—Kurmanji Kurdish—
A Reference Grammar
with Selected Readings

W. M. Thackston
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Reading Selections in Arabic-Script Kurmanji

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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), 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-

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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 Caucase jusqu’à Kere-Bax [Qarabagh], par ceux de la république d’Erevan, 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 Bextiyrâ. (3) Le dialecte Nord-ouest est le dialecte des Kurdes Dûmilî. Du Dûmilî on ne peut pas tracer une limite fixe quelconque, parce que trop melangé avec les Kurdes Qurdmanî parlant le dialecte du Nord le Qurdmanî. Tout de même les points de condensation de ce dialecte sont: Dêrsîm, Palo, Genc, Çepekçûr, Maden, Piran, Egil, Sûwareq, 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 umlauted 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, 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 Perwiz Cihanî, 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 ژریو Sirwe in 1990 and in the Latin Kurmanji in which it was reprinted in Aole (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

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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: Tümzamanlar 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:


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 Kurmanji 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ì</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>nìv [niv] ‘half.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ì</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>dil [dil] ‘heart’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ì</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>vedixwim [vædixwim] ‘I drink.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë</td>
<td>[ø]</td>
<td>hêz [hez] ‘power.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>berhem [bærˈhæm] ‘product,’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë</td>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>dewlet [dəwˈlæt] ‘state,’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë</td>
<td>[ɘ]</td>
<td>miróvek [mɪˈro-] ‘room.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

vekt ‘a man’ and dîçe [ˈditʃe] ‘he goes.’

û is like the ‘oo’ in ‘boot,’ IPA [u], as in bûn [bun] ‘to be.’

û is like the ‘u’ in ‘put’ and ‘bull,’ IPA [u], as in du [du] ‘two’; the sequences gu and ku are pronounced by some as [gure] and [kure], particularly in closed syllables like gur ‘wolf,’ pronounced either [gurer] or [gur].

ô is like the ‘oa’ in ‘boat,’ IPA [o], without the w-offglide of English, as in nod [nød] ‘ninety.’

a is like the ‘a’ in ‘father’ and ‘balm,’ IPA [a], as in bav [bav] ‘father.’

Consonants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental/Alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
<th>Glotto-Pharyngeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p, p</td>
<td>t, t</td>
<td>k, k</td>
<td>q</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>g</td>
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<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>h, h</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋ</td>
<td>ŋ, ŋ</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>c</td>
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<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>w</td>
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<td>r, r</td>
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<td>l</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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’ [tʃʰ] (see below)
çek is the unaspirated ‘ch’ of English ‘eschew’ plus pharyngealization [tʃ] (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 \( \zeta \) of Arabic (a voiceless pharyngeal fricative, \([h]\)); 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’ \([3]\)

**k** is the aspirated ‘k’ of English ‘key’ \([k^h]\) (see below)

\( k \) is the unaspirated ‘k’ of English ‘sky’ plus pharyngealization \([k^]\) (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)

**p** is the unaspirated ‘p’ of English ‘spy’ plus pharyngealization \([p^]\) (see below)

**q** is a voiceless uvular stop, like the Arabic \( q \) \([q]\); 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

**r** 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 \( pîrr\)), otherwise it is not indicated in the writing system

**s** is the ‘s’ of English \([s]\)

**ṣ** is pronounced like the ‘sh’ in ‘ship’ \([\mathcal{S}]\)

**t** is the aspirated ‘t’ of English ‘tie’ \([t^h]\) (see below)

\( t \) is the unaspirated ‘t’ of English ‘sty’ plus pharyngealization \([t^]\) (see below)

**v** is the ‘v’ of English \([v]\)

**w** is the ‘w’ of English ‘we’ \([w]\) except before \( i, i, \) and \( ë, \) when it is a close back unrounded semivowel \([u]\), like the ‘u’ in French \( cuire\) and \( huit\)

**x** is pronounced like the ‘ch’ in German ‘Bach’ and the Arabic \( \dot{\zeta} \), a voiceless uvular fricative \([x]\)

**x** is a voiced uvular fricative \([\gamma]\), the ghayn \( \dot{\zeta} \) 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 (א). 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 چرتب ‘Arab’)

The aspirated and unaspirated stops.

p, t, k, and ç are aspirated stops, as in English ‘pie,’ ‘tie,’ ‘key,’ and ‘chew’
p, t, k, and ç 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 the this book by an underscore: cf. pêlav [pʰelav] ‘wave’ and pêlav [p’elav] ‘shoes,’ kal [kʰal] ‘unripe’ and kal [k’al] ‘old man,’ tîn [tʰin] ‘thirst’ and tîn [t’in] ‘heat,’ çal [tʃ’al] ‘speckled’ and çal [tʃ’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, gûnd > gûndê, odé > odéya), with the exception of the plural suffixes -ên and -an, which are stressed (kûrd > kurdê’n, kurdân).

