

—Kurmanji Kurdish—
A Reference Grammar
with Selected Readings

W. M. Thackston

CONTENTS

PHONOLOGY

Alphabet and sounds	1
The aspirated and unaspirated stops.....	3
Stress	4
Orthographic variants.....	4
Doubled consonants	4
The furtive <i>i</i>	4

SUBSTANTIVES

§ 1. The Noun.....	7
§ 1.1. Gender.....	7
§ 1.2. Inflection	7
§ 2. Demonstrative Adjectives and <i>Her</i> 'Every'	9
§ 3. The Indefinite State	10
§ 4. The Primary Construct Case	11
§ 4.1 The Adjectival Construct	12
§ 5. The Secondary Construct: The Construct Extender.....	14
§ 6. Synopsis of Noun States of Cases.....	16
§ 7. Personal Pronouns	17
§ 7.1 The Reflexive Pronoun <i>Xwe</i>	19
§ 8. Prepositions, Postpositions, Circumpositions	19
§ 8.1. Contracted Prepositions	21
§ 9. Numbers	21
§ 9.1. Ordinal Numbers	24
§ 9.2. Months of the Year and Days of the Week.....	25
§ 9.3. Telling Time.....	26
§ 10. Comparative and Superlative Adjectives	26

THE VERB

§ 11. Present Copulas	29
§ 12. 'To Have' and the Existential Verb <i>Hebûn</i>	30
§ 13. The Infinitive.....	31
§ 14. The Present Tense	32
§ 15. Compound Verbs	34
§ 16. The Formation of the Present Subjunctive.....	35
§ 16.1 Uses of the Present Subjunctive	37
§ 16.2. The Future Tense.....	40
§ 16.2. <i>Xwestin</i> 'To Want'	41
§ 16.3. <i>Karîn</i> 'To Be Able'	41
§ 17. The Imperative	42
§ 17.1. The Vocative	43
§ 18. The Simple Past (Intransitive).....	43
§ 18.1. The Past Habitual/Progressive (Intransitive)	44
§ 18.2 The Simple Past (Transitive): The Ergative.....	45
§ 18.3 Number Agreement in Extended Ergative Verbs.....	48
§ 18.4 The Past Tense of <i>Xwestin</i>	49
§ 18.5. Loss of Ergativity.....	49
§ 19. The Past Participle.....	49
§ 20. The Present Perfect Tense (Intransitive).....	50
§ 20.1. The Present Perfect Tense (Transitive/Ergative)	50
§ 21. The Past Perfect Tense (Intransitive).....	52
§ 21.1. The Past Perfect Tense (Transitive/Ergative)	53
§ 21.2. The Past Perfect Tense of <i>Karîn</i> and <i>Zanîn</i>	57
§ 22. The Past Subjunctive.....	55
§ 23. The Future Perfect Tense	56
§ 24. The Modal of <i>Karîn</i>	57
§ 25. The Irrealis Mood.....	57
§ 25.1. The Past Conditional	58

§ 25.2. The Past Perfect Conditionals	59
§ 26. The Passive Voice	62
§ 27. Postposed Verbal Complements	63
§ 28. Factitive Verbs	64
§ 28.1. The Periphrastic Factitive Construction.....	65

OTHER SYNTACTICAL FEATURES

§ 29. Subordinate Clauses and Subordinating Conjunctions	66
§ 30. Relative Clauses	67
§ 31. The Emphatic <i>Jî</i>	70
§ 32. Expressions of Temporal Duration	71
§ 33. Sequence of Tenses after Past Verbs of Perception	71
§ 34. Questions with <i>Ma</i>	72

Synopsis of Verb Tenses and Moods	74
Common Verbs with Irregular Present Stems.....	79
Conversion Table for Arabic and Cyrillic.....	81
Grammatical and Orthographic Differences between “Standard” Kurmanji and Ex-Soviet Kurmanji	83

READINGS

Qedrîcan, “Rojên Derbasbûyî	86
Osman Sebrî, “Çar Leheng: Leheng I: Ferzende Beg”	91
Kurdo Husên, “Başoke”	94
Şahînê B. Soreklî, “Vegera Mal”	101
“Cumhûriyeta Kurdî ya Mehabadê”	107
Firat Cewerî, “Kêzika Bênav”	111
_____, “Li Mala Rewşen Bedir-Xan”	116
_____, “Sedsaliya Celadet Alî Bedir-Xan”	120
Nûredîn Zaza, “Xurşîd”	130
_____, “Gulê”	133
Zeynelabîdîn Zinar, “Bavê Nazê”	138

Mahmut Baksî, “Çar Aliyê Me Agir E”	145
Hesenê Metê, <i>Labîrenta Cinan</i>	152
Reading Selections in Cyrillic-Script Kurmanji	
„Зэрдэшт П’ехэмбэр”	157
„K’örd у K’ördстан”	158
„Автономия Културие у Щие Хэбате”	162
Аветис Аһаронийан: „P’зго-Сеп’о”	165
К’т’ебед Тэ’зэ: „K’ördстана Башур Иро”	173
Reading Selections in Arabic-Script Kurmanji	
Celadet Ali Bedir-Xan, “کرد و کردستان بچافی بیانیان”/Kurd û Kurdistan Bi Çavê Biyaniyan”	175
_____، “شێخ عەبد رەحمانی گەرسێ چو رحمتی” Çû Rehmetê”	180
Perwîz Cihanî, “گوری تەکانه”/Gurê Tekane”	187
Kurdish–English Vocabulary	196
Ex-Soviet Kurdish–English Vocabulary	245
General Index	264

PREFACE

KURDISH BELONGS to the Western Iranian group of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family. The two principal branches of modern literary Kurdish are (1) Kurmanji, the language of the vast majority of Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and of a few in Iraq and Iran, the area designated by Kurdish nationalists as “North Kurdistan” (*Kurdistana Bakûr*),¹ with an estimated fifteen to seventeen million speakers, and (2) Sorani, the language of most Kurds in Iraq (four to six million speakers) and Iran (five to six million speakers), the area designated as “South Kurdistan” (*Kurdistana Başûr*). Although the two languages are closely related, Kurmanji and Sorani are not mutually intelligible and differ at the basic structural level as well as in vocabulary and idiom. Since all varieties of Kurdish are not only closely related to Persian but have also been mas-

¹The line dividing Kurmanji from Sorani runs roughly diagonally from northeast to southwest. The extreme northwest of Iran and the northernmost tip of Iraq fall into the Kurmanji-speaking area. An article in *Hawar* (No. 2 [1932], p. 9) explains the geographical distribution as follows: “La langue Kurde se divise en trois dialectes principaux: 1- Le dialecte du Nord, 2- Le dialecte du Sud, 3- Le dialecte du Nord-Ouest. (1) Le dialecte du nord est parlé par tous les Kurdes du Kurdistan occupé par les turcs, par les Kurdes de la Caucasic jusqu’à Kere-Bax [Qarabagh], par ceux de la république d’Erivan, par les Kurdes de la Syrie, par une partie des Kurdes de l’Irak habitant le Mont Sindjar et la contrée située au nord d’une ligne partant du sud du Sindjar par Mosil, et atteignant à l’est la ville de Rewandiz, ensuite par les Kurdes de la Perse habitant le nord et l’ouest du lac de Urmî, par les Kurdes du Khorasan, au nord-est de la Perse.... (2) Le dialecte du sud est parlé par les Kurdes de l’Irak et de la Perse à partir du sud de la ligne Mosil–Rewandiz et du lac de Urmî vers le sud et sud-est, jusqu’aux limites méridionales des Kurdes Bextiyarî. (3) Le dialecte Nord-ouest est le dialecte des Kurdes Dumilî. Du Dumilî on ne peut pas tracer une limite fixe quelconque, parce que trop mélangé avec les Kurdes Qurdmanç parlant le dialecte du Nord le Qurdmançî. Tout de même les points de condensation de ce dialecte sont: Dêrsîm, Palo, Genc, Çepeqçûr, Maden, Pîran, Egil, Sîwerek, Pêçar, Çermiq.”

KURMANJI KURDISH

sively influenced by Persian, the dominant literary and cultural language of the area for the last millennium, Kurdish is best approached with a knowledge of Persian, and for that reason reference to Persian syntax has been freely made throughout the presentation of the grammar.

Sorani has been the second official language of Iraq since the creation of that country after World War I and has many decades of literary activity behind it. Kurmanji, which was given its present written form by Jeladet Ali Bedir-Khan in the early 1930's, is still far from being a unified, normalized, or standardized language. For historical and political reasons it has not been a written means of communication in the largest area in which it is spoken, and only recently has publication in Kurmanji begun in earnest—and that mostly among émigré communities in Europe, Sweden in particular. With the abundance of regional dialects, it is not possible to give a description of all the variants that may be encountered, although every effort has been made to describe the main ones that occur in the written language. There are, for example, regions in which the unlauded *ü* of Turkish is a regular feature of the spoken language, but it is not indicated in the writing system. There are areas in which Kurdish has become so inextricably entangled with Turkish and/or Arabic and/or Persian that the grammatical structure of the language has been affected, while the Kurmanji of former Soviet areas like Azerbaijan and Armenia, which has been written in Cyrillic letters since the late 1930's, has been influenced by Russian.¹ The language described herein is, to the extent possible, what has been adopted as a norm by the majority of writers.

The readings, chosen to give samples of a broad range of prose writing, are provided with running vocabulary glosses beneath the texts, and the glosses in the readings are also contained in the Kurdish–English vocabulary at the end of the book. Words considered to be absolutely basic vocabulary are not glossed in the notes, since it is assumed that these words either are known already or will be actively acquired by looking them up in the

¹ Like most regional and ethnic languages of the early Soviet Union that did not have a traditional alphabet and a long history of literature, Kurmanji was given a Latin-based alphabet in 1929, but it, like the others, was Cyrillicized by Stalin's decree in 1937. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has switched to a modified Latin alphabet, and it is assumed that the little Kurdish written in Azerbaijan has followed suit. Kurdish produced in Armenia is now written in both Cyrillic and a slightly modified form of the normal Latin Kurmanji letters (see the conversion table for Arabic and Cyrillic on p. 80).

PREFACE

vocabulary in the back. Generally words are not glossed more than once in the notes because any word encountered a second time should be learned actively. Words are glossed after the first instance only if they are rare enough to warrant being ignored for acquisition. The Kurdish–English vocabulary contains over 3,000 words, which should represent a good basic working vocabulary for the language.

Kurmanji has been and is written in a variety of alphabets. Foremost today is the Kurmanji used in Turkey and Europe, which is written in a modified Turkish Latin alphabet. In Armenia and Azerbaijan,¹ Kurmanji is written in Cyrillic letters, and enough readings in Cyrillic Kurmanji have been given, together with a brief analysis of the main differences between Turkey Kurmanji and ex-Soviet Kurmanji, to enable the student to develop a facility in reading that medium. There were once Kurdish-speaking Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, and they wrote Kurmanji in the Armenian alphabet. With the exception of Syria, Kurmanji is not widely spoken in countries that use the Arabic alphabet, and since Syrian Kurds use the Latin script when they write Kurdish, the Arabic script is little used for modern Kurmanji. In the early days of literary Kurdish, however, when the Arabic alphabet was still widely known in Turkey and Latin-script Kurdish was new in Syria, Arabic was used in tandem with the Latin. Two articles by Jeladet Ali Bedir-Khan from early issues of the journal *Hawar*, when it was published in both alphabets, are given as examples. Some Iranian Kurdish journals include a few pages of Arabic-script Kurmanji for the Kurmanji-speaking Kurds who live in Iran, and a specimen of this type, a story by Perwîz Cîhanî, is given at the end of the reading selections both in the Sorani-based Arabic script in which it was printed in the Iranian Kurdish journal *سروه Sirwe* in 1990 and in the Latin Kurmanji in which it was reprinted in *Alole* (pp. 23–27), a collection of his stories published by Doz Yayınları in Istanbul in 2005. There are some minor differences between the two versions, and they are signaled by asterisks in the Latin text.

The readings, chosen to give a fair sample of the range of prose writing

¹The major concentrations of Kurdish population in the former Soviet Union are in Armenia and Azerbaijan. From 1923 to 1929 there was an autonomous Kurdish region in Azerbaijan called Kurdistana Sor (Red Kurdistan). There are a few Kurds in Georgia, and there is a Kurmanji-speaking Kurdish population of more than half a million people in northeastern Iran and Turkmenistan, to which they were exiled in the seventeenth century.

KURMANJI KURDISH

today, are provided with running glosses beneath the texts, and the glosses in the readings are also contained in the Kurdish–English vocabulary at the end of the book. Words considered to be absolutely basic vocabulary are not glossed in the notes, since it is assumed that these words either are known already or will be actively acquired as they occur. Generally words are not glossed more than once in the notes because any word encountered a second time should be learned actively. Words are glossed after the first instance only if they are considered rare enough to warrant being ignored for acquisition. The readings and biographical sketches of authors have been taken mainly from Mehmet Uzun, *Antolojiya Edebiyata Kurdî*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Tüzmamanlar Yayıncılık, 1995), which may be consulted for further reading. The readings in Cyrillic Kurmanji, which have not been glossed but have a separate vocabulary at the end of the book, have been taken from *R'ya T'eze*, a Kurdish newspaper published in Armenia.

For dictionaries of Kurmanji, the following may be consulted:

Chyet, Michael L. *Kurdish–English Dictionary*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

Галлиямов, Салават. **Кордско–Башкордско–Англо–Русский Словарь**. Ufa, 2000.

İzoli, D. *Ferheng Kurdi–Tırki Türkçe–Kürtçe*. Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 1992. A comprehensive dictionary for those who know Turkish. Unfortunately the gender of Kurdish nouns is not indicated.

Курдоев, К. К. **Курдско-Русский Словарь**. Moscow, 1960.

Rizgar, Baran. *Kurdish–English English–Kurdish Dictionary*. London: M. F. Onen, 1993. With around 25,000 Kurdish words and phrases, this is a useful dictionary for reading.

Saadallah, Salah. *Saladin's English–Kurdish Dictionary*. Istanbul: Avesta, 2000. Contains around 80,000 entries.

Цаболов, Руслан Лазарович. **Этимологический Словарь Курдского Языка**. Moscow: Восточная Литература, 2001.

For on-line and downloadable dictionaries and word lists for Kurdish and a variety of languages, see www.ferheng.org.

The Phonology of Kurmanji Kurdish

Alphabet and sounds. The Kurdish alphabet is based on the Turkish adaptation of the Latin alphabet, and for the most part words are written as they are pronounced, although there are several important features that are not indicated in the writing system. These are noted below. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) equivalents are given in square brackets.

Vowels:

î	û
i	u
ê	o
e	a

- î is like the ‘ee’ in ‘beet,’ IPA [i], as in *nîv* [niv] ‘half.’
- i is like the ‘i’ in ‘bit,’ IPA [ɪ] as in *dil* [dɪl] ‘heart’; in closed syllables ending in *m*, *i* is often pronounced as a close central unrounded vowel [ɨ], i.e. very close to the Turkish *ı*, as in *vedixwim* [ˈvædɨxwɨm] ‘I drink.’
- ê is like the ‘ai’ in ‘bait,’ IPA [e], without the y-offglide of English, as in *hêz* [hez] ‘power.’
- e is like the ‘a’ in ‘bat,’ IPA [æ],¹ as in *berhem* [bæɾ’hæm] ‘product,’ except (1) in the sequence *ew*, where it is pronounced [ə] as in *ew* [əw] ‘that’ and *dewlet* [dəw’læt] ‘state,’ (2) when it is followed by *y* but not in the same syllable, in which case it is pronounced like the ‘e’ in ‘bet’ [ɛ], as in *odeya* [o’dɛya] ‘room,’ and (3) in post-stress positions, particularly word-finally, where it is pronounced [ɛ], as in *miróvek* [mɪ’rɔ-

¹ The [æ] pronunciation of this vowel is taken as standard; for many speakers, however, it is closer to [ɛ], the vowel of English ‘bet,’ in all environments.

KURMANJI KURDISH

vək] ‘a man’ and *dîçe* [ˈdɪtʃɛ] ‘he goes.’

- û** is like the ‘oo’ in ‘boot,’ IPA [u], as in *bûn* [bun] ‘to be.’
- u** is like the ‘u’ in ‘put’ and ‘bull,’ IPA [ʊ], as in *du* [dʊ] ‘two’; the sequences *gu* and *ku* are pronounced by some as [gʷɛ] and [kʷɛ], particularly in closed syllables like *gur* ‘wolf,’ pronounced either [gʷɛr] or [gʊr].
- o** is like the ‘oa’ in ‘boat,’ IPA [o], without the *w*-offglide of English, as in *nod* [nod] ‘ninety.’
- a** is like the ‘a’ in ‘father’ and ‘balm,’ IPA [a], as in *bav* [bav] ‘father.’

Consonants:

	bilabial	labiodental	dental/alveolar	palatal	velar	uvular	glotto-pharyngeal
plosive	p, p̣		t, ṭ		k, ḳ	q	
	b		d		g		
fricative		f	s		x		h, ḥ
		v	z		χ		‘
			ʃ	ç, ç̣			
			j	c			
nasal	m		n				
approximate	w			y			
flap, trill			r, ṛ				
lateral			l				

- b** is the ‘b’ of English [b]
- c** is pronounced like the ‘j’ in ‘judge’ [dʒ]
- ç** is the aspirated ‘ch’ like the ‘ch’ in ‘church’ [tʃ^h] (see below)
- ç̣** is the unaspirated ‘ch’ of English ‘eschew’ plus pharyngealization [tʃ^{ç̣}] (see below)
- d** is like the ‘d’ of English [d]
- f** is like the ‘f’ of English [f]
- g** is the hard ‘g’ of English, as in ‘go’ [g]
- h** is like the ‘h’ of English [h]

PHONOLOGY

- h** is pronounced, in areas in which it occurs, like the ح of Arabic (a voiceless pharyngeal fricative, [ħ]); in areas where it is not so pronounced, it is not differentiated from *h*
- j** is the ‘j’ of French, the English ‘g’ in ‘beige’ [ʒ]
- k** is the aspirated ‘k’ of English ‘key’ [k^h] (see below)
- ḳ** is the unaspirated ‘k’ of English ‘sky’ plus pharyngealization [k^ʕ] (see below)
- l** is a liquid ‘l’ as in Persian, like the *l* in ‘lee’ [l]
- m** is the ‘m’ of English [m]
- n** is the ‘n’ of English [n]
- p** is the aspirated ‘p’ of English ‘pie’ [p^h] (see below)
- p̣** is the unaspirated ‘p’ of English ‘spy’ plus pharyngealization [p^ʕ] (see below)
- q** is a voiceless uvular stop, like the Arabic ق [q]; it is pronounced like ‘k’ but farther back in the throat
- r** is a flap as in Persian and Italian [r]; does not occur word-initially
- rr** is a trill, like the ‘rr’ of Spanish [r]; all initial r’s are trilled; the trilled *r* is only sporadically indicated in the orthography by *rr* (e.g. *pirr* ‘very,’ which is sometimes written *pirr*), otherwise it is not indicated in the writing system
- s** is the ‘s’ of English [s]
- ʃ** is pronounced like the ‘sh’ in ‘ship’ [ʃ]
- t** is the aspirated ‘t’ of English ‘tie’ [t^h] (see below)
- ṭ** is the unaspirated ‘t’ of English ‘sty’ plus pharyngealization [t^ʕ] (see below)
- v** is the ‘v’ of English [v]
- w** is the ‘w’ of English ‘we’ [w] except before *i*, *î*, and *ê*, when it is a close back unrounded semivowel [ʍ], like the ‘u’ in French *cuire* and *huit*
- x** is pronounced like the ‘ch’ in German ‘Bach’ and the Arabic خ, a voiceless uvular fricative [χ]
- x̣** is a voiced uvular fricative [ʁ], the *ghayn* (غ) of Arabic; it is the voiced counterpart to *x*

KURMANJI KURDISH

- y** is the ‘y’ of English ‘yes’ [j]; also indicates the diphthongs *ay* and *ey*
- z** is the ‘z’ of English [z]
- ‘ is not part of the orthographic system, but it is given in the vocabulary to indicate the Arabic ‘*ayn* (ع). In parts of the Kurmanji-speaking area, particularly those closer to Arabic-speaking areas, the ‘*ayn* is pronounced as in Arabic (a voiced pharyngeal fricative, [ʕ]). Vowels pronounced with a preceding ‘*ayn* are marked with an underscore (e = ‘e, as in *ereb* ‘Arab’)

The aspirated and unaspirated stops.

p, t, k, and **ç** are aspirated stops, as in English ‘pie,’ ‘tie,’ ‘key,’ and ‘chew’

p̣, ṭ, ḳ, and **ç̣** are unaspirated stops, as in English ‘spy,’ ‘sty,’ and ‘ski,’ and ‘eschew,’ and are accompanied by slight pharyngealization. They are not indicated in the writing system, and they are not universally observed by all speakers, but where they occur they contrast on the phonemic level. They are indicated in this book by an underscore: cf. *p̣elav* [p^helav] ‘wave’ and *p̣elav* [p[̣]elav] ‘shoes,’ *kal* [k^hal] ‘unripe’ and *kal* [k[̣]al] ‘old man,’ *ṭin* [t^hin] ‘thirst’ and *ṭin* [t[̣]in] ‘heat,’ *çal* [t^hal] ‘speckled’ and *çal* [t[̣]al] ‘pit, well’

Stress. All nouns and adjectives are lightly stressed on the final syllable. Most grammatical elements added to nouns (**-ek**, **-ê**, **-a**) are enclitic and thus unstressed (*miróv* > *miróvek*, *gúnd* > *gúndê*, *odé* > *odéya*), with the exception of the plural suffixes **-ên** and **-an**, which are stressed (*kúrd* > *kurdê’n*, *kurdán*).

