literary short story. This short story was first published in serial form in the magazine *Žiyānawa* (Revival) and later in the magazine *Žiyān* (Life). It was published in 23 installments (18 of which in *Žiyānawa* and 5 in *Žiyān*) during the period July 1, 1925, to July 29, 1926.²⁸ The last issue carries the text “To be continued”. In spite of the fact that the author lived many years following publication of the short story, he neither wrote any new short stories nor published this story in book form. It was only in 1975, on the 50th anniversary of the first publication, that Jamāl Bābān had it printed as a book.²⁹

Many researchers regard this short story as incomplete, considering the note at the end. No continuation followed, even though the periodical continued to come out. The publication of the short story in book form in 1975 was based on the author’s manuscript, but not even then was any text added. I believe that it was the author’s intention to refrain from continuing the short story, and that as a result, the short story is more refined.

He could have made his story complete by adding just one sentence; the narrator could for example have said, “and then I awoke.” That this did not happen has to do with the short story’s contents, the time for its publication, and with Jamāl Šā’ib’s life and opinions.

Ironically, the first Kurdish literary short story levels criticism against the first king and against the first independent kingdom in Kurdistan’s modern history. Jamāl Šā’ib devoted the entire story to attacking Šaix Maḥmūd Ḥafīd and describing his time in power as a blood-stained dictatorship – or an unpleasant dream. This hostile attitude toward the King of southern Kurdistan, as Šaix Maḥmūd was called, was caused by diverse personal and political factors that we need not study in detail here. The fact that the short story was published in *Žiyānawa* explains a good deal. According to Ḥusain ‘Ārif, the magazine was a tool with the mission of making propaganda for Great Brit-

²⁷ Xaznadār, Jamāl (publisher): *Rož-ī Kurd*, Baghdad 1981, pp. 41–42 and 76–77.

²⁸ ‘Ārif, Ḥusain: *Ĉīrok-ī Hunar-ī Kurdī 1925–1960*, Baghdad 1977, p. 14.

²⁹ Šā’ib, Jamāl: *La Xawmā*, ed. Jamāl Bābān, Baghdad 1975.

ain. Its pages were full of articles praising Great Britain's so-called "compassionate defense of Kurds' rights".³⁰

Celadet Alī Bedirxan (1893–1951) was a productive linguist and journalist. With affection, he dedicated his life to the development of different aspects of Kurdish culture. He gave out the magazine *Hawar* (Cry). In the fourth issue, Bedirxan published a short story with the title *Bar Tavnā Meh̄fūrē* (In Front of the Weaving Frame), which is one of the first short stories in Kurdish literature; whether regarding language, form, or content however, it is not one of the best. In this short story, Bedirxan relates how the Kurds suffered defeat after Turkey crushed Šaix Sa'īd's revolt in 1925. A bright spot in the narrative is the political optimism and belief that Kurds must acquire education and knowledge as stable stepping-stones on the road to freedom.³¹

The short story *Masala-y Wiždān* (A Question of Conscience) by Aḥmad Muxtār Jāf (1897–1935) is one of the most successful short stories of this period. But it did not receive its rightful place in Kurdish literature because it was written in 1927–1928 and then lay as a manuscript until 1970 when it was published as a book.³² Until publication of the book, A. M. Jāf was known as a patriotic poet; with the publication of the short story, he stood out as a keen-sighted and clever short story writer. Like Šā'ib's short story, this one too is unfinished; but the plot shows that the story could have been made longer. It seems as if the author was unable to bring the tale to its conclusion.

In contrast to Šā'ib's short story, *Masala-y Wiždān* is a revolutionary and radical short story. The author is extremely critical of the Iraqi and British regimes and their officials. He exposes and condemns the corrupt bureaucratic system established by the English colonizers in Kurdistan following their destruction of Šaix Maḥmūd's government. In the conflict between, on the one side, the poor oppressed people and farmers, and on the other side, the corrupt people in power and the ruthless, greedy feudal lords, A. M. Jāf chose the former without hesitation. His attitude means all the more when we consider that he was a prince, the son of Wasmān Pāšā Jāf. He was part of the same administration as *Qā'im-maqām* in Halabja. A. M. Jāf also took a clear-cut position as a revolutionary and patriot in his poems.

The Poet Pīramērd (1867–1950), an avant-garde intellectual also known as Hājī Tawfīq, was active and influential in several areas: as journalist, translator, poet, folklorist, and author of plays. He also wrote short stories. One respect in which Pīramērd differed from other authors was that he embraced

³⁰ 'Ārif, op. cit., p. 15.

³¹ Bedirxan, op. cit.

³² Jāf, Aḥmad Muxtār: *Masala-y Wiždān*, ed. Dr. Iḥsān Fu'ād, Baghdad 1970.

the historical short story. His historical works consist of *Duwānza Suwāra-y Marīwān* (The Twelve Horsemen of Marīwan) and *Mam u Zīn* (Mam and Zīn).³³ Besides these two works, Pīramērd wrote a few short stories which were published in newspapers and magazines, but which never were given out in book form.

Another short story author of this period is Muḥammad ‘Alī Kurdī (1898–1957), who in the mid-1930s published a short story and a novel. The short story *Duwā-y Sarxošt-y Zor Šētīya* (The Folly of Drunkenness) was published in *Diyārī-y Lāwān* (The Gift of Youth, Baghdad 1934), and three installments of the novel *Nāzdār* (Nāzdār) appeared in the magazine *Rūnākī* (Light 1936). The magazine was banned, and consequently there was no continuation of Muḥammad ‘Alī Kurdī’s novel. Until the present, no manuscript has ever been found.³⁴

2. The *Galāwēž* Generation (1939–1949)

During the 1930s up to the end of the Second World War, Kurdish political movements had made great advances. The *Hīwā* party and later the Democratic Party of Kurdistan were founded in Iraqi Kurdistan; in Iranian Kurdistan, the establishment of *Komaḷa-y Jiyāndinawa-y Kurdistan* (Union for Kurdistan’s Revival; popularly known as *J.K.*) was followed by that of Kurdistan’s Democratic Party. The high point was the time for the Bārzān revolts 1933–34, 1943, 1945 and the constitution of the Democratic Republic of Kurdistan in Mehābād in 1946. During the same period, Kurdish culture grew in vitality. In the beginning of the 1930s, a Baghdad group of Kurdish authors and students published a literary anthology: *Yādgār-ī Lāwān* (The Memory of Youth, 1933) and *Diyārī-y Lāwān* (The Gift of Youth, 1934). Clubs and associations for cultural policy were founded. In December 1939, the first issue of the magazine *Galāwēž* (Sirius) came out. *Galāwēž* is regarded, even now, as having been the best and most substantial of Kurdish magazines. Published until September 1949, *Galāwēž* had a great influence on the development of the Kurdish short story.

In Iranian Kurdistan, *J.K.* and the Kurdistan Republic had two objectives in the sphere of culture: to educate people and to develop Kurdish culture. From the beginning of the 1940s until the fall of the Mahābād Republic in December 1946, a range of newspapers and magazines were published, and many books were printed.

³³ Pīramērd, Hājī Tawfīq: *Duwānza suwāra-y Marīwān*, 1st ed., Silēmānī 1935, 2nd ed. Silēmānī 1959; *Mam u Zīn*, 1st ed., Silēmānī 1934, 2nd ed. Silēmānī 1968.

³⁴ ‘Ārif, op. cit., p. 45.

To entice the Kurds and simultaneously reduce the influence of Communism, colonial powers England and France began to express an interest in Kurdish culture, and to use Kurdish for propaganda purposes. The English embassy in Iraq gave out the periodical *Dang-ī Gēti-y Tāza* (The Voice of the New World) from 1943 to 1947; and in Palestine they established a Kurdish division at their Near East radio station. The French allowed, and even financed partly, a few Kurdish publications to come out in Syria and Lebanon. The aim of some of these magazines was to carry on propaganda for the Allies and provide news from the war: *Hawar* (Cry) 1932–43; *Ronahī* (Light) 1942–45; *Roja Nū* (New Day) 1943–45; and *Sitēr* (Star) 1943–45.

During its ten years of publication, the magazine *Galāwēž* laid the foundation for the modern Kurdish short story. Both the owner and the editor of *Galāwēž* worked deliberately to develop the Kurdish short story. On the one side, they encouraged and published the works of Kurdish authors; on the other side, they had foreign short stories translated to Kurdish. In the 105 issues which came out during the magazine's ten years, 114 short stories were published; of those, 82 were translated and 32 were written by Kurdish authors.³⁵

The most well-known authors whose works were translated and published in *Galāwēž* were Guy de Maupassant, Oscar Wilde, Honoré de Balzac, Anton Chekhov, Maxim Gorky, Leo Tolstoy, and Ilya Ehrenburg. At the same time, the poet Pīramērd translated the novel *Kamānčažan* (The Fiddler) via Turkish to Kurdish – without stating the name of the author³⁶ – and published it in 1942. The poet Gorān (1904–1962), who during the war years worked at the Kurdish radio station in Jaffa (Palestine), translated several short stories and used to read them on the air. Later he had them published in a book (1953). In the foreword to this anthology, which contains nine short stories, he wrote about the objective of his translations: “My intention was to use the radio broadcasts to cooperate with the magazine *Galāwēž* and try to establish and develop the art of the Kurdish short story. Like the authors at *Galāwēž*, I felt that the shortest route to that end was to first translate some short stories from other languages.”³⁷

There are a few other authors who belong to the *Galāwēž*-generation; the most famous among them are ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Sajjādī (1917–1984), Ibrāhīm Aḥmad (1914–2000), who was the magazine's publisher and editor, and Šākīr Fattāḥ (1914–1988). All three chose similar topics for their short sto-

³⁵ ‘Ārif, op. cit. p. 56–57.

³⁶ In recent years, some Kurdish critics have written about this short story and attributed it to H. C. Andersen (1805–1875). During a close examination of Andersen's authorship, I did not find any novel or tale by this name. Pīramērd notes in the foreword to his translation that the Turkish version had been translated from German.

³⁷ Goran: *Halbižārda la Ćīrok-ī Kurt-ī Bēgāna*, p. 5.

ries; but they differ from each other in regard to finding solutions to problems and the conclusions they draw.

In his short stories, Šākir Fattāḥ described the social problems and shortcomings of his time. He wanted to expose public officials whose goal was to make money through bribes and to steal from the people. He wanted to expose religious leaders (priests and sheiks) who exploited religion to delude people and let them remain uneducated. In other short stories he told about the life of a destitute person without work; or took up the question of traditional marriage, in which the man and the woman never meet until the day they marry. He was a religiously colored reformist: in the struggle between good and evil, heaven and its justice clearly have their roles to play. The unrighteous is punished and in the end justice is done. Šākir Fattāḥ published a collection of ten short stories in *Šabanga Ba Rož* (Sunflower, 1947). In addition to these, he also wrote short stories which were published in other periodicals.

‘Alā’ al-Dīn Sajjādī’s short stories make it clear that he was well acquainted with Kurdish society and the daily lives of villagers and peasants. Skillfully, Sajjādī shows how, in a system like the one in Iraq of that period, officials and oppressors worked in collusion: the policemen, the chief of police, the mayor, the village *aga*, the feudal lord, the nomad tribe’s chief, and the chief of the settled clan. He showed how the burdens of oppression and injustice weighed heavy on the shoulders of the villagers and peasants, who were thus deprived of a decent life. Sajjādī doesn’t offer a ready solution, but he propels the plot brilliantly so that, parallel with the development of the narrative, even casual readers find themselves increasingly sensitized to the author’s issues. At the end of the short story, the reader draws clear-cut conclusions. One of Sajjādī’s recurring themes is the courage and bravery of the Kurdish people, whether it be a political champion or a hero known in his clan for his solid morals. In the short stories *La Pēnāwī ‘Āfratā* (For the Sake of the Woman) and *Jawhar ‘Āgā* (Jawhar the Agha), Sajjādī provides a romantic description of heroic courage, bravery, and skill in horseriding. Sajjādī collected his short stories and in 1960 published them in a book with the title *Hamīša Bahār* (Marigold, or Eternal Spring).³⁸

The most radical author is Ibrāhīm Aḥmad (1914–2000). Like Sajjādī’s tales, his short stories take place in a village and peasant environment. Unlike Sajjādī however, Aḥmad appears to lack intimate knowledge of the villager’s life. The author tells in his short stories about government officials and the corruption of both high and petty civil servants, about oppressed women, and about complicity between the chief of police and the feudal lord. In contrast

³⁸ Sajjādī, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn: *Hamīša-bahār*, Baghdad 1960.

to Fattāḥ and Sajjādī, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad suggests solutions, often through his hero's voice at the end of the short story. The solutions are radical. He doesn't believe in half-measures or compromises. He is aware that the system will never change by simply replacing one corrupt official with another, or through the rehabilitation of a single individual. "The well water is muddy, and the house is rotten all the way down to the foundation. To clean the water and build up the house again requires the organized and earnest cooperation of wise people with strong arms." This is the conclusion drawn by a poor farmer in one of Aḥmad's short stories.³⁹ Having been subjected to oppression and cruelty, Aḥmad's tormented heroes draw stark conclusions: "The source of all this tyranny and pain is our lack of awareness, our disunity, and our ignorance."⁴⁰ It was not until 1959 that Ibrāhīm Aḥmad gathered and published his short stories.

The magazine *Hawar*, which was published in Damascus, came out during three different periods due to the shifting political situation in Syria. Issues 1–23 came out between May 1932 and July 1933; numbers 24–26 come out between April 1934 and August 1935; and issues 27–57 were released between April 1941 and August 1943.⁴¹

Like the magazine *Galāwēž*, *Hawar* had a great influence on Kurdish culture. The writers at *Hawar* also chose – though perhaps with less purposefulness – the same two-pronged approach for developing the Kurdish short story as did the staff of *Galāwēž*. Those two paths were: to author stories themselves; and to translate stories from other languages.

Hawar's third period of publication, 1941–1943, was the richest in regard to the art of the short story. Some of the most important short story writers during this period were Qedrīcan (1916–1972), Bişarē Segman, Fuad Cemīl Paşa, Osman Sebrī (1905–1993), and Nūredīn Zaza (1924–1988).

Osman Sebrī used his short stories to discuss numerous subjects, e.g. the typically Kurdish belief in supernatural beings, and treats them in a satirical way. One example is the belief that the devil can wake the dead and transform them into evil people. Even relatives become filled with fear and flee. In other short stories, he portrays the Kurds' struggle for independence, or hunting traditions in Kurdistan.