The hierarchy of stress in verbs is as follows:

(1) The negative prefixes na- and ne-, as in náçim [’natʃim] ‘I don’t go’ and nêçû [’næʃu] ‘he didn’t go.’


(3) The modal prefixes di- and bi-, as in dlaxîftim [’dlaxîftim] ‘I was speaking,’ and biţaxive [’biţaxive] ‘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'xiftîne] ‘they have spoken.’

(5) The infinitive is stressed on the final syllable, as in *axîfîn* [axîfîtîn] ‘to speak.’

Orthographic variants. Some writers prefer to use the Turkish undotted ‘i’ for ‘i’ and the dotted ‘i’ for ‘î.’ They write dizanim as dizanım and zanîn as zanîn.

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. mutd > mudet, м vandalism > mele, м vandalises > museses, and shidt > sidet. 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 *agîl* ‘mind, intelligence,’ *esl* ‘origin,’ *emr* ‘age,’ and *emr* ‘order’ are *agîl, esl, emr,* and *emr* when by themselves or when followed by a consonant-initial suffix (*agîl* ‘mind,’ *kêmaqîl* ‘foolish,’ *ew kêmaqîl bu* ‘he was foolish,’ and *agîlmend* ‘intelligent’). When followed by a vowel-initial enclitic or suffix the *i* is dropped, as in *agîlê te* ‘your mind,’ *ew kêmaqîl e* ‘he is foolish,’ *kêmaqîlî* ‘foolishness,’ *bi eslê xwe* ‘in one’s origin, originally,’ *emrê min* ‘my age’ and *emra serdor* ‘commander’s order.’ The furtive *i* is included in the vocabulary by an italicized *i,* e.g. *aql, esîl, emîr, fêhîm.* Kurdish writers are not in agreement on the

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1Aql ‘mind’ (with furtive *i*), from the Arabic عقل, is to be distinguished from the homograph aqîl that means ‘intelligent, reasonable’ (from the Arabic عقل). The latter is stable as aqîl even in compounds (aqilane ‘intelligently’). There are two words spelled emîr, emîr (a variant of umr غير ‘age’ and emîr (from the Arabic أمر) ‘order’; they both contain furtives *i*’s.
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.
§ 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, 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
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 -i change the i to -iy- before adding any endings. An example of a masculine noun is mirôv ‘man,’ and examples of feminine nouns are jîn ‘woman’ and ode ‘room’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINATIVE</th>
<th>OBLIQUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MASC. SING.</td>
<td>mirôv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM. SING.</td>
<td>jîn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>odé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLURAL</td>
<td>mirôv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jîn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>odé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gundî’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Ode paqîj e. The room is clean.

Ev mekteb e. This is the school.

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

Gundî di mèvanxana Reço de rûnis-tîbhûn û daxaftin. The villagers were sitting and talking in Resho’s reception room.

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

Ez miróv dibînim. I see the man.
Ez mirován dibînim. I see the men.
Ez jînê dibînim. I see the woman.
Ez jînán dibînim. I see the women.

(2) complements of prepositions:

ji miróv from the man
ji mirován from the men
ji jînê from the woman
ji jînán from the women
di odîyê de in the room
di odê´ de

(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 dibînim? 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, mér, 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
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOM. SING. &amp; PL.</th>
<th>OBL. SING.</th>
<th>OBL. PL.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MASC. <strong>ev</strong> ...</td>
<td><strong>vî</strong> ... -î</td>
<td><strong>van</strong> ...-án</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ew</strong> ...</td>
<td><strong>wî</strong> ...-î</td>
<td><strong>wan</strong> ...-án</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>her</strong> ...</td>
<td><strong>her</strong> ...-î</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM. <strong>ev</strong> ...</td>
<td><strong>vê</strong> ...-ê</td>
<td><strong>van</strong> ...-án</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ew</strong> ...</td>
<td><strong>wê</strong> ...-ê</td>
<td><strong>wan</strong> ...-án</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>her</strong> ...</td>
<td><strong>her</strong> ...-ê</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINATIVE</th>
<th>OBLIQUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MASC.</td>
<td>-(y)ek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM.</td>
<td>-(y)ek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

mirov > miróvek
Miróvek hat.
Ez miróvekî dibînim.

kitêb > kitêbek
Li ser masê kitêbek heye.
Ez kitêbekê dibînim.

derî > derîyek
Ez derîyekî vedîkîm.