The hierarchy of stress in verbs is as follows:

(1) The negative prefixes **na-** and **ne-**, as in *náçim* [ˈnatʃim] ‘I don’t go’ and *néçû* [ˈnætʃu] ‘he didn’t go.’

(2) Preverbs like **ve-**, **hil-**, **da-**, and **wer-**, as in *védixwim* [ˈvædixwim] ‘I drink,’ *hıldidin* [ˈhıldidin] ‘they lift,’ *dáqurtand* [ˈdaqurtʰand] ‘swallowed it,’ and *wérgerand* [ˈwærgærand] ‘translated it.’

(3) The modal prefixes **di-** and **bi-**, as in *díaxiftim* [ˈdɪaxiftim] ‘I was speaking,’ and *bíaxive* [ˈbɪaxive] ‘let him speak.’

PHONOLOGY

(4) When there are no prefixes on finite verbal forms, the final syllable of the verb stem is stressed, as in *axiftine* [a'xiftine] 'they have spoken.'

(5) The infinitive is stressed on the final syllable, as in *axiftîn* [axiftîn] 'to speak.'

Orthographic variants. Some writers prefer to use the Turkish undotted 'ı' for 'i' and the dotted 'î' for 'î.' They write *dizanim* as *dızanim* and *zanîn* as *zanin*.

Doubled consonants. Doubled consonants are quite rare in Kurdish, and almost all the doubled consonants of Arabic and Persian loanwords are reduced to a single consonant, e.g. *muddat* > **mudet**, *mullâ* > **mele**, *mu'assasa* > **muesese**, and *shiddat* > **şidet**. The few double consonants that survive are in learned borrowings like **ummet** 'religious community,' **welle** 'by God,' **seff** 'class,' and **muswedde** 'draft copy.'

The furtive *i*. Kurdish does not tolerate all final consonant clusters. When an intolerable final consonant cluster appears, it is broken by the vowel *i*, called the 'furtive *i*,' which disappears when a vowel-initial enclitic or suffix is added to the word. Words like *aql* 'mind, intelligence,' *esl* 'origin,' *emr* 'age,' and *emr* 'order' are *aqil*, *esil*, *emir*, and *emir*¹ when by themselves or when followed by a consonant-initial suffix (*aqil* 'mind,' *kêmaqil* 'foolish,' *ew kêmaqil bû* 'he was foolish,' and *aqilmend* 'intelligent'). When followed by a vowel-initial enclitic or suffix the *i* is dropped, as in *aqîlê te* 'your mind,' *ew kêmaqil e* 'he is foolish,' *kêmaqîlî* 'foolishness,' *bi eslê xwe* 'in one's origin, originally,' *emrê min* 'my age' and *emra serdar* 'commander's order.' The furtive *i* is indicated in the vocabulary by an italicized *i*, e.g. **aqîl**, **esîl**, **emîr**, **fêhîm**. Kurdish writers are not in agreement on the

¹*Aqil* 'mind' (with furtive *i*), from the Arabic عقل, is to be distinguished from the homograph *aqil* that means 'intelligent, reasonable' (from the Arabic عاقل). The latter is stable as *aqil* even in compounds (*aqilane* 'intelligently'). There are two words spelled *emir*, *emir* (a variant of عمر) 'age' and *emir* (from the Arabic امر) 'order'; they both contain furtives *i*'s.

KURMANJI KURDISH

writing of the furtive *i*, and many omit it, particularly when it is unstressed, i.e. some write *ez fêhim dikim* ‘I understand’ while others write *ez fêhm dikim*.

For practicing Kurdish pronunciation, there are stories with printed text and audio available on the internet at www.dibistanakurdi.com. For the stories, select “Çîrok” in the “Hilbijartî” list. The words in the stories are included in the vocabulary at the end of the book.

THE GRAMMAR OF KURMANJI KURDISH

SUBSTANTIVES

§ 1. **The Noun.** A Kurdish noun in the absolute state, i.e. without any ending of any kind, gives (1) the generic sense of the noun and (2) the definite sense. It is also the “lexical” form of the noun, i.e. the form in which a noun is given in a vocabulary list or dictionary. Thus, a noun like **kitêb** ‘book’ may, depending upon the context, mean ‘books (in general)’ or ‘the book’ (the one that has already been introduced). There are no articles of any kind in Kurdish.

§ 1.1. **Gender.** All Kurmanji nouns are either masculine or feminine. Each and every word must be learned along with its gender, and there is little helpful that can be said concerning determining gender, as grammatical gender appears to be randomly assigned. Beings that are male or female by nature are assigned to the corresponding grammatical gender class, and as a rule, the names of towns, cities, and countries are feminine; all abstract nouns ending in **-î** are feminine; all infinitives used as nouns are feminine; and nouns ending in vowels tend to be feminine.

Words borrowed from Arabic, which has gender, do not necessarily correspond to the gender assignment in Arabic. **Kitêb** ‘book’ is feminine in Kurdish; the Arabic word from which it is derived, **كتاب** *kitāb*, is masculine. Words borrowed from Persian and Turkish, neither of which has gender, are randomly assigned gender.

§ 1.2. **Inflection.** Nouns are inflected in four cases, nominative, oblique, construct, and vocative. The construct case will be treated in §4 below, and the vocative will be treated in §17.1.

There are no particular endings for the nominative, and the nominative

KURMANJI KURDISH

plural is identical to the nominative singular. Nouns are actually masculine or feminine only in the singular; the plural is common, and there is no gender differentiation of plural nouns.

In the oblique case, feminine singular nouns add unstressed **-ê** (or **-yê** if the noun ends in a vowel; feminine nouns that end in **e** either add **-yê** or change the **e** to **ê**), unmodified masculine singular nouns do not change,¹ and all plural nouns add stressed **-an** (or **-yan** if the noun ends in a vowel). Words that end in **-î** change the **î** to **-iy-** before adding any endings. An example of a masculine noun is **mirov** ‘man,’ and examples of feminine nouns are **jin** ‘woman’ and **ode** ‘room’:

	NOMINATIVE		OBLIQUE
MASC. SING.	miróv	+ —	miróv
FEM. SING.	jín	+ ê	jínê
	odé	□ + yê □ □ or e > ê	odéyê odé´
PLURAL	mirov	+ án	mirován
	jín	+ án	jinán
	odé	+ yán	odeyán
	gundî´	î > iyán	gundiyan

The nominative case is used for (1) unmodified subjects and predicates of equational sentences (see §11)

Ode paqij e.	<i>The room is clean.</i>
Ev mekteb e.	This is <i>the school</i> .

(2) subjects of all intransitive verbs (see §14)

Gundî di mêvanxana Reşo de rûniş-tîbûn û daxaftin.	<i>The villagers were sitting and talking in Resho’s reception room.</i>
---	--

and (3) the patients of all past-tense transitive verbs (see §18.2).

¹ When a masculine singular noun is modified by a demonstrative (see §2) or indefinite (see §3), it does change.

SUBSTANTIVES

The oblique case is used for (1) direct objects of present-tense verbs:

Ez miróv dibînim.	I see <i>the man</i> .
Ez mirovân dibînim.	I see <i>the men</i> .
Ez jîné dibînim.	I see <i>the woman</i> .
Ez jinân dibînim.	I see <i>the women</i> .

(2) complements of prepositions:

ji miróv	from the man
ji mirovân	from the men
ji jîné	from the woman
ji jinân	from the women
di odéyê de <input type="checkbox"/>	in the room
di odé' de <input type="checkbox"/>	
di odé' de <input type="checkbox"/>	

(3) the second member of a construct chain (see below §4):

gundên kurdan	villages of Kurds
----------------------	-------------------

(4) agents of past-tense transitive verbs (see below §18.2).

In the case of nouns coordinated by the conjunction **û** 'and,' only the last member of a series shows a case ending if there is one.

Tu kitêb û kovaran dibîni?	Do you see the books and journals?
Ji bo rojên bê, ez plan û bernaman çêdikim.	I'm making plans and programs for the coming days.

There are a few nouns that contain the vowel **a**, usually in the final syllable, like **ba** 'wind,' **bajar** 'city,' **ziman** 'language,' **mar** 'snake,' **welat** 'country,' and **agir** 'fire,' that may show an internal change of the **a** to **ê** for the oblique case, i.e. **bê**, **bajêr**, **zimên**, **mêr**, **welêt**, and **êgir**. The use of the internal oblique is optional.

§ 2. Demonstrative Adjectives and Her 'Every.' When functioning as attributive adjectives, the nominative demonstratives are **ev** 'this, these' and **ew** 'that, those.' They modify both singular and plural nouns and show no differentiation between masculine and feminine. In the oblique, however, **ev**

KURMANJI KURDISH

and **ew** become **vî** and **wî** respectively with masculine nouns, and the noun echoes the ending by adding **-î**; with feminine nouns **ev** becomes **vê**, and **ew** becomes **wê**, and the noun echoes the ending by adding **-ê**; in the plural **ev** becomes **van** and **ew** becomes **wan**, and the plural nouns echo them by adding **-an**.

When modified by **her** ‘every,’ masculine singular nouns, which are not distinguished in the oblique case when they are unmodified, take the oblique ending **-î** and feminine nouns add the regular oblique ending **-ê**.

	NOM. SING. & PL.	OBL. SING.	OBL. PL.
MASC.	ev ...	vî ... î	van ... án
	ew ...	wî ... î	wan ... án
	her ...	her ... î	—
FEM.	ev ...	vê ... ê	van ... án
	ew ...	wê ... ê	wan ... án
	her ...	her ... ê	—

□	ev miróv	this man, these men (masc. nom. sing. & pl.)
}	ji vî miróvî	from this man (masc. obl. sing.)
}	ji her miróvî	from every man
}	ji van mirován	from these men (obl. pl.)
}	Ez wî miróvî dibînim.	I see that man.
}	Ez wan mirován dibînim.	I see those men.
}	ew odé	that room, those rooms (fem. nom. sing. & pl.)
}	ji wê odéyê	from that room (fem. obl. sing.)
}	ji her odéyê	from every room
}	ji wan odeyán	from those rooms (obl. pl.)

§ 3. **The Indefinite State.** The sign of the indefinite singular (‘a, any, some’) is an unstressed enclitic **-ek** (**-yek** for words ending in vowels) added to the end of the absolute singular noun. Both masculine and femi-

SUBSTANTIVES

nine indefinite nouns have an oblique case, the endings of which echo the oblique demonstrative endings (-î for masc. and -ê for fem.).

	NOMINATIVE	OBLIQUE
MASC.	´-(y)ek	´-(y)ekî
FEM.	´-(y)ek	´-(y)ekê

mirov > miróvek	the man > a man
Miróvek hat.	A man came.
Ez miróvekî dibînim.	I see a man.
kitêb > kitê´bek	the book > a book
Li ser masê kitêbek heye.	There’s a book on the table.
Ez kitêbekê dibînim.	I see a book.
derî > deríyek	the door > a door
Ez deríyekî vedikim.	I’ll open a door.

The relatively little-used indefinite plural is formed by adding **-(n)in** to the absolute singular for the nominative and **-(n)inan** for the oblique.

kur > kúrin	some boys
derî > derí´nin	some doors
îstgah > îstgáhin	some stations

§ 4. The Primary Construct Case. The construct links (1) two nouns in a limiting or possessive relationship and (2) an attributive adjective to the noun it modifies. The first noun in a construct string, the one that is limited, is in the construct case, the endings for which are as follows for all nouns ending in consonants:

	DEF. SING.	INDEF. SING.	PLURAL
MASC.	-ê	-ekî	-ên
FEM.	-a	-eke	-ên

These endings are exemplified by the nouns **mirov** ‘man’ (masc.) and **jin**

KURMANJI KURDISH

‘woman’ (fem.):

MASC.	mirovê	mirovekî	mirovên
FEM.	jina	jineke	jinên

Nouns ending in **e** have the following endings and alternative forms exemplified by **perçe** *m* ‘piece’ and **ode** *f* ‘room’:

MASC.	{	perçeyê		perçeyên
		perçê	perçeyekî	perçên
FEM.	{	odeya	odeyeke	odeyên
		oda	odake	

Nouns ending in **î** (like **xanî** *m* ‘house’ and **piranî** *f* ‘majority’) change the **î** to **iy** and then add the endings:

MASC.	xaniyê	xaniyekî	xaniyên
FEM.	piraniya	piraniyeke	piraniyên

There are very few nouns that end in **u** and **û**, but for the few that exist the following endings may take the place of the **u** or **û**:

MASC.	iwê	iwekî	iwên
FEM.	iwa	iveke	iwên

A noun or pronoun in the second part of a construct, the limiter, is in the oblique case, as in the following:

{	mirôvê wî welátî	the man of that country
	miróvekî wî welátî	a man of that country
	mirovê´n wî welátî	the men of that country
{	hejmára kovárê	the issue of the journal
	hejmáreke kovárê	an issue of the journal
	hejmarê´n kovárê	the issues of the journal
{	odéya (or oda) rûnîştínê	the sitting room
	odéyeke (or odáke) rûnîştínê	a sitting room
	odeyê´n rûnîştínê	the sitting rooms

KURMANJI KURDISH

mirovê mezin	the big man
mirovekî mezin	a big man
mirovên mezin	the big men
kitêba nû	the new book
kitêbeke nû	a new book
kitêbên nû	the new books
xaniyê biçûk	the little house
xaniyekî biçûk	a little house
xaniyên biçûk	the little houses

As in noun-noun constructs, the construct case ending takes precedence over the oblique case. As an example, in the string

behsa girîngiya wê rojê discussion of the importance of that
day

wê rojê, as the third noun and last element in the string, is in the oblique case, but in the string

behsa girîngiya wê roja pîroz discussion of the importance of that
celebrated day

wê roja is in the construct case because it is modified by a following adjective. Only the last noun in a construct string can be modified by an adjective, i.e. in the phrase in the example above it is grammatically impossible to modify either **behsa** or **girîngiya** with an adjective inside the string (see §5).

Syntactically related prepositional and circumpositional phrases (see §8 below) modify nouns in Kurmanji and are linked to them by the construct exactly as though they were adjectives.

mirovê di xanî de	the man in the house (vs. the man outside the house)
ev pirtûka di destê we de	this book in your hand
di hevpeyvîneke bi wî mirovî re	in a conversation with that man
rojnameyeke bi kurdî	a newspaper in Kurdish
şagirtê li teniştê min	the student next to me

SUBSTANTIVES

In a series coordinated by the conjunction **û**, only the last noun shows the construct ending.

gelek serok û birêvebirên partiyên siyasî	many heads and leaders of political parties
şexsiyet û rewşenbîrên kurdan	personalities and intellectuals of the Kurds

§ 5. The Secondary Construct: The Construct Extender. The primary construct is used, as has been seen, to connect noun to noun (to noun, indefinitely) or noun to a single attributive adjective. These two categories cannot be mixed: the first noun in a noun-noun construct cannot be modified by an adjective, and a noun cannot be modified by more than one adjective with the construct. In cases other than these two, the secondary construct with a “construct extender” is used. The extenders are as follows:

MASC. SING.	FEM. SING.	COMMON PLURAL
yê	ya	yên

The extenders are used (1) to add a modifying noun to a noun-adjective construct, (2) to link an adjective modifying the first noun in a noun-noun construct, and (3) to add an additional adjective to a noun-adjective construct.

As examples, (1) a phrase like **hejmareke nû** ‘a new issue’ is a normal noun-adjective construct, but since this type of construct is closed, in order to modify the construct further in any way, such as ‘a new issue of the journal,’ the construct extender is used: **hejmareke nû ya kovarê**, where the feminine extender **ya** agrees with the feminine head noun in the construct, **hejmarek**.

destê rastê yê Cengî	Jengi’s right hand
Cumhûriyeta Kurdî ya Mehabadê	The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad
navên din yên vê êkolê	other names of this school

(2) In a noun-noun construct string like **navê wî mirovî** ‘that man’s name,’ the extender is used to modify the first noun in the string: **navê wî mirovî yê rastîn** ‘that man’s real name.’

KURMANJI KURDISH

zimanekî min yê taybetî	a special language of mine
dîroka Kurdistanê ya nêzik	the recent history of Kurdistan
xebat û fedekariyên xwe yê nî şexsî	his own personal struggles and sacrifices

(3) In a noun-adjective string like **rojnameyeke kurdî** ‘a Kurdish newspaper’ the extender is used to modify the noun with another adjective, as in **rojnameyeke kurdî ya rojane** ‘a daily Kurdish newspaper.’ Other examples are as follows:

helbestvanê Ferensî yê ji sedsala nozdehan	the French poet of the nineteenth century
rojnameyeke rojane ya bi kurdî	a daily newspaper in Kurdish
darbeeyeke mezin ya ekonomîk	a great economic blow
keç û jinên Ewropî yê nî porzer û çav şîn	blonde and blue-eyed European girls and women

In some dialects the extenders are **ê**, **a**, and **ên** (without the initial *y*), and they are used particularly when the preceding word ends in a vowel.

dîlê wî ê pola	his heart of steel
mala birê min ê mezin	my big brother’s house
kulma zêbit a guvaştî	the officer’s clenched fist
şeva me a dawî	our last night
zendên xwe ê nî xurt	his strong arms
zarokên gund ê nî belengaz	the poor children of the village

An optional—and fairly rare—alternative masc. sing. construct extender uses the same ending as the indefinite, **î**.

nivîskarekî din î zîrek	another clever writer
şafîrekî kurd î bijarte	a recognized Kurdish poet
bi wî dengê xwe î bilind	in that loud voice of his

§ 6. Synopsis of Noun States and Cases.