Among the short story authors at *Hawar*, it was N. Zaza who wrote with the greatest consciousness, and who attempted to write in a more modern fashion than his colleagues. He was also the most productive writer. The content

³⁹ Aḥmad, Ibrāhīm: *Kōrawarī*, 1st ed. Baghdad 1959, 2nd ed. Mahābād 1982, p. 46.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴¹ Bakir, Muhammad: *Hawar, Kovara Kurdī* (new edition), Vol. 1, Stockholm 1987, p. VII.

of Zaza's short stories lies reliably between two poles: the Kurds' devotion in the fight for independence; and the struggle for education and knowledge, especially for the youngest generation. In the short story *Xurşid*, a villager brings his son up in a modern fashion and does everything in his power to provide him with an education. Even following his son's death, he dedicates his life to, and sacrifices his fortune for, the purpose of educating the children of the village under the tutelage of the village mullā.⁴²

In the short story *Gulē* (Gulē) Zaza tells the story of a woman who was forced into marriage against her will. Finding her husband repulsive, she kills him one day and flees to another man – a robber – whom she joins to live with in the mountains. The villagers speak insultingly of her, and consider her a whore. Even Gulē's new husband, Qoço, abuses her; but she fancies him nonetheless. She stays with him and they live this way for several years. When the enemy invades the area one day, the robber is transformed into a hero; he leads the youth of the area in the battle against enemy forces. One night, Gulē is seen coming back from enemy territory; they conclude that she has betrayed them and has guided the enemy to them. Now she is guilty of yet another crime. Qoço kills her. The battle continues, and the Kurds seize enemy territory. The truth about Gulē emerges: "The enemy officer's head was cut off and the room was covered in blood. A dagger lay shining on the bed. Qoço took the dagger. It was the dagger he had given Gulē. In the dead officer's knotted fist was a tuft of Gulē's hair, swaying in the wind."⁴³

3. Popular authors (1950–1969)

Many political changes took place during the years 1950–1969. The Kurdish Democratic Republic in Mahābād fell at the end of 1946; and with its disappearance, an important center for the Kurdish independence movement and for Kurdish culture was lost. At the end of the 1940s, the Kurdish independence movement and other elements of opposition in Iraq were on the defensive in the face of the regime's political aggression. The regime had the Barzānī families moved to southern Iraq and imprisoned their leaders; and in spite of the promised amnesty, Kurdish officers who returned to Iraq after the fall of Mahābād were executed. Political parties were crushed, and their leaders were imprisoned or executed.

During this period, the Kurdish press could not escape the regime's repression. The magazine *Galāwēž*, which for ten years had quickened Kurdish culture, ceased publication in 1949. Until the mid-1950s, there was only one weekly publication, *Žin* (Life), which occasionally published a literary piece.

⁴² Zaza, Nūredīn (=Nūredīn Usif): *Xurşid*, *Hawar*, 27 (April 1941), p. 10.

⁴³ Zaza, N., *Gulē*, *Hawar*, 29 (June 1941), pp. 8–9.

After a few years in retreat, the Kurdish liberation movement and other political coalitions began once again to organize and prepare themselves for a renewed struggle. Battles and other actions directed against the monarchic Hashemite regime in Baghdad intensified. Cooperation between oppositional political parties led to the creation in 1957 of The National Front.

The opposition's advances compelled the regime to allow the renewed publication of certain newspapers and magazines. Among other periodicals given out during 1957–1958, *Hîwā* (Hope) and *Şafaq* (Dawn) had a positive effect on Kurdish culture. Translations of foreign literature were published during these years as well. The most significant works to be translated were written by Voltaire, Shakespeare, and Gogol.⁴⁴

The struggle and the resistance led to the fall of the monarchy, and a republic was proclaimed in Iraq on July 14, 1958, under the leadership of 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim (1905–1963). Once the monarchy was overthrown, a relatively democratic regime came to power. The new regime granted the Kurdish people the same rights as the Arabs had, and enshrined those rights in the constitution. The Kurdish press was legalized and it experienced a new period of freedom.

Several newborn Kurdish publications came into print during the new regime's first three years; but this relatively democratic period came quickly to a close. After making vain efforts to solve problems with peaceful and democratic methods, the Kurdish independence movement initiated an armed struggle in 1961. This fight for freedom, begun in 1961 under the leadership of Muştafā Barzānī (1903–1979), continued – with occasional lulls during negotiations – until 1975.

This 20-year period was favorable for the Kurdish short story. What strikes us first upon studying this period is the remarkable growth in the number of short story writers. If during the *Galāwēž*-generation there were only three outstanding authors, then this new period offered at least ten with singular characteristics and who with their works enriched Kurdish literature. Beyond that, another roughly ten writers met with less success. A few of them soon ceased writing completely.

Compared with the previous period, authors now chose from a much wider field of subject matter. The subjects which had dominated the short story in the 1940s, such as the oppression of peasants and women, remained; but writers began take up new themes as well. Authors no longer tarried in the countryside among the peasants and villagers, but began to direct attention to the city as well. The two most central themes are: the political struggle, in-

⁴⁴ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. V, 1981, p. 483.

cluding resistance to the regime; and spotlighting the Kurdish national question as a source of both oppression and struggle. In addition, the subject of Kurdish history received a good deal of attention.

The level of artistic skill varied considerably among authors; Muṣṭafā Ṣāliḥ Karīm and Jamāl Nabaz, to take two examples, wrote short stories that exhibit a higher level of artistry than the ones which the *Galāwēž*-generation produced. However, certain other writers of this new period told their stories in such a simple way that they sometimes just end their tale with advice and instruction.

The change of regime in Iraq and the subsequent years of relative freedom could have offered an opportunity for an increase in the quality of the Kurdish short story, but no such improvement manifested itself. The change in regime did open the way for the publication of several works that had been written earlier but that, due to censorship, could not earlier have been published. Authors' choices of themes remained the same. It seems that the change in regime had caught the short story writers by surprise. The only new subject was the revolution, the republic, and "the sole leader". Some short stories, which appeared during the first year following the change of regime, discuss the new regime openly and describe how happy people are over the ensuing "paradise". Often, the short story's hero gives an animated speech and exhorts the people to defend the new republic with their blood. This new theme did not result in any successful short stories, but did result in numerous texts devoid of artistic and esthetic values.

Muḥarram Muḥammad 'Amīn (1921–1980) used his short stories to describe the lives of poor city-dwellers. In certain of his short stories, he leaves questions unanswered – such as why a man and his wife die quickly after one another – and this is decidedly a shortcoming in his writing.⁴⁵ One of his short stories is a superb tale about the distress and anxiety of a Kurd and a Romany; both are stateless.⁴⁶

Muḥammad Mawlūd (1927–1987) wrote under the pseudonym Mam. He was familiar with the life of the poor, both in the villages and the cities; this was a solid base from which he depicted many aspects of Kurdish society. Another group providing focus in his stories are students, who are either described as poor people or political champions. The issue of nation and the liberation movement also constitute important subjects in Mam's short stories.

⁴⁵ Amīn, Muḥarram Muḥammad: *Mām Homar*, Hawlēr (Arbīl) 1954.

⁴⁶ Amīn, M. M., *Ādamīzād*, Silēmānī 1969.

Muṣṭafā Sāliḥ Karīm (b. 1931) was one of the most literary of this group's writers. In the beginning he chose to write about the countryside, but it is obvious that he was not really familiar with rural life. In many of his short stories, he portrays dramatic incidents that add nothing constructive to the plots; but Karīm thought the devices could attract readers. It is possible that such twists of plot fascinated readers in the 1950s. In Karīm's longer short story *Šahīdān-ī Qalā-y Dimdim* (The Martyrs of the Dimdim Fort), the self-sacrificing fight for liberty and independence, and the heroism of the Kurds' forefathers, are brought to life. He wrote on this subject to provide the young generation with positive role models.⁴⁷

Jamāl Nabaz (b. 1929) has only published one long short story: *Lalo Karīm* (Uncle Karīm). Otherwise he is known as a linguist and political debater. In this long short story, Nabaz describes the lives of peasants under the oppression of feudal lords. The subject matter is the same as used by other writers, but this story is successful particularly for its artistic qualities. The language used in the story is a pure and literary Kurdish, although the author was less successful in capturing the peasants' idiom in the dialogues.⁴⁸

Jamāl Bābān (b. 1927) chose the same path as many other writers. His short stories are artificial attempts at describing the lives of farmers and villagers. He also describes the oppression of women; his first long short story *Xānzād* is devoted to this subject.⁴⁹ Bābān's stories are artistically weak and his language is not particularly refined.

The Journal *Šafaq*, which first appeared in January 1958, presented an important initiative when, in their second issue, they announced a competition that would award prizes for the three best short stories. More than 30 stories participated in the event. First prize was awarded to Ḥusain 'Ārif for his short story *Čā-y Šīrīn* (Sweet Tea). It was thanks to the competition that this very talented and creative writer was discovered. However, after his debut short story for the contest, it was several more years before he published another significant story. Since 1970 and up to the mid-1980s 'Ārif was, however, a short story writer of central consequence.

In the beginning of the 1960s two short story writers from Iranian Kurdistan became known to the Kurdish public, viz. Ḥasan Qiziljī (1913–1984) and Raḥīm Qāzī. Ḥasan Qiziljī was one of the most active writers during the time of the Mahābād Republic. After the fall of the republic he, like many other authors and political activists, was forced to flee to Iraqī Kurdistan. Kurds lived under oppression there as well; and he found life just as difficult in his

⁴⁷ Karīm, Muṣṭafā Sāliḥ: *Šahīdān-ī Qalā-y Dimdim*, Silēmānī 1960.

⁴⁸ Nabaz, Jamāl: *Lālo Karīm*, 1st ed. Hawlēr (Arbīl) 1956, 2nd ed. Stockholm 1986.

⁴⁹ Bābān, Jamāl: *Xānzād*, Baghdad 1957.

new environment. Living in fear of the Iraqi police, Qiziljī was compelled to accept diverse jobs under false names. His life as a vagabond, hungry and living clandestinely, became a rich well of experience to draw from. When it comes to style, language and literary form, Qaziljī is the most advanced of all the writers of this period. Qiziljī spices his stories with satire and caricature. He was very deliberate in his choice of subjects for his short stories. In this regard he can be compared to ‘Āla’ al-Dīn Sajjādī, although the latter wrote fewer short stories. Qiziljī’s short stories were published in book form in 1972.⁵⁰

Raḥīm Qāzī published only one long short story, *Pēšmarga* (Kurdish guerilla soldier; literally “one who faces death”), which can perhaps be considered a novel. In his story he chose to describe a new epoch in the history of the Kurdish people. His own family played an important role during this era and he himself was a witness to many of the events during 1940–1946, the climax of which was the formation of the Mahābād Republic.⁵¹

Among the writers of this period, these three authors deserve attention: Kāwūs Qaftān (1933–2007), Muḥammad Sālīḥ Sa‘īd, and Mārif Barzinjī (1921–1963). Barzinjī took up new themes and introduced an innovative writing style. Although few of his works have been published, the reader is quickly aware of Barzinjī’s talent. One subject he chose concerns religion, particularly the orders of the sheiks. He took a negative view of them, even though he himself came from such a family, which indeed was well known all over Kurdistan. Barzinjī was also a revolutionary and was politically active. The Iraqi regime executed him in 1963. His complete works – including seven short stories, several articles, poems, plays, and translations – were published by his children in 1993.⁵²

In September 1961 – after the persecution and arrest of Kurdish political activists; after the banning of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan and the suspension of its party organ; after the regime betrayed its promises of rights for the Kurds – an armed struggle began in Kurdistan. Kurdish literature now faced severe constraints. Nearly all Kurdish newspapers and publications were banned. From 1962 until 1966, no independent Kurdish newspaper or periodical was published at all. Nonetheless, there were two or three “periodicals” and publications from a high school in Sulaimānī or from a city council in Arbīl, and with only one number per year at that. The magazine *Tūtīn* (Tobacco) was given out in three languages: Arabic, English, and Kurdish.

⁵⁰ Qiziljī, Ḥasan: *Pēkanīn-ī Gadā*, 1st ed. Baghdad 1972, 2nd ed. Baghdad 1985, 3rd ed. Aras publishers, Hawler 2010.

⁵¹ Qāzi, Raḥīm: *Pēšmarga*, 1st ed. Baghdad 1961, 2nd ed. Mahābād 1980, 3rd ed. Aras publishers, Hawler 2008.

⁵² *Sarjam-ī Barhamakan-ī Mārif Barzinjī-y Šahīd*, Hawlēr 1993.

The eight-page newspaper *Al-Axbār* (The News) offered one page in Kurdish.⁵³ The number of Kurdish books available shrank considerably. During these five years, only 39 books were published in Kurdish.⁵⁴ From mid-1961 until mid-1967, no short story of consequence came out. These were the darkest years in the modern history of Kurdish culture.

4. A New Generation (1970–)

In the middle of the 1960s, the Kurdish liberation movement had become such a powerful military and political force that the central Iraqi government could not disregard it. There was a schism in Kurdish movement in 1964, but in spite of this, people gave the movement increased support. It had become power to reckon with, and it could affect the course of politics in the whole of Iraq. A basic requirement for any Iraqi central government that desired stability was a regard for the Kurdish independence movement. During the whole decade of the 1960s, different Iraqi regimes tried negotiating with the Kurds in order to consolidate the regime's influence; to win time, they offered cease-fires in 1963, 1964, and 1966.

Beginning in 1967, the Iraqi regime pursued a new policy toward the Kurds. This policy was the result of negotiations conducted in 1966 that resulted in the so-called June-66 Declaration. The armed struggle and the resurgence of Kurdish mass media in the liberated areas forced the regime to accept concessions. Beginning in 1967, a number of newspapers and magazines received license to publish. The most important of these were: *Birāyī* (Brotherhood), *Rūnākī* (Light), *Rizgārī* (Liberation), and *Bayān* (Dawn). These periodicals gave attention to Kurdish short stories. Hardly an issue came out that did not carry a short story. Some modern short story writers made their debut in these publications, e.g. Aḥmad Muḥammad Ismā'īl, Ra'ūf Ḥasan, and Ṣadr al-Dīn 'Ārif. This period saw the publication of several collections of short stories which in their form and content show them to be successors to the literature of the 1950s and early 1960s. We can see endeavor toward modernization in some short stories, but the attempts are awkward. In spite of its limited extent, this literary activity sowed the seeds of the cultural explosion which took place in Iraqi Kurdistan beginning in 1970.

The Iraqi regime that seized power in July 1968, like its predecessors, needed to buy time; to that end, it began negotiations with the Kurdish movement in mid-1969. An important result of the negotiations was the peace covenant known as the March 11th agreement. The settlement was significant both politically and culturally, and marks the start of a new cultural period.

⁵³ Aḥmad, K. M., op. cit., p. 227.

⁵⁴ Narīman, op. cit., p. 5.

Two points in the cultural sphere were of central importance for the development of Kurdish culture:

(a) the renaissance or creation of Kurdish cultural institutions, e.g. the union of Kurdish authors; the science academy; the education council; the Kurdish cultural association; the TV station in Kirkuk; and the Kurdish departments at the universities of Baghdad and Suleimānī;

(b) the publication of a relatively large number of newspapers and periodicals, in Kurdish, and treating many different subject areas. In addition, civil bodies such as student organizations were now permitted. Authors began to write and publish in large scale. A few dozen young poets and authors made their debut during this period.

As early as the spring of 1970, Kurdish readers began to encounter a strong new current of modernism in both poetry and prose. This modernist movement gave rise to a literary debate in newspapers and at literary gatherings and seminars. Never before had Kurdish culture experienced such an intense discussion. The debate centered upon the basic questions of literature and the theories surrounding them; about attitudes toward the heritage of older literature and folklore; about imitating or being inspired by foreign literature; symbolism as opposed to realism; and similar questions. There were animated discussions about the newly published texts among opponents and defenders of the new authors. The debate continued for a long time and resulted in wide acceptance of the new generation.

The new literary movement of the 1970s saw a renewal of styles and subject matter, but the number of new writers was limited. The already established authors now wrote in new ways and with renewed vigor. Among the active authors who were viewed as representing the new generation, only five or six had not published any works before 1970.

The number of published works increased rapidly; this was because the number of newspapers and magazines multiplied, and the opportunities for printing and publishing books grew. This new generation, also known as “the seventies generation”, continues to play a leading role.

The period 1975–1978 was one of decline for Kurdish culture: it was a victim of the regime’s oppression and censorship. No publications had been banned, but Kurdish writers were under such pressure that they no longer could express themselves freely. The Kurdish press was full of articles and translations dealing with the Baath party’s ideology. These four years were full of misfortune for culture in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Several authors belong to this new generation. Some had made their debut before 1970, either in book form or with single short stories in newspapers or magazines. The authors of this generation were not a homogenous group in regard to age, subject matter, or the style of their work. The common denominator for this otherwise diverse group of authors is that they endeavored to renew the Kurdish short story through experimentation with new styles and new content. Parallel with the new generation, writers from earlier generations (the *Galāwēž*- and the 1950s-generations) continued to produce new works. Certain of these even tried to renew themselves and once again gain popularity; one such writer was Muṣṭafā Sālīḥ Karīm.