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 > derîn
"some doors"

§ 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEF. SING.</th>
<th>INDEF. SING.</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MASC.</td>
<td>-ê</td>
<td>-ekî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM.</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>-eke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

‘woman’ (fem.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASC.</th>
<th>mirovê</th>
<th>mirovekî</th>
<th>mirovên</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEM.</td>
<td>jina</td>
<td>jineke</td>
<td>jinên</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASC.</th>
<th>perçeyê</th>
<th>perçeyekî</th>
<th>perçeyên</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perçê</td>
<td></td>
<td>perçên</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM.</td>
<td>odea</td>
<td>odeyeke</td>
<td>odeyên</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>oda</td>
<td>odake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASC.</th>
<th>xaniyê</th>
<th>xaniyeke</th>
<th>xaniyên</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEM.</td>
<td>piraniya</td>
<td>piraniyeke</td>
<td>piraniyên</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASC.</th>
<th>iwê</th>
<th>iwekî</th>
<th>iwên</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEM.</td>
<td>iwa</td>
<td>iweke</td>
<td>iwên</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mirôvê wî welâtî</th>
<th>the man of that country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>miróvekî wî welâtî</td>
<td>a man of that country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mirovê’n wî welâtî</td>
<td>the men of that country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hejmâra kovárê</td>
<td>the issue of the journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hejmâreke kovárê</td>
<td>an issue of the journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hejmârê’n kovárê</td>
<td>the issues of the journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>odêya (or oda) rûniştînê</td>
<td>the sitting room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>odêyeke (or odâke) rûniştînê</td>
<td>a sitting room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>odeyê’n rûniştînê</td>
<td>the sitting rooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretically constructs of successive nouns can be extended without limit; in practice they are limited to three or four successive nouns. In all construct strings the construct case takes precedence over the oblique case, i.e. only the last noun in a string is in the oblique case, and the others are in the construct case. For example, in the phrase

\[
di \text{ gundan de}
\]

in the villages

the word \text{gundan} is oblique plural governed by the circumposition \text{di ... de} ‘in.’ In the construct phrase

\[
gund\text{ên kurdan}
\]

the villages of the Kurds

\text{gundên} is in the construct plural followed by \text{kurdan} in the oblique plural as second member of the construct. When such a construct phrase is the complement of a preposition, \text{gundên} remains in the construct case, i.e.

\[
di (\text{gundên kurdan}) \text{ de}
\]

in the villages of the Kurds

and the string can be extended as follows:

\[
di (\text{gundên kurdên Kurdistana Tirkiyeyê}) \text{ de}
\]

in the villages of the Kurds of Turkey’s Kurdistan

Other examples of construct strings are as follows:

\[
\text{kitêbên kurê wî mirovî}
\]

that man’s son’s books

\[
\text{kitêbên keça mirov}
\]

the man’s daughter’s books

\[
\text{behsa girîngiya wê rojê}
\]

discussion of the importance of that day

\textbf{§ 4.1. The Adjectival Construct.} Attributive adjectives follow the nouns they modify. Nouns so modified by adjectives are in the construct case, but adjectives are indeclinable and show no case.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kürtçe</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mirovê mezin</td>
<td>the big man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mirovekî mezin</td>
<td>a big man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mirovên mezin</td>
<td>the big men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitêba nû</td>
<td>the new book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitêbeke nû</td>
<td>a new book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitêbên nû</td>
<td>the new books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xaniyê biçûk</td>
<td>the little house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xaniyekî biçûk</td>
<td>a little house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xaniyên biçûk</td>
<td>the little houses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**

- **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**

- **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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kürtçe</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mirovê di xanî de</td>
<td>the man in the house (vs. the man outside the house)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ev pirtûka di destê we de</td>
<td>this book in your hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di hevpeyvînêke bi wî mirovî re</td>
<td>in a conversation with that man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rojnameyêke bi kurdî</td>
<td>a newspaper in Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şagirtê li tenîsta min</td>
<td>the student next to me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a series coordinated by the conjunction û, only the last noun shows the construct ending.

gelek serok û birêvebirên partiyên sîyasî — many heads and leaders of political parties

şexsîyet û rewşenbirên 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBSTANTIVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masc. sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yê</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Cembîrîyeta Kurdî ya Mehabadê — The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad

navêd yên vê ekolê — 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.’
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zimanekî min yê taybetî     a special language of mine
diroka Kurdistanê ya nêzik  the recent history of Kurdistan
xebatû fedekariyên xwe yên şexslî his own personal struggles and sacrifices

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

helbestvanê Ferensî yê ji sedsala nozdehan the French poet of the nineteenth century
rojnameyêke rojane ya bi kurdî a daily newspaper in Kurdish
darbeyêke mezin ya ekonomîk a great economic blow
keçû jînê Wrupî yên porzer û çav şin 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.