KURMANJI KURDISH

§ 7. **Personal Pronouns.** The personal pronouns in the nominative and oblique cases are as follows. There are no enclitic pronouns in Kurmanji.

SINGULAR			PLURAL		
NOM.	OBL.		NOM.	OBL.	
ez	min	I	em	me	we
tu	te	you (sing.)	hun ¹	we	you (pl.)
ew	{	wî (m) he/it/that	ew	wan	they/those
		wê (f) she/it/that			
ev	{	vî (m) he/it/this	ev	van	they/these
		vê (f) she/it/this			

There are no third-person pronouns other than the demonstratives. The **ew** set is the third-person pronoun of default; the **ev** set is used to direct attention to a nearby third person. Note that both **ew** and **ev** distinguish gender only in the oblique singular. Subject pronouns are necessarily expressed, as in English, except in impersonal constructions where English uses ‘it’ (as in “it’s raining”) and occasionally in connected prose where the referent of a third-person pronoun has already been introduced and is obvious from context.

The **nominative** pronouns are used as subjects of equational sentences, present-tense verbs, and past-tense intransitive verbs

Ez kurd im.	<i>I’m a Kurd.</i>
Ew wî mirovî dibîne.	<i>He sees that man.</i>
Em rûniştin.	<i>We sat down.</i>

and (2) as patients of past-tense transitive verbs (see §18.2).

Min tu dîtî.	<i>I saw you.</i>
Wî em dîtîn.	<i>He saw us.</i>

The **oblique** pronouns are used as (1) possessors in a construct

kitêba min, kitêbên min	<i>my book, my books</i>
kitêbeke min	<i>a book of mine</i>

¹ In some dialects **hun** is **hûn**.

SUBSTANTIVES

kitêbeke nû ya min	a new book of <i>mine</i>
xaniyê me	<i>our</i> house

(2) direct objects of all present-tense verbs (and all verbs formed from the present stem of the verb)

<u>Tu</u> min dibîni?	Do you see <i>me</i> ?
Ez <u>te</u> dibînim.	I see <i>you</i> .
Ew <i>me</i> dibîne.	He sees <i>us</i> .
Em ni^{karin} wan bibînin.	We cannot see <i>them</i> .

(3) complements of prepositions and circumpositions

ji min	from <i>me</i>
ji wî	from <i>him</i>
ji wê	from <i>her</i>
bi wan re	with <i>them</i>

(4) agents of all past transitive verbs (see §18.2 below)

<u>Te</u> ez dîtîm.	You saw me.
Min ew dîtîm.	I saw them.

§ 7.1 **The Reflexive Pronoun Xwe.** The reflexive pronoun **xwe** has, in and of itself, no person or number but takes its person and number from the subject of the verb in the clause in which it occurs. It can thus mean, as a possessive, ‘my own,’ ‘your own,’ ‘his/her own,’ ‘our own,’ or ‘their own’ as well as the objective ‘myself,’ ‘yourself,’ ‘him/herself,’ ‘ourselves,’ ‘yourselves,’ or ‘themselves.’ **Xwe** must be used as both possessive pronoun and object pronoun to refer to the subject of the verb, i.e. the personal pronouns cannot be so used. Constructions like **kitêba min** ‘my book’ and **hevalên min** ‘my friends’ are viable in any clause in which ‘I’ is not the subject of the verb, but not in sentences like “I see my book” and “I went with my friends,” where **kitêba xwe** and **hevalên xwe** must be used.

Dêlikek teva du cewrên xwe li ser riya min xuya dibûn. A bitch used to appear on my route with *her* two pups.

KURMANJI KURDISH

Li dora xwe dinêrim.	I look around <i>myself</i> .
Ferzende di ranê xwe da birîn bû.	Ferzende was wounded in <i>his</i> thigh.
With past transitive verbs (see §18.2), <i>xwe</i> takes its person and number from the logical subject (= agent).	
Ezê vegeyîyama Şamê, minê hevalên xwe ên li wir bidîtana.	I would have returned to Damascus; I would have seen <i>my</i> friends there.
Te xwe ji bîr dikir û te çemê bajarê xwe tanî bîra xwe.	You forgot <i>yourself</i> , and you remembered the river of your town.

§ 8. Prepositions, Postpositions, Circumpositions. Certain prepositions, particularly **bi**, **dî**, **ji**, and **li**, occur as circumpositions that envelop the complement, that is, the preposition itself marks the beginning of the prepositional phrase, and the end of the complement is marked by one of the postpositions, **ve**, **de**, or **re** (or the variants, **va**, **da**, and **ra**).

The postpositional element does not always, in and of itself, add anything substantial to the meaning of the prepositional phrase, and most prepositions occur without the postpositional element without any significant distinction in meaning. Others need the postpositional element to define the signification of the preposition, as **dî ... de** 'in' vs. **dî ... re** 'with' and **ji ... ve** 'from' vs. **ji ... re** 'to, for, with.' Generally the postpositions have the following significations: **de** indicates stationary position in or at; **re** indicates accompaniment; and **ve** indicates motion away from.

Common prepositions and circumpositions:

ba to, towards	dî ... re by, via, with
ber in front of, toward	dî ... ve through
bêî (bêyî , bêy) without	dî bareya ... de about, concerning
berî before	digel with
bi with, by means of (see below)	dî nav ... de among, amidst, inside of
bi ... re with, along with	dî navbera ... de between
bi tenê except for	heta until, as far as
bi xêra due to, thanks to	ji from, of (partitive)
derveyî outside of	ji ... re to, for, with
dî ... de in	

SUBSTANTIVES

<p>ji ... ve from; as of, since ji bilî other than, aside from ji bo for, for the sake of ji nava from amongst ji xeynî other than, aside from li (... de) in, at, to li cem together with li ber in front of, before li dijî against li dora around ligel together with</p>	<p>li gora according to li pey after, behind li pêş in front of li rex beside li ser on, above, about mîna like piştî after ser on, to ta until, up to tevî along with wek(e) like</p>
---	---

As a rule, prepositions are followed by nouns and pronouns in the oblique case. The exception is the preposition **bi**: when it is used to create an adverb (like **bi şermdarî** ‘modestly’) or a compound adjective (like **bi quwet** ‘powerful’), the complement is in the nominative case.

<p>Pêlên bayê hênik bi şermdarî derbasî hundirê oda te dibûn.</p>	<p>Waves of cool breeze were passing <i>modestly</i> into your room.</p>
<p>Û bi rastî tu mîna gula ji lûla tufingê derkeve, tu ji malê derkefî</p>	<p>And <i>truly</i> you went out of the house like a bullet shot from the barrel of a rifle.</p>
<p>yek ji şair û nivîskarên herî bi quwet</p>	<p>one of the most <i>powerful</i> poets and writers</p>

Since a circumposition envelopes the whole of its complement, it may extend through a relative clause (for which see §30), as in the following:

<p>Gelo mirov kanê jî {berhemên ku bi zimanên din têne nivîsandin} re bibêje berhemên kurdî an jî edebiyata kurdî?</p>	<p>I wonder if one can speak of works that are written in other languages as Kurdish works or Kurdish literature.</p>
<p>Ew ê bixwaze bi {yekî ku nêrîna wî nêzikî nêrîna wê ye} re bizewice.</p>	<p>He would like to get married to someone whose outlook is close to his own.</p>

§ 8.1. **Contracted Prepositions.** Four prepositions have contracted forms

KURMANJI KURDISH

with third-person singular complements:

bi + wî/wê > pê	ji + wî/wê > jê
di + wî/wê > tê	li + wî/wê > lê

If there is a postposition, it appears along with the contracted form of the preposition (**jê re, tê de**, etc.).

Kesê ku heval, hogir û şagirtê wî bû û pê re dimeşiya...	The person who was his friend, companion, and pupil and who walked <i>with him</i> ...
Mêrik odaya min û nivînê ku ezê tê de razêm, nişanî min da.	The man showed me my room and the bed <i>in which</i> I would be sleeping.
Mizgînî digihîje Emîn Alî Bedir-Xan, ku jê re lawikek çêbûye.	The news reaches Emin Ali Bedir-Khan that a son has been born <i>to him</i> .
Mela lê nêrî û got...	The mulla looked <i>at him</i> and said...
Te lê vegerand.	You replied <i>to him</i> .

§ 9. Cardinal Numbers. The cardinal numbers are as follows:

1 <u>yek</u>	17 <u>hivdeh</u>	102 <u>sed û du, &c.</u>
2 <u>du, didu</u>	18 <u>hijdeh</u>	200 <u>dused</u>
3 <u>sê, sisê</u>	19 <u>nozdeh</u>	300 <u>sêsed</u>
4 <u>çar</u>	20 <u>bîst</u>	400 <u>çarsed</u>
5 <u>pênc</u>	21 <u>bîst û yek</u>	500 <u>pêncsed</u>
6 <u>şeş</u>	22 <u>bîst û du</u>	600 <u>şeşsed</u>
7 <u>heft</u>	23 <u>bîst û sê, &c.</u>	700 <u>heftsed</u>
8 <u>heşt</u>	30 <u>sî (sih)</u>	800 <u>heştсед</u>
9 <u>neh</u>	40 <u>çil</u>	900 <u>nehsed</u>
10 <u>deh</u>	50 <u>pêncî</u>	1,000 (<u>yek</u>) <u>hezar</u>
11 <u>ya(n)zdeh</u>	60 <u>şêst</u>	2,000 <u>du hezar</u>
12 <u>dwanzdeh</u>	70 <u>heftê</u>	3,000 <u>sê hezar</u>
13 <u>sêzdeh</u>	80 <u>heştê</u>	4,000 <u>çar hezar</u>
14 <u>çardeh</u>	90 <u>nod</u>	5,000 <u>pênj hezar</u>
15 <u>panzdeh</u>	100 <u>sed</u>	6,000 <u>şeş hezar</u>
16 <u>şanzdeh</u>	101 <u>sed û yek</u>	7,000 <u>heft hezar</u>

SUBSTANTIVES

8,000 heşt hezar 9,000 neh hezar 10,000 deh hezar &c.

Compound numbers are formed with the conjunction **û**, as in

çil û yek	forty-one
pêncî û heft	fifty-seven

The number **yek** and all subsequent compound numbers ending in **yek** are ordinarily declined as feminine singular with construct in **-a** and oblique in **-ê**.

di 91'ê de	di nod û yekê de	in '91
-------------------	-------------------------	--------

Lê ew yeka han wî bêhêvî nake.	But that one (thing just mentioned) does not make him despair.
---------------------------------------	--

Ev yeka han ji tradisyona Celadet Bedir-Xan û bi xêra kovara wî Hawarê dibe.	This one (thing just mentioned) is from the tradition of Jeladet Bedir-Khan and is thanks to his journal <i>Hawar</i> .
---	---

When **yek** is used as a pronoun referring to a person, however, it takes the appropriate gender.

ew yekê wan	that one (masc.) of them
ew yeke wan	that one (fem.) of them

The numbers **du** through **neh**, and all subsequent compounds ending in 2 through 9, as well as the thousands, are inflected as plurals with a regular oblique in **-an**.

di sala 1984'an de	di sala hezar û nehsed û heştê û çaran de	in the year 1984
li 4'a aprîla 1946'an de	li çara aprîla hezar û nehsed û çil û şeşan de	on April 4, 1946

All numbers ending in zero (except the thousands) are declined as masculine with construct ending in **-ên**, but the oblique ends in **-(y)î**.

di salên 1300'î de	di salên hezar û sêsedî de	in the 1300s
---------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------

KURMANJI KURDISH

<p>di navbera 1968–70’yî de</p>	<p>di navbera hezar û neh- sad û şeş û heşt û hef- têyî de</p>	<p>between 1968 and 1970</p>
<p>Oidupusa Sofokles bi kê- manî berî niha bi 2450 salî hatiye nivîsandin.</p>	<p>Oidupusa Sofokles bi kêmanî berî niha bi du hezar û çarsed û pêncî salî hatiye nivîsandin.</p>	<p>Sophocles’ <i>Oedipus</i> was written at least 2450 years ago.</p>

Numbers that modify nouns are indeclinable and are followed immediately by the noun counted, and the noun is plural—of course this will show only in the oblique and construct cases.

The numbers ‘2’ and ‘3’ by themselves are **didu** and **sisê**; when they modify nouns and when they are part of a compound number they are **du** and **sê**, and nouns following them are construed as plural, as are the nouns after all numbers.

<p>Apê min û du kes çûn nava şikeftê.</p>	<p>My uncle and the two men went inside the cave.</p>
<p>piştê du rojên din</p>	<p>after two more days</p>
<p>Her du çavên wê sor, wek du pizotên êgir bûn.</p>	<p>Its two eyes were red, like two brands of fire.</p>
<p>Sê hefte û çar roj mabûn.</p>	<p>Three weeks and four days remained.</p>
<p>piştî şeş meh û 14 (çardeh) rojan</p>	<p>after six months and fourteen days</p>
<p>Temporal expressions of duration of time (“for X amount of time”) and instance (“X number of times”) are in the oblique case.</p>	
<p>Sê roj û sê şevan di wî cihî da ma.</p>	<p>He stayed in that place for three days and three nights.</p>
<p>Ez heşt caran hatim girtin.</p>	<p>I was arrested eight times.</p>
<p>Pênc, heşt, deh caran ew lat bilind dibûn berî ku giranbûna wan wan bikişîne binê golê.</p>	<p>Five, eight, ten times those stones skipped before their weight pulled them to the bottom of the lake.</p>

§ 9.1. Ordinal Numbers. With the exception of ‘1st,’ ordinal numbers are

SUBSTANTIVES

formed from the cardinal numbers plus the suffix **-(y)an**, as in the following:

1st ewel(î)	7th heftan
2nd diduyan, duduyan	8th heştan
3rd sisiyān	9th nehan
4th çaran	10th dehan
5th pêncan	11th yanzdehan
6th şeşan	12th dwanzdehan &c.

The ordinals are construed as normal adjectives.

Bi hatina cunta faşîst a diduyan re ez jê hatim avêtin. With the coming of the second Fascist junta I was thrown out of there.

di hejmarā Hawarê ya 4'an [çaran] de in the fourth issue of *Hawar*

Roja sisyān laşê kurê xwe da piştā xwe û bir mal. On the third day he put his son's body on his back and carried him home.

Xeyn ji dengê segekî tu dengên din ne dihatin guhan, lê dirêj ne kir, dema dengê segekî bû yê duduyan û sisyān û çaran. Aside from the sound of a dog no other sounds could be heard, but it wasn't long before there was the sound of a second, third, and fourth dog.

There is an alternative set of ordinals formed in the Persian manner with the suffixes **-em** and **-emîn**, as follows:

1st yekem(în)	7th heftem(în)
2nd duyem(în)	8th heştem(în)
3rd sêyem(în)	9th nehem(în)
4th çarem(în)	10th dehem(în)
5th pêncem(în)	11th yanzdehem(în)
6th şeşem(în)	12th dwanzdehem(în) &c.

These ordinals tend to be used in set phrases like **şe_rê cîhanê yê yekemîn** 'the First World War' and **cara yekem** 'the first time.'

§ 9.2. Months of the Year and Days of the Week. There are several nomenclature systems in use for the months. The names of the first set are borrowed from French, and they are as follows:

janvîye/januar January **fevrîye** February

KURMANJI KURDISH

mars March	ût August
aprîl April	september September
mê May	oktober October
jûen June	november November
jûîya July	desember December

The names of the second set either correspond to or were borrowed directly from the Arabic versions of the ancient Semitic month names that were adjusted to fit the Julian calendar months of the Roman Empire. May and July have fallen out of use in this set. The names are given with their Arabic equivalents in parentheses:

çîleya paşîn January (كانون الثاني)	ab August (آب)
sibat February (شباط)	eylûl September (يلول)
adar March (ادار)	çiriya pêşîn October (تشرين الاول)
nîsan April (نيسان)	çiriya paşîn November (تشرين الثاني)
hezîran June (حزيران)	çîleya pêşîn December (كانون الاول)

The third set consists of traditional Kurdish names for a few months:

reşeme February	tîrmeh July
avdar March	gelawêj August
gulan May	îlon September

Dates are written and read as follows:

31'ê adara 1947'an	sî û yekê adara hezar û nehsed û çil û heftan	March 31, 1947
di 26'ê nîsana 1893'an de	di bîst û şeşê nîsana hezar û heştê sed û nod û sisiyan de	on the 26th of April 1893
di 25.07.1974'an de	di bîst û pêncê tîrmeha hezar û nehsed û heftê û çaran de	on 25 July 1974

The days of the week (all feminine) are as follows. The *b* of *şemb* is normally deleted in the nominative case and restored in the oblique and con-

SUBSTANTIVES

struct cases, as in **şem** (nom.) but **roja şembê** (obl.):

şem(b) Saturday	çarşem(b) Wednesday
yekşem(b) Sunday	pêncşem(b) Thursday
duşem(b) Monday	în Friday
sêşem(b) Tuesday	

§ 9.3. **Telling Time.** In all expressions for telling time, the basis of the expression is **saet** (or the variant **seet**) ‘hour.’

Saet çî ye?	What time is it?
Saet deh e.	It’s ten o’clock.
Saet nêzikî dudiyê piştî nîvroje (nîro) bû.	It was nearly two o’clock in the afternoon.
saet sisê sibehê/şevê	three o’clock in the morning/at night

§ 10. **Comparative and Superlative Adjectives.** The comparative degree of the adjective is made by suffixing **-tîr**. There are only a few irregularly formed comparatives, viz. **pir** ‘much’ > **bêtîr** ‘more,’ **baş** ‘good’ > **çêtîr** ‘better,’ and **mezin** ‘big’ > **meztîr** (as well as the regularly formed **mezin-tîr**) ‘bigger, older.’ Adjectives ending in *t* drop the *t* before the addition of **-tîr** (*pêwîst* > *pêwîstîr*, not **pêwîsttir*, and *xurt* > *xurtîr*, not **xurttir*). The preposition of comparison is **ji**, as in the following examples.

Mîn ji her tiştî bêtîr ji wan hez dikir.	I liked them <i>more</i> than anything.
Hin ji wan, bi balefiran, ya jî bi gemiyên mezin dûrtîr çûbû.	Some of them had gone <i>further</i> in planes or large ships.
Ew pêwîst e ku nivîskarên me li ser jiyana gundî û axayan biaxivin, lê pêwîstîr e ku ew ji bîr nekin ku kurd li şehran jî dijîn.	It is important that our writers speak of the life of villagers and lords, but it is <i>more important</i> that they not forget that Kurds live in cities too.
Ez tenê şeş salan ji te mezintîr im.	I’m only six years <i>older</i> than you.
Erebiya min ji kurdî û turkiya min çêtîr bû û çêtîr e jî.	My Arabic was and still is <i>better</i> than my Kurdish and Turkish.
Tu her roj xurtîr dibî.	You get <i>stronger</i> every day.

KURMANJI KURDISH

‘More than’ followed by a number is expressed by **bêtîrî** (or **pirrtîrî**) + the number:

Hûn bêîrî pêncî mitrî di binê zemîna Parîsê de bûn. You were *more than fifty* meters beneath the ground of Paris.

Pirrtîrî dused û pêncî kuştî ji leşkerên tirkan hebû. There were *more than two hundred fifty* slain among the soldiers of the Turks.

The superlative is indicated by context, not by a special form. The first example in this section could just as well be translated as “I liked them the most of anything.” A comparative adjective followed by a construct usually gives the superlative sense, and a following construct is the equivalent of the English “in.”

Xurşîd dewlementîrê gund bû. Khurshid was *the richest (person) in the village.*

Wî li kurê xwe dinêrî û xwe bextyarîrê dinê dizanî. He used to look at his son and consider himself *the luckiest (person) in the world.*

A true superlative adjective is made by adding **-tîrîn** to the adjective, and such superlatives precede the nouns they modify:

Mezintîrîn nav ku bi ziman û edebiyata kurdî ya klasîk re bûye yek, Ehmedê Xanî ye. *The greatest name* that has occurred in the classical Kurdish language and literature is Ahmad Khani.