This modernization led on the one hand to the creation of many and fine new works, and to the abandonment of older styles of expression; and on the other hand, it led to many authors' imitation of European literature, albeit a body of literature which Europeans themselves considered *passé*. Because of this, these authors' works often seemed strange to Kurdish readers and did not appeal to Kurdish sensibilities. Soon enough however, many of these authors presented new and better works, and found their literary voices.

The most widely known writer of this period was Ḥusain 'Ārif (b. 1936). His debut, as mentioned earlier, was in a 1958 competition organized by the magazine *Šafaq*, in which his short story "Sweet Tea" was awarded first prize. In 1959, he published a small collection of short stories with the title *La Koṛ-ī Xabātā* (On the Field of Battle). The book, consisting of four short stories, was a political work full of praise for the new Iraqi republic. Up until the beginning of the 1970s, 'Ārif published a few short stories in newspapers and magazines.

It was not before the 1970s that 'Ārif was recognized as a talented story teller. He was one of the people who from the very beginning took part in the debate about renewal and modernism. Simultaneously he published his own stories, and those fueled the debate and led to further discussion. Since 1970, 'Ārif has published three collections of short stories, three novels, a book about the Kurdish art of storytelling, a bibliography, and dozens of articles and translations.⁵⁵

'Ārif's short stories – which I here also let represent others of this generation – differ in several regards from the short stories of earlier generations. The plots in his stories are played out primarily in cities, and the characters are drawn from different classes. This is the first measure taken by 'Ārif to break with the traditional subjects that dominated the short stories of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. 'Ārif often chooses to make a Kurdish intellectual the protagonist of his short

⁵⁵ For a comprehensive list of Ḥusain 'Ārif's works, please consult the bibliography at the end of the essay.

stories. The choice of an intellectual as the main character allows an author to describe his own inner anxiety and gives him an alter ego who can examine philosophical questions. It is evident that through the characters in his short story, an author can express his own thoughts and values.

Husain 'Ārif does not avoid sexuality in his short stories. In some of his stories, sex is part of the daily life of his characters; in others, it is the theme of the story and is presented as the primary force behind people's actions.⁵⁶

With 'Ārif and other writers of this generation, the freedom fighter is not the same character as in the 1940s and 1950s. The hero in the short stories of that period fought against feudal lords, who were symbols of the regime and of colonial powers. At the end of those short stories, the hero often was in prison (as with Ibrāhīm Aḥmad or Muṣṭafā Sāliḥ Karīm), or he was in handcuffs and on his way to prison (as with Mārif Xaznadār). This picture of the political activist shifts during the 1960s to an insightful person who desires to organize and enlighten the people. In the stories from the 1970s, the hero has reached an even higher level of consciousness, and this leads him/her to new methods. Sometimes it is armed struggle. He/she directs the struggle and is the superior power against the occupying forces. This type of hero can be found in short stories by A. M. Ismā'īl (b. 1943), Ra'ūf Bēgard (b. 1942), H. 'Ārif, Muḥammad Mukrī (1943–2012), etc. The enemy is no longer the bureaucratic police chief who was satisfied to put the Kurd behind bars for a few years, or to have him whipped. The conflicts now became more complex, such as those between occupiers and the occupied, or between colonies and colonists. Punishments and methods of repression also changed character; now it was economic blockade, diverse kinds of torture, executions, the mass burial of living people, etc.

Other short story writers who were active in this period, beyond the ones named above, were 'Abdullā Sarrāj (b. 1937), Muḥammad Rašīd Fattāḥ (b. 1941), Kākamam Botānī (b. 1937), Muḥammad Farīq Ḥasan (b. 1941), Salām Manmī (1937–2014), Tāhir Ṣāliḥ Sa'īd (1941–2016), 'Abdullā Agrīn (b. 1942), and several others.

In contrast to the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan, the atmosphere in Turkish Kurdistan during 1975–80 was characterized by openness. In spite of the articles in the constitution prohibiting the use of the Kurdish language, the Turkish regime chose largely to ignore the publication of Kurdish-language literature. During this relatively relaxed period, bilingual (Kurdish and Turkish) magazines came out, e.g. *Rizgarī* (Liberation), *Özgürlük yolu* (The Route of Independence), *Roja Welat* (Day/Sun of the Country), and *Tīrēj* (Rays of Light). In addition, new books in Kurdish were printed, and books

⁵⁶ 'Ārif, H.: Šafaq, in *Čīrok-ī Halbižārda*, Baghdad 1976, pp. 3–6.

which previously had only been published abroad were printed in new editions. The period of openness ended abruptly with the military coup of September, 1980. In Turkish Kurdistan, two short story writers are particularly prominent, i.e. M. Emīn Bozarslan (b. 1935) and Flīt Totanī (born 1945; pseudonym for Mehmet Gemicī. When publishing poetry, he uses the pseudonym Rojen Barnas.)

Bozarslan's short stories are traditional in regard to both content and style. An equivalent to his short stories can be found among the works of 1940s and 1950s authors in Iraqī Kurdistan. Bozarslan tells stories against the backdrop of the countryside. In his short stories, he focuses on underdevelopment, analphabetism, poverty, and belief in ancient myths. Strangely enough, Bozarslan makes no space in his short stories for the peasants' and villagers' struggle against feudal lords, even though this theme was still current in Turkish Kurdistan roughly until the end of the former century. In some stories, he deals with the oppression of Kurds, or with the brutality of the Turkish police and gendarmes. Regarding style, it seems that the author has not made any attempt to employ new techniques and forms, but rather has used a traditional expository style.⁵⁷

Flīt Totanī chose a style that is rather unique among Kurdish short story authors, namely satire. The characters in his stories are primarily Kurds who live in cities. That they live in cities is solely a question of geography; in every other regard, they are peasants who have taken their customs and traditions with them to the city. The characters are in conflict with, and in opposition to, the state. The state is portrayed as being in its structure a modern institution, but in its way of thinking the product of a primitive tribal society. In the society that Totanī interprets, the state pursues chauvinistic and aggressive policies that cause people grief.⁵⁸

An author similar to Flīt Totanī in Iranian Kurdistan is short story writer Aḥmad Qāzī (1936–2015). Following the rise to power of the Islamic revolution in Iran, he published his first short story collection, consisting of six close-knitted short stories.⁵⁹ These short stories are a satire on social life, and are written in clean, literary language. It would appear that Qāzī was not familiar with earlier Kurdish short story writers; in regard to form, he seems mainly influenced by the Persian short story. This type of short story collection with several interwoven short stories is rare in Kurdish literature.

⁵⁷ Bozarslan, M. Emīn: *Meyro*, 1st ed. 1979, Istanbul; 2nd ed. Borås 1981; 3rd ed. Deng förlag, Uppsala 1995.

⁵⁸ F. Totanī published his short stories in the short-lived Kurdish periodical *Tīrēj* which came out with four issues during 1980–1981. These short stories were collected later and were given out in book form under his other pseudonym. See: Barnas, Rojen: *Hingē* (Then), Nüdem, Stockholm 1994.

⁵⁹ Qāzī, Aḥmad: *Bāqabēn*, Mahābād 1981

II. The Contents of the Kurdish Short Story

Kurdish short stories take up many different subjects, and taken together, these treat a great deal of the lives of the Kurdish people. For 60–70 years, short-story writers have dealt with wide-ranging historical, social, and political issues. The subjects can be divided into the following main groups:

- A. The History of the Kurdish People
- B. The Struggle of Peasants, Villagers, and Other Hard-laboring People
- C. The Kurdish Struggle for Liberation
- D. The Issue of Women
- E. Underdevelopment and Backwardness

Other more seldom-discussed subjects are platonic love, sex life, philosophical questions, and science fiction.

These various subjects have always been in a continual state of development and change. Some of them, e.g. the peasants' struggle against feudal lords, was a dominant theme until the end of the 1950s; but this subject was subsequently abandoned, following changes in the political structures in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. The political struggle and the Kurds' fight for freedom are reflected in literature from the beginning of the 1950s, and they continue to be vital subjects. The mode of expression has changed paralleling changes in the struggle for liberation. Social changes too were not the same in the 1970s and 1980s as they were in the 1940s and 1950s. Details of this will be developed into a clearer picture later in the chapter.

After a close study of the contents of the short stories, one can draw the following conclusions:

(1) The content of Kurdish short stories is closely tied to the history of the Kurdish people. In each epoch, political and social conditions have influenced short-story writers and have been reflected in their works. This does not mean that the Kurdish short story became politicized; rather, the choice of these subjects has been an expression of the authors' affection for their people and their country, and of their artistic consciousness within an underdeveloped and colonized community. But each storyteller has endeavoured to express his or views with an artistic voice. The balance between these two ambitions has not always been managed successfully.

(2) Kurdish short stories have their own style and standards of taste. This is true even when the short story takes up a subject that the Kurdish community has in common with other cultures.

(3) Classification of the short stories as listed above does not indicate that each text only treats one subject. In certain cases, both in short stories and in novels, the author discusses two, three, or more of these subjects. Yet there are short stories that focus on a single subject.

A. The History of the Kurdish People

The first author who deliberately chose the history of Kurdistan as the subject of his short story was the poet and journalist Pīramērd. He wrote some short stories, but none of them give evidence of his truly great talent in the subject. In his favour, one can count the literary language that he used in both his short stories and in his poems and translations. With his historical short stories, he also had moral, political and pedagogical aims.

Pīramērd wrote two historical narratives: “The Twelve Horsemen of Marīwān” and “Mam and Zīn”. The latter has often been seen as a stage play but, except for the instruction at the beginning or end of each chapter that the curtain should go up or down, it fulfils none of the requirements of a stage play.

In “The Twelve Horsemen of Marīwān”, Pīramērd utilizes an 18th-century event as the basis for his story. Twelve brave horsemen of the principality of Bābān battle against twelve thousand ‘Ajam horsemen (i.e. Iranians or Persians) in a night time attack and defeat them. Thanks to their attack, the independence of the principality of Bābān was preserved. In his story, Pīramērd had opportunities to describe various customs of the time, e.g. the court of the pasha, hunting traditions, hospitality, and the art of playing the drum. More valuable yet is his description of military tactics of the period.

To describe the courageousness of the Kurdish horsemen, Pīramērd uses the same device as Ferdausī (935–1020) did in his famous work *Šāhnāme*. First, Pīramērd praises the bravery of the Persian army: “Salīm Bag believed that when he attacked them, they would lose faith in themselves and fail, but this was not the case. Indeed, they struggled in a spirited and self-sacrificing way.”⁶⁰ This assessment of the enemy's army is simply a method of preparing the way for the true appreciation due the Kurdish horsemen, who finally are the victors of the war.

⁶⁰ Pīramērd, *Duwānza...*, p. 19.

Mam and Zīn is based on a folkloric epic which exists in several different versions; it is the same one upon which the poet Aḥmad-ī Xānī (1651–1707) constructed his famous work. Pīramērd utilized this epic and blended it with the experiences of another period in Kurdish history. He cast Mam as the son of the Šārazūr prince, while Zīn is given the role of the Āmēdī sovereign's sister.

Pīramērd authored his tale about 250 years after Xānī. A simple comparison demonstrates that Pīramērd's story, in form, content, and style, is a weak story. The sovereign in Xānī's story is a powerful, wise and competent sovereign, while Pīramērd's sovereign is weak, short-sighted, and filled with doubt. He is foolish and completely powerless. Similarly, while Xānī's Zīn is a mature and prudent princess and a faithful lover, the Zīn of Pīramērd's story is a nervous, half-crazy girl incapable of thinking beyond her nose. At times, she interferes in serious and political issues in a way that is inappropriate for a person of her station. In matters of love, she is gullible. Already in her first meeting with Mam, she says among other things "If God is willing and I become your wife, I promise you that I will give you a male heir and bring him up to fight for the Kurdish people. I desire nothing else."⁶¹

Similarly, conversation between Zīn and her servant Parīzāda is laboured and lacking in style. Zīn relates the history of her forefathers and their principalities in too great detail, and it is tiring.⁶² Parīzāda's dialog with Mam – a prince – is disrespectful, far from what is appropriate for a servant in Kurdish society. The elegant wording and the profound political and philosophical thoughts in Xānī's work are nowhere to be found in Pīramērd's story.

In contrast to Pīramērd, 'A. Sajjādī transforms history into attractive reading-matter, and brings it back to life in an imaginative and artistic form. In the short story *Jawharāgā*, Sajjādī tells about how Jawharāgā Šikāk (in other sources called Ja'far Āgā) was murdered by Iranians about 1906.⁶³ He was a patriot, a clan chief, and a Kurdish leader.

Sajjādī constructs his short story upon an account he received from his father, who was present in Tabrīz at the time of the murder. In contrast to Pīramērd, Sajjādī does not fill his short story with advice and moral lessons, but rather like a skilful film director he interweaves recollections with the historical event. The portrayal of the incident as a part of Kurdish history is objective. Martin van Bruinessen, a Dutch Kurdologist, refers to the incident

⁶¹ Pīramērd, *Mam u Zīn*, 1st ed. Silēmānī 1934, 2nd ed. Silēmānī 1968, p. 18.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶³ Sajjādī, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

in one of his articles and says that Jawharāgā “was invited to Tabrīz by the heir to the Iranian throne and was assassinated.”⁶⁴

Sajjādī gives a detailed description of commercial life at that time. He also spotlights the cowardice of those who murdered Jawharāgā as well as the courage of the two men who survived the massacre.

Short-story writers M. Ş. Karīm and R. Qāzī have employed two different periods in Kurdish history as the bases of their literary works published in 1960 and 1961 respectively. In “The Martyrs of the Dimdim Fortress”, M. Ş. Karīm tells of Amīr Xān Yakdast’s battles against Šāh ‘Abbās II (1585–1628), which took place in 1608 (1017 A.H.).⁶⁵ There are two main themes in the short story: the first deals with battles and the Kurds’ courageous resistance; and the second treats the love between Awdāl Bag the son of Amīr Xān, and his fiancée Viyān. These two themes run through the entire short story, intersecting at times, only to separate again. At the conclusion, the Kurds are defeated under the leadership of Amīr Xān, conquered by the forces of Qizilbāš following the occupation of the Dimdim fortress. Karīm wrote an epic-like work and consequently transformed the Dimdim event, which earlier had been retold among the people in a folkloric style, to an artistic literary work.

A weak point in the short story, in my opinion, is that the author allows the short story’s characters’ political consciousness to be so acute, that they, without hesitation, sacrifice themselves for Kurdistan. Mortally wounded and dying, Viyān says to Awdāl Bag, “... my life is soon extinguished ... but go now to your fortress and carry on the battle ... and take revenge.”⁶⁶

Dr. Raḥīm Qāzī’s long historical story *Pēšmarga* is an important example of a novel in Kurdish literature, even if the author himself has called it a short story. He has chosen to give an account of 5–6 years of modern history in Iranian Kurdistan. Qāzī’s style is simple and realistic, and this tends to limit his imaginative and artistic expressions.

More successfully than his predecessors, Qāzī has succeeded in moving the story forward, step by step; and he has managed well in integrating the characters into the plot. An obvious difference between his short story and other historical short stories is that, once he has chosen his subject, his characters, and their rolls, he proceeds to construct his story from a Marxist class perspective. Here, in contrast to Karīm’s short story about the Dimdim fortress,

⁶⁴ Van Bruinessen, Martin: “Kurdish Tribes and the State of Iran: The Case of Simko’s Revolt” in Tapper, Richard (ed.): *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*, London 1983, pp. 364–400.