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

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

niviskarekî dîn î zirek another clever writer
şaîrekî kurd î bijarte a recognized Kurdish poet
bi wî dengê xwe î bilind in that loud voice of his

SUBSTANTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MASCULINE ABSOLUTE/DEFINITE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM.</td>
<td>– mirov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSTR.</td>
<td>-ê mirovê</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBL.</td>
<td>– mirov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMONS. OBL.</td>
<td>-î wî mirovî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MASCULINE INDEFINITE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM.</td>
<td>-ek mirovek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONST.</td>
<td>-ekî mirovekî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBL.</td>
<td>-ekî miroven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMININE ABSOLUTE/DEFINITE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM.</td>
<td>– jin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSTR.</td>
<td>-a jina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBL.</td>
<td>-ê jinê</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMONS. OBL.</td>
<td>-ê wê jinê</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMININE INDEFINITE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM.</td>
<td>-ek jinek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONST.</td>
<td>-eke jineke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBL.</td>
<td>-ekê jineken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The syntactical hierarchy of noun forms is: (1) the coordinating conjunction û, which supersedes all case endings; (2) the construct; (3) the oblique. That is, the oblique case is superseded by the construct, so a noun that should syntactically be in the oblique case but which is also the first member of a construct is in the construct case rather than the oblique. In turn, both the construct and the oblique cases are superseded by the coordinating conjunction, so only the last noun in a coordinated series in either case shows its case ending.

ji heval û hogirên (const.) wî mirovê from that man’s friends and companions

ji heval û hogiran (obl.) from friends and companions
§ 7. Personal Pronouns. The personal pronouns in the nominative and oblique cases are as follows. There are no enclitic pronouns in Kurmanji.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOM.</td>
<td>OBL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez</td>
<td>min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu</td>
<td>te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew</td>
<td>wî (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wê (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ev</td>
<td>vî (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vê (f)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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’m a Kurd.
- Ew wî mirovî dibîne. He sees that man.
- Em rûniştin. We sat down.

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

- Min tu dibî. I saw you.
- Wi em dibîn. He saw us.

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

- kitêba min, kitêbên min my book, my books
- kitêbeke min a book of mine

---

1 In some dialects hun is hûn.
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kitêbeke nû ya min  a new book of mine
xaniyê me  our house

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

Tu min dibînî?  Do you see me?
Ez te dibînim.  I see you.
Ew me dibîne.  He sees us.
Em nîkarin wan bibînin.  We cannot see them.

(3) complements of prepositions and circumpositions

ji min  from me
ji wî  from him
ji wê  from her
bi wan re  with them

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

Te ez dîtim.  You saw me.
Min ew dîtim.  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,’ ‘our-selves,’ ‘your-selves,’ 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  A bitch used to appear on my route with
min xuya dibûn.  her two pups.
I look around myself.

Ferzende was wounded in his thigh.

With past transitive verbs (see §18.2), xwe takes its person and number from the logical subject (= agent).

I would have returned to Damascus; I would have seen my friends there.

You forgot yourself, and you remembered the river of your town.

§ 8. Prepositions, Postpositions, Circumpositions. Certain prepositions, particularly bi, di, 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 di … de ‘in’ vs. di … 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
- ber in front of, toward
- bêî (bêyi, bêy) without
- berî before
- bi with, by means of (see below)
- bi … re with, along with
- bi tenê except for
- bi xêra due to, thanks to
- derveyî outside of
- di … de in
- di … re by, via, with
- di … ve through
- di bareya … de about, concerning digel with
- di nav … de among, amidst, inside of
- di navbera … de between
- hêta until, as far as
- ji from, of (partitive)
- ji … re to, for, with
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.

Pêlên bayê hênik bi şermdarî derbasî hundirê oda te dibûn. Waves of cool breeze were passing modestly into your room.

And truly you went out of the house like a bullet shot from the barrel of a rifle.

yek ji şair û nivîskarên herî bi quwet one of the most powerful poets and writers

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

Gelo mirov kane ji {berhemên ku bi zimanên din têne nivîsandin} re bibê-je berhemên kurdî an ji edebiyata kurdî? I wonder if one can speak of works that are written in other languages as Kurdishish works or Kurdish literature.

Ew ê bixwaze bi {yekî ku nêrîna wî nêzikî nêrîna wê ye} re bizewice. He would like to get married to someone whose outlook is close to his own.

§ 8.1. Contracted Prepositions. Four prepositions have contracted forms
with third-person singular complements:

- **bî + wî/wê > pê**
- **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, hogîr û şagîrtê wî bû û pê re dimeşiya... The person who was his friend, companion, and pupil and who walked with him...