A second type of superlative is made with **herî** preceding the adjective. Like *-issimo* in Italian, **herî** gives a superlative sense of “really,” e.g. **herî girîng** means “most important” in the sense of “really important.” Superlatives of compound adjectives like **bi quwet** ‘powerful’ and past participles used adjectivally like **lipaşmayî** ‘backward,’ where the addition of **-tîr** would be awkward or impossible, are signaled by **herî**.

Ew yek ji şaîr û nivîskarên herî bi quwet ê mekteba “Hawar”ê bû. He was one of *the most powerful* poets and writers of the Hawar school.

Nêçîrvanekî herî dilêr jî newirî bû bi roj di nav re derbas bibûya. Even a *really intrepid* hunter would not have dared to pass through in the day-time.

SUBSTANTIVES

Cumhûriyeta Mehabadê di dîroka Kurdistanê ya nêzîk de yek ji bûyerên herî girîng e.	The Republic of Mahabad is one of <i>the most important</i> events in the recent history of Kurdistan.
Kurdistan herêma Tirkîyeyê ya herî lipaşmayî ye; Mêrdînê bajarê Tirkîyeyê yê herî lipaşmayî ye; Nisêbînê qeza Mêrdînê ya herî bi derd e; Stilîlê nehiya Nisêbînê ya herî belengaz e; Zivingê gundê Stilîlê yê herî lipaşmayî ye. Li gorê nifûsa min ez li şikefta jimar dîdo ya vî gundî hatime dinyayê.	Kurdistan is <i>the most backward</i> part of Turkey; Mardin is <i>the most backward</i> city in Turkey; Nusaybin is <i>the most wretched</i> district of Mardin; Stilîl is <i>the most destitute</i> part of Nusaybin; Ziving is <i>the most backward</i> village in Stilîl. According to my identity card, I was born in cave number two of this village.

THE VERB

§ 11. **Present Copulas.** The present-tense copulas ('am, is, are') are enclitics, i.e. unstressed, but they are usually written as separate words.

POSTCONSONANTAL		POSTVOCALIC	
im	in	me	ne
î	in	yî	ne
e	in	ye	ne

Examples of postconsonantal copulas:

ez kurd im 'I am Kurdish'	em kurd in 'we are Kurdish'
tu kurd î 'you are Kurdish'	hun kurd in 'you are Kurdish'
ew kurd e 's/he is Kurdish'	ew kurd in 'they are Kurdish'

Examples of postvocalic copulas:

ez bi wî re me 'I'm with him'	em bi wî re ne 'we are with him'
tu bi wî re yî 'you're with him'	hun bi wî re ne 'you are with him'
ew bi wî re ye 's/he's with him'	ew bi wî re ne 'they are with him'

The negative **ne** (stressed) is positioned before the complement (or whatever is negated, but not before the copula). Examples of copulas with negatives:

ez ne kurd im 'I'm not Kurdish'	em ne kurd in 'we aren't Kurdish'
tu ne kurd î 'you aren't Kurdish'	hun ne kurd in 'you aren't Kurdish'
ew ne kurd e 's/he isn't Kurdish'	ew ne kurd in 'they aren't Kurdish'

Other examples are as follows:

Tu xwêdekâr î.	You <i>are</i> a student.
Tu xwêdekârekî bîş î.	You <i>are</i> a good student.
Tu né xwêdekârekî bîş î.	You <i>are not</i> a good student.
Bîş e.	It <i>is</i> good.

THE VERB

<i>Né báš e.</i>	It <i>is not</i> good.
<i>Ev xaníyek e.</i>	This <i>is</i> a house.
<i>Ev xaní' ne.</i>	These <i>are</i> houses.
<i>Ev né xaníyek e.</i>	This <i>is not</i> a house.
<i>Ez ne ji eşîra we me, ez ne çiyayî û ne jî deştî me; ez bajarî me. Lê beriya hertîştî, ez jî merivek im.</i>	I <i>am not</i> from your tribe; I <i>am not</i> a mountaineer or from the plains either; I <i>am</i> an urbanite, but before anything else I <i>am</i> a person.

The combination of an oblique plural ending in **-an** and the first-person singular enclitic **im** usually becomes **-a me** instead of **-an im**.

<i>Ez yek ji wan nivîskara me.</i>	I am one of those writers.
<i>Ez jî yek ji wan kurda me ku ...</i>	I too am one of those Kurds who ...
<i>Ez bi xwe yek ji wan kesa me ku ...</i>	I myself am one of those people who...

§ 12. ‘To Have’ and the Existential Verb *Hebûn*. The existential verb ‘to exist’ is *hebûn*, the present and past conjugations of which are as follows:

PRESENT		PAST	
ez héme	em héne	ez hébûm	em hébûn
tu héyî	hun héne	tu hébûyî	hun hébûn
ew héye	ew héne	ew hébû	ew hébûn

The third-persons singular and plural are used for ‘there is’ and ‘there are’ respectively.

<i>Gotîneke pêşiyên me heye.</i>	There is a saying of our ancestors.
<i>Ger xwendevanên kurdî tunebin sedemê wê hene.</i>	If there are no readers of Kurdish, there are reasons for it.
<i>Pir kes li dora min hebûn ku ji şîran hez dikir û şîr dinivîsandin.</i>	There were many people around me who enjoyed poetry and wrote poems.
<i>Di çavên wî da ronahiyeke dijwar hebû.</i>	There was a hard light in his eyes.

The negative of **heyê** is **tune** ‘there is not any..., there is no...,’ and the

KURMANJI KURDISH

negative of **hebû** is **tunebû** ‘there was not any..., there was no...’

Madem ku zimannivîs tune, ev dewlet- çêkirin çi ye?	As long as there are no writers, what’s the use of creating this state?
Di vî warî da otorîteyêke resmî tune.	In this regard there is no official author- ity.
Divabû ku ew kêzik wê şevê bihata kuştin an na xew li min tunebû.	That bug would have to be killed that night or else there would be no sleep for me.

There is no verb in Kurdish equivalent to the English verb ‘to have.’ Kurdish expresses possession by the possessive construct followed by the appropriate third person of the existential verb—**heye** ‘there is,’ **hene** ‘there are,’ **hebû** ‘there was,’ or **hebûn** ‘there were.’

Pirsiyareke min heye.	I have a question.
Pirsiyareke min hebû.	I had a question.
Pênc zarokên wî hene.	He has five children.
Cihêkî bajarê Mehabadê yê taybetî di dîlê me de heye.	The city of Mahabad has a special place in our hearts.

§ 13. **The Infinitive.** Kurdish infinitives end in **-in**, **-în**, **-an**, or **-ûn**, are stressed on the final syllable (**dîtîn** ‘to see,’ **meşiyân** ‘to walk,’ **tirsîn** ‘to fear’), and are construed as feminine nouns. The use of the infinitive as a noun occasionally coincides with English usage, but it is more often used where the English gerund (“-ing”) is used.

Axaftin, xwendin û nivîsîna bi zimanê zîkmakî, ji her mirovî re pêwîstiyek e.	<i>To speak, to read, and to write</i> in one’s native language is a requirement for every person.
piştî weşandina kovara xwe bi salekê û piştî avakirina Cumhûriyeta Tirkiyê bi deh salan	a year after <i>publishing</i> his journal and ten years after the <i>founding</i> of the Re- public of Turkey

An unmodified direct object of an infinitive precedes the infinitive and forms a generic compound with it. Thus, **qehwe vexwarin** ‘to drink coffee,’

THE VERB

rojname xwendin ‘to read newspapers,’ **kovar weşandin** ‘to publish journals,’ and **hotêl çûyîn** ‘to frequent hotels’ are generic compounds. A modified direct object of an infinitive is linked to the infinitive by an objective genitive construct. So, **vexwarina qehweya xwe** ‘to drink one’s coffee,’ **xwendina rojnameya xwe ya bi kurdî** ‘to read one’s newspaper in Kurdish,’ **weşandina kovara xwe** ‘to publish one’s journal,’ and **çûyîna min ya hotêlê** ‘my going to the hotel,’ where the objects and complements are definite, indefinite, or modified (i.e. not generic), become construct phrases.

Ez dixwazim her sibeh bi vexwarina qehweya xwe re rojnameya xwe ya bi kurdî jî bixwînim. I want to read my newspaper in Kurdish every morning while *drinking my coffee*.

Bi çûyîna min ya hotêlê dilê xwe girtin. They were offended by *my going to the hotel*.

The infinitive is also used with the preposition **ji bo** to express purpose:

Ji bo dîtina wan ez çûme Sûriyê. I went to Syria *in order to see* them.

Min bihîst ku li welatên Rohelat çil sal xebat divêt ji bo çêkirina şerbikêkî ferfûrî. I have heard that in the countries of the Orient forty years of labor are needed *in order to produce* a porcelain vase.

§ 14. **The Present Tense.** The present tense corresponds to the English present used for habitual action (“I work”) and to the present progressive (“I’m working”). It is formed from the present stem of the verb.

The present stems of a few very common verbs are totally irregular and must be learned as a principal part of the verb (e.g. **dîtîn** ‘to see’ > **bîn-**, **xwestîn** ‘to want’ > **xwaz-**). With few exceptions, verbs with infinitives ending in **-an**, **-iyan**, **-în**, and **-ûn** are regular and form the present stem by dropping those endings. Verbs that end in **-andin** (for which type see §28 below) form their present stems by changing the **-andin** ending to **-în-** (e.g. **mirandin** ‘to cause to die’ > **mirîn-**).

To form the present tense, the stressed progressive/habitual modal marker **dî** is prefixed to the present stem, and the following suffixed personal endings are added to the stem.

KURMANJI KURDISH

CONSONANT STEMS

-im	-in
-î	-in
-e	-in

VOWEL STEMS

-m	-n
-yî	-n
—	-n

Examples of conjugation are as follows. In Kurmanji, pronominal subjects are not optional and must be expressed.

ÇÛN/-Ç- 'GO' (CONSONANT STEM)

ŞUSTIN/-ŞO- 'WASH' (VOWEL STEM)

ez dîçim	em dîçin	ez dîşom	em dîşon
tu dîçî	hun dîçin	tu dîşoyî	hun dîşon
ew dîçe	ew dîçin	ew dîşo	ew dîşon

In the negative, the modal marker **di** is replaced by stressed **ná-**.

ez náçim	em náçin	ez náşom	em náşon
tu náçî	hun náçin	tu náşoyî	hun náşon
ew náçe	ew náçin	ew náşo	ew náşon

If the present stem begins with **a-** or **ê-**, the prefix **di-** may drop its vowel and becomes **d-**, as in **axaftin/axiv-** 'speak' and **êşandin/êşîn-** 'to hurt,' the present tenses of which are either **daxivim** or **diaxivim** 'I speak' and either **dêşînim** or **diêşînim** 'I hurt.'

There are two verbs with irregular conjugations in the present tense, **hatin** 'to come' and **anîn** 'to bring.' In both these verbs the **dî-** modal marker has assimilated to the present stem and appears as **t-**. Their present conjugations, affirmative and negative, are as follows:

HATIN		ANÎN	
ez tê	em tên	ez tînim	em tînin
tu teyî	hun tên	tu tînî	hun tînin
ew tê	ew tên	ew tîne	ew tînin
ez nayê	em nayên	ez naynim	em naynin
tu nayeyî	hun nayên	tu naynî	hun naynin
ew nayê	ew nayên	ew nayne	ew naynin

THE VERB

There are also two verbs, **zanîn** ‘to know’ and **karîn** ‘to be able,’ that are irregular in the negative. They form the negative with **nî** instead of **na**.

ZANÎN		KARÎN	
ez nizanîm	em nizanin	ez nikarim	em nikarin
tu nizanî	hun nizanin	tu nikarî	hun nikarin
ew nizane	ew nizanin	ew nikare	ew nikarin

The present tense is used for (1) present habitual action (“I go”) and (2) present progressive action (“I’m going”), and context usually makes it clear which tense should be used in English. Normal word order in Kurdish is subject, object, verb.¹ Complements of verbs of motion (where one comes, goes, brings, etc.) tend to follow the verb in the oblique case, as in the first example below.

<p>Ez naçim doktor. Ez derman vena-xwim. Derziyê jî naxwazim.</p>	<p>I’m not going to the doctor. I’m not taking medicine. I don’t want stiches either.</p>
<p>Xelkên Mehabadê wê roja han mîna karnevalekê pîroz diqin, dehol û zurnevanên bajêr lêdixin, Mehabadî jî bi destên hev digirin û direqisin.</p>	<p>The people of Mahabad celebrate that day like a carnival, they play the city drums and clarions, and Mahabadis join hands and dance.</p>
<p>Du jinên gundî nêzîktir dibin, heta ber derê lojmanê tîn, Mamoste Kevanot çav li wan dikeve û bi matmayîn dibêje...</p>	<p>Two village women get closer. They come up to the door of the lodging. Master Kevanot looks at them and says with astonishment...</p>

§ 15. Compound Verbs. Compound verbs, which do not differ significantly from their counterparts in Persian and Sorani, consist of a nonverbal element (preverb or complement) and a verb. In Kurmanji some compound verbs are consistently written as one word, like **hildan** ‘to lift,’ which consists of the preverb **hil** and the verb **dan** ‘to give’ (present stem **d-**), **vekirin**

¹ Full normal word order is: (1) temporal expression, (2) subject, (3) direct object, (4) miscellaneous prepositional phrases, (5) verb, (6) directional complement. Many other orders are possible, but when any element is moved from its normal position it is highlighted or emphasized in some way.

KURMANJI KURDISH

‘to open,’ which consists of the preverb **ve** and the verb **kirin** ‘to do’ (present stem **k-**), and **rûniştin** ‘to sit down,’ which consists of the preverb **rû** and the verb **niştin** (present stem **nê-**); others are written as two separate words, like **behs kirin** ‘to discuss’ and **alîkarî kirin** ‘to help.’ The **di-** prefix is added to the verbal part of the compound, i.e. after the nonverbal part. Stress in the affirmative is on the preverb.

ez védikim	em védikin	ez béhs dikim	em béhs dikin
tu védikî	hun védikin	tu béhs dikî	hun béhs dikin
ew védiqe	ew védikin	ew béhs diqe	ew béhs dikin
ez híldidim	em híldidin	ez rûdinê	em rûdinên
tu híldidî	hun híldidin	tu rûdinêyî	hun rûdinên
ew híldide	ew híldidin	ew rûdinê	ew rûdinên

In the negative the stressed prefix **ná-** takes the place of **di-** in compound verbs:

ez venákim	em venákin	ez behs nákim	em behs nákin
tu venákî	hun venákin	tu behs nákî	hun behs nákin
ew venáqe	ew venákin	ew behs náqe	ew behs nákin
ez hilnádîm	em hilnádî	ez rûnánê	em rûnánên
tu hilnádî	hun hilnádî	tu rûnánêyî	hun rûnánên
ew hilnáde	ew hilnádî	ew rûnánê	ew rûnánên

Depending upon the semantics of a given compound, many compound verbs can be extended to include any and all matter that complements the nonverbal part of the compound. For instance, compound verbs like **alîkarî kirin** ‘to help’ and **behs kirin** ‘to discuss’ can be extended through a construct (or multiple constructs) as in the following examples. In extended constructs the construct takes care of modifications and relationships that are expressed by various means in English, usually with prepositions.

Ew jî alîkariya kovara Enstîtuya kurdî He also helps out on the journal of the
ya Parîsê dike. Paris Kurdish Institute.

THE VERB

Em behsa beşê kurdên Kurdistana Tirkîyeyê dîkin. We are discussing the role of the Kurds in Turkey's Kurdistan.

Close compound verbs of the **hildan** ‘to raise’ and **vekirin** ‘to open’ type do not admit extension through a construct. They take normal direct objects before the verb.

Ji peyayên gundî hinek ji dûr ve silavê li wî hildidin. A few of the village men raise a greeting to him from afar.

Soviyetî pirtûkên dersan yê bi kurdî çap dikin û dibistanên kurdî vedikin. The Soviets print schoolbooks in Kurdish and open Kurdish schools.

§ 16. The Formation of the Present Subjunctive. Like the present indicative, the present subjunctive is formed from the present stem of the verb and the personal suffixes. The modal marker for the subjunctive is **bî-**. Unlike the **dî** prefix, **bî** does not usually drop its vowel in favor of an initial **a** in the stem, but in some dialects it may do so (i.e. **baxivim** for **biaxivim**).

ez bîçim	em bîçin		ez bîaxivim	em bîaxivin
tu bîçî	hun bîçin		tu bîaxivî	hun bîaxivin
ew bîçe	ew bîçin		ew bîaxive	ew bîaxivin

In compound verbs, the **bî-** prefix is optional, and it is usually omitted with close compounds (generally speaking, those that are written together as one word and, by and large, verbs compounded with **kirin** unless there is an extended complement). When the **bî-** prefix is omitted, the absence of a modal prefix identifies the verb as subjunctive, as in **ve-xwarin** (**ve-xw-**) ‘to drink’ and **hil-dan** (**hil-d-**) ‘to lift’:

ez véxwim	em véxwin		ez híldim	em híldin
tu véxwî	hun véxwin		tu híldî	hun híldin
ew véxwe	ew véxwin		ew hílde	ew híldin

The negative prefix for the subjunctive is **né-**, which replaces **bî-** where it occurs. Where there is no **bi-** prefix, the negative is attached to the verbal part of compounds.

KURMANJI KURDISH

ez néçim	em néçin		ez hilnédim	em hilnédin
<u>tu</u> néçî	hun néçin		<u>tu</u> hilnédî	hun hilnédin
ew néçe	ew néçin		ew hilnéde	ew hilnédin

There are two present subjunctives of the verb **bûn** ‘to be, become,’ with and without the subjunctive marker **bi-**. The conjugation without the marker is used when the verb means ‘be’; the conjugation with the marker is used when the verb means ‘become’ and when it is part of a compound verb.

‘BE’		‘BECOME’	
ez bim	em bin	ez bîbim	em bîbin
<u>tu</u> bî	hun bin	<u>tu</u> bîbî	hun bîbin
ew be	ew bin	ew bîbe	ew bîbin

In the negative the distinction between ‘be’ and ‘become’ is lost, and there is only one negative present subjunctive.

ez nébim	em nébin
<u>tu</u> nébî	hun nébin
ew nébe	ew nébin

There are two present subjunctives of **hatin** ‘to come.’ One is regularly conjugated based on the stem **wer-** without the **bi-** prefix; the other is regularly conjugated based on the stem **bê-**, a contraction of **bi-** and **yê-**, the present stem of **hatin**.

<i>WER-</i> STEM		<i>YÊ-</i> STEM	
ez werim	em werin	ez bêm	em bên
<u>tu</u> werî	hun werin	<u>tu</u> bêyî	hun bên
ew were	ew werin	ew bê	ew bên

The negative present subjunctive of these two variants is as follows:

ez néwerim	em néwerin	ez néyêm	em néyên
<u>tu</u> néwerî	hun néwerin	<u>tu</u> néyêyî	hun néyên
ew néwere	ew néwerin	ew néyê	ew néyên

There are also two present subjunctives of **çûn** ‘to go.’ One is regularly

THE VERB

conjugated based on the stem **ç-** with the **bî-** subjunctive marker; the other is regularly conjugated based on the stem **her-** without the subjunctive marker.