⁶⁵ Karīm, M. Ş., op. cit. p. 57.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 79.

the aga has to be a cowardly, ruthless traitor, while the son of peasants is a courageous, patriotic revolutionary. In Karīm's short story, "the people" are the hero, even though he gives a lengthy portrayal of Prince Awdāl Bag and his fiancée Viyān who is from a lower class. The traitor is Maḥmūd Kēhakānī, who also comes from a lower class.

In certain parts of this work, Qāzi has overstepped the boundary between a historical short story as literary work and a purely historical account. He delivers historical facts, supported by dates and figures; and he blends them with the plot of the short story, which often disturbs the reader's line of thought. For example, he writes of conditions at the time when the first issue of the periodical *Nīštimān* came out; or about the poet Hēmin's roll during the period of the Mahābād Republic.⁶⁷

B. The Struggle of Peasants, Villagers, and Other Hard-laboring People

Kurdish society was, from the 1910s, when the Kurdish short story had its beginnings, until the end of the 1950s, a peasant society. The primary conflict was between peasants and feudal lords. Beyond these two classes there was also the mainly city-dwelling middle class group of traders and businessmen whose tyranny mainly struck peasants and villagers. Beyond these groups, there were other segments of society who chose sides (and thus class) in different ways. Examples of these segments are: clergy (*malā*) and students of religious studies; the learned people of the cities; the landless villagers; and jobless people in the cities. At the top of this pyramid of assorted classes and categories was the power of the state, with its old-fashioned and bureaucratic administration; with its corrupt, ignorant, and immoral officials; with its police force, its jails, and hundreds of methods of torture; and worst of all, numerous medieval laws which those in power interpret in whatever way it suits them, and which they themselves are the first to transgress.

Portraying these conditions, taking a position on what is happening in society, giving a voice to the oppressed, and then guiding them to revolt and change their lives – these are the central themes taken up by the Kurdish authors of the first three periods, ending at the beginning of the 1960s. It is rare to find a short story writer who has not dedicated at least one short story – if not a whole book of short stories – to this subject.

⁶⁷ Qāzī, R., op. cit., p. 101, 108.

If we attempt to chart these class conflicts as portrayed in Kurdish short stories, we can identify three main points:

- (1) The conflict between peasants and feudal lords (with their police and state support)
- (2) The conflict between peasants and officials, police, gendarmes, and the state generally
- (3) The conflict between peasants and the businessmen of the city

A common characteristic of all the Kurdish short stories that have treated this subject is that they have taken a clear position and are unwaveringly loyal. They support the peasants and villagers against the feudal lords, the police, and the regime. In short, they back the oppressed against the oppressors. As regards finding solutions however, the authors give differing views.

In “A Question of Conscience”, Aḥmad Muxtār Jāf reveals the details of the lives of peasants and toilers. The central theme of this story is how a poor young man is deformed as he climbs in the ranks of society, to finally reach the high administrative position of city mayor. In the course of the story, young Zorāb tries his hand at a range of jobs: apprentice to an ironsmith, carpenter, shoemaker, errand boy in a shop, inspector, writer, tax collector, and politician.

Zorāb is oppressed by others at the outset of the story and must accept sacrifice and hardships; but as time passes he is transformed and he himself takes on the role of oppressor. The narrator gives a portrayal of peasants and the city’s craftsmen, but also offers us a picture of the corruption of those in power. Feudal lords and businessmen are also part of the machinery. When the tobacco farmers come from their nearby villages to collect payment for the tobacco that the city’s businessman has bought, they get no payment other than the wrath of the businessman. To cow the peasants, the businessman – at whose office the narrator works as a bookkeeper – shouts,

Not a word more! – otherwise I’ll call the police and have you driven away! Go ahead and make complaints if you want to, but you’ll see what happens. The people who take your complaints drink coffee or tea in my *dīwaxān* [guest room] every evening.⁶⁸

In this author’s view, the path to success in Iraqi Kurdistan of the 1920s requires money and a readiness to ignore morals and conscience. This philosophy is so clearly and simply portrayed in the story that even common people can easily understand it. After trying his hand at several trades, Zorāb

⁶⁸ Jāf, A. M., op cit., p. 24.

begins to dream about a high post in public administration. He mentions this in confidence to a close friend, and this dialog ensues:

F. Dear friend, first tell me: do you have any money?

Z. Yes, enough.

F. Then it will be easy. But you must fulfill a few requirements.

Z. Such as...?

F. Be negative toward your countrymen, lie, and betray!⁶⁹

Accepting these terms for the sake of one's own benefit and advancement; and crossing the line between an honorable life and a life of treachery; – these are, according to the author, questions of conscience. A. M. Jāf's short story can very well be studied for its philosophical and ideological points of view.

The short story writers of the *Galāwēž*-generation dedicated most of their stories to the peasants' struggle. Each of the authors is, in his or her own way, fully aware of class conflicts and of the peasants' lives. Notable authors of this period are Š. Fattāḥ, 'A. Sajjādī and I. Aḥmad. In one of his articles, H. 'Ārif summarizes the contents of these authors' short stories:

In their finest and most well-known works, they focused on the oppression of feudal lords and on the reactionary power's working methods; those two forces worked together to put the yoke of terror, oppression, and slavery upon the shoulders of the people, particularly on the shoulders of the peasants. In spite of the fact that they took up other themes as well, e.g. the oppression of women, social problems, and lack of development, they still put their greatest priority on the conflict between peasants and feudal lords. All of them criticized and condemned conditions albeit in different ways."⁷⁰

The social position of the authors and their familiarity with peasant life are of great significance for the style in which they present the peasants' struggle. The positions they took are a clear expression of support for the peasants, but the authors' varying ideological backgrounds leads them to suggest different solutions to the problem. (This is discussed in detail in Chapter 1.)

Š. Fattāḥ, for example, chose to make "Mr. Boss" the central character of one of his short stories, and then proceeds to describe how Mr. Boss uses his

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 32–33.

⁷⁰ 'Ārif, H., *Al-Wāqī'yya al-ʔintiḳādiyya fī 'l-Qiṣṣa al-Kurdiyya*, *Al-Aqlām*, No. 2 (Nov. 1978), p. 116.

position to oppress the peasants, take everything from them, and quickly become a rich man.⁷¹

Sajjādī is one of the three authors who are best acquainted with the lives of the peasants, speaks their language, and describes their settings in a natural way. Beyond the feudal lords' and the state's traditional methods of exploiting the peasants, Sajjādī saw other small but significant sides to their relationships that his colleagues neglected. In the short story *Šāyīyaka-y Raša-y Xajalāw* (Raša-y Xajalāw's Wedding), the despotic and ruthless agha is transformed into a gentle, kind, normal person. To prove his friendliness, he pays visits to the villagers and takes part in the marriage of a simple peasant. Before long, the reason for the agha's transformation becomes clear: it is time for elections, and he wants to secure for himself a seat in parliament. He promises the peasants better tracts of land, schools, and new roads. He exaggerates his own importance as a member of parliament, and claims that without him the country will collapse. At the same time, Sajjādī demonstrates the peasants' foolishness in letting themselves be deceived by the agha's sweet words; they forget the past, and shout in unison, "May God preserve you for our sake!"⁷²

At the end of the short story, Sajjādī shows another side of the agha. He sits in parliament, silent, because he doesn't know a single word of the official language – Arabic. His duty is simply to always vote "yes".

I. Aḥmad uses the story of how Manūčar's donkey was stolen to expose the workings of public administration, the police, and armed forces. Authorities are never on the side of the people; they do nothing to help redress persons who have been wronged, but rather see it as their duty and objective to strip them of everything, to shut them up, and to leave them in a state of underdevelopment, poverty, and ignorance. If the people should ever reach a state of self-assurance, the situation would be dangerous.

The theme of the short story *Kōrawarī* (Misery) is the same, but here the writer has given a special roll to one of the peasants; the young man Sofī Ḥasan tries to rouse and awaken the peasants. He is imprisoned and tortured, but he finally explodes in wrath against M. Bag and the gendarmerie officer and exposes them using the most brutal kind of language. The natural result is that he is dealt more blows and torture; but the reader can sense the change in his consciousness and level of thought.⁷³

⁷¹ Fattāḥ, Šākir: Mudīr Bag: *Galāwēž*, No. 10 (Volume 4), Oct. 1943, pp. 64–71.

⁷² Sajjādī, op. cit., p. 49.

⁷³ Aḥmad, I., op. cit., p. 77.

This theme is found again in works of the following generation of authors, e.g. Jamāl Nabaz, R. Qāzī, Maʿrūf Barzinjī, and Ḥasan Qiziljī. The last-mentioned writer portrayed a range of laborers and oppressed persons in his short stories. Already at the beginning of his short story *Pēkanīn-ī Gadā* (The Beggar's Laughter), he takes Ḥama Raš, who has fled from hunger and poverty and been forced to leave his family, to the city and makes him a beggar. Through this character, Qiziljī shows us the life and suffering of another segment of society.⁷⁴

Among the new short story writers, Ḥ. ʿĀrif devotes some of his works to the lives of the poor and oppressed, but ʿĀrif's characters come primarily from the city. In *Xūyak-ī Pūč* (An Absurd Habit), he focuses on a beggar and a teahouse waiter. He contrasts these with an intellectual man who frequents the teahouse. This man's attitude toward the beggar is nonchalant; he puts several philosophical questions to the beggar – questions that clearly have been occupying his thoughts, such as: Why do you want to eat? Why do you want to live? At the same time, the intellectual doesn't hesitate to intervene when the waiter is hit. He interprets his own attitude as being “an absurd habit”.⁷⁵

The porter Mārif is the main character of *Nān u Kawar-ī Xönāwī* (A Bloody Slice of Bread and Celery). Step by step, the author traces his day as he toils at his work, carrying heavy loads for poor payment; Mārif longs for his wife and children, he longs for good warm food, and he dreams of providing fine warm clothing for his family.

One day, Mārif is shot and killed by an anonymous bullet. This is a common occurrence in the cities of Kurdistan when soldiers and other troops of the regime begin shooting without cause. Here too, ʿĀrif provides a philosophical framework for a person's suffering and pain. The short story's last scene is Kafka-like: “... the sun sank beyond the hills, the last prayer of the evening was called out and darkness fell, but the father didn't show up... The father was a dead body, covered with blood and tossed into the mortuary of the northern hospital... He had been thrown in there impassively.”⁷⁶

C. The Kurdish Struggle for Liberation

The theme of the Kurdish struggle for liberation can scarcely be found among the first short story writers or authors of the *Galāwēž*-generation. From the 1950s up to the present however, this is one of the Kurdish short

⁷⁴ Qiziljī, op. cit., p. 16.

⁷⁵ ʿĀrif: *Kiḷāfayak Žān-ī Tūra*, Najaf 1971, p. 59.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 66.

story's most significant subjects. The development and changes in the style of presenting this issue parallel the development and changes in the Kurdish people's struggle for liberation.

There are two different ways of approaching the subject:

- (a) Through a description of the oppression that the occupiers of Kurdistan subject the Kurdish people to, by denying their very existence, stripping them of their human and cultural rights, and meeting every sign of struggle for liberation with imprisonment, executions, and bombings.
- (b) Through the selection of a political champion as the lead character, who fights in different ways to liberate his people. The image of this political activist varies.

In the research and in the articles that treat the Kurdish short story, there is a total lack of studies examining the Kurdish liberation struggle as a literary theme. In fact, this is a measure of the importance of the subject, because the central power's censorship does not tolerate the subject – not even within the framework of a literary study.

The political champions of M. Ş. Karīm and M. Xaznadār are largely young educated people, that is, politically conscious and active students. In one of Karīm's short stories, a young man – Āmānj – and a young woman – Piršing – meet each other in Baghdad when he donates blood for her. They hadn't known each other earlier, but now they become comrades in the political struggle. Together they distribute political leaflets and organize the students. Their liaison lasts three years, during which time they commence university studies. They take part in demonstrations that the regime's police crush with tear gas, water cannon, and firing shots point-blank into the crowd. During one of these demonstrations, Piršing climbs up to the top of a bus; she is cheered and applauded as she speaks to the demonstrators. Āmānj watches her proudly, when suddenly she is shot – and dies.⁷⁷

Mārif Xaznadār's short story *Ba Āmānj Gayišt* (He Reached His Goal) portrays the story of the young student Diļsoz who enthusiastically takes part in political actions, but who is finally caught by the police and sent to prison in Baghdad.⁷⁸ Images of police officers, and handcuffed youths being sent from Kurdish cities to prisons in Baghdad, recur in Xaznadār's short stories. Once again, in *Sarīna Bor* (The Gray Pillow), the main character is a Kurdish student in Baghdad. On one of his trips from Baghdad to Kurdistan, he has with him a pillow and a blanket. The pillow is the most important object in the

⁷⁷ Karīm, op. cit., p. 96.

⁷⁸ Xaznadār, Mārif (Dr.): *Aḷamān Kurdī*, Baghdad 1969, p. 82.

short story: it is filled with political leaflets that the student is transporting to Kurdistan.⁷⁹

During the 1950s, the struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan was a political struggle. It usually consisted of organizing the people – particularly students, intellectuals, and white-collar workers –, distributing leaflets during national holidays, and organizing demonstrations against the Iraqi monarchy backed by England. The regime's police always kept their eyes on the students and viewed them as “anarchists”; they were persecuted, arrested, and jailed. These settings and characteristics are typical for the liberation struggle as portrayed in the short stories of the 1950s.

In *Kumē Tiftik* (The Felt Cap), M. Emīn Bozarslan introduces us to another kind of oppression, which is practiced in Turkish Kurdistan. In this story, a boy named Baran sings happily as he travels in to town wearing his typically Kurdish cap. In town, gendarmes appear, beat the boy, and cut the cap up with a knife; they do this to enforce a special law that forbids the wearing of such caps.⁸⁰

Ḥasan Qiziljī lived in Iranian Kurdistan until mid-1940; then he lived a rather long time in Iraqi Kurdistan. This gave him the opportunity to study the social and political conditions in two different sections of Kurdistan. In the short story *Tāj u Taxt-ī Köxā Homar* (The Village Elder Homar's Crown and Throne), the plot circles around the rebellion that took place at the end of the 1930s in the Sardašt area. The Shah regime's chauvinistic policies, and the tyranny of gendarmes and those in power, reached such a level that people could not bear it any longer. The Village Elder Homar of Sösna leads a rebellion against the state and kills several soldiers belonging to the force that had been sent to crush the revolt. The state is compelled to negotiate and accedes to the demand that troops be withdrawn. Instead, the state establishes a civil administration under the leadership of a certain Piziškiān. Only two years later the situation is intolerable again, and the Kurds rise up once more. One summer day in 1941, “Piziškiān and his soldiers returned from Mahābād, stripped of everything but their underwear; and from there they traveled to the Shah's capital.”⁸¹

Another kind of experience, which might be called interkurdish, is the subject of the short story *Šahīd-ī Zułma, Kifn u Šordinī Nawē* (He is the Martyr of Tyranny, and Therefore Needs Neither a Washing nor a Shroud). The economic situation in Iran in the 1950s was very poor. Many Kurds found it necessary to leave for the villages and cities of Iraqi Kurdistan in order to

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 107–111.

⁸⁰ Bozarslan, op. cit., pp. 15–19.