Mêrik odaya mín û nîvinê ku eze tê de razêm, nîşanî mín da. The man showed me my room and the bed in which I would be sleeping.

Mizgînî digihiye Emîn Ali Bedir-Xan, ku jê re lawîkek cêقبîye. The news reaches Emin Ali Bedir-Khan that a son has been born to him.

Mela lê nêrî û got... The mulla looked at him and said...

Te lê vegerand. You replied to him.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Kurmanji</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>yeğû</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>diîde</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>seksê</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>çarîdeh</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>pêncê</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>şeşê</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>heftêdeh</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>heştêdeh</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>nehê</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>dehêbe</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ya(ñ)zdeh</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>dwanzdeh</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>şezdeh</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>çardeh</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>pânzdeh</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>şânzdeh</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **17** hivdeh
- **18** hîjdeh
- **19** nozdeh
- **20** bîstû
- **21** bîst û yekû
- **22** bîst û du
- **23** bîst û sê, &c.
- **30** sî (sih)
- **40** çil
- **50** pêncêi
- **60** şeşê
- **70** heftê
du
- **80** heştê
du
- **90** nehê
- **100** dehê
- **102** sed û du, &c.
- **200** dused
- **300** sêsê
- **400** çarsê
- **500** pêncêseh
- **600** şeşêseh
- **700** heftêseh
- **800** heštêseh
- **900** nehêseh
- **1,000** (yeğû) hezar
- **2,000** du hezar
- **3,000** sê hezar
- **4,000** çar hezar
- **5,000** pênj hezar
- **6,000** şeş hezar
- **7,000** heft hezar
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 yekâ han wî bêhêvi nake._ But that one (thing just mentioned) does not make him despair.

Ev yekâ 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 Hawar.

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 hește 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

**Di navbera 1968–70'yî de**

**Oidupusa Sofokles bi ké**

**sali hatiye nivisandin.**

between 1968 and 1970

Sophocles’ Oedipus was written at least 2450 years ago.

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.

**Apê min ü du kes çun nava şikeftê.**
My uncle and the two men went inside the cave.

**Piştê du rojên din**
after two more days

**Her du cavên wê sor, wek du pizotên ečir bûn.**
Its two eyes were red, like two brands of fire.

**Sê hefte ü çar roj mabûn.**
Three weeks and four days remained.

**Piştî şeş meh ü 14 (çardeh) rojan**
after six months and fourteen days

Temporal expressions of duration of time (“for X amount of time”) and instance (“X number of times”) are in the oblique case.

**Sê roj ü sê şevan di wî cihû da ma.**
He stayed in that place for three days and three nights.

**Ex heşt caran haṭim girtin.**
I was arrested eight times.

**Pênc, heşt, deh caran ew laî bilind dibûn berî ku giranbûna wan wan bikişûne binê golê.**
Five, eight, ten times those stones skipped before their weight pulled them to the bottom of the lake.

§ 9.1. Ordinal Numbers. With the exception of ‘1st,’ ordinal numbers are
formed from the cardinal numbers plus the suffix -(y)an, as in the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardinal Numbers</th>
<th>Ordinals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>ewel(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>diduyan, duduyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>sisiyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>çaran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>pêncan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>şeşan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>heftan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>heştan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>nehan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>dehan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>yanzdehan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>dwanzdehan &amp;c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ordinals are construed as normal adjectives.

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

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

**Roja sisiyan laşê kurê xwe da piştâ 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, iê dirêj ne kir, dema dengê segekî bû yê duduyan û sisiyan 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 -emin, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardinal Numbers</th>
<th>Ordinals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>yekelem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>duyem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>sêyem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>çarem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>pêcem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>şeşem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>heftem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>heştem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>nehem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>dehem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>yanzdehem(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>dwanzdehem(in) &amp;c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These ordinals tend to be used in set phrases like şerê cihanê yê yekelemîn ‘the First World War’ and cara ye kem ‘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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Janviye/Januar</th>
<th>Fevriye</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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:

- çileya paşîn (آکونو الثانی) January
- ab (آب) August
- sibat (شپاک) February
- eylül (اپول) September
- adar (ادار) March
- çiriya paşîn (تشرین الثانی) October
- nîsan (پسان) April
- çiriya paşîn (تشرین الثانی) November
- hezîran (خیران) June
- çileya paşîn (آکونو الثانی) December

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

- reşeme (روشم) February
- tîrmeh (تیرم) July
- avdar (آودار) March
- gelawêj (گلواج) August
- gulan (گولان) May
- ilon (یلون) September

Dates are written and read as follows:

- 31'ê adara 1947'an de si û yekê adara hezar û nehsed û çil û heftan (March 31, 1947)
- di 26'ê nîsana 1893'an de di û û şeşê nîsana hezar û heştsed û nod û sisiyan de (on the 26th of April 1893)
- di 25.07.1974'an de di û û û chê û heft û çaran de (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.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>şem(b)</th>
<th>çarşem(b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yekşem(b)</td>
<td>pêncşem(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>düşem(b)</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sêşem(b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Saet iç ye?  What time is it?
Saet deh e.  It’s ten o’clock.
Saet nêzêki dudiyê pişti nîvroje (nîro) bû.  It was nearly two o’clock in the afternoon.
Saet sisê sihehe/şêve  three o’clock in the morning/at night

§ 10. Comparative and Superlative Adjectives. The comparative degree of the adjective is made by suffixing -tir. There are only a few irregularly formed comparatives, viz. pûr ‘much’ > bêthir ‘more,’ baş ‘good’ > çêthir ‘better,’ and mezin ‘big’ > meziþir (as well as the regularly formed meziþ-tir) ‘bigger, older.’ Adjectives ending in t drop the t before the addition of -tir (pêwist > pêwiþîr, not *pêwisttir, and xurt > xurtîr, not *xurttir). The preposition of comparison is ji, as in the following examples.

Min ji her tiþti bêthir ji wan hez dikir.  I liked them more than anything.
Hin ji wan, bi balefiran, ya ji bi gemiyên meziþ diþûbû.  Some of them had gone further in planes or large ships.
Ew pêwist î ku nîvîskarên me li ser jiyanu gundi î axtay biaxîvin, ê pêwistîr î ku ew ji bir nekin ku kurd li şehran ji dijîn.  It is important that our writers speak of the life of villagers and lords, but it is more important that they not forget that Kurds live in cities too.
Ez tênê şes salan ji û meziþîr im.  I’m only six years older than you.
Erebiya min ji kurdî û turkiya min çêthir bû û çêthir e ji.  My Arabic was and still is better than my Kurdish and Turkish.
Tu her roj xurtîr dibû.  You get stronger every day.
More than’ followed by a number is expressed by bètirî (or pirtrirî) + the number:

Hûn bètirî pêncî mitrî dî binê zêmîna You were more than fifty meters beneath the ground of Paris.
Parîsê de bûn.

Pirtrirî dused û pêncî kuşî ji leşkerên tîrkan 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.”

Xurşid dwelmenêtîrê gund bû. Khurshid was the richest (person) in the village.

Wi li kurê xwe dinêrî û xwe bextyartîrê 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 -tirîn to the adjective, and such superlatives precede the nouns they modify:

Mezîntîrîn nav ku bî ziman û edebîyata kurdî yá klasîk re büye 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 -tir would be awkward or impossible, are signaled by herî.

Ew yeq ji şair ü niviskarên herî bi quwet ê mekteba “Hawar”ê bû. He was one of the most powerful poets and writers of the Hawar school.

Nêçirvanêk herî dilêr ji newîrî bû bi roj di nav re derbas bibûya. Even a really intrepid hunter would not have dared to pass through in the daytime.
The Republic of Mahabad is one of the most important events in the recent history of Kurdistan.

Kurdistan is the most backward part of Turkey; Mardin is the most backward city in Turkey; Nusaybin is the most wretched district of Mardin; Stilil is the most destitute part of Nusaybin; Ziving is the most backward village in Stilil. According to my identity card, I was born in cave number two of this village.
§ 11. Present Copulas. The present-tense copulas (‘am, is, are’) are enclitics, i.e. unstressed, but they are usually written as separate words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSTCONSONANTAL</th>
<th>POSTVOCALIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>im</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>ye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of post consonantal copulas:
- ez kurd im ‘I am Kurdish’
- tu kurd i ‘you are Kurdish’
- ew kurd e ‘s/he is Kurdish’

Examples of post vocalic copulas:
- ez bi wî re me ‘I’m with him’
- tu bi wî re yi ‘you’re with him’
- ew bi wî re ye ‘s/he’s 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’
- tu ne kurd i ‘you aren’t Kurdish’
- ew ne kurd e ‘s/he isn’t Kurdish’

Other examples are as follows:
- Tu xwendekár i. You are a student.
- Tu xwendekárekî baş i. You are a good student.
- Tu né xwendekárekî baş i. You are not a good student.
- Bás e. It is good.
**THE VERB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Né bás e.</th>
<th>It is not good.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ev xaniyek e.</td>
<td>This is a house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ev xani´ ne.</td>
<td>These are houses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ev né xaniyek e.</td>
<td>This is not a house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ez ne ji eşıra we me, ez ne çlyayî ù ne ji destî me; ez bajaran me. Lé beriya hertîşî, ez ji merivek im.**  
*I am not from your tribe; I am not a mountaineer or from the plains either; I am an urbanite, but before anything else I am 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.