Ç- STEM		HER- STEM	
ez biçim	em biçin	ez herim	em herin
tu biçî	hun biçin	tu herî	hun herin
ew biçe	ew biçin	ew here	ew herin

Negatives are predictably formed:

ez néçim	em néçin	ez néherim	em néherin
tu néçî	hun néçin	tu néherî	hun néherin
ew néçe	ew néçin	ew néhere	ew néherin

§ 16.1 **Uses of the present subjunctive.** The present subjunctive is used in the following instances:

(1) independently—i.e. not dependent upon a preceding construction—as a deliberative (English ‘should’).

Ez îro bêm?	Should I come today?
Îcar em çi biçin?	Now what should we do?

(2) in the first persons singular and plural as a cohortative (‘let me, let’s’) and in the 3rd persons as a hortatory (‘let him..., may he ...’). The hortatory is often preceded by **bila** ‘let.’

Peşî ez bibêjim <u>ku</u> ...	First let me say that ...
Ew derî <u>ve</u>ke.	Let him open the door.
Em herin!	Let’s go!
Bi siyasetê bila ew mijûl bibin.	Let them get involved in politics.

(3) as complement to all verbs and constructions of desire and wanting (see §16.2), ability (see §16.3), necessity, deciding, ordering, etc.

Lazim e <u>tu</u> Kurmancî biaxivî.	<i>It’s necessary that you speak Kurmanji.</i>
---	--

KURMANJI KURDISH

Di vê babetê de ez naxwazim <u>tîşt</u>ekî bibêjim.	<i>I don't want to say anything in this regard.</i>
Tu dikarî hinekî behsa xwe û jiyana xwe bikî?	<i>Can you speak a bit about yourself and your life?</i>
Em kurd in û kurd gereke berî hemû zimanan, bi zimanê xwe biaxivin, bixwînin û binivîsin.	<i>We are Kurds, and Kurds ought to speak, read, and write in their own language before all other languages.</i>
Berî her <u>tîşt</u>î gereke ez nîşan bidim ku ji mefhûma “kovara îslamî” ez çî <u>tîşt</u>î fehim dikim.	<i>Before anything else, it is necessary for me to indicate what I understand by the concept of an “Islamic journal.”</i>
Gereke <u>kovar</u> xwe zencîr <u>nekin</u>.	<i>It is necessary that journals not fetter themselves.</i>
Wî pirr caran biryar dabû ku êdî li xurînî cixarê nekişîne.	<i>Many times he had decided not to smoke cigarettes any more on an empty stomach.</i>
Doktor divê rêyekî nîşanî me bide û derman binivîsîne.	<i>The doctor must show us a way and write a [prescription for a] remedy.</i>
(4) after a number of conjunctions like berî ku ‘before’ (which is usually followed by the subjunctive), çaxê ku ‘when’ (which is followed by the subjunctive when it refers to the future), and mîna ku ‘as though.’ See §30.	
Berî ku ez derkevîm derveyê welêt, min soranî nebihîstibû.	<i>Before I went outside the country, I had not heard Sorani.</i>
Çaxê ku firseta min çêbibe, ez ê bi şev û rojan bo ziman û edebiyata kurdî bişixulim.	<i>When I get the opportunity, I will work day and night for Kurdish language and literature.</i>
Mîna ku di berê de naxoşiyek di navîna wan de hebe...	<i>As though there was some unpleasantness between them before...</i>

(5) in the protasis (the “if” clause) of a possible conditional with reference to the present or the future:

Ger ev rast be, ...	<i>If this is true, ...</i>
Ger ew bibin yek, ew dikarin her <u>tîşt</u>î bikin.	<i>If they unite, they can do anything.</i>

THE VERB

(6) in all purpose clauses, usually introduced by **ji bo ku** ‘in order that’:

Ez diçim xwendegehê ji bo ku ez bixwînim.	I go to school <i>in order to study</i> .
Ez dixwînim ji bo ku bibim mamoste.	I’m studying <i>in order to become a teacher</i> .
Ji bo ku tu ji nexweşiyê bifilî, divê doktor li te binêre û bi nexweşiya te bizanibe.	<i>In order for you to get rid of your illness, it is necessary for the doctor to have a look at you and diagnose your illness.</i>

(7) in clauses complementary to adjectives, where English usually has a complementary infinitive:¹

Gelê me, gotin û kelîmeyên ku dizane ji ne amede ye ku ji sembol û herfan bixwîne.	Our society is not <i>ready to read</i> even words it knows from symbols and letters.
---	---

(8) In relative clauses introduced by indefinite relative pronouns like **herkesê ku** ‘anybody who’ &c.:

Herkesê ku bi kurdî binivîse, di destpêkê de û heta demeke dirêj, ê pergî zehmetiyên mezin were.	<i>Anybody who writes in Kurdish will encounter major difficulties at the beginning and for a long time.</i>
---	--

(9) In relative and result clauses after negative expressions:

Tiştê ne dihat xuya kirin ku mirov bibêje ev ê biqaribe bibe sedema ewte ewta kûçikên gund.	<i>Nothing could be made out that one might say it could be the reason for the barking of the dogs of the village.</i>
Salên min ne ewqas zêde ne ku ez bibêjim, ez pir jiyame û min gelek dîtiye.	<i>My years are not so many that I could say I have lived a lot and seen much.</i>

¹But not in clauses dependent upon adjectives that describe situations or actions that actually pertain or have taken place, which are in the indicative mood, as:

Ez xwe bexşiyar dibînim ku mamoste-tiya gundeki weha bûye para min.	I count myself <i>lucky that</i> a teaching job in such a village <i>has been</i> my lot.
--	---

KURMANJI KURDISH

(10) In relative clauses with indefinite antecedents, often preceded by **wek** or **mîna** ‘like.’ See §22 (3).

Mîna gula ji lûla tufingê derkeve, tu ji malê derkefî. You lit out of the house like a bullet shot from the barrel of a rifle.

Dîtina wî bû mîna kêra ku tu di birînê de bigerînî. Seeing him was like a knife you twist in a wound.

Two verbs, **karîn** ‘to be able’ and **zanîn** ‘to know,’ do not form their present subjunctives as other verbs do but use the form of the past subjunctive (see § 22 below) instead.

§ 16.2. The Future Tense. The future tense is formed by adding **-ê** or **dê** to the personal pronouns followed by the present subjunctive conjugation. **Tu** + **ê** is often contracted to **tê** (**tû ê** and **tiwê** also exist), and **ew** + **ê** may be contracted to **wê**, although the contraction is not mandatory. The conjugation of the future tense of **çûn** (affirmative and negative) is:

ezê (ez dê) biçim emê (em dê) biçin ezê (ez dê) neçim emê (em dê) neçin
tê (tu dê) biçî hunê (hun dê) biçin têt (tu dê) neçî hunê (hun dê) neçin
ewê (ew dê) biçe ewê (ew dê) biçin ewê (ew dê) neçe ewê (ew dê) neçin

When the subject of a future-tense verb is a noun, **wê**, **ê**, or **dê** comes after the noun. All the future markers are reflexes of the present stem (وی *wê*) of the verb **ویستن** *wîstîn* ‘to want,’ which still exists in Sorani Kurdish and which has produced this synthetic tense much like the English future compounded with ‘will.’

Dema em dê bighêjin Ewropa,¹ keçên porzer li Ferensa û li Swêdê wê li ser porê me dîn bibin. When *we get* to Europe, the blonde girls in France and Sweden *will go crazy* for our hair.

Ew dibêje ku ewê bi siyasetê ve mijûl nebe. He says *he won't get involved* in politics.

¹Kurdish, like French (*quand nous arriverons en Europe*), uses the future after ‘when’ when it has a future implication.

THE VERB

Ya meriv ê *israr bike* û bi kurdî *bini-vîse*, yan jî meriv ê *zimanekî din ku ji kurdî gelekî pêşketîtir e, tercih bike*. Either a person *will insist* and *write* in Kurdish, or a person *will prefer* another language that is much more advanced than Kurdish.

“Ya rebî, *ezê çi bikim?*” min di dilê xwe de got. “O Lord, what *will I do?*” I said to myself.

§ 16.2. *Xwestin*, ‘To Want.’ The Kurmanji verb for “to want” is **xwestin** (present stem **xwaz-**). Verbal complements are in the present subjunctive. A full inflection of the present tense of ‘to want to go’ is as follows:

ez dixwazim biçim	em dixwazin biçin
tu dixwazî biçî	hun dixwazin biçin
ew dixwaze biçe	ew dixwazin biçin

When the subject of **xwestin** and the subject of the following subjunctive complement are the same, the subjunctive follows in the same person, as in the following examples.

Ez naxwazim vê behsê dirêj bikim. I don’t want to prolong this discussion.

Ew dixwaze ji avakirina Cumhûriyetê re bibe piştgir û alîkar. He wants to become a supporter and helper in the founding of the republic.

When the subjects are different, however, the conjunction **ku** usually intervenes, and the subject of the subjunctive verb must be expressed.

Bavê wî dixwaze ku ew bixwîne. His father wants him to study.

Bavê min dixwaze ku ez bixwînim. My father wants me to study.

See note on the past tense of **xwestin** at §18.3 below.

§ 16.3. *Karîn*, ‘To Be Able.’ The verb ‘to be able’ is **karîn** (present stem **kar-**). **Karîn** is regularly conjugated in the present, often without the **di-** prefix, and it is followed by a subjunctive complement. The negative present is formed with **ni-** instead of **na-**. Below is given the full present conjugation, affirmative and negative, of ‘I can go/I can’t go’:

KURMANJI KURDISH

ez dikarim biçim	em dikarin biçin	ez nikarim biçim	em nikarin biçin
tu dikarî biçî	hun dikarin biçin	tu nikarî biçî	hun nikarin biçin
ew dikare biçe	ew dikarin biçin	ew nikare biçe	ew nikarin biçin

Hevalê hêja, tu karî xwe bi me bidî nasandin?	Dear friend, can you introduce yourself to us?
Tu dikarî, ji kerema xwe re, hinekî behsa xwe û jiyana xwe bikî?	Can you please talk a bit about yourself and your life?
Meriv nikare di hengamekê de li çend cihan be.	A person cannot be in several places at once.

Karîn does not form its present subjunctive in the normal manner. For it, see §22 below. For the past tense of **karîn** see §21.1 and note 3 on p. 54.

A dialectal variant of this verb, **kanîn**, is used by some writers.

§ 17. **The Imperative.** The singular imperative of verb stems ending in vowels is formed from **bî-** + the present stem. To present stems that end in consonants is also suffixed an unstressed **-e**. The plural imperative is identical to the 2nd-person plural subjunctive. As is the case in the subjunctive of close compound verbs, the **bî-** prefix is usually omitted; in open compounds it is generally found but may be omitted.

INFINITIVE	PRESENT STEM	SING. IMPT.	PL. IMPT.
bûn ‘be’	b-	bîbe	bîbin
-bûn ‘become’	-b-	-be	-bin
çûn	ç-	bîçe	bîçin
girtin	gir-	bîgire	bîgirin
hildan	hil-d-	hîlde	hîldin
kirin	k-	bîke	bîkin
rûniştin	rû-nê-	rûnê	rûnên
şustin	şo-	bîşo	bîşon
vekirin	ve-k-	vêke	vêkin

Hatin and **çûn** form imperatives on their second present stems, **wer-** and

THE VERB

her- respectively.

hatin	wer-	were	werin
çûn	her-	here	herin

The negative imperative prefix is **né-**.

bûn	b-	nébe	nébin
çûn	ç-	néçe	néçin
girtin	gir-	négire	négin
hildan	hil-d-	hilméde	hilmédin
kirin	k-	néke	nékin
rûniştin	rû-nê-	rûnéne	rûnénen
şustin	şo-	néšo	néşon
vekirin	ve-k-	venéke	venékin

§ 17.1. **The Vocative.** In the vocative the stress shifts to the first syllable of the noun and the following endings are added:

MASC. SING.	FEM. SING.	PLURAL
-o	-ê	-ên/-no
Hiş be, kúro!		Be quiet, boy!
Were, kéçê!		Come here, girl!
Kárkerên, yekgin!		Workers, unite!
Zû bin, hevalno!		Be quick, friends!

The difference between the **-ên** ending and the **-no** ending for the plural is dialectal.

§ 18. **The Simple Past (Intransitive).** The simple past (preterite) of intransitive verbs is formed by adding unstressed personal suffixes to the past stem of the verb. The past stem is derived by deleting the **-(i)n** ending of the infinitive; this will leave a past stem in a consonant, **û**, **î**, or **a**.

AFTER CONSONANTS	AFTER VOWELS
------------------	--------------

KURMANJI KURDISH

-im	-in	-m	-n
-î	-in	-yî	-n
—	-in	—	-n

Examples of the simple past inflection are from **hatin** ‘to come,’ **bûn** ‘to be,’ **tirsîn** ‘to fear,’ and **man** ‘to remain.’

<i>HATIN</i>		<i>BÛN</i>	
ez ha <u>t</u> im	em ha <u>t</u> in	ez bûm	em bûn
tu ha <u>t</u> î	hun ha <u>t</u> in	tu bûyî	hun bûn
ew ha <u>t</u>	ew ha <u>t</u> in	ew bû	ew bûn
<i>TIRSÎN</i>		<i>MAN</i>	
ez tirsîm	em tirsîn	ez mam	em man
tu tirsîyî	hun tirsîn	tu mayî	hun man
ew tirsî	ew tirsîn	ew ma	ew man

The negative is formed by prefixing **né-**:

ez néha <u>t</u> im	em néha <u>t</u> in	ez nébûm	em nébûn
tu néha <u>t</u> î	hun néha <u>t</u> in	tu nébûyî	hun nébûn
ew néha <u>t</u>	ew néha <u>t</u> in	ew nébû	ew nébûn
ez nétirsîm	em nétirsîn	ez némam	em néman
tu nétirsîyî	hun nétirsîn	tu némayî	hun néman
ew nétirsî	ew nétirsîn	ew néma	ew néman

The Kurdish simple past tense usually corresponds closely to the English past tense.

Tu bi pelikan çûyî jor.	You <i>went</i> down the stairs.
Demekê jî midûrê dibistanê bûm.	For a time I <i>was</i> a school principal.
Hemû man bêdeng.	They all <i>remained</i> silent.

However, since the Kurdish simple past tense indicates anything that took place or has taken place in the past, it sometimes corresponds to the English present perfect tense. In journalistic and advertising usage, the simple past tense is used in headlines and story titles, where English normally uses the

THE VERB

present, as in the following:

Kaset û cd derket li hemû mûzîk marketan.	The cassette and CD <i>have come</i> to (are available in) all music stores.
Konferansa Tevgera Jinên Azad bi dawî bû.	The conference of the Liberated Women's Movement <i>has ended</i> .
Li başûrê Kurdistanê di 10 salên dawî de 2733 kes mirin, 4913 kes jî birîndar bûn.	2,733 people <i>have died</i> and 4,913 people <i>have been wounded</i> over the last ten years in the south of Kurdistan.

A distinction between the two meanings of the verb **bûn**, 'to be' and 'to become,' is shown in the past tense by the placement of the verb. When it means 'to be' it follows the predicate, but when it means 'to become' the verb comes between the subject and the predicate, as in the following:

Ew zabitekî jîr û jêhatî bû.	He was a talented and worthy officer.
Ew bû zabitekî jîr û jêhatî.	He became a talented and worthy officer.

§ 18.1. The Past Habitual/Progressive (Intransitive). The past habitual ('I used to go') and progressive ('I was going') is formed by adding the habitual/progressive prefix **dî-** to the simple past.

ez dîhatim	em dîhatin	ez dîçûm	em dîçûn
tu dîhatî	hun dîhatin	tu dîçûyî	hun dîçûn
ew dîhat	ew dîhatin	ew dîçû	ew dîçûn

Gava dîçûm dibistanê û vedigeriyam, dêlikek teva du cewrên xwe li ser riya min xuya dibûn û bi min da direyan.	When I was going to school and coming back, a dog and her two pups used to appear in front of me and bark at me.
---	--

Leşkerên tirk wek pelkên daran di ser piştê hespan de dîhatin xarê.	Turkish soldiers were coming down from the backs of horses like leaves of trees.
--	--

For past habituals in **di-**, the negative is regularly formed by prefixing **né-** to the affirmative (and not, as in the present tense, by combining the negative prefix with **di-**):

KURMANJI KURDISH

ez nedihatim	em nedihatın	ez nediçûm	em nediçûn
tu nedihatî	hun nedihatın	tu nediçûyî	hun nediçûn
ew nedihat	ew nedihatın	ew nediçû	ew nediçûn

Xweş tê bîra min xew nediket çavên min, heya diya min çîrokek ji min re negota. I remember well that sleep *used not to come* to my eyes until my mother had told me a story.

Rojek derbas nedibû, bê ku ew û mirinê li çavên hev ne nihêrin. *Not a day used to go by* that he and death did not look each other in the eye.

§ 18.2. **The Simple Past (Transitive): The Ergative.** The simple past tense of transitive verbs exhibits a phenomenon called ergativity, whereby (1) the agent is marked, (2) the patient is unmarked, and (3) the verb agrees with the patient.

The tense is formed from the past stem of the verb, and to it are added the personal endings of the intransitive past, but these endings agree in person and number with the patient (what we call the direct object). The agent (our subject) is in the oblique case, and the patient is in the nominative—i.e. just the reverse of the present tense.

AGENT OBL. CASE	PATIENT NOM. CASE		VERB AGREES WITH PATIENT
min	ew	←	dît
I	him		saw-him
wî	ez	←	dîtîm
he	me		saw-me
wê jinê	tu	←	dîtî
that woman	you		saw-you
te	ew	←	dîtîn
you	them		saw-them

The first conjugation below reflects changing agents, and even if the 3rd-person singular patient **ew** were not expressed, it would still be inextricably

THE VERB

built into **dît**. The second conjugation reflects changing patients.

DIFFERENT AGENTS; STABLE PATIENT

min ew dît	I saw him	me ew dît	we saw him
te ew dît	you saw him	we ew dît	you saw him
wî ew dît	he saw him	wan ew dît	they saw him

STABLE AGENT; DIFFERENT PATIENTS

wî ez dîtîm	he saw me	wî em dîtîm	he saw us
wî tu dîtî	he saw you	wî hun dîtîm	he saw you
wî ew dît	he saw him	wî ew dîtîm	he saw them

Negatives are formed by prefixing **né-** to the affirmative.

wî ez nedîtîm	he didn't see me	wî em nedîtîm	he didn't see us
wî tu nedîtî	he didn't see you	wî hun nedîtîm	he didn't see you
wî ew nedît	he didn't see him	wî ew nedîtîm	he didn't see them

The past habitual/progressive is regularly formed by adding the **dî-** prefix to the verb and **nédi-** for the negative.

min ew didît I used to see him	wî ez nedidîtîm he didn't use to see me
---------------------------------------	--

Pronouns in the oblique case are the clearest indicators of agency. Noun agents are also in the oblique case; however, masculine singular nouns are not marked for the oblique.

*Alfred Nobel piştî mirina xwe, serwe-
teke mezin li dû xwe hişt.* Alfred Nobel left behind a large fortune
after his death.

Mêrik bi kenekî ne ji dil got... The fellow said with a smile not from
the heart...

Feminines, of course, are marked in the oblique, as are masculines modified by a demonstrative and all plurals.

Jinîkekê çaya me anî. A woman brought our tea.

Wî mirovî çay anî. That man brought tea.

Gundiyan tişteke negot. The villagers didn't say anything.

KURMANJI KURDISH

If any one in a series of co-ordinated verbs in the past tense is transitive, the ergative construction takes precedence and the agent is marked.

Rewşen Xanimê demekê bêdeng ma, kûr kûr fikirî û cigarek vêxist. Mme Rewshen remained silent for a moment, lost in her thoughts, and lit a cigarette.