⁸¹ Qiziljī, op. cit., p. 51.

find jobs; but even here they were persecuted by the police and were arrested. After torture and imprisonment, they were turned over to the Iranian police, where even worse treatment awaited. After walking for several days, Habās arrives in a town in Iraqi Kurdistan. He goes directly to the mosque to rest a while. There he is warned to leave immediately, under the threat of being arrested. He departs reluctantly. The same day, he is found dead outside of town. The man who cares for the mosque wants to wrap the dead Habās in a shroud, but no one will help him. Finally, the caretaker takes him and buries Habās in the clothes he is wearing and says, “He is a martyr of repression, and therefore he needs neither a washing nor a shroud.”⁸²

The short story writers M. Mawlūd (Mam) and Dr. Kawūs Qaftān dedicated one short story each to the subject of conditions in Turkish Kurdistan. In the story *Agarēmawa Wiḷātim* (I Return to My Country), Mam has selected a stage far from Kurdistan. A young man, Ganjo, from a small village, is drafted for military duty and sent to the war in Korea in 1951. During a battle there, he becomes lost and ends up in China. He forgets his identity, and he finds the language incomprehensible. With the help of his hands and feet, he tries to communicate with Chinese peasants so that they will show him the way to Kurdistan.⁸³

In his short story *Baḷām Kurdim* (But I am a Kurd), which Qaftān wrote in Moscow in 1960, the stage is Berlin. The subject of the story, however, is a central tragedy of the Arārāt rebellion of 1928–1930. The narrator of the story is a Turk who is a refugee in Germany. He relates how he saw Turkish soldiers assemble all the children in a village and kill them while the wildest among the soldiers cries with joy, “Kill them! Otherwise tomorrow they will be grown-ups who go into the mountains to fight against us. Wipe them out!”⁸⁴

In 1961, the liberation movement in Iraqi Kurdistan entered a new period: the period of armed struggle. During this era, the various Iraqi regimes used an assortment of methods to crush the movement and destroy the Kurds: persecution, prison, torture, economic blockade, wholesale murder of civilians, bombing of villages and cities, leveling of whole villages, compulsory transfer of whole groups of people, sabotage of water supplies, clear-cutting of forests, and even the use of chemical weapons against civilian populations. If we seek a comprehensive picture of this situation in literature, we are bound to be disappointed. The fact that there is no such complete picture is not an indication of any lack of talent in the writers of the time; rather, the problem is that the events were so great and tragic and difficult to portray in

⁸² Ibid., p. 101.

⁸³ Mawlūd, Muḥammad (Mam): *Āīrokakān-ī Mam*, Baghdad 1970, p. 114.

⁸⁴ Qaftān, Kāwūs (Dr.): *Xor-ī Āwābū*, Silēmānī 1970, p. 81.

a literary work. Besides, any short story with the ambition of telling about the genocide would not stand a chance of being published in any part of Kurdistan. Yet this period is represented in the works of many Kurdish storywriters. The writers of short stories have exploited every opportunity to describe the enemy's terror, his own peoples' fight for liberation, and his or her own point of view. To avoid censorship, authors have often had to resort to the use of symbols, which for many readers have not been so easy to understand.

Ibrāhīm Aḥmad's novel *Žān-ī Gal* (The Suffering of the Nation) is one of the literary works that comprehensively treat several aspects of this period's first years. The novel stretches over a period of 11–12 years, but the most important section focuses on 1961–1963. Juwāmēr Bāyiz, the central character, leaves home to fetch a midwife for his wife Kālē who is giving birth. By chance, he is caught up in a demonstration and is wounded. He is arrested and the military court sentences him to ten years in prison. When he is released after ten years, he hopes to be able to meet his son Hīwā (Hope) and his wife. His heart is broken when the news comes that his village Guḷān was bombarded a few days earlier; no one had survived. Kālē and Hīwā had been there on a visit. The novel's climax is the last page, consisting of a letter that had been sent to Juwāmēr by his cousin Lāwa after Juwāmēr had joined the movement and become a *pēšmarga*. Lāwa reveals his secret: "I wanted to light up the dark night of your life and give you a ray of light in prison. I wanted to give you hope and a dream to live for." Then after a few lines, "Yes, brother Juwāmēr, Kālē died, but she died already in childbirth. Both she and the boy died the same day that you were wounded and arrested."⁸⁵

This novel is full of evidence that Aḥmad had developed in artistry and language, as well as in structure, compared with his first short story collection. By telling his story through a character like Juwāmēr, Aḥmad can illustrate the battle in the cities, life during the state of emergency, and experiences in prison; at the same time, he can describe conditions in Kurdistan's countryside during the war, the armed struggle, and the organization and administration that the revolutionary leaders had begun in the liberated areas.

Economic blockade is one of the methods used by the regime, particularly against villages that were under the regime's control during daytime, but which were under the control of the *pēšmarga* at night. During the state of emergency, even the most basic necessities of life could not legally be transported out of the cities. All vehicles that traveled from large cities to smaller cities and villages were inspected, and passengers were searched several times. This situation is the subject of two short stories by Mam and Ḥusain

⁸⁵ Aḥmad, I., *Žān-ī Gal*, Silēmānī 1972, p. 248.

‘Ārif. In Mam’s story, churchwarden Dinḥa – a Christian Kurd – has bought two bundles of multicolored candles, which his fiancée Šīrīn is going to light on the grave of Sūrāḥmān. The driver orders everyone to abandon any prohibited articles before they proceed.

“Sugar, tea, wheat, bread, medicine, pens, paper, lamp oil, candles... are forbidden and dangerous. The only things which are permitted are murdering people, setting houses on fire, and bombarding... and... Dinḥa felt his heart in his mouth when he heard the words *lamp oil* and *candles*.

“Are... candles forbidden too?” Full of fear, the driver whips around and screams:

“Candles...?! For God’s sake, didn’t I say that?... Candles are forbidden, oil, kindness, generosity, honor, conscience, compassion, feelings of brotherhood, all of this is forbidden on this road and onward to the mountains...”⁸⁶

When the driver says “on this road and onward to the mountains”, he means the areas that are under the regime’s control.

Ḥusain ‘Ārif’s short story with the title *Rūy Kirdawa Šāx* (He Made for the Mountains again) describes the same subject and setting. “Sugar, tea, vegetable oil, rice, – everything is prohibited! ... Don’t give me any problems! ... I’m going to search each and every one of you, said the slim shorthaired soldier who, with his Kalashnikov on his back, nearly frightened them out of their wits.”⁸⁷

If these two short stories had been written in Kurdistan in the 1950s, they would presumably have ended with some of the passengers being arrested and taken to prison. But conditions in the 1960s were different. Political consciousness had risen to a new level, and the struggle had taken a new shape. If a Kurd opposed the regime, it was not only the prison gates that were open for him. He also knew the way to the mountains and could join his people’s freedom fight. And this is exactly what the heroes of Mam’s and ‘Ārif’s stories do. Dinḥa, as well as the young man in ‘Ārif’s short story, cannot tolerate the situation any longer. Both make the same decision: to depart for the mountains.

Through their short stories, Mam and ‘Ārif and several others portray the genocidal environment: the burning of villages, bombardment, the murder of women and children, and the occupying forces’ many other forms of terror.

⁸⁶ Mawlūd, op. cit., p. 35.

⁸⁷ ‘Ārif, *Kilāfayak* ... p. 3.

The crucial complement in this equation was the resistance, revenge, and the heroic actions of Kurdish warriors – particularly the *pēšmargas*.

Beginning in the 1960s, the *pēšmarga* becomes a symbol for bravery, a messenger of happiness, national pride, and liberation. This image of the *pēšmarga* develops further when a *pēšmarga*'s martyrdom is imbued with religious and mythological aspects. Then *pēšmarga* is then transformed from a mortal being to a saint. In Kākamam Botānī's short story *Sēbar-ī Bar Sangar-ī Marg* (In the Shadow of the Trench of Death), the enemy demands that the wounded *pēšmarga* surrenders:

“This is your last warning! Put down your arms! Throw down your weapon and give yourself up!”

“Don't imagine for a moment that I'll ever do that. You are there, and I am here – with my last bullet and the only truth I could arrive at.”⁸⁸

At the conclusion of his short story *La Rožžimēr-ī Dēyak-ī Am Xuwāradā* (Diary from a Village in the South), A. M. Ismā'īl describes the graves of a *pēšmarga* and his mother. The *pēšmarga* died in an ambush, and his mother died of sorrow two days later. In this portrayal, the two graves are the only fine green spot on an otherwise dry, hot plain:

Let your hand shade your eyes against the harsh sun. As far as the eye can see, only dry red earth, sometimes whirling up toward the heavens. But there, at the far south end, you see the ruins of some twenty clay houses. To the right of them is a low hill with two graves on it. Above the graves are four or five thickets of reeds that shade them from the sun.⁸⁹

Short story writer Ra'ūf Bēgard presents this subject from another perspective. War causes many tragedies, but not only for the oppressed; is even the oppressor affected. But there is a key difference between the two: the one side is conducting a righteous war, while the other's war is unjust. In the short story *Rēgā w Hawār* (The Road and the Destination), a young Kurdish man, Farhād, and an Arab, Ḥusain, travel together in a minibus from Baghdad to Kurdistan. In the war – the war against the Kurds of course – Ḥusain has lost an arm and had it replaced with an artificial arm. In the evening, he is a guest in Farhād's home. Ḥusain is surprised during the visit, when Farhād shows him that he has lost a leg, and walks with an artificial leg.

“Me too... this happened to me in the war.”

“...!”

⁸⁸ Botānī, Kākamam: *Simkoḷ-ī Ahrīman*, Silēmānī 1973, p. 40.

⁸⁹ Ismā'īl, Aḥmad Muḥammad: *Čāwarwānī*, Baghdad 1981, p. 26.

“I too am very sorry that part of my body has died and been replaced with an artificial limb. The difference between you and me is that I know why it happened and I have no regrets.”⁹⁰

D. The Issue of Women

It is not common in an underdeveloped society to bring up the issue of women by itself as a question for discussion. In an underdeveloped society, social and political studies normally place priority on the questions of poverty, illiteracy, and disease. The primary struggle is the struggle of the people – including women – and their society against the colonial powers with their political, economic, and military hegemony; or else against the remaining expressions of colonialism and feudalism. The question of women as a separate item of discussion is taken up for serious debate only after a newly established state’s basic needs have been satisfied. At that point, the discussion revolves around whether women should have full equality in the new civil society, and be permitted to take part in all of life’s activities; and whether women’s rights shall be enshrined in the law of the land. This is not to say that the various political parties ignored the question during the period before liberation. Most – or perhaps all – political parties working for liberation have, in spite of being dominated by men, taken a position on women’s liberation and have spread knowledge on the subject.

In a society of the Kurdish kind, with its oppressed and colonized community in the third world, it is understandable that the women’s question is scarcely done justice; but political parties and organizations have in varying degrees taken up the question. Writers and intellectuals have given attention to this question. A positive point in this connection is that the Kurdish woman always has had a stronger position than her sisters in the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish societies, and that she has had greater freedom. Many travelers and Orientalists who have visited Kurdistan have confirmed this.

As early as the 1940s, Kurdish short story writers took up the question of women and presented from various aspects. The subject has developed in parallel with changes in society. There are many different images of women in the Kurdish short story, but generally women have been cast in three principal roles:

- Women as victims of oppression
- Women as wives and lovers
- Women as liberation fighters

⁹⁰ Bēgard, Ra’ūf, *Hawār*, Baghdad 1981, p. 103.

Naturally, women in Kurdish short stories are also portrayed in other roles as well, but in those cases they are not portrayed as having problems peculiar to women. The Kurdish short story offers illustrations of another traditional conflict – also to be found in the epics and folk tales of other peoples –, namely the conflict between a woman and her mother-in-law.

In his short story *La Pēnāw-ī Āfratā* (For the Woman's Sake), 'A. Sajjādī shows us clan life with all of its customs and traditions – customs and traditions that are obstacles to women's freedom. Guḷandām becomes a victim of her father's greediness, and it is for her sake that her seven brothers, her father, and her lover Samsām are all killed. Like an experienced connoisseur of Kurdish society, Sajjādī has in this short story assembled several aspects of clan tradition that have to do with women. Traditions in clan society are rigidly conformed to, and are illustrated in Sajjādī's story following these rules:

1. An uncle's daughter must marry with another uncle's son. Such a son has the right of priority to marry her.
2. The dowry demanded for a bride is so high that the young man cannot pay it.
3. Kidnapping of the bride: Samsām is forced, after many attempts at negotiation with his uncle, to run away with Guḷandām.
4. The taking of revenge – thus averting shame – to reestablish honor. The girl's father and brothers must redeem themselves from disgrace by killing the kidnapper and the girl.
5. The girl is faithful and keeps all her promises.

Even though Sajjādī ambitiously brings all of these traditions into his short story, he does it so skillfully that the story never suffers. He uses the story to describe the natural surroundings, horsemanship, and other remarkable facts. From start to finish, the short story is like a moving picture. The only witness to survive the bloody tragedy concludes the story this way:

Until now, I have lived for Samsām's sake. My father did this for the money. From now on, I belong to the earth. She took her father's sword – the sword which had killed Samsām – and, before I could ask "What are you doing?", she cut her throat and fell over Samsām's body; there they embraced each other for eternity.⁹¹

The image of the woman as an oppressed person, whether she is oppressed by the other sex or by social traditions and customs, occurs repeatedly in the works of different writers. In most cases, this oppression is presented within

⁹¹ Sajjādī, op. cit., p. 32.

a framework of social, political, and economic conditions, and with regard to the level of underdevelopment permeating society.

In the short stories of the 1940s and 1950s, the starting-point for most stories about women was the theme of compulsory marriage, in which money plays an important role. There are several different forms of compulsory marriage. The commonest is the situation in which the woman is in love with one man, while her father forces her to marry another. This other man can be a rich man, an agha, a feudal lord, an older man, or even a young man whom the girl does not like. Another form of compulsory marriage is like an exchange of goods: two men reach an agreement to marry each other's sister or other relation. It may happen that the one couple cannot proceed with marriage, and that forces the other couple to break off their union. A third type of problem is polygamy, which often leads to chaos in the family.

For stories taking place in periods when clan and feudal conditions governed life, the issue of women was presented within that framework. In the 70s and 80s, when social circumstances shift; when official law gives only partial protection to women and their rights; and when the number of educated women increases, – then the treatment of the women's issue changes too.

I. Aḥmad, a writer of the 1940s, describes the woman in his short story *Xāzē* in the framework mentioned above. A father marries off his daughter to an old but rich man. Her misfortune begins at the same moment that she is married off.⁹² Another stage of the story concerns her escape to the home of the agha. When the agha gives her as a gift to another man, and when her brothers take revenge – all this is just a logical consequence of the original problem.

M. Emīn Bozarṣlan dedicated three of his short stories to women and their situation in northern Kurdistan. The women in his stories are villagers who have many heavy daily chores; they are mothers with many children, and beyond that they have to help the men with the farm work. In *Zavayē dehsalī* (The Ten-Year-Old Bridegroom), Bozarṣlan illustrates the problem in the same manner as the short story writers of southern Kurdistan. A rich man takes the village's most beautiful girl as a wife for his ten-year-old son in spite of the fact that the girl is in love with someone else. With the power of money, the father's strictness, and the permission of the *mullā*, the girl marries. But she then leaves the ten-year-old bridegroom and his family to elope with her lover, and creates a great scandal.⁹³

⁹² Aḥmad, I., *Kōrawarī*, pp. 47–56.

⁹³ Bozarṣlan, op. cit., p. 53.