| Ez yek ji wan nivîskara me. | I am one of those writers.         |
| Ez ji yek ji wan kurda me ku … | I too am one of those Kurds who … |
| Ez bi xwe yek ji wan kesa me ku … | 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESENT</th>
<th>PAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez héme</td>
<td>em héne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu héyî</td>
<td>hun héne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew héye</td>
<td>ew héne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**Gotineke peşiyên me heye.**  
*There is a saying of our ancestors.*

**Ger xwendevanênd kurdî tunebûn sedemê wê hene.**  
*If there are no readers of Kurdish, there are reasons for it.*

**Pîr kes li dora min hebûn ku ji şîr an hez dikir ü şîr dinivîsandîn.**  
*There were many people around me who enjoyed poetry and wrote poems.*

**Dî çavên wi da ronahîyêce dijwar hebû.**  
*There was a hard light in his eyes.*

The negative of *heye* is *tune* ‘there is not any…, there is no…,’ and the
negative of hebû is tunebû ‘there was not any…, there was no…’

Madem ku zîmannîvis tune, ev dewlet-çêkirin çi ye? As long as there are no writers, what’s the use of creating this state?

Di vi warî da otorîteyeke resmî tune. In this regard there is no official authority.

Divabû ku ew kêzik wê şevê bihaça kuştîn an na xew li mîn 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.
Cîhekî bajarê Mehbadê yê taybetî di dilê me de heye. The city of Mahabad has a special place in our hearts.

§ 13. The Infinitive. Kurdish infinitives end in -în, -în, -an, or -ûn, are stressed on the final syllable (diştîn ‘to see,’ mesîyán ‘to walk,’ tirîn ‘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.

Axaftîn, xwendîn û nîvîşîna bi zîmanê zîkmakî, ji her mirovi re pêwîşîyek e. To speak, to read, and to write in one’s native language is a requirement for every person.

piştî weşandîna kovara xwe bi salekê û piştî avakîrina Çumhûriyeta Türkîyê bi deh salan a year after publishing his journal and ten years after the founding of the Republic of Turkey

An unmodified direct object of an infinitive precedes the infinitive and forms a generic compound with it. Thus, qehwe vexwarîn ‘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 kurdi ‘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 kurdi jî bixwînim. I want to read my newspaper in Kurdish every morning while drinking my coffee.

Bi çûyîna min ya hotêlê didê 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 weletên Rohelat cîl sal xehat divêt ji bo çêkirina şerbîke kî 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.

33
CONSONANT STEMS

VOWEL STEMS

-îm  -în  -îm  -în
-î  -în  -îyî  -în
-e  -în

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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kurmanji</th>
<th>Kurdish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez dícim</td>
<td>em dícin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu dícî</td>
<td>hun dícin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew dîçe</td>
<td>ew dícin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez díçim</td>
<td>em díçin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu díçî</td>
<td>hun díçin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew dîçe</td>
<td>ew díçin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kurmanji</th>
<th>Kurdish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez nácim</td>
<td>em nácin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu nácî</td>
<td>hun nácin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew náçê</td>
<td>ew nácin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez náçim</td>
<td>em náçin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu nácî</td>
<td>hun nácin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew náçê</td>
<td>ew nácin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HATÎN</th>
<th>ANÎN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez têm</td>
<td>em tên</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu teyî</td>
<td>hun tên</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew tê</td>
<td>ew têne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez nayêm</td>
<td>em nayên</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu nayeyî</td>
<td>hun nayên</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew nayê</td>
<td>ew nayne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZANÎN</th>
<th>KARÎN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez nizanim</td>
<td>ez nikarîm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu nizanî</td>
<td>tu nikarî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew nizane</td>
<td>ew nikare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

Ez naçim doktor. Ez derman venaxwim. Derziyê jî naxwazim. I’m not going to the doctor. I’m not taking medicine. I don’t want stiches either.

Xelkên Mehabadê wê roja han mîna karnevalekê piroz dikin, dehol û zur- nevanên bajêr lêdixin, Mehabadî jî bi destên hev digirin û direqisin. The people of Mahabad celebrate that day like a carnival, they play the city drums and clarions, and Mahabadis join hands and dance.

Du jinên gundî nêzîktir dibin, heta ber derê lojmanê tên, Mamoste Kevanot çav li wan dikeve û bi matmayîn dibêje… Two village women get closer. They come up to the door of the lodging. Master Kevanot looks at them and says with astonishment…

§ 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.
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‘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 alikari 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.