In the example above, neither **ma** nor **fikirî** is transitive, but since the final verb in the series, **vêxist**, is transitive and therefore ergative, the agent, **Rewşen Xanimê**, is in the oblique case.

The ergative verb agrees in person and number with its patient (logical object), but since the patient is in the nominative case and unmodified plural nouns do not have an external plurality, the number is indicated only by the verb, as in the following examples. Compare:

Wê kaxiz ji dest wî girt. She took the page from his hand.

Wê kaxiz ji dest wî girtin. She took the pages from his hand.

In the second example only the plural verb **girtin** indicates the plurality of the patient **kaxiz**.

Me ew helbest xwend. We read that poem.

Me ew helbest xwendin. We read those poems.

Here only the plural verb **xwendin** indicates the plurality of the patient **ew helbest**.

Just as in a series of co-ordinated nouns only the last noun shows case, in a series of co-ordinated past transitive verbs with a plural patient, only the last in the series shows the plural. In the following example, the patient, **destên xwe** 'their hands,' is plural, but only the second of the two verbs, **anîn**, shows the plurality.

Havalan destên xwe bi hustiwên hev re bir û anîn. The friends reached out and put their hands on each other's necks.

§ 18.3. Number Agreement in Extended Ergative Verbs. In the past tenses of compound verbs whose complements can be extended through the construct (like **behs kirin** 'to discuss,' which can be extended as **behsa ...**

THE VERB

kirin ‘to discuss something,’ and **bal kişandin** ‘to attract attention,’ which can be extended as **bala ... kişandin** ‘to attract the attention of someone’), the verb agrees in number (singular or plural) with the last element (not necessarily the last word) in the extension, i.e. if the last element in the extension is plural, it attracts a plural verb, as in the following:

Wî ji min re behsa serpêhatiyên xwe kirin. He discussed his adventures with me.

Here the extended patient is **behsa serpêhatiyên xwe** ‘discussion of his adventures,’ and the past verb **kirin** agrees in the plural with the last element in the sequence, **serpêhatiyên xwe** ‘his adventures.’

Wêneyên min bala rojname û hunermendan kişandin. My pictures attracted the attention of newspapers and artists.

In this example the extended patient is **bala rojname û hunermendan** ‘the attention of newspapers and artists,’ and the plural verb **kişandin** agrees with the last element in the sequence, the plural **hunermendan** ‘artists.’

Kemalîstên tirk fermana bi dardakirina Emîn Elî Bedirxan û hersê kurên wî jî derxistin. The Turkish Kemalists issued an order to hang Emin Ali Bedirkhan and all three of his sons.

In this example the extended patient is **fermana bi dardakirina Emîn Elî Bedirxan û hersê kurên wî** ‘an order to hang Emin Ali Bedirkhan and all three of his sons,’ and the plural verb **derxistin** agrees with the last element in the extended patient, **hersê kurên wî** ‘all three of his sons.’

§ 18.4. **The Past Tense of *Xwestin*.** The past tense of a transitive verb like **xwestin** is ergative, but the following subjunctive complement is not. Therefore, even when the subject of the two verbs is the same, the two pronouns—one oblique for the ergative and the other nominative for the subjunctive—must be expressed, and optionally **ku** may intervene between the two verbs. An example is the conjugation of the phrase “I wanted to say”:

min xwest (ku) ez bibêjim	me xwest (ku) em bibêjin
te xwest (ku) tu bibêji	we xwest (ku) hun bibêjin
wî xwest (ku) ew bibêje	wan xwest (ku) ew bibêjin

KURMANJI KURDISH

Min xwest ku ez ji gund derkevim û ji xwe re berî berî çem bimeşim. I wanted to get out of the village and walk by myself along the river.

Ew tiştê ku di ser û dilê min de bû û min dixwest ez bidim, pêk nehat. The thing that was in my heart and mind, and which I wanted to give, didn't come to be.

§ 18.5. **Loss of Ergativity.** For stylistic reasons ergativity may be lost in past transitive verbs. Normally this happens only in expressions like “I saw that...” and “I said that...” when the verb is followed by a subordinate clause as its complement:

Min gotim ku... I said that... (not **min got**)

Min dîtîm ku... I saw that... (not **min dît**)

Otherwise all tenses and moods constructed on the past stem of transitive verbs are normally ergative. In some eastern dialects, however, ergativity is sporadically lost. The criteria for this loss have not been determined.

Di hundurê kûlê da sosreteke reş û giran dîtî. Inside the hut/hole ??? they saw something unusual, black and heavy.

§ 19. **The Past Participle.** The past participle is formed by adding **-î** to the past stem of verbs whose stems end in consonants. With past stems that end in **-a** and **-û** the participle is formed by adding **-yî** to the past stem. With past stems that end in **-î**, the past participle is identical to the past stem.

CONSONANT STEMS	VOWEL STEMS
haî > hat > haî ‘come’	man > ma > mayî ‘remained’
şustî > şust > şustî ‘washed’	çûn > çû > çûyî ‘gone’
kirî > kir > kirî ‘done’	kirîn > kirî > kirî ‘bought’

In meaning the past participle corresponds fairly closely to the English past participle: **haî** ‘come,’ **vekirî** ‘opened,’ **şustî** ‘washed’ as in

cilên şustî	washed clothes
welatekî pêşketî	an advanced country

THE VERB

welatekî lipaşmayî	a backward country
kitêbeke çapkirî	a published book

Negative participles are formed by prefixing **ne-**, as in

kitêbên neçapkirî	unpublished books
cilên neşustî	unwashed clothes
benên nexuyayî	unseen bonds
tiştên negotî	unsaid things

§ 20. **The Present Perfect Tense (Intransitive).** The present perfect tense of intransitive verbs is formed from the past stem with the following endings:

STEMS ENDING IN CONSONANTS		STEMS ENDING IN VOWELS	
´-ime	´-ine	´-me	´-ne
´-iye	´-ine	´-ye	´-ne
´-iye	´-ine	´-ye	´-ne

Note that the second and third persons singular are identical. Examples from **hatîn** ‘to come’ and **çûn** ‘to go’ are:

ez hatîme	em hatîne	ez çûme	em çûne
tu hatiye	hun hatîne	tu çûye	hun çûne
ew hatiye	ew hatîne	ew çûye	ew çûne

The negative is formed by prefixing **ne-**

ez nehatîme	em nehatîne	ez neçûme	em neçûne
tu nehatiye	hun nehatîne	tu neçûye	hun neçûne
ew nehatiye	ew nehatîne	ew neçûye	ew neçûne

§ 20.1. **The Present Perfect Tense (Transitive/Ergative).** The present perfect tense of transitive verbs is made from the agent pronouns plus the endings given above, but the construction is ergative, as in the simple past.

KURMANJI KURDISH

Examples reflect changing agents ('I, you, &c. have seen him/her/it') and changing patients ('he has seen me, you, &c.'). The negative is formed by prefixing **né-** to the verb.

DIFFERENT AGENTS; 3rd-PERSON SINGULAR PATIENT		3rd-PERSON SINGULAR AGENT; DIFFERENT PATIENTS	
min ew dîtîye	me ew dîtîye	wî ez dîtîme	wî em dîtîne
te ew dîtîye	we ew dîtîye	wî tu dîtîye	wî hun dîtîne
wî ew dîtîye	wan ew dîtîye	wî ew dîtîye	wî ew dîtîne
min ew nedîtîye	me ew nedîtîye	wî ez nedîtîme	wî em nedîtîne
te ew nedîtîye	we ew nedîtîye	wî tu nedîtîye	wî hun nedîtîne
wî ew nedîtîye	wan ew nedîtîye	wî ew nedîtîye	wî ew nedîtîne

Generally, the present perfect tense of Kurdish corresponds fairly closely to the English present perfect ("I have come").

Min heta niha çar kitêb çap kirine.	Until now I <i>have published</i> four books.
Gelo ew jî wek min winda bûye.	I wonder if he too, like me, <i>has become lost</i> .

But the Kurdish present perfect is in all respects the exact equivalent of the Persian past narrative (**hatime** = آمده‌ام, **maye** = مانده است). In Kurdish, as in Persian, the present perfect tense is used for anything that happened in the past, the effects or results of which are felt to be relevant to the present or to the topic at hand. Compare, for instance, the following two examples with their literal translations:

Wî tu caran tişteki wilo negot.	“He never said any such thing.”
Wî tu caran tişteki wilo negotiye.	“He has never said any such thing.”

The first example in Kurdish is a simple statement of fact, as in English. The second example can only be said in English if the person about whom it is said is still alive; if he is dead, we have to say, “He never said any such thing.” In Kurdish, however, the present state of the person is irrelevant; what pertains is whether his not having said any such thing is or is not felt to be relevant to the present—i.e., is it still true and relevant to the topic at

THE VERB

hand that he never said such a thing? If so, present perfect; if not, simple past.

Other examples of usage are as follows:

Jiyana min gelekî bi şequdeq bihuriya. Tenê dê bi kurtî bibêjim: Ez di Sibata 1953'an de, li Hedhedkê hati-me dinê. Pêşî, min xwendina olî li cem bavê xwe xwendiyê. Îcar piştê ez derketîme feqîtiyê û li hin medreseyên Kurdistanê geriyame. My life has been spent mostly in misery and hardship. I will only say in brief: I was born in February 1953 in Hedhedik. First I had religious instruction with my father. Then I became a religious student and made the rounds of some schools in Kurdistan.

In this example, the writer's first verb, *bihuriya*, is in the simple past tense as a statement of fact, while English demands the present perfect. Thereafter, that the writer was born in 1953, studied with his father, became a religious student, etc. are all relevant to his having had a miserable life, which is the topic at hand. Therefore he uses the present perfect tense.

Diya min li wir bûye û meriyên wê îroj li her du hêlên xeta hesin bi çîh dibin. My mother was from there, and today her people live on both sides of the "Iron Line."¹

In this example the writer says literally, "my mother has been from there" because the fact that his mother was from there explains why he has relatives on both sides of the border.

§ 21. **The Past Perfect Tense (Intransitive).** For intransitive verbs with past stems ending in a consonant, the past perfect tense, which is functionally equivalent to the English past perfect ('I had come, you had gone'), is formed from the past stem + *i* + the past tense of **bûn** 'to be.' Verbs with past stems ending in a vowel form the past perfect tense from the simple stem + the past tense of **bûn**. Some writers shorten a final *î* in the stem to *i* (i.e. **ez tersibûm** 'I had feared' for **ez tersîbûm**). Examples of conjugation are from **hatin** and **çûn**.

ez hati**bûm em ha**ti**bûn ez ç**u**bûm em ç**u**bûn**

¹ The "Iron Line," coined on the model of the "Iron Curtain," is Turkey's border with Syria and Iraq, which divides Kurdistan.

KURMANJI KURDISH

tu <u>ha</u> tîbûyî	hun <u>ha</u> tîbûn	tu çûbûyî	hun çûbûn
ew <u>ha</u> tîbû	ew <u>ha</u> tîbûn	ew çûbû	ew çûbûn

The negative is formed by prefixing **ne-** to the verb:

ez <u>ne</u> ha ¹ tîbûm	em <u>ne</u> ha ¹ tîbûn	ez <u>ne</u> çûbûm	em <u>ne</u> çûbûn
tu <u>ne</u> ha ¹ tîbûyî	hun <u>ne</u> ha ¹ tîbûn	tu <u>ne</u> çûbûyî	hun <u>ne</u> çûbûn
ew <u>ne</u> ha ¹ tîbû	ew <u>ne</u> ha ¹ tîbûn	ew <u>ne</u> çûbû	ew <u>ne</u> çûbûn

Tu <i>caran</i> <u>neke</u> tîbû <i>bîra</i> <i>min</i> <u>ku</u> <i>ezê</i> <i>rojekê</i> <i>ji</i> <i>hîvê</i> <i>ji</i> <i>ne</i> fretî <i>bî</i> kim.	<i>Never had it occurred</i> to my mind that one day I would hate the moon.
Pirraniya <i>mirovên</i> <i>bajêr</i> çûbûn <i>havîna</i> <i>xwe</i> <i>li</i> <i>ber</i> <i>lêvên</i> <i>derî</i> <i>û</i> <i>dengizên</i> <i>başûr</i> <i>derbas</i> <i>kin</i> .	Most of the people of the city <i>had gone</i> to spend their summers on the shores of the seas in the south.
Heta <i>demek</i> <i>pir</i> <i>dirêj</i> <i>bi</i> <i>heval</i> <i>û</i> <i>dostên</i> <i>xwe</i> <i>re</i> <i>ji</i> <i>nepeyivîbû</i> .	He <i>hadn't spoken</i> to his friends and bud- dies for a very long time.

§ 21.1. The Past Perfect Tense (Transitive/Ergative). The past perfect tense of transitive verbs is formed, like that of intransitive verbs, from the past stem + **-i-** + the past tense of **bûn** on the ergative model. Past stems that end in vowels add **bû** directly without the **-i-**.

min <u>dî</u> tîbû	I had seen (it)	me <u>dî</u> tîbû	we had seen (it)
te <u>dî</u> tîbû	you had seen (it)	hun <u>dî</u> tîbû	you had seen (it)
wî <u>dî</u> tîbû	he had seen (it)	wan <u>dî</u> tîbû	they had seen (it)
wî <i>ez</i> <u>dî</u> tîbûm	he had seen me	wî <i>em</i> <u>dî</u> tîbûn	he had seen us
wî <i>tu</i> <u>dî</u> tîbûyî	he had seen you	wî <i>hun</i> <u>dî</u> tîbûn	he had seen you
wî <i>ew</i> <u>dî</u> tîbû	he had seen him	wî <i>ew</i> <u>dî</u> tîbûn	he had seen them

Îngilîzan <i>zimanê</i> <i>hindiyan</i> <i>qedex</i> <i>nekirîbûn</i> . ¹	The English had not banned the Indians' language.
Wî <i>pirr</i> <i>caran</i> <i>biryar</i> <i>dabû</i> <u>ku</u> ...	Many times he had decided that...

¹ For the reason for the plural verb, see §18.3.

THE VERB

Wê rojê, germa havînê tu gêj kiribûyî.	On that day the heat of summer had made you dizzy.
Bi fikira ku belkî mêrik li hemberî polîsan rabe û tiştêkî bi kar bîne, polîsekî demanca xwe jî kişandibû.	Thinking that the man might resist the police and use something [as a weapon], a policeman <i>had drawn</i> his pistol.

As in Persian, the past perfect tense in Kurmanji is not necessarily tied to a temporal reference as it is in English. It is often used independently for a past tense with a somewhat more remote signification where English would have a simple past, particularly in narratives.

Gava min di hevpeyvîneke bi Osman Sebrî re, pîrsa ku wî “kengî dest bi nivîsandinê kiriyê” kiribû, wî gotibû ku ...	When, during a conversation with Osman Sebrî, I asked (not “had asked”) when he had started writing, he said (not “had said”) that ... ¹
Tu heta niha li ku bûî? —Ez bîskê çûbûm mala Ehmed. Ji wir jî em çûn komelê.	Where have you been till now? —I went to Ahmad’s house for a bit. From there we went to the society. ²

§ 21.2. **The Past Perfect Tense of *Karîn* and *Zanîn*.** The past perfect form of the verbs *karîn* ‘to be able’ and *zanîn* ‘to know’ is used as the normal past tense. Thus *ez/min dikaribûm* means ‘I was able, I could,’ and *min dizanibû* means ‘I knew.’ As in the present tense, the negatives of these verbs are formed with *ni-*, as in *ez/min nikaribûm* ‘I wasn’t able, I couldn’t’ and *min nizanibû* ‘I didn’t know.’ Negatives with *di-* (past perfect progressive) are *nedi-*. Complements of the past perfect of *karîn* are either in the present subjunctive or in the past conditional (see §25.1 below). For sequence of tenses in clauses following the past perfect of *zanîn*,

¹ In this example, both Persian and Turkish might very well have the past perfect tense in both positions (پرسیده بودم, *sormuştum* and گفته بود, *demışti*) to imply that significant time has passed since the exchange occurred. Since the example is without a secondary time reference, English would not use the past perfect.

² Here the first verb is in the past perfect because the speaker wants to convey that he *had gone* to Ahmad’s house before he and the others went somewhere else.

KURMANJI KURDISH

see §33.

Çavên Nazê *nedikaribûn* êdî hêstiran Nazê's eyes couldn't keep back the tears
paş ve vegeřîn. any longer.

Wî baş *dizanibû* ku wê rê şaş ne *kiriye*. He well knew that he hadn't made a
mistake.

A rastî me *nizanibû* em bi ku da *diçin*. We really didn't know where we were
going.

Although, strictly speaking, ***karîn*** is intransitive, in the past tenses the choice of nominative or oblique subject pronoun is generally dictated by the complementary verb. When the complementary verb is intransitive, the nominative pronoun is used and ***karîn*** is conjugated as an intransitive, as in the following:

Ez êdî *nikaribûm* li ser *lingan rawestî-* I was still not able to get up on my legs.
***yama*.**

Ez *nikaribûm* jê re *bibûma alîkar*. I wasn't able to be helpful to him.

When the complementary verb is transitive, the oblique pronoun is used and ***karîn*** is conjugated as an ergative, as in the following:

Te *nikaribû* awirên xwe ji *destê çakê* You couldn't take your eyes off the
vala dûr *bikî*. empty sleeve of the jacket.

Qederê mehekê *min *nikaribû* dora xwe* For a month I wasn't able to see my sur-
***bidîta*.** roundings..

§ 22. The Past Subjunctive. The past subjunctive is formed like the past perfect, but instead of the past tense of ***bûn***, the present subjunctive of ***bûn*** is added, and to the whole is added the ***bî-*** subjunctive prefix (which may be omitted for stylistic reasons) or ***ne-*** for the negative. As with all past tenses, the past subjunctive is nonergative with intransitives and ergative with transitives.

INTRANSITIVE		TRANSITIVE/ERGATIVE	
ez <i>bihařibim</i>	em <i>bihařibin</i>	min <i>bidîtibe</i>	me <i>bidîtibe</i>
<i>tu <i>bihařibî</i></i>	hun <i>bihařibin</i>	<i>te <i>bidîtibe</i></i>	we <i>bidîtibe</i>

THE VERB

ew bihatibe	ew bihatibin	wî bidîtibe	wan bidîtibe
ez nehatibim	em nehatibin	min nedîtibe	me nedîtibe
tu nehatibî	hun nehatibin	te nedîtibe	we nedîtibe
ew nehatibe	ew nehatibin	wî nedîtibe	wan nedîtibe

The past subjunctive is used (1) after all constructions that take subjunctive complements (see §16.1) when the complement is in the past.

Gereke baran baribe.

It must have rained.¹

Ger car caran di hin cihan de çirûskin pêketibin jî, dewlet bi xurtî çûye ser wan, bi girtin, lêdan û îşkencê dengê wan birîne.

If occasionally in some places some sparks have caught fire, the state has attacked them forcefully and silenced them through arrest, beating, and torture.

(2) In past relative clauses with indefinite antecedents and in past clauses introduced by indefinite relatives like ‘whoever,’ ‘whatever,’ ‘no matter who,’ ‘no matter what,’ ‘however much,’ &c.

Kurdên ku navên Salih û Celadet Bedir-Xan nebihîstibin pir kê m in.

Kurds who haven't heard the names of Salih and Jeladet Ali Bedir-Khan are very few.

Herçiqas me berhemên van nivîskaran baş nexwendibin jî ...

However much we haven't read the works of these writers well...

Te îşev çî kiribe divê tu jî min re bibêjî.

Whatever you've done tonight, you have to tell me.

Kê bi çî awayî nerazîbûna xwe ya li dijî dewletê anîbe ziman, kî bi çî awayî li dijî dewletê derketibe, kê bi çî awayî jî bo bidestxistina mafên gelê kurd têkoşîn dabe, dewlet heta niha bi eynî metodên nemirovane çûye ser wan.