The image of the oppressed woman is the most common one in Kurdish short stories. But the opposite exists too: the portrait of a woman as an oppressor with a heart of stone. Š. Fattāḥ constructed one of his short stories around the relationship between a ruthless, deceitful woman and her elderly, frail mother-in-law.⁹⁴ In his short story *Būbūm ba Dir̄k-ī Mam u Zīn* (I Was the Thistle of Mam and Zin), J. Bābān described one woman's tyranny and cruelty toward her stepdaughter.⁹⁵ In both short stories, the characters playing opposite the wicked women are foolish men who can't see the truth, or who come to realize that they have walked into a trap.

M. Farīq Ḥasan made religion the subject of his short story *Xāč* (The Cross). A Muslim man and a Christian girl love one another, but religion is an obstacle for them. The author's point of view is evident at the conclusion of the short story, when Šērwan says, "I must meet her this evening and make her understand... that it is human beings who set limitations, and human beings who can eliminate them."⁹⁶

Another image of woman is the political warrior, who along with the men fights for liberation and takes part in political activities. This kind of woman's role can be found in many of M. Š. Karīm's works. In his short story from 1958, *Piršing* (referred to earlier) takes an active role in organizing students, spreading leaflets, and finally participating in a great demonstration when she is shot to death.⁹⁷ In another work (1976) of the same author, *Tazū-y Xam La Goranī-y Diḏārakāndā* (The Quaking Sorrow in the Lovers' Songs), a Kurdish man and woman meet in Cairo and fall in love. A short time later the woman, Nērgis, is kidnapped by two men who drive her away in a black car (an indication that the Iraqi security organization is involved). The same day, they throw her inside the door of her apartment – a dead body.⁹⁸

A very expressive short story, illustrating the fate of a woman within the framework of a people struggling for freedom, is M. Š. Karīm's *Rašpošēk-ī Jihān-ī Čuwāram* (A Fourth-World Woman Dressed in Black). Šiwān and Sīrwān become close friends and meet often, since they are both members of a secret organization. Šiwān falls in love with Niyān, Sīrwān's sister, and they marry. Later on, something the men had discussed – and that had always scared Niyān – happens: both men are arrested and executed. Niyān doesn't get the bodies back. She becomes a young black-clothed widow who lives with many memories of her husband and her brother.⁹⁹ The woman in

⁹⁴ Fattāḥ, Š., *Būk u Xasū: Galāwēž*, No. 5 (Vol. 5); May 1944, p. 18–21.

⁹⁵ Bābān, Jamāl, *Sayyid Kaḷak*, Baghdad 1969, p. 18.

⁹⁶ Ḥasan, Muḥammad Farīq: *Sēbar-ī Aspa-Šē*, Silēmānī 1978, p. 39.

⁹⁷ Karīm, M. Š., *op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁹⁸ Karīm, M. Š., *Rašpošēk-ī Jihān-ī Čuwāram*, Baghdad 1984, pp. 61–72.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 129–144.

this story doesn't play a direct role in the political struggle, but she suffers because of her relationship with Šiwān and Sīrwān; her life becomes an endless tragedy.

Ahlām Maṣṣūr (1951–2013) was a woman writer, who began to author short stories in the mid-1970s. It might be tempting to believe that Kurdish women, their lives and struggle, would be portrayed best by a woman author; but Maṣṣūr's short stories are similar others of that period and don't deal especially with women. In *Faqē 'Abās u Dīmanēk-ī La Yādnaçū* (Faqē 'Abās and an Unforgettable Sight), she tells the story of a warm and strong love relationship, followed by the woman's compulsory marriage. The story's presentation is in the same style as used by writers of the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁰⁰

Prostitutes appear seldom in Kurdish short stories. None of the most important writers have taken up this subject. The reason for this, in my opinion, is because prostitution is a relatively unusual phenomenon in Kurdistan. The unfaithful woman does make an appearance in a few short stories. Ra'ūf Ḥasan, for example, focuses on this subject in his short story *Bibūra Māl-ī Janābtān Nīya* (Excuse Me, This Is Not Your Home). To justify the woman's actions, the author applies the idea of equality – or rather an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth – as the basis for discussion. When the husband travels to other countries for pleasure and amuses himself with numerous women, his wife back at home does the same thing with an assortment of men. Actually, their problems began when their marriage was arranged, instead of being based on love and trust. Before Nāzdār angrily breaks off the conversation with her husband, who had called from another country, she tells him the bitter truth:

Yes, my dear husband, I am tired after the night before last, and all the nights before that. But I'm probably not the only one who's tired. I am sure that you are more sick and tired than I am. Our poor health is an epidemic that began the first time we met, and it has infected us completely. You have to find your solution, and I have to find mine.¹⁰¹

Writers often took up women as subject matter during the second and third periods, but authors of later periods gave very little space to the subject. I believe there are two reasons for this. First, changes in social and political conditions gave women a new position and value in society, and also gave them a new set of problems. Second, the wholly dominant conflict is between the Kurds and the occupants of Kurdistan; and to the degree it is taken up, the issue of women is treated within that framework.

¹⁰⁰ Maṣṣūr, Ahlām: *Pird*, Baghdad 1981, pp. 3–22.

¹⁰¹ Ḥasan, Ra'ūf: *Sibaynē Bāwkīt Dētawa*, Baghdad 1979, p. 39.

E. Underdevelopment and Backwardness

The aspects of underdevelopment that short story writers illustrate, criticize, and attempt to find solutions for, lie on two levels:

- On a personal plane, dealing with gambling, thievery, excessive use of alcohol, miserliness, fraud, etc.
- On a broad plane, where the main subjects are: how religion is used to delude and exploit people; and belief in supernatural beings.

The authors who take up subjects on this personal plane always choose a particular occurrence as the start of the story, and then describe a bad habit such as gambling, thievery, etc. The core purpose of the short story is to give advice and guidance.

Kawūs Qaftān portrayed the life of a rich but stingy man. He is so rich that he owns half of the stores and half of the buildings in his city, but he has forbidden his wife and children to invite guests for tea, not even those who have come to condole with his family. In the end, his house burns up and he dies of sorrow.¹⁰²

Jamāl Bābān criticized and debunked gambling. A young man gambles and loses everything he has inherited from his father. His beautiful young wife is forced into the company of people who gamble, and in the end he loses her too.¹⁰³

Ḥ. ‘Ārif describes a more modern form of gambling in *Races La Xönyānā Ažē* (They Have Racing in Their Blood). The story is full of names and terms from the world of horse racing, but ‘Ārif’s purpose and object is, like so many other writers, to offer advice at the conclusion. “Whoever wants to take part must understand from the beginning that he may be forced to sell his wife too.”¹⁰⁴

More than anyone else, short story writers Ḥ. Qiziljī and M. E. Bozarслан understand how religion can seduce people, and how belief in supernatural beings affects people. *Nūštaka-y Āmīna Xān* (Āmīna Xān’s Amulet) and *Xamḷ-ī Pamū* (The Cotton Tax) are two short stories in which Ḥ. Qiziljī shows that religion is an anti-democratic force. In the first story, Āmīna Xān succeeds her father as the inscriber of amulets for the villagers in spite of her being illiterate, and thus she makes herself a fortune. The second story deals with a sheikh who altered his position on questions whenever it benefited him. On the one hand, he wants to keep Sofī Nāmiq’s loyalty; but on the

¹⁰² Qaftān, K., op. cit., p. 65.

¹⁰³ Bābān, J., Sayyid... p. 44.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Ārif, Ḥ., *Kilāfayak*... p. 44.

other hand, he doesn't want to lose Zorāb Bag's friendship. Zorāb Bag has advised him not to stand up for the subordinates, since the sheikh is a land-owner too. The sheikh wants to convince Sofī Nāmiq that he should pay his tax, and the sheikh indicates that it is foreordained by God that Sofī will pay. Sofī Nāmiq is respectful of his sheikh, but is not prepared to obey in this case:

Sofī Nāmiq kissed the sheikh's hands and took his leave. He said, "Even if it is foreordained a thousand times over, I will not give him my cotton."¹⁰⁵

Bozarslan showed great writing skill in his illustration of the belief in the supernatural, which exists among Kurds. When a shepherd loses a sheep out in the countryside, he or the sheep's owner goes to the *mullā* to have him "tie the wolf's jaws together". A particular chapter of the Koran (Chapter 91) is read above a knife that must not be allowed to touch the ground. In the story *Devē Gur* (The Jaws of the Wolf), Old Lady Zero has lost her cow during the day, and she goes to the *mullā* to have him tie the wolf's jaws together. The next day, she hunts for her cow; when she locates it, she finds that only the head, the tail, and a few bones are left.¹⁰⁶

These stories by Qiziljī and Bozarslan are so vivid that it is easy to believe they are writing about first-hand experiences. When many other writers take up this theme, they produce works that seem forced and artificial. The advice, which is the short story's main purpose, bores the reader; and because of it, the story loses in artistic qualities.

Beside these main subject areas, there are a few other narrow subjects to be found among Kurdish short stories. A new one is science fiction, as written by Ra'ūf Ḥasan. He blends the Kurds' situation with aspects of science fiction, including robots' space travel. The young Kurdish woman JAN, Y, SZ. KO. E70 is chosen as Miss Universe. JE7.142857 – also known as Ernest Moralis – falls in love with her, and his love inspires him to a great invention.¹⁰⁷

Finally, I would like to mention a work that contains most of the subject areas mentioned, i.e. Ḥ. 'Ārif's novel *Šār* (The City). This is the first installment in a not yet completed trilogy. In this part, 'Ārif depicts the period of the Kurds' history between 1948 and 1958. The novel takes up the most important political, social, and cultural aspects of the period.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Qiziljī, Ḥ., op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁰⁶ Bozarslan, op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁰⁷ Ḥasan, R., *Tawqa-y Xošawīstī, Bayān* No. 148 (Oct. 1988), pp. 10–16.

¹⁰⁸ 'Ārif, Ḥ., *Šār*, Baghdad 1986.

III. Form in the Kurdish Short Story

The development and the contrasts in content in the Kurdish short story have no parallel when it comes to form. Most attempts at renewal in the area of form, especially those having to do with the inner form, occurred in the 1970s and later. In a study of technique in the Kurdish short story, H. ‘Ārif writes, “In the art of the short story, the narrative style dominated from 1925 until the end of the 1960s. That meant a richness of detail, shallowness in the seeking of solutions, and a great deal of advice. The characters and events are described superficially, and often in an exaggerated way.” He sums up this development and continues, “The question of new and different forms of technique came into vogue at the beginning of the ‘70s, when literature simply exploded with new techniques, unlike everything seen earlier.”¹⁰⁹

In this chapter, I attempt to survey the Kurdish short story’s varying forms and place them in their historical context. Three aspects of form will be treated:

- A. The exterior framework
- B. The inner form
- C. Language and forms of expression

Here, I examine developments and changes solely from a historical perspective, and put no emphasis on theoretical or esthetic ideas.

A. The Exterior Framework

In their production, the authors have employed three different frameworks:

(1) The short story is the dominant form. The writers of the first period wrote short stories that consisted of a single continuous account, while writers of later periods divided their short stories into several sections. These sections were usually marked off with numbers in the short stories of the 1950s and 1960s; later it became common to head the chapters with names. In H. ‘Ārif’s short story *Races La Xönyānā Ažē* for example, the text is sectioned

¹⁰⁹ ‘Ārif, H.: *Aškāl al-Taknīk al-Ḥadīṭa fī ‘l-Qiṣṣa ‘l-Kurdiyya 1970 wamā Ba’dahā*, *Al-Aqlām*, No. 2–3 (Feb–Mar 1984), p. 125.

off with the titles *The First Page*, *The Second Page*, *The Third Page*, *Conversation*, and *I*.¹¹⁰

(2) Examples of the long short story go back to the very origins of the short story as a form of literature. At times, the number of pages can approach 100. Strangely enough, authors who chose this format decided to print the long short story as a book by itself, i.e. without any other short stories in the same volume. Early examples of this form are *La Xawmā* (In My Dream) by Jamāl Şā'ib and *Masala-y Wiždān* (A Question of Conscience) by Aḥmad Muxtār Jāf. Among later authors, Jamāl Bābān, M. Ş. Sa'īd, and Jamāl Nab-az have used this form.

(3) From the end of the 1970s, some authors began to make use of a new form that they called the “utterly short short story”, consisting of just five or six lines. In this concise form, they worked to express content that also could be employed as a theme in the context of a broader form. This “utterly short short story” might well be compared to the Japanese poetry form *haiku*.

B. The Inner Form

(1) The form of narration

Most Kurdish short story writers use this form; the writer tells a continuous story from beginning to end. All too often, he or she begins by describing the scene, the period, and the characters in exhausting detail. Characters are described only in their exterior appearance. The entire story has a photographic quality. This type of narrative short story consists commonly of an introduction, a climax, and a conclusion.

Descriptions are often so exaggerated that they become unbelievable, leading the reader to react. In one story, I. Aḥmad portrays the villagers' seating arrangements:

Rugs, blankets, and cushions were placed around the well. On many of them lay mattresses and pillows borrowed from the houses of the wealthy. They were so old and dirty and torn that it no longer was possible to see their color or decorations. If you looked closely, you could see whole caravans of lice....¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ārif, H., *Kilāfayak...* pp. 39–45.

¹¹¹ Aḥmad, I., *Körawarī*, p. 7.

(2) Dialogue

Dialogue has been a feature from the very beginning, but it has been used in different ways. In early instances, writers blended speakers' words with the narrative text without supplying any punctuation. But for each quote, the author would at least name the speaker. Fu'ād Tamo transcribes dialogue this way: "The old man came in and said to the shepherd: Listen Shepherd, why did you get up so late today? It is already noon. The sheep are still in the farmyard. They are hungry and need you to take care of them. The villagers are angry. The shepherd said: Look, old man – what am I supposed to say? You see what a state I'm in. I'm sick today...."¹¹² The same style was used by Jamīl Šā'ib: "One of them lit a match and looked at me and said who is he, where does he come from, where is he going? The caravan driver said: That man is a stranger, he has come from *Garmiyān* to work here, and he is poor and has no power. They said: No, that's not correct, maybe he is carrying a secret..."¹¹³

In early texts, there are at least a few samples of dialogue being represented in a more modern fashion. Each utterance is introduced by a dash.

In "A Question of Conscience" we find this dialogue:

I sat down; I couldn't eat anything that evening, since I was so sad.
That evening, my creditor came and said:
-- My dear friend, being sad doesn't help. Stand up and find your own solution!
-- What is the solution?
-- Do you have any money?
-- Yes!
-- The boss has a man he relies on. Go and ask him for help.
-- But I don't know him.
-- Don't worry. I'll come with you.¹¹⁴

(3) The narrator

In Kurdish short stories, the commonest means of relating a story is for the writer to describe the characters' conduct and behavior. In this model, the reader sees everything through the eyes of the writer; it is through his description – though he's not a character in the story – that the reader understands the

¹¹² Tamo, Fu'ād: Čīrok, *Rož-ī Kurd*, No. 2 (1913 = 14 Ša'bān 1331).

¹¹³ Šā'ib, J., op. cit., p. 33.

¹¹⁴ Jāf, A. M., op. cit., p. 30.

events. The personal pronouns that come into use here are third person singular (he/she) or third person plural (they).

Another common model calls for the writer to identify him- or herself with the narrative voice. First person singular (I) is used, and the reader sees events through the eyes of this “I”, without the writer necessarily being visible between the reader and the main character.

A third narrative technique involves using the second person singular, “you”. The main character is “you”, but the person who controls him or her, and who narrates events, is another person – who might be the author – who is the link between the reader and the story’s hero. There may also be other characters (they, he, she) in the narrator’s story. This storytelling form is quite new in the history of the Kurdish short story; only modern authors have used it. H. ‘Ārif writes in *Kāniya Raḥmān* (Raḥmān’s Well): “You were forced to stand up. Once again, you filled the bowl with water. The fish, small as a finger, started moving again; and when you returned home, you helped him transfer the fish to a water pan. He brought some breadcrumbs and tossed them to the fish. While you slept that night, you had a strange dream.”¹¹⁵ M. Ş. Karīm and Ra’ūf Ḥasan are among those who have employed this form.