Whoever has expressed by any means whatsoever his discontentment with the state, whoever has combatted the state by any means whatsoever, whoever has made an effort by any means whatsoever to attain the goals of Kurds, until now the state has attacked them with the same base methods.

(3) after **weke ku** ‘as though’ in the past for hypothetical situations and in

¹ Compare this with the present subjunctive: **gereke baran bibare** ‘it must rain.’

KURMANJI KURDISH

relative clauses with an antecedent preceded by **wek** or **mîna** ‘like.’

wek peza ku ço li serî ketibe *like a sheep on whose head a stick has landed*

(4) The past subjunctive form of two verbs, **karîn** ‘to be able’ and **zanîn** ‘to know,’ is normally used as the present subjunctive.

Însan naxwazin ku kesên din bizanîbin People don’t want others *to know* that
ew tiştên weha dixwîne. they read such things.

Em dixwazin bizanîbin. We want *to know*.

Ev girîng e ku mirov bizanibe ... It’s important that one *know* that...

Ez ne bawer im ku tu kes bikaribe I don’t believe that anybody *could* say
bibêje ku rewşa ziman û edebiyata that the style of Kurdish language and
kurdi baş e. literature is good.

Kêm berhemên gel û milletên din yê There are few works belonging to other
evqasî kevin hene ku mirov bê alî- such ancient groups and nations that
kariya ferhengan bikaribe jê têbigihê. one *could* understand without the help
of a dictionary.

Ji bo ku bikaribim razê, min di serê In order that *I be able* to sleep, I was for-
xwe de plana ku ezê çawa û bi çi awa- mulating a plan in my head how and by
yî bikaribim wî benderuhî bikujim, what means I would be able to kill that
çêdikir. creature.

§ 23. **The Future Perfect Tense.** The future perfect is formed, like the future, by adding **ê** to pronominal subjects or **wê** to nominal subjects, and the verb is in the past subjunctive. Effectively only two verbs, **zanîn** and **karîn**, occur in this tense, and they are used for a past modal of ‘know’ and ‘can,’ like the English modal ‘would know’ and ‘would be able’ (and not like the English future perfect ‘I will have known’), as in the following conjugations:

<i>zanîn</i>		<i>karîn</i>	
ezê bizanîbim	emê bizanîbin	ezê bikarîbim	emê bikarîbin
tê bizanîbî	hunê bizanîbin	tê bikarîbî	hunê bikarîbin

THE VERB

ewê bizanîbe	ewê bizanîbin	ewê bikarîbe	ewê bikarîbin
Êdî her kes wê <i>bizanîbe</i> ku karê me çiqas bi zehmet e.			
		Now everybody <i>would realize</i> how difficult our work was.	
Tiştêk ne dihat xuya kirin ku mirov bibêje ev ê <i>bikaribe</i> bibe sedema ewte ewta kûçikên gund.			
		Nothing could be made out that one might say it <i>could be</i> the reason for the barking of the village dogs.	

§ 24. **The Modal of *Karîn*.** The verb **karîn** ‘to be able’ in the past subjunctive and future perfect corresponds to the English modal ‘could’ or ‘would be able.’ When the modal indicates present or future time it is followed by the present subjunctive, as in the following examples:

Gava mirov <i>pirsek wilo ji te bike, tu ê navê kîjan romana xwe bidî? — Mixabin, ez ê <i>nikaribim</i> bersiva vê bidim.</i>	When someone asks you such a question, which novel of yours would you name? — Unfortunately I <i>wouldn’t be able</i> to give him an answer.
Ji bo ku ew <i>bikaribe</i> alfabeya xwe di nava kurdan de belav bike, ew biryara derxistina kovarekê dide.	So that he <i>could</i> spread his alphabet among the Kurds he decided (hist. pres.) to bring out a journal.
Asûrî, ereb, ermen, û faris cîranên me ne û yên herî kevin in, lê mixabin di bareya edebiyata wan de tiştêkî nizanim ku <i>bikaribim</i> ya me û yên wan bidim ber hev.	Assyrians, Arabs, Armenians, and Persians are our neighbors, and very anciently so, but unfortunately I don’t know anything about their literatures that I <i>could</i> compare ours with theirs.

§ 25. **The Irrealis Mood.** Kurmanji Kurdish is particularly rich in irrealis—or contrafactual—modals. There are two modal tenses devoted to the irrealis, a past conditional and a past perfect conditional, of which there are two varieties.

§ 25.1. **The Past Conditional.** The past conditional is made by prefixing **bî-** and adding the following endings to the past stem. In close compound verbs the **bî-** prefix may be omitted.

KURMANJI KURDISH

CONSONANT-FINAL STEM

bí- stem **-ama**

bí- stem **-ayî**

bí- stem **-a**

bí- stem **-ana**

bí- stem **-ana**

bí- stem **-ana**

VOWEL-FINAL STEM

bí- stem **-ma**

bí- stem **-ya**

bí- stem **-ya**

bí- stem **-na**

bí- stem **-na**

bí- stem **-na**

The past conditional of intransitives is intransitive and non-ergative; the past conditional of transitives is ergative.

INTRANSITIVE

ez bihatama

tu bihatayî

ew bihata

ez nehatama

em bihatana

hun bihatana

ew bihatana

em nehatana

ERGATIVE

wî bidîtama

wî bidîtayî

wî bidîta

wî nedîtama

wî bidîtana

wî bidîtana

wî bidîtana

wî nedîtana

The past conditional of **bûn** does not normally have the **bi-** prefix when it means 'be.' Its conjugation is as follows:

ez bûma

tu bûya

ew bûya

em bûna

hun bûna

ew bûna

In compound verbs and when it means 'become,' the past conditional of **bûn** does have the **bi-** prefix.

Nêçirvanekî herî dilêr jî newirî bû bi roj di nav re derbas bibûya.

Even a really intrepid hunter would not have dared to pass through in the day-time.

Wê ferqiyeta herdu zaravayên kurdî yên mezin hêdî hêdî hindiktir bibûya.

The difference between the two large Kurdish dialects would gradually have decreased.

The past conditional is used (1) as the complement to the past perfect tense of **karîn**, which is, as has been stated, the normal equivalent to the English past tense of 'be able.' While the present tense of **karîn** is followed by the present subjunctive, in some dialects the past perfect is followed by the past conditional. See the following examples.

THE VERB

Wek berê îdî <i>nikaribû</i> barê giran <i>hiligirta</i>.	He <i>wasn't able to carry</i> heavy loads any more like before.
Heta destpêka salên 1930'î jî, Celadet Ali Bedir-Xan <i>nikaribû</i> nameyek bi kurdî <i>binivîsanda</i>.	Until the beginning of the 1930s Jeladet Ali Bedir-Khan <i>couldn't write</i> a letter in Kurdish.
Her miletî di hundurê sînorên împêretoriyê de <i>dikaribû</i> hunera xwe bi pêş <i>bixista</i>, edebiyata xwe <i>biafranda</i>, bi zimanê xwe perwerdeya xwe <i>bikira</i>.	Every nationality within the borders of the empire <i>could advance</i> its own art, <i>create</i> its own literature, and <i>carry out</i> its education in its own language.

(2) It is similarly used as the complement to the past tense of **diviya** or **dîva bû**, the past and past perfect tenses of **divê** 'must, have to,' and in some dialects as the complement to the past tense of **xwestin** 'to want.'

Mîr Zoro <i>nedixwast</i> navê sultan <i>bibihîsta</i>.	Mir Zoro <i>did not want to hear</i> the sultan's name.
Di vê dersê de her şagirtêkî <i>dîva bû</i> li ser serpêhatiyek xwe <i>bipeyiviya</i> yan jî çîrokêk jî çîrokên ku bihîstibû <i>bigota</i>.	In that class every student <i>had to speak</i> about an adventure or <i>to tell</i> a story he had heard.
Li gorî peymana Îngilîz û Sovyetîyan û li gorî biryara Yekîtiya Neteweyan, <i>diviyabû</i> Sovyet di demeke kurt de ji Îranê <i>derketa</i>.	In accordance with the Anglo-Soviet pact and in accordance with the decision of the League of Nations, the Soviets <i>were supposed to withdraw</i> from Iran in a short time.

(3) It is used for the verb **bûn** 'to be' in both parts of a past contrafactual conditional (see §25.2).

§ 25.2 **The Past Perfect Conditionals.** There are two past perfect conditionals in use, but they seem to be mutually exclusive, i.e. depending on dialect a given speaker will use either one or the other. (1) The first past conditional is formed by prefixing the subjunctive prefix **bî-** for the affirmative or **né-** for the negative and suffixing **-(y)a** to the past perfect:

INTRANSITIVE	ERGATIVE
ez bîhâtîbûma	em bîhâtîbûna
min bîdîtîbûya	me bîdîtîbûya

KURMANJI KURDISH

tu bîhatîbûya	hun bîhatîbûna	te bîdîtîbûya	we bîdîtîbûya
ew bîhatîbûya	ew bîhatîbûna	wî bîdîtîbûya	wan bîdîtîbûya
ez néhatîbûma	em néhatîbûna	min nédîtîbûya	me nédîtîbûya
tu néhatîbûya	hun néhatîbûna	te nédîtîbûya	we nédîtîbûya
ew néhatîbûya	ew néhatîbûna	wî nédîtîbûya	wan nédîtîbûya

(2) The second past conditional is formed by prefixing the subjunctive **bî-** or **né-** and substituting **ba-** in place of **bû** in the past perfect.

INTRANSITIVE

ERGATIVE

ez bîhatîbam	em bîhatîban	min bîdîtîba	me bîdîtîba
tu bîhatîbayî	hun bîhatîban	te bîdîtîba	we bîdîtîba
ew bîhatîba	ew bîhatîban	wî bîdîtîba	wan bîdîtîba
ez néhatîbam	em néhatîban	min nédîtîba	me nédîtîba
tu néhatîbayî	hun néhatîban	te nédîtîba	we nédîtîba
ew néhatîba	ew néhatîban	wî nédîtîba	wan nédîtîba

The past conditional mood is used in the following instances:

(1) In past contrafactual conditional sentences, the verb of the protasis (the “if” clause) is in the past perfect conditional mood (with or without **bi-**), and the verb of the apodosis (the result clause) is in either the past perfect conditional or the future perfect conditional. When either part of a past contrafactual conditional contains the verb **bûn**, it is in the past conditional, not the past perfect conditional. When the apodosis contains the verb **karîn**, it is usually in the future perfect conditional.

Ma eger Aristo ne yunanî, lê çînî bûya, wê bikarîbûya felsefa xwe pêk bîne? If Aristotle *had been* not Greek but Chinese, *would he have been able* to put his philosophy together?

Mewlana eger ne parsî, lê meselen bi tirkî nivîsandibûya, ma wê bikarîbûya Mesnewî biafirîne? If Mevlana *had written* not in Persian but, for instance, in Turkish, *he wouldn't have been able* to create the Masnavi, would he?

Ger ez neçûbûma Dêrikê, min Girê Tûrcelê nedîtîba. If I *hadn't gone* to Dêrik, I *wouldn't have seen* Turjel Hill.

THE VERB

Ez bawer im ger ez ne kurd <i>bûma</i> jî, min ê dîsa li ser kurdan <i>binivîsanda</i>.	I believe that, even if I <i>weren't</i> a Kurd, I <i>would have written</i> about Kurds anyway.
Ger wilo <i>dom bikira</i> ew ê <i>şerpeze û dîn bibûya</i>.	If it <i>had continued</i> like that, he <i>would have gone</i> crazy.
Ger wî destê xwe ji siyasetê <i>bikişanda</i>, wî ê hewcedariya ku ew nameyeke dirêj ji Mustefa Kemal Atatürk re bişîne, <i>nedîta</i>.	If he <i>had given</i> up politics, he <i>would not have considered</i> it necessary to send a long letter to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

The phrase **ne ji ... bûya** ‘were it not for ...’ is a past conditional construction.

<i>Ne ji Celadet Beg bûya, me nizanîbû ku zimanê kurdî zimanê nivîsandinê ye an na.</i>	<i>Were it not for</i> Jeladet Beg, we <i>wouldn't have known</i> whether Kurdish was a language for writing or not.
--	--

(2) as a past or modal complement of past constructions that demand a subjunctive, like **lazim** in the first example and complement to an indefinite antecedent in the second:¹

Lêbelê <i>lazim bû ku me ji derekê ve dest bi vî karî bikira û me kir.</i>	On the other hand, it was necessary that we begin this labor somewhere, and so we did.
Rîskeke mezin hebû <i>ku wan ez tewqîf bikirama.</i>	There was a great risk that they would arrest me.
Diviyabû Sovyet di demeke <i>kurt de ji Îranê derketa.</i>	The Soviet [Union] was supposed to have withdrawn from Iran in a short time.
Xelkê wê <i>çaşê newêrîbûn xwe nêzîkê kesên sosyalîst bikirana.</i>	People at that time didn't dare to get close to socialist persons.

¹ Some writers follow the Persian model and use the present subjunctive after these expressions, but the past conditional is much more commonly used.

KURMANJI KURDISH

Te dixwest jinek porzer û laş spî û dagirtî bi te re baya. You wanted there to be a blond-haired, white-skinned, well-built woman with you.

Some writers use it after **berî ku** ‘before’ with reference to past time:¹

Aw nivîsarên ku ji Hawarê re dihatîn şandin, berî ku bihatana weşandin kesî ew di ber çav re derbas dikirin? Did anyone review the writings that were sent to Hawar *before they were published?*

(3) Following a past perfect or modal of **karîn** ‘to be able’ for an unfulfilled, unfulfillable, or unrealized situation, i.e. what one couldn’t do, couldn’t have done, could have done but didn’t, or should or shouldn’t have done.

Di mehên destpêkê de ez nikaribûm jê re bibûma alîkar. In the initial months I *wasn’t able to be* helpful to him.

Ew dikaribû bibûya yek ji şairên dema xwe yê herî navdar. He *could have become* one of the most famous poets of his age.

Meriv dikaribû ew bi her tişti bi nav bikirina, lê ne ... One *could call* them anything but not ...

Îmkanên min ku ez bikaribûma vegeyama Batmanê, Sêrtê an jî Diyarbekirê bimama, bijiyama, tune bû. There were no possibilities for me that I *could return* to Batman, Siirt, or even Diyarbekir *and remain and live* there.

Kesên ku bikaribana binivîsiyana jî gelekî kêr bûn. Persons who *could write* were very few.

With the addition of **ê/wê/dê** to the past conditional, a future conditional modal (‘would, should’) is produced.

Berî min, kesin din ev şixul bi ser xistibûn. Çima min ê nekira? Others before me had put this business in their heads. Why *shouldn’t I do* it?

Lê wî biryara xwe dabû, wî ê bixwenda. But he had made his decision: he *would study*.

¹ Other writers prefer the present subjunctive exclusively after **berî ku**.

THE VERB

**Ez pê bawer bûm ku meriv ê bikari-
bûya, bi zimanê kurdî, romanek ava
bikira.** I believed that one *should be able* to pro-
duce a novel in Kurdish.

**Ji rûniştewanên wê, mirov dê bigotaya
Kurdistan e.** To judge by the inhabitants of it, one
would say it was Kurdistan.

Ew ê gelek nebaş bibûya. It *would have been* very bad.

(4) After **xwezî** ‘would that, I wish’ or the verb **xwiziyan** ‘to wish’ for unfulfillable wishes in the past, often without the **bi-** prefix.

**Ax, xwezî wî zanîbûya ez çiqasî bi vê
peyvê diêşiyam.** Oh, would that he had known how
pained I was by those words.

**Xwiziya wî satila Nazi jî bi xwe re anî
ba bo tijî av bike.** He wished he had brought Nazi’s bucket
too to fill it with water.

§ 26. **The Passive Voice.** The passive voice is constructed from the verb **hatin** (conjugated in all persons, moods, and tenses) plus the infinitive. Examples of the passive are the following conjugations of **hatin dîtin** ‘to be seen.’ For any other passive verb, simply substitute the infinitive for **dîtin**.

PRESENT INDICATIVE		PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
‘I am seen, &c.’		‘that I be seen, &c.’	
ez tēm dîtin	em tēn dîtin	ez bēm dîtin	em bēn dîtin
tu tēyî dîtin	hun tēn dîtin	tu bēyî dîtin	hun bēn dîtin
ew tē dîtin	ew tēn dîtin	ew bē dîtin	ew bēn dîtin
FUTURE		SIMPLE PAST	
‘I will be seen, &c.’		‘I was seen, &c.’	
ezê bēm dîtin	emê bēn dîtin	ez hatim dîtin	em hatin dîtin
tê bēyî dîtin	hunê bēn dîtin	tu hatî dîtin	hun hatin dîtin
ewê bē dîtin	ewê bēn dîtin	ew hat dîtin	ew hatin dîtin
PRESENT PERFECT		PAST PERFECT	
‘I have been seen, &c.’		‘I had been seen, &c.’	
ez hatime dîtin	em hatine dîtin	ez hatibûm dîtin	em hatibûn dîtin

KURMANJI KURDISH

<u>tu</u> <u>hatiye</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>hun</u> <u>hatine</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>tu</u> <u>hatibûyî</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>hun</u> <u>hatibûn</u> <u>dîtin</u>
<u>ew</u> <u>hatiye</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>hatine</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>hatibû</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>hatibûn</u> <u>dîtin</u>

PAST SUBJUNCTIVE

PAST CONDITIONAL

‘that I have been seen, &c.’

‘had I been seen, &c.’

<u>ez</u> <u>hatibim</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>em</u> <u>hatibin</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ez</u> <u>bihatama</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>em</u> <u>bihatana</u> <u>dîtin</u>
<u>tu</u> <u>hatibî</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>hun</u> <u>hatibin</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>tu</u> <u>bihatayî</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>hun</u> <u>bihatana</u> <u>dîtin</u>
<u>ew</u> <u>hatibe</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>hatibin</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>bihaṭa</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>bihaṭana</u> <u>dîtin</u>

PAST PERFECT CONDITIONAL I

PAST PERFECT CONDITIONAL II

‘I would have been seen, &c.’

‘I would have been seen, &c.’

<u>ez</u> <u>bîhatibûma</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>em</u> <u>bîhâtibûna</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ez</u> <u>bîhatibam</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>em</u> <u>bîhatiban</u> <u>dîtin</u>
<u>tu</u> <u>bîhatibûya</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>hun</u> <u>bîhâtibûna</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>tu</u> <u>bîhatibayî</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>hun</u> <u>bîhatiban</u> <u>dîtin</u>
<u>ew</u> <u>bîhatibûya</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>bîhâtibûna</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>bîhatiba</u> <u>dîtin</u>	<u>ew</u> <u>bîhatiban</u> <u>dîtin</u>

In the present and present subjunctive of **hatîn**, the third-person singular forms are sometimes **tête** and **bête** (cf. Sorani بێتە *betà*) instead of **tê** and **bê**, as in the first two examples below. The agent of a passive verb is expressed by the circumposition **ji aliyê ... ve**.

- | | |
|--|--|
| Em hêvîdar in ew ê jî di nêzik de bête çap kîrin. | We are hopeful <i>it will soon be published.</i> |
| Her ziman û edebiyat bi hin nav û kesan ve tête nasîn. | Every language and literature <i>is known</i> by a few names and persons. |
| Ji xwe ez ji welatê xwe hatibûm dûrxistin. | <i>I had been exiled</i> from my country by my own self. |
| Bi salan bi vî navî ve hatiye naskîrin. | He <i>has been known</i> for years by this name. |
| Ew di nava kurdên her çar perçeyên welêt de tê naskîrin û hezkîrin. | <i>It is known and loved</i> among Kurds of all four parts of the country. |
| Î carekê hatibû vexistin û divabû ku were kişandin. | but once <i>it had been lit</i> it would have to be smoked. |
| Gavên wî bi lez pêş ve dihatin avêtin. | His steps <i>were being taken</i> quickly. |

THE VERB

Sê rê hebûn; an ez dê bihatama girtin, di girtîgehê de biriziyama, an ez ê ji aliyê MÎTê ve bihatma kuştin, an jî min ê welatê xwe terk bikira.	There were three alternatives: <i>I would be caught</i> there and <i>thrown</i> into prison, or <i>I would be killed</i> by the MIT, ¹ or I would leave my country.
Stranên ku heta niha nehatine gotin, zimanê ku nehatiye vejandin, edebiyata ku nehatiye nivîsandin, klasîkên ku nehatine çapkirin û belavkirin, kultura ku nehatiye nasandin û gelek tiştên din...	Songs that <i>haven't been sung</i> yet, a language that <i>hasn't been revived</i> , literature that <i>hasn't been written</i> , classics that <i>haven't been printed or published</i> , a culture that <i>hasn't been recognized</i> , and a lot of other things...

§ 27. **Postposed Verbal Complements.** Directional complements often follow the verb directly and are in the oblique case without a preposition.

Min pêşniyaza xwe şand Swîsreyê.	I sent my proposal to Switzerland.
ew çend libên ku digihîştin wan welatan jî	even those few copies that reached those countries
Ew ji welatê xwe dengbêj û stranbêjên tîne Stenbolê.	He brings singers from his country to Istanbul.

The postposed complement is sporadically indicated by the addition of *e* to the verb, but this is not so regular a feature of Kurmanji as it is in Sorani (see Sorani §44). The addition of the directional *-e* to most forms of the past tense makes most resulting verbs indistinguishable from the present perfect tense, although the third-person singulars are different (pres. perf. **hatiye** ‘has come’ vs. directional **hate** ‘came to’). Context usually makes the tense clear.

Ez çûme Sûriyê.	I went to Syria.
Me ji gund barkire Nisêbînê.	We moved from the village to Nusaybin.
Dengê xişîşekê hate min.	A scratching sound came to me (= reached my ears).

A postposed third-person pronominal complement is indicated by the ad-

¹MIT, *Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, National Intelligence Organization, the Turkish secret police.

KURMANJI KURDISH

dition of **-(y)ê** to the verb.

Min gotê. I said *to him/her*.

Bavê wî dest avêtê, lê ne gihayê. His father stretched out his hand *to him*,
but it didn't reach *him*.

§ 28. **Factitive Verbs.** The factitive infinitive, by which an intransitive verb is rendered transitive, is formed from the present stem of the base verb + **-andin**. The present stem of all such verbs is in **-în-**.

INFINITIVE	PRES.STEM	FACTITIVE
mirin 'to die' >	mir- >	mirandin mirîn- 'to make die, kill'
şewitan 'to burn' >	şewit- >	şewitandin şewitîn- 'to make burn, set fire to'
tirsîn 'to be afraid' >	tirs- >	tirsandin tirsîn- 'to scare'

{	Mala wî şewita.	His house burned down.
{	Wan mala wî şewitand.	They burned his house down.
{	Ez pirr ditîrsim.	I'm very afraid.
{	Çi wan ditîrsîne?	What is scaring them?

Exceptional are the verbs **nivîsîn** and **nivîsandin**, both of which mean 'to write' without any apparent difference in meaning.

§ 28.1. **The Periphrastic Factitive Construction.** "To have something done" or "to make something be done" is commonly achieved by the verb **dan** 'to give' plus the infinitive, as **naskirin** 'to know (a person)' > **dan naskirin** 'to introduce,' **zanîn** 'to know (a fact)' > **dan zanîn** 'to cause to know,' and **xuya kirin** 'to be clear' > **dan xuya kirin** 'to make clear.'

Ew xwe dide naskirin. He introduces himself.

Wî derd û kulên gundiyan bi eskeran didane zanîn. He used to communicate the villagers' troubles and sorrows to the soldiers.

Gelo tu ê bikaribî xwe bidî naskirin? I wonder if you could introduce yourself.

THE VERB

Ew di wir de dide xuya kirin, ku kurd There he makes it clear that Kurds are
ne tirk in. not Turks.

OTHER SYNTACTICAL FEATURES

§ 29. **Subordinate Clauses and Subordinating Conjunctions.** Subordinating conjunctions in Kurdish consist generally of prepositions + **ku**. A short list of common subordinating conjunctions follows:

<p>berî (or beriya) ku (+ pres. subj.) before</p> <p>bê(î) ku (+ pres. subj.) without</p> <p>çaxê ku when</p> <p>da ku (+ pres. subj.) in order that</p> <p>digel ku although</p> <p>dema (ku) when</p> <p>gava (ku) when</p> <p>gelo whether</p> <p>gorî ku as</p> <p>hema ku as soon as (+ past or pres. subj.)</p> <p>herwekî ku just as</p> <p>heta (ku) (+ pres. subj.) in order that; (+ past) until</p>	<p>ji ber ku because, on account of the fact that</p> <p>ji bo ku (+ pres. subj.) in order that</p> <p>jibona (ku) (+ pres. subj.) in order that</p> <p>ku (+ pres. subj.) in order that</p> <p>madem ku as long as</p> <p>mîna ku as though</p> <p>paşê ku after</p> <p>piştî ku after</p> <p>ta ku as long as</p> <p>weke (ku) as</p> <p>wexta (ku) when</p>
--	---

Conjunctions that mean ‘after’ (*paşê ku*, *piştî ku*) are followed by an indicative verb, present or past according to sense.

Paşê ku min pîstîya wan dît, ez ji wan bi dûr ketim. After I saw how bad they were, I avoided them.

Piştî ku vî merovî çend gotinên xwe peyivî, şagirt rûniştin. After this man spoke his few words, the pupils sat down.

Conjunctions that mean ‘before’ are normally followed by a present subjunctive verb. The correct tense for English translation is gained from context.

Berî ku ewrekî reş yê şînê bi ser vî bajarî de bigire, ji pişt çiyar rojeke bêhawe xweş bilind dibe. Before a black cloud of mourning covers this city, an extraordinarily nice day breaks from behind the mountains.

OTHER SYNTACTICAL FEATURES

- Beriya ku em dest bi dersên xwe bikin, dixwazim ji we re çêlî tiştekî bikim.*** *Before we start our lessons, I want to discuss something with you.*
- Berî ku ez bersiva vê pirsava te bidim, ez tiştekî biçûk li ser gotina we bêjim.*** *Before I answer this question of yours, let me say a little something about what you all have said.*
- Berî ku ez derkevim derveyê welêt, min soranî nebihîstibû.*** *Before I wound up outside the homeland, I hadn't heard Sorani.*
- Berî ku leşker li ber xwe binêrin, Ferzende ajote ser wan*** *Before the soldiers looked in front of themselves, Ferzende attacked them.*

Conjunctions that mean ‘when’—*dema (ku)*, *gava (ku)*, *çaxê (ku)*, *wexta (ku)*—are normally followed by an indicative verb (past, present, or future according to sense).

- Gava ku mirov ji derve li avahiya hotêlê dînihêrî, hotel gelekî xweş û luks xuya dikir.*** *When one was looking at the hotel building from the outside, it looked very nice and deluxe.*
- Pirr nivîskar, dema dixwazin li ser kurdan binivîsin, jiyana kurdî di pencerek teng de dibînin.*** *Many writers, when they want to write about Kurds, see Kurdish life through a narrow window.*
- Dema em dê bighêjin Ewropa keçên porzer li Ferensa û li Swêdê wê li ser porê me dîn bibin.*** *When we get to Europe, blonde girls in France and Sweden will go crazy over our hair.*
- Dibe ku anuha pir neyêşe, lê wexta ku êşiya, tu bibêje, em derman bidine te.*** *It shouldn't hurt much anymore, but when it hurts, you tell us so that we may give you some medicine.*

All conjunctions that mean ‘in order that’ are followed by a present subjunctive verb (except *karîn* and *zanîn*, which use the past subjunctive form for the present subjunctive).

- Ji bo ku bê tirs û fikarê bikaribim razê, min di serê xwe de pîlana ku ezê çawan bikaribim wî benderuhî bikujim, çêdikir.*** *In order that I might be able to sleep without fear or worry, I was formulating a plan in my head how I could kill that creature.*

KURMANJI KURDISH

Divê tu herî bajêr, jî bo ku tu têkevi mektebê. You have to go to town *in order that you attend* to school.

Serdar Îhsan Nûrî, Ferzende digel şêst siwarî şande nav eşîrên serhedan da ku sedek hesp peyda bike. Commander Ihsan Nuri, sent Ferzende with sixty cavalymen among the tribes of the borders *in order to find* a hundred horses.

Em radipelikîn penceran da ku em çîrokan bibihîzin. We used to creep up to the windows *in order to hear* the stories.

Conjunctions like **weke ku** ‘as,’ which do not necessarily take a following subjunctive, may do so when doubt is implied.

Weke ku hun zanin... As you may know...

Compare the above example with the following, where no doubt is implied:

Weke ku hun dizanin... As you know...

The conjunction **her ku** has a variety of meanings for translation, but the basic meanings are “the more...the more” when there is a comparative involved (or implied) and “every time” for temporals.

Her ku roj bilind dibe, Mehabadî dikevin tevgerê. The higher the sun rises, the more the Mahabadis fall into activity.

Her ku ber bi dibistanê tê û nêzîktir dibe, bêtir jî diyar dibe ku kalekî salmezî e. As he approaches the school, the closer he comes, the more it becomes apparent that he is an old man of great age.

Her ku hejmareke nû ya kovarê derdiket, ew mîna zarokekî dilşa dibû. Every time a new issue of the journal would come out, he used to be as happy as a child.

Her ku with a 3rd-person singular form of **çûn** in an appropriate tense is used for the constant increase of something (“to keep getting...”).

Dengê ji ezmên herku diçû bêtir dibû. The noise from the sky kept getting louder.

Her ku diçe dunya piçûk dibe. The world keeps getting smaller.

KURMANJI KURDISH

With the exception of temporal expressions ('the year in which,' 'the days during which,' etc), in relative clauses in which the antecedent is other than the subject or object of the verb in the relative clause (i.e. types like 'the thing *of which* I was afraid,' 'the man *with whom* I went'), the syntax of the relative is indicated by a referent pronoun (literally "the thing *which* I was afraid of *it*," "the man *who* I went with *him*").

<u>Tiştê</u> <u>ku</u> Celadet Bedir-Xan <u>jê</u> ditir-siya, bi serê kurdên Tirkiyeyê ve hatiye.	<i>The thing of which</i> Jeladet Bedir-Khan was afraid has happened to the Kurds of Turkey.
Gelo <u>tu</u> çima naçî wî <u>welatê</u> <u>ku</u> <u>tu</u> li wir ji dayikê bûyî û evqasî <u>jê</u> <u>hez</u> dikî?	I wonder why you don't go to <i>that country</i> , <i>where</i> you were born and which you like so much.
Mêrik odeya min û <u>nivînê</u> <u>ku</u> <u>ezê</u> <u>tê</u> <u>de</u> razêm, nîşanî min da.	The fellow showed me my room and <i>the bed in which</i> I would sleep.

Temporal expressions do not normally have a referent pronoun, and the relative **ku** after temporal expressions is usually best translated as 'when.'

Piştî sala 1972 <u>ku</u> derketim Ewrûpê...	After the year 1972, <i>when</i> I went off to Europe...
Piştî 12ê Êlûna 1980, <u>ku</u> cunta sisiyan a faşîst li Tirkiyê hate ser hikim...	After September 12, 1980, <i>when</i> the third fascist junta came to power in Turkey...

Relatives without noun antecedents use **yê ku** 'he who,' **ya ku** 'she who,' and **yên ku** 'those who' or **kesê ku** 'one who,' **kesa ku** 'one (f) who,' and **kesên ku** 'persons who.'

<u>Ya</u> <u>ku</u> ji min re derî vekir berdestka wê bû.	<i>The one (fem.) who opened the door for me</i> was her servant.
Îro di nava kurdên me yê <u>Sûriyê</u> de <u>yên</u> <u>ku</u> <u>kurdî</u> bi <u>alfabeya</u> <u>erebî</u> <u>dinivîsîn</u>, çî bigire tune ye.	Today among our Kurds in Syria, <i>those who write Kurdish in the Arabic alphabet</i> are practically nil.
<u>Ew</u> <u>kesên</u> <u>ku</u> <u>dixwazin</u> <u>huner</u> û <u>edebiyat</u> <u>bikevin</u> <u>bin</u> <u>bandora</u> <u>polîtîkaya</u> <u>rojê</u>...	<i>Those persons who want art and literature</i> to come under the influence of the politics of the day...

OTHER SYNTACTICAL FEATURES

As in English, there is an occasional elipsis of the relative **ku** when the relative is the object of the verb in the relative clause.

Min fahm kir ku tiştên min nivîsbûn, ne şîr bûn. I understood that *the things I had written* were not poetry.

Te xwest bibî başoke, ew teyrê te pîrr jê hez dikir. You wanted to become a falcon, *that bird you liked so much.*

§ 31. **The Emphatic Ji.** The Kurmanji enclitic **ji**, equivalent to the Sorani enclitic *يش -îsh*, the Persian *هم*, and the Turkish *de/da*, emphasizes the word that precedes it. Its meanings range from ‘even’ to ‘also,’ but it is often untranslatable since the function it serves is taken care of in English by voice inflection and intonation (italicization or underscore in writing). It is often helpful to think of **ji** as a spoken underscore.

Bêguman ew ne Xweda ye. Kêmasî û şaşiyên wî jî hene. Of course, he isn’t God. He *too* has weaknesses and faults.

Min mamostetiya zimanê erebî dikir û ez demekê jî midûrê dibistanê bûm. I used to teach the Arabic language, and *also* for a time I was a school principal.

Di gelek waran de ew hê jî mamos-tayiya me dike. In many respects he is *still* teaching us.

§ 32. **Expressions of Temporal Duration.** There are two constructions for temporal duration, the first of which is the more commonly used.

(1) The formula for present expressions of temporal duration (“I’ve been here for two hours”) is as follows: (**bi**) length of time + **e** (or **in**) + (optional **ku**) + present-tense affirmative verb or present-perfect negative verb.

Du saet e ku ez li vir im. I’ve been here for two hours.

...zimanekî mîna kurdî ku bi sedsalan e nebûye zimanê nivîsandinê ...a language like Kurdish, which has not been a language of writing for centuries

Ji kengê ve ye ku tu bi kurdî dinivîsî? Since when have you been writing in Kurdish?

KURMANJI KURDISH

Hefteyek e ku min ew nedîtime.	I haven't seen him for a week.
Bîst û yek sal e ku ez neçûme welêt.	I haven't gone to the homeland for twenty-one years.
Ev heftê sal in ku gelê kurd ji derdê vê nexweşiya han dinale.	The Kurdish nation has been complaining of the pain of that very sickness for these seventy years.

In past expressions of temporal duration (“I had been here for two hours when...”), the formula is: length of time + **bû** + (**ku**) + past-tense affirmative verb or past-perfect negative verb.

Du saet bû ku ez li vir bûm.	I had been here for two hours.
Bîst û yek sal bû ku ez neçûbûm welêt.	I hadn't been to the homeland for twenty-one years.

(2) The second construction literally means “this is my (X amount of time) that I am (doing something),” as in the following:

Ev panzdeh salên min in ez têgi-hîştîme, ku welatêkî bê ziman ne tu welat e.	For fifteen years now I've understood that a country without a language is no country (lit. “these are my fifteen years I have understood that...”).
Ev 55 salên min in ku ez di nava vê xebatê de me.	I've been in the midst of this struggle for 55 years now (lit. “these are my 55 years that...”).
Deh salên te li şehri Parîsê derbas bûbûn.	You had been in the city of Paris for ten years (lit. “your ten years had passed”).

§ 33. Sequence of Tenses After Past Verbs of Perception. While present-tense verbs of perception (seeing, hearing, thinking, realizing, feeling, guessing, &c.) do not pose any particular problem for English-speakers, past-tense verbs of perception are followed, as in Persian, by the tense of the verb that would have been used by the speaker at the time of the perception. In English all such verbs are thrown back by one tense.

OTHER SYNTACTICAL FEATURES

Wî hîs <u>kir</u> <u>ku</u> tenê ye.	He felt he <i>was</i> alone.	(i.e., at the time, he would have verbalized his feelings as “I <i>am</i> alone”)
Ez t^êgihîştîm <u>ku</u> zimane- kî min yê taybetî <i>heye</i>.	I came to the realization that I <i>had</i> a special language.	(i.e. what I said to myself at the moment of realization was, “I <i>have</i> a special language”)
Mîn dîtîm <u>ku</u> mamost^e ne t^e ye.	I saw that the teacher <i>was</i> not there.	(i.e. what I would have said to myself at that moment was, “The teacher <i>is</i> not here”)
Em difikîrîn <u>ku</u> ev roj <i>ê</i> neyê.	We used to think that this day <i>wouldn't</i> come.	(i.e. what we used to think was, “That day <i>will not</i> come”)
Mîna <u>ku</u> dizanibû wê polîs destê wî <i>kelemçe</i> <i>bikin</i>, herdu destên xwe dirêjî polîs kirin.	As though he knew the police <i>were going to handcuff</i> him, he extended both his hands toward the policemen.	(i.e., at the time, he would have said to himself, “the policemen are going to handcuff me”)
Mîn zanîbû wê saetê ava germ <i>peyda nabe</i>.	I realized that at that hour <i>there was</i> no hot water to be found.	(i.e., at the time, I would have said to myself, “there <i>is</i> no hot water”)

§ 34. **Questions with *Ma*.** The particle **ma**, which is the equivalent of the Persian **آیا**, introduces an affirmative question to which a negative answer is expected (English, “you don’t know, do you?”).

Ma rast e?	That’s not right, is it?
Ma ez <i>ê</i> karibim careke din rûyê dinyê bibînim?	I won’t ever be able to see the face of the earth again, will I?
Ma ji bo me tu derên bê tehlike, bê tirs hene?	For us there aren’t any places without danger, without fear, are there?

It also introduces a negative question to which an affirmative answer is expected (English, “it rained last night, didn’t it?”).

Ma em jî eynî tişt <u>nakin</u>?	We do the same thing, don’t we?
---	---------------------------------

KURMANJI KURDISH

Ma tu ne herdem di odakê de yî? You are always in a room, aren't you?

The reply to such a question need not be in the affirmative, but an affirmative expectation is implied by the asking of such a question, as in the following exchange:

Gava mêrik bêdeng ma, jinikê dîsa got, When the husband remained silent, the wife said once again, "Yes, that's how it is, isn't it?"
—Erê, ma ne wilo ye?
—Na, ne wilo ye! mêrik bi hêrs got. "No," the husband said irritably, "it's not like that!"

Ma also has the contradictory force of 'but,' particularly in questions that also contain an interrogative ('who,' 'where,' 'why') or **gelo**, which introduces a "wondering" query and can be implied.

Çavên te girîf bûn û germa dijwar laşê te sist kiribû, te gêj kiribû. Ma hişê te li ku bû dema telefona li ber te, li ser masa te, lê xist? Your eyes were closed, and the oppressive heat had weakened your body, had made you dizzy. *But* where was your mind when the telephone in front of you on your desk rang?

Erê, ez im, ma tu kê yî? Yes, it's me, *but* who are you?

Mîn xwe dît di Xoşnav de... ma gelo ewê xwe di hinekên din de bibîne? I saw myself in Khoshnav, *but I wondered* if he would ever see himself in others.

Ma saet çand e? *I wonder* what time it is.