(4) The inner monologue:

The monologue has a long history in the literature of the world. James Joyce, for example, is associated with the form called *stream of consciousness*. The purpose of this flow of thoughts is to reveal the characters’ inner feelings freely without the censorship of the author or reader. The characters’ innermost thoughts and feelings are sketched in their most primitive form before they have matured enough to be clothed in the expressions and logic of normal daily language.

The inner monologue has been used in the Kurdish short story since the beginning of the 1970s, but only to a limited extent. The inner monologue is sometimes signaled by using bold typeface or by writing it inside parentheses. It can be found in freestanding segments, or as one or more sentences contained in the middle of a paragraph. In one of his short stories, Ra’ūf Ḥasan uses the inner monologue this way:

She put the pen point to the paper and wrote “reproductive organ” ...
She stopped writing and smiled... **Already in childhood, it is hidden
for girls but visible for boys... Anyway, reproductive organ is a**

¹¹⁵ ‘Ārif, H., *Töşü-y Safarêk-î Saxt*, Baghdad 1979, p. 105.

noble name... it's nothing to be ashamed of when speaking in a group... It's just for reproduction...¹¹⁶

(5) Abbreviations

Certain Kurdish short story writers employ abbreviations in such a way that the work is weakened, and the reader's concentration and imagination are disrupted. Abbreviations are typically used for the names of villages and cities, and for proper names that would have been better to replace with fictitious names. Ibrāhīm Aḥmad is the short story writer who most often uses this kind of abbreviation. The short story *Karalotî-y Manūčar* (Manūčar's Donkey) contains these abbreviations: The city H, the city P, the village D, and the village H. In some sentences there are so many abbreviations that they begin to seem like a code; they interrupt the reader's train of thought. In "Misery", we run across sentences like, "M. Bag said: Let him take it to the Village S. and deliver it to my agent A."¹¹⁷

C. Language and Forms of Expression

(1) Simple Imagery

Most writers use simple language in their works. By "simple", I don't mean that it is less literary, rather only that the words and expressions are used to stand for their most directly associated meaning, without any additional historical or religious connotations. If these works are studied from the perspective of esthetics, of grammar, or of standard language, then it will be plain that the authors have written on many different levels. A simple comparison between 'A. Sajjādī and K. Qaftān shows that the former writes in a pure and literary Kurdish; there is no evidence of any foreign influence in his vocabulary, grammar, or syntax. Qaftān's vocabulary and expressions are thoroughly Kurdish, but at the same time his sentence construction and syntax show signs of Arabic influence.

(2) Symbols

Because of political conditions and censorship, short story writers are often forced to use symbols. The use of symbols may provide refuge from the censor, but they simultaneously increase the risk of losing the average reader.

¹¹⁶ Ḥasan, R., *Sibaynē* ... p. 10.

¹¹⁷ Aḥmad, I., *Kōrawarī*, p. 78.

One way of employing symbolism is to borrow from legends. Most short story authors write about a storybook city that is a symbol for Kurdistan. A great deal happens in this city. The writer describes the strange laws of this city, the ruthless and bloodthirsty sultan, sometimes a seven-headed dragon that stops the city's water supply, and the champion who must appear in order to save the city and its citizens.

Another way that authors use symbols is to invent their own symbol-filled language. However, such symbols have no past history, they cannot benefit from association with any legend, they are more difficult to recognize, and they resist being connected to reality. As an example, Ra'ūf Bēgard writes about a caravan, leaving the village a severe winter day, which suffers all sorts of difficulties and natural disasters.¹¹⁸

H. Qiziljī uses a beggar's cup as a symbol for the peasants' dreams. There is a supernatural power in the cup that instantly grants wishes and makes dreams real. But when the agha uses the same cup, two knotted fists fly out to strike the agha's head.¹¹⁹

(3) Labored language

There are authors who attribute to the people in their stories language that doesn't fit the character of the person, perhaps because of their consciousness, age, or position in society. An example: an eight-year-old who lectures on political and patriotic subjects.

During the 1940s and 1950s, when the theme of conflict between peasants and feudal lords was in fashion, many authors – driven by ideological or political motives – brought politics and patriotism into their stories. But because several of the authors came from intellectual environments and were not familiar with the peasants' lives and language, their attempts at reconstructing the language of the peasants were unsuccessful. Among these authors are I. Aḥmad, Š. Fattāḥ, J. Nabaz, M. Ş. Karīm, and J. Bābān.

¹¹⁸ Bēgard, R., op. cit., p. 3.

¹¹⁹ Qiziljī, H., op. cit., p. 93.

IV. The Kurdish Short Story 1988–2000: An Update

A. The Political Background

The year 1988 appears destined to be a turning point in the modern history of the Kurds, both politically and culturally. It was in the spring of 1988 that the Iraqi regime bombed the city of Halabja with chemical weapons. This caused unparalleled devastation in the area, and took the lives of over 6,000 people of which the majority were children, women, and elderly. “The Anfāl Operations” is the collective name of an extensive big campaign that was carried out in stages. It began in the spring of 1988 and continued for several months. The objective was to “clean up” large tracts in Kurdistan by eliminating their inhabitants – the Kurds – and by obliterating the villages completely. The result was that over 4,000 villages were destroyed and razed to the ground, and that 182,000 persons were shipped to southern Iraq and executed.¹²⁰

As time has passed by since then, this catastrophe has received a relatively large amount of attention from mass media around the world; but in Kurdish literature Anfāl has mainly been observed in political texts and articles, and partly in Kurdish poetry. Some Kurdish poets have used the catastrophe as a symbol in their poems, and have – in contrast to others – tried to turn it into an artistic monument, to establish it as a living image in the Kurdish consciousness. For the Kurdish short story, reaction to the catastrophe was slower; it took more time before the tragedies gave rise to artistic expression. But among these artistic expressions, there are no works of great literary value to be found.

If, for the Kurds and the whole Middle East, the end of the 1980s signaled the end of the eight-year-long war between Iran and Iraq, then it also opened the stage for a new war that broke out at the beginning of the 90s. First, Iraq

¹²⁰ For detailed information about Iraq’s criminal treatment of the Kurds, particularly regarding Halabja and the Anfal Campaign, there exists extensive literature and documentation. See e.g.:

(a) Human Rights Watch / Middle East Watch: *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*, 1993; and:

(b) Makiya, Kanan: *Cruelty & Silence*, Jonathan Cape, London 1993.

occupied its neighboring country Kuwait. Following that, the allied forces, under the leadership of the USA, forced a vanquished Iraq to leave Kuwait; and they did this solely in order to defend and strengthen their interests in the region. Because it better served their interests, they allowed Saddam Hussein retain power in Iraq.

The defeat of the Iraqi regime in this Gulf War provided the Kurdish people with better conditions under which to launch a popular uprising against the regime. During the height of the uprising, Kurdish forces were able to liberate nearly the entire Kurdish area of Iraq and to expel the occupiers for a period. But because the USA pursued a course of politics characterized by double standards, the Iraqi military finally put down the rebellion.

For most of us, the following points are accepted as obvious facts: the UN's demarcation of a portion of northern Iraq as a security zone known as "safe haven"; the election of a Kurdish parliament; the creation of independent institutions in Iraqi Kurdistan; and the civil war between the two major rivals in Kurdish politics.

The first years, following the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, – as it officially is known –, were characterized by extensive economic and political problems. These were partly due to the economic sanctions that Saddam Hussein's regime forced on the Kurdish area, and partly due to a lack of experience in governing a ravaged country, which, after Iraq withdrew its administration, no longer had either a functioning infrastructure or institutions to conduct foreign relations.

Several new newspapers and magazines began to come out during the period 1992–1996; these were bound to political parties, and spent their energies on factional and ideological conflicts. Because of political antagonisms, cultural institutions and authorities were paralyzed. During the last five years however, the situation has changed radically; books, newspapers, and magazines are streaming from the printing presses. It is as if the two major rival political parties are consciously striving to demonstrate their ability to take action in the cultural sphere. In turn, however, this has led to a situation with both advantages and disadvantages for Kurdish culture and for Kurdish intellectuals. Currently, hundreds of periodicals are regularly published in Iraqi Kurdistan; of these, three are daily newspapers, about ten are weeklies, and the rest are either monthly or quarterly publications. About 15–20 publishers are active in the production of books. There are also some fifteen TV stations, most of them are international and can be seen in America, Australia, Europe and the Middle East. In addition, there are about 100 local TV and radio stations.

The media situation is somewhat difficult for Kurdish authors and intellectuals to handle. In any case, it has led to most of them becoming engaged to work either for some newspaper or magazine, or else for one of the many cultural authorities. Many of the authors write regularly for these periodicals and are paid for their writing; as a result, most writing deals with the political and social issues of the day, and is strikingly superficial. This is not to say that all writers have met the same fate. There are yet authors who keep their distance from the periodicals' market, who produce works possessing esthetic values, and who maintain their ambitions for renown.

Even though much of that which is printed is poetry, it is evident that writers are attempting to develop literary, historical, and artistic studies. Considerable contributions come in the form of translations from other languages – especially Persian, French, English, and Swedish. Many novels have been published in a relatively short period, and this is seen as a triumph for the Kurdish novel compared with earlier decades. The subject matter of these novels and even of most short stories published during the last ten years is, understandably enough, Kurdistan's political history. In their works, some authors focus on the great social and political questions that occupy modern Kurdistan. Since most short stories lack great literary value, they can be regarded as a repetition of the experiments made by Kurdish short story writers in the 1980s and 1990s. The recent development of the Kurdish short story is mostly a quantitative development.

Largely due to the stability of the Turkish state's attitude toward the Kurds, the withering pressure on the Kurdish language and culture diminished in the early 1990s. The few changes which have occurred in the country can be traced to these decisive factors: the dramatic events which took place in the area; the fact that Iraq's Kurdish question suddenly was internationalized; certain changes in the political scene; and pressure exerted by the Kurdish liberation movement on the politics in Turkey. In spite of the fact that no public-sector or state authorities had been established, which would have given a concrete form to the cultural rights of Kurds in Turkey, a number of cultural and literary associations were founded, and several Kurdish newspapers and periodicals have gone into regular publication. The status quo yet today is that most Kurdish authors from the Turkish part of Kurdistan are living outside of Turkey, particularly in Europe. But today, the works they produce have an easier time reaching their audience in Turkey.

In Iranian Kurdistan following the Islamic Revolution, the pressure on Kurdish cultural life has reduced considerably; the situation there is currently relatively stable. Some unofficial literary associations have begun to meet, and a large number of Kurdish periodicals come out now. The publication of the magazines *Sirwa* (Breeze) and *Āwēna* (Mirror) during the last ten years,

and the more recent publication of weeklies like *Āwiyar* (Awiyar), *Zirēbār* (Zirebar), *Mahābād* (Mahabad), *Ruānga* (Perspective), and *Sīrwān* (Sirwan) in various cities has played and continues to play an important cultural roll; it has promoted literary activities especially among Kurdish youth. Many readers have begun to read and write in Kurdish, and some have even become interesting poets and short story writers. Even books in Kurdish – in e.g. novels, poems, and short stories – are being given out. It is of great importance that publications from Iraqi Kurdistan are distributed in Iranian Kurdistan, whether legally or illegally. Some writers from Iranian Kurdistan have moved to Iraqi Kurdistan, and are actively engaged in different mass media and cultural institutions. Other Kurdish authors who still live in Iran partake by sending their works for publication in newspapers and periodicals in Iraqi Kurdistan.

In contrast to the recent advances of Kurdish culture in many parts of Kurdistan, Kurdish culture has suffered many hardships in the ex-Soviet Union, especially in Armenia. After the collapse of the Communist regime and the creation of the independent country of Armenia, the new regime renounced many of the Kurds' cultural rights. Many Kurdish intellectuals and writers found themselves therefore forced to leave Armenia and move to either Russia or to Europe or Australia. Others became victims to the racial and religious discrimination that possessed the country, and were forced to move to any of the countries surrounding Armenia.

B. A Brief Overview of the Works of Selected Authors

Šērzād Ḥasan, born 1951, received recognition as a serious short story writer in the beginning of the 1980s, but his actual breakthrough came at the end of that decade. Šērzād Ḥasan has published two collections of short stories – *Tanyāyī* (Solitude) in 1983, and *Gul-ī Raš* (Black Flower) in 1988 – and a short novel, which he has termed a novelette: *Ḥasār* (Walls of the House), released in 1996.¹²¹

In general, Šērzād Ḥasan's short stories reflect the inner world of modern man. He endeavors to tell about and describe people's intimate feelings in an artistically skilled way. He stands out aside and lets his characters tell us whatever needs to be told. Modern psychoanalysis is always present in Šērzād Ḥasan's short stories. He writes in such a way that the reader soon feels familiar with the characters; as insights to their psychological workings are served up, we come to understand how their personal world is shaped

¹²¹ The term novelette has come by way of English literature, and is quite new to Kurdish literature.

and why they act as they do. His characters are in no way typical representatives of Kurdish society; they are quite simply individuals, and their counterparts can likely be found in many other communities.

In the short story *Mīm* (roughly “Me”), Ḥasan tells the tale of a Kurdish author’s dilemma. The man finds himself between two diametrically opposed powers: on the one side, modern thought as he has learned it from current books; and on the other side, the morals and traditional thinking of the society he lives in. He tries to resist and free himself from the dictates of custom, but the inevitable outcome is that a single conscious intellectual individual is going to lose his battle against society.

Ḥasār (1996) may be classed as a short novel or long short story. In it, the father – a charismatic, dominating, and self-confident father figure – is a living specimen of that political, social, and moral power in society, which society itself creates, but which society cannot free itself from. Even when one of his sons kills him, and his violent shadow vanishes from the house, all the others remain in the house: his many women, daughters and sons, his possessions and assets, all of which represent a complete vision of society, confused and lost; they try to call him back, place him once more at his station, and restore him to the position of power and standing he had before he was murdered. Thus, total liberation cannot be reached through killing a number of individuals in society, but it can be reached by increasing one’s understanding of society’s underpinnings. Social changes in a society are thus nothing less than a question of civilization.

‘Aṭā Nahāyī (b. 1960) is a Kurdish short story and novel writer among many others in Iranian Kurdistan. During recent years, he has published some of his short stories in Kurdish magazines in Iran. Most of his short stories are written in a language that, with its artistic and linguistic refinement, distinguishes him from his colleagues. Most often, Nahāyī takes up complicated subjects that are current in Kurdish society and makes them the themes of his short stories. Clearly he is familiar with Kurdish society and the social problems he discusses.

In his novel *Guḷ-ī Šorān; La Šön Čāranūsēk-ī Win* (The Shoran Flower; The Search for a Lost Destiny), the author brings up a period of Iranian Kurdistan’s political history, which in a larger sense is an ill-fated chapter in the history of the Kurds. During the first half of the 1940s, Iranian Kurdistan was a free area since the English had occupied southern Iran and the Soviets occupied northern Iran. The Kurds exploited the situation and proclaimed the existence of their own country – a republic that lasted one year. The Iranian regime brought a bitter end to the new state by executing the Kurdish presi-

dent and a number of his collaborators. Writing about this period is still taboo in Iran.

Author ‘Aṭā Nahāyī developed an esthetic framework for his story of this period. He avoided politically charged language, and instead introduces the events with a string of symbols and metaphors; and it is these that give his work its strength and beauty.

The Wusū Ağā family is a middle class family in the city of Bāneh in Iranian Kurdistan. The son, Lās, is active in Kurdish politics and has great hopes for the future of his people. When the Kurdish republic collapses, he decides to not give up, but to continue to fight. He disappears without a trace for 15 years. One day, he reappears and goes to his family home; for a week, he stays with his mother and younger brother. He learns that his father has died, and that his wife has married his brother. His remaining hope is his son, but the son doesn’t care to come visit his father. Lās leaves them to go “die”; a few days later he is found dead in a small village. His son arrives at the village just as Lās is being carried to the cemetery. He joins the people who are carrying the coffin and says, “That is my father who has died”. This is a clear sign that the old political system of thought had come to an end. The son, representing the new generation, says nothing about his plans for the future. ‘Aṭā Nahāyī has published two collections of short stories. His language is poetic, and the style – in both his short stories and in this novel – is modern.

Helīm Yūsif, born in ‘Āmūda in 1967, is a Kurdish short story writer from Syria who has written most of his stories in Arabic. But in recent years, he has translated some of them into Kurdish himself, as well as written some directly in Kurdish. In several respects, his short stories have similarities with those of Šērżād Ḥasan, especially regarding the existential questions that occur in the mind of an individual living in modern society. His short stories are, in their technique, obviously follow-ups to the novels another Kurdish author wrote in Arabic, namely those of Salīm Barakāt. Barakāt is a great and well-known name in current Arabic literature, and is counted as one of the foremost writers of novels in Arabic.

Any discussion of the modern Kurdish short story must highlight two more authors from Turkish Kurdistan: Firat Cewerī and Hesenē Metē. They draw our attention because their recent short stories demonstrate, both in regard to content and form, distinct developments in the art of the short story.

Firat Cewerī, born in Dērīk in 1959, comes from a middle-class family. After spending his early childhood in the countryside, he moved in to one of the cities in Turkish Kurdistan. Politically active early in his life, he was forced to flee Turkey in 1980, and found refuge in Sweden. He began his literary

career by writing poetry, but subsequently – to be better able to relate his experiences of life – he chose to write short stories. In 1986, he published his first collection of short stories, *Girtî* (Captive). Most of the short stories in this collection deal with his early experiences of life in the countryside. His storytelling and style in this collection are simple and traditional. The main theme is the conflict between farmers and the feudal lords, who represent the regime's policies.

Firat Cewerî's breakthrough as a short story writer accompanied the release in 1990 of his next collection, *Kevoka Spî* (White Dove). In contrast to the previous collection of short stories, he now became much more selective in his choice of subjects. Most frequently he takes up a theme dealing with society's social problems, but in his short stories he also treats life in exile and gives reflection to his own life experiences.

The short story "White Dove" is one of the best he has written. The description of his characters is very skillful. He weaves descriptions of their inner and outer qualities, and lets the reader experience two quite different worlds, which often are at odds with each other. His greatest success is in a short sequence in which a brother has decided to kill his sister, and he lets the brother tell about the conflicting forces that have driven him to different decisions. Firat Cewerî's style and his art of storytelling are much better in this collection of short stories than in the previous. In numerous stories, he deftly displays the importance of dreams and psychology in the lives of his main characters.

Hesenê Metê, who was born in Arganî in 1957, worked for a time as an elementary school teacher in Turkey, but because of political activities he was forced to leave the country. He came to Sweden as a refugee in 1985. Thus far, he has published two short story collections, a novel, and a novelette. Like Şêrzād Hasan and Helîm Yūsuf, he selects special and individual cases as his subjects and takes no consideration for whether they are unique, or universal, within the context of the Kurdish community.

The artistic aspect of Metê's short stories is most conspicuous when he ventures into his main characters' consciousness and reveals their invisible traits. Most often, we see that the main characters' interior and exterior qualities are conflicted. Having passing understanding of psychoanalysis is useful for the reader's understanding of the main characters' typical behavior.

A principal narrative technique in his short stories is stream of consciousness, which implies that two different happenings or thoughts enter the reader's mind at the same time, illuminating two very different worlds. These two streams are developed in parallel in the short story, and complement each other. Usually the main character's characteristic behavior is presented

in an ironic way; in some of his short stories, the numerous conflicts among the characters' qualities are reminiscent of absurd theater's efforts to expose life's absurdities.

If we compare Firat Cewerī's and Hesenē Metē's story telling methods, we might draw the following conclusions:

– Both in terms of content and of storytelling technique, these two short story writers have been at their most successful in their latest collections.

– Firat Cewerī places the greatest emphasis on his characters' exterior attributes and at the same time shows that existing circumstances are significant for a person's characteristics. To describe these characteristics, he uses beautiful language full of imagery. Hesenē Metē puts the greatest emphasis on inward qualities and goes deep into his main characters' invisible inner world to tell us about their hidden qualities. Metē's narrative style may be called vertical, while Cewerī's is horizontal.

– It should be pointed out that neither author has been able to avoid political developments in Turkey. Each has written a short story to discuss and tell about the events of recent years that in one or another way have affected the political climate in the country. In Hesenē Metē's short story *Epīlog* (Epilogue), a young man living in exile speaks by telephone with his mother. She tells him the political news using non-political language. Relating political conditions to her son, she tells about people in her local area and about events that she or her neighbors have experienced. Firat Cewerī selected a doctor character to acquaint us with political developments in the country. The doctor is arrested and subjected to torture by the Turkish secret police because he has given help to the Kurdish guerillas.

After the publication of his novel *Šār* (The City) in 1984, Hūsain 'Ārif gave out two more novels: *Andēša-y Mirovēk* (One Man's Anxiety, 1990) and *Hēlāna* (The Bird Nest, 1999). In *Andēša-y Mirovēk*, the subject is the modern intellectual, who in confronting his society is unable to find a common language with which to communicate with his fellow-beings. Similar themes can also be found in 'Ārif's short stories. In this novel, the main character finds refuge in a cemetery, where he seeks the peace and tranquility that he never had been able to find in the city and among people.

Hēlāna is in total contrast to most of Hūsain 'Ārif's short stories and novels in that it is a thoroughly political novel. He deals with nothing other than those events of 1988 in Iraqi Kurdistan, namely the Halabja massacre and the *Anfāl* campaign. Three friends – Subhān, Jāfir, and Mīna – choose different paths in life; but they are united later in life by the political struggle against the Iraqi regime, and by the *Anfāl*-catastrophe which befalls them

when their village is burned down and when their families and all their relatives are sent to concentration camps in southern Iraq, where they are liquidated.

The most striking quality of Husain 'Ārif's latest two novels is in the language. He uses an entirely plain and ordinary style, totally lacking the beauty of his earlier works. The form of *Hēlāna* as well is far removed from the artistic technique that was characteristic of his short stories from the 1970s. In these two novels, we witness the artistic decline of an author who was the leader of a generation of short story writers who renewed and developed the Kurdish short story.

Kurdish short story writer 'Abdullā Sarrāj, born in Karkūk (in official European documents written as Kirkuk) in 1937, published his novel *Haḷkišān Baraw Lūtka* (Climbing to the Top) in 1989. The following year, Ismā'īl Resūl (1928–1991) brought out his novel *Paristgā-y Dīldārān* (The Lovers' Tempel). After that, in 1995, came the posthumously published novel *Rēgā* (The Way) by the great Kurdish short story author Muḥammad Mawlūd (Mam). Muḥammad Mukrī also released his big novel *Haras* (The Collapse) in two parts in 1985, and later published several more novels. Mahmud Baksi (1944–2000) published the novel *Gundikē Dono* (The little village of Dono) in 1996; and Mehmed Uzun (1953–2007) came out with the novels *Tu* (You) in 1985, *Siya Evīnē* (Love's Shadow), *Bīra Qederē* (The Well of Destiny) and *Hawara Dicleyê* (The Cry of Tigris) in 2003. Baksi recast his childhood experiences as the subject of his novel, while Uzun employed as his main theme the lives of a few Kurdish politicians, such as Mamdūh Salīm (1895–1977) and Celadat Badirxan (1870–1951). Both Baksi and Uzun failed to use the language in a refined way. Their vocabularies were plainly limited, affecting the works negatively and giving them a documentary character. Uzun has also often been accused of plagiarism.¹²²

Among Kurdish writers of novels there are two who are of special significance in this context, since they have been productive and their works have spanned large periods of Kurdish history: Xusraw Jāf and 'Azīz-ī Malā-y Raš. Xusraw Jāf was born in 1940 in the city of Kalar in Garmiyan region in southern Kurdistan. In recent years, he has given out several novels: *Hīč* (Nothing, 1991), *Pāšayān Kušt* (They Killed the Pasha, 1993), *Rāz* (Secret, 1994), *Gamāl* (The Dog, 1995), *Darbār* (The Royal Palace) and *Dogdu* (Doghdu). Each one of these novels carries the reader off into the author's

¹²² Following publication of the first novels, several articles were written in which the authors deal with the subject of plagiarism, and clearly show that Uzun fetched large portions of his novels from the works of other authors. It is also clear that Uzun demonstrates shortcomings in both Kurdish grammar and vocabulary. See i.e.:

1. Ferhad, Xalid: *Mehmed Uzun ū Çiroka Diziya "Tu"* (Mehmet Uzun and the Story of the Theft of "Tu"), *Armanc*, No. 142, Sept. 1993.

characteristically inventive, linguistic adventure. He has written novels on everything from social and political subjects to science fiction. In the novel *Hîç*, Jāf restricts events to the 1940s and 1950s in Garmiyān in southern Kurdistan. The primary opposing forces are, on the one side, the monarchist regime backed by Great Britain, and on the other side the peasants, augmented by other groups from the masses, represented partly by the two political parties Democratic Party of Kurdistan, and the Iraqi Communist Party. The real hero in this novel is a prostitute. The novel *Pāšayān Kušt* fetches its inspiration further back in history. It deals with three generations of leaders of the Jāf clan – all forefathers of the author. They received the title of pasha from the Ottoman sultan and lead their family, which was the largest clan in all of Kurdistan. Xusraw Jāf uses the novel to portray events from political, historical, and cultural viewpoints. To achieve his national and political ambitions, the pasha is compelled to carry out large and complex maneuvers among the Ottomans, the Qajars, and the Kurdish princes. In my opinion, *Gamāl* is the most significant novel he has written thus far. The style of this novel is largely the same as in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Using symbolic language, the author precisely describes the Iraqi regime's brutality and terror against civilians in Iraqi Kurdistan. The main character is a dog who quite by chance ends up in England; there, he is "jailed" and held in quarantine together with hundreds of other animals. Later on, the dog and many of his comrades are granted asylum in England. The language in these novels is deeply influenced by the local dialect used in Garmiyān, and is consequently not exactly in agreement with standard literary language.

‘Azīz-ī Malā-y Raš (b. 1940) has a great deal in common with Xusraw Jāf. Both authors have given all their energy to writing novels instead of short stories. Both of them also employ the dialects which are spoken in their native areas: the Hawlēr plain and Garmiyān, respectively.

‘Azīz-ī Malā-y Raš has until now published four novels: *Kōxā Sēwē* (Village Elder Sēwē, 1986), *Ġawāra* (The Stranger, 1991), *Xāk u Ćawsānawa* (The Soil and the Tyranny, 1998), and *Xāk u Kēša-y Mān* (The Soil and the Question of Survival, 1999). The political message in these works is clear and unmistakable. The struggle, as portrayed in these novels, has two aspects: a national struggle to protect the country from Arabization; and a class struggle between peasants including indigent villagers and the feudal lords. The literature that ‘Azīz-ī Malā-y Raš offers us is a classical literature of resistance. It is reminiscent of the literature that the Algerian authors wrote to protest French colonialism. An important difference is that ‘Azīz-ī Malā-y Raš writes in his own language, while the Algerians used the language of the colonialists.

Finally, there are a few more names in the Kurdish short story and novel world that should be mentioned due to their contributions to its successes and development: Fāḍil Karīm Aḥmad, Karīm-ī Dānišyār, Naci Kutlay, Munzur Cem, Akram ‘Alī, Sa‘īd Nākām, Bavē Nazē, Fewaz Huseyn, Ḥama, Suleyman Demir, Sidqī Hirorī, Mahābād Qaradāgī, Mustafa Aydogan, Ḥamakarīm ‘Ārif, Ārām Kāka-y Fallāḥ, Şahīn Bekir Soreklī, Ḥakīm Kāka-ways, Ġafūr Şāliḥ ‘Abdullā, Kārwān ‘Umar Kākasūr, Hīwā Qādir, Baxtyār ‘Alī, ‘Atā Muḥammad and ‘Izzaddīn Yousif. In fact, an entire essay could be dedicated to the last ten years’ literary achievements by these authors; but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this study.

V. Conclusion

The first literary prose texts in Kurdish literature, of which most were written during the twentieth century, are considered by a number of researchers to be the beginnings of the Kurdish art of the short story. A close inspection of these texts reveals them to be didactic and religious texts, or, at least in one case, to be efforts to record traditional and verbal legends. About the beginning of the 1900s, several texts were published, which displayed the features of the short story. It was these texts that came to constitute the basis of this literary form in Kurdish literature.

A question often discussed in this context is whether Kurdish short story authors were influenced by, or were even conscious of, the Western storytelling tradition. The first samples, published up to the 1930s, do not support such an analysis. The publication of the literary journals *Hawar* and *Galāwēž* signaled the arrival of a period of greater influence for the short story. During this period, the influence of the Western short story can be seen in the works of a number of Kurdish short story writers. The publishers of *Galāwēž* and some of its contributing writers were particularly eager to introduce Western short stories to its Kurdish readership. Translation of short stories to Kurdish was viewed as the simplest means of reaching this objective. More texts, short stories and novels were translated in the 1970s and 1980s.

The shifting political situation in Kurdistan, together with political ideologies, have had a significant influence upon the development of the Kurdish short story since the 1940s. Into the 1980s, the left-wing and socialistic thought patterns dominating society made social realism many Kurdish authors' favorite trend. Political defeats combined with the spread of French existential philosophy were given expression through numerous short stories designated as absurd literature. The origin of a literature of resistance was a response to a political situation in which Kurdish writers were persecuted and their works were censored by the regimes in those countries where writers were active. Beyond this, the Kurdish short story served as an artistic tool in the support and advancement of the Kurdish liberation movement.

In the literary discussion about the Kurdish short story, assertions are sometimes made that the group of short story authors who came to be known as

the 1970-generation is already surpassed. This kind of conclusion assumes that a new generation of short story writers arises every ten years. A more attentive study of the history of Kurdish literature suggests instead that new generations of authors emerge in response to crises in the political history of Kurdistan. The new situation in Iraqi Kurdistan will most likely result in the rise of a new generation of short story authors. Nonetheless, several authors belonging to the 1970-generation continue today to be among the most productive writers.

In the last ten years, there has been a considerable increase in the number of names among those who write and publish short stories and novels in the different parts of Kurdistan. These new authors may constitute the core of a new generation and a new trend in Kurdish literature. However, it is no modest undertaking to survey and establish all the characteristics of the huge quantity of literature that is being published. In spite of this, it is safe to make the following observations:

(1) Whereas most Kurdish literature earlier was produced in southern (Iraqi) Kurdistan, we now witness the healthy growth of literature in all parts of Kurdistan.

(2) The language used by most of the new authors is inferior, and their vocabulary is relatively limited.

(3) The number of new novels appearing is excessive, compared with what was written by earlier generations. The number of novels that has come out during the last ten years is very nearly seven times as many as appeared during the entire previous history of Kurdish literature. Many young writers today begin their authorship with the quick publication of a novel.

The future of, and prospects for, Kurdish literature depend in great extent upon the development of political circumstances in Kurdistan. Only an imaginative short story writer would venture to offer predictions on that future.

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