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

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 alikari 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 ji alikariya Kovara Enstituya kurdî ya Parisê dike. He also helps out on the journal of the Paris Kurdish Institute.
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 yên 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 bí-. Unlike the di prefix, bí 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 bíçim | em bíçin | ez biaxivim | em biaxivin |
| tu bíçî | hun bíçin | tu biaxivî | hun biaxivin |
| ew bíçe | ew bíçin | ew biaxive | ew biaxivin |

In compound verbs, the bí- 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 bí- prefix is omitted, the absence of a modal prefix identifies the verb as subjunctive, as in ve-xwarin (ve-xw-) ‘to drink’ and hildan (hil-d-) ‘to lift’:

| ez vêxwim | em vêxwin | ez hîldim | em hîldin |
| tu vêxwî | hun vêxwin | tu hîldî | hun hîldin |
| ew vêxwe | ew vêxwin | ew hîlde | ew hîldin |

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘BE’</th>
<th>‘BECOME’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez bîm</td>
<td>em bîn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṭu bî</td>
<td>hun bîn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew be</td>
<td>ew bîn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

| ez nébîm | em nébin |
| ṭu 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WER- STEM</th>
<th>YÊ- STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez werim</td>
<td>em werin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṭu werî</td>
<td>hun werin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew were</td>
<td>ew werin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

| ez néwerim | em néwerin |
| ṭu néwerî | hun néwerin |
| ew néwere | ew néwerin |

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

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

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Ç- STEM} & & \text{HER- STEM} \\
\text{ez biçin} & \text{em biçin} & \text{ez herim} & \text{em herin} \\
\text{tu biçi} & \text{hun biçin} & \text{tu heri} & \text{hun herin} \\
\text{ew biçe} & \text{ew biçin} & \text{ew here} & \text{ew herin} \\
\end{array}
\]

Negatives are predictably formed:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{ez necim} & \text{em necin} & \text{ez nêherim} & \text{em nêherin} \\
\text{tu neci} & \text{hun necin} & \text{tu nêheri} & \text{hun nêherin} \\
\text{ew necê} & \text{ew necin} & \text{ew nêhere} & \text{ew nêherin} \\
\end{array}
\]

§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?
- İcar em çi bikin? 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 ku … First let me say that …
- Ew derî veçe. Let him open the door.
- Em herin! Let’s go!
- Bi siyasetê bila ew mijûl bikin. 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 tu Kurmançî biaxivi. It’s necessary that you speak Kurmanji.
I don't want to say anything in this regard.

Can you speak a bit about yourself and your life?

We are Kurds, and Kurds ought to speak, read, and write in their own language before all other languages.

Before anything else, it is necessary for me to indicate what I understand by the concept of an “Islamic journal.”

It is necessary that journals not fetter themselves.

Many times he had decided not to smoke cigarettes any more on an empty stomach.

The doctor must show us a way and write a [prescription for a] remedy.

We are Kurds, and Kurds ought to speak, read, and write in their own language before all other languages.

Before anything else, it is necessary for me to indicate what I understand by the concept of an “Islamic journal.”

It is necessary that journals not fetter themselves.

Many times he had decided not to smoke cigarettes any more on an empty stomach.

The doctor must show us a way and write a [prescription for a] remedy.

(4) after a number of conjunctions like berî ku ‘before’ (which is usually followed by the subjunctive), čaxê ku ‘when’ (which is followed by the subjunctive when it refers to the future), and mîna ku ‘as though.’ See §30.

Before I went outside the country, I had not heard Sorani.

When I get the opportunity, I will work day and night for Kurdish language and literature.

As though there was some unpleasantness between them before…

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

If this is true, …

If they unite, they can do anything.
THE VERB

(6) in all purpose clauses, usually introduced by 

Ez diçim xwendegehê ji bo ku ez bixwînim. I go to school in order to study.

Ez dixwînim ji bo ku bibim mamoste. I’m studying in order to become a teacher.

Ji bo ku tu ji nexwesîyê bîfîlîti, divê doktor li te binêre û bi nexwesîya te bizanîbe. 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.

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

Gelê me, gotin û kelîmeyên ku dizane ji ne amede ye ku ji sembol û herfan bixwîne. Our society is not ready to read 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 dest-pêkê de ê heţa demeke dürêj, ë pergî zehmetiyên mezin were. Anybody who writes in Kurdish will encounter major difficulties at the beginning and for a long time.

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

Tiştêk ne diha xuya kirin ku mirov bibêjê ev ë bikarihe bibe sedema ewte ewte kuçîkên gund. Nothing could be made out that one might say it could be the reason for the barking of the dogs of the village.

Salên min ne ewqas zêde ne ku ez bibêjim, ez pir jiyame û min gelek dîtye. My years are not so many that I could say I have lived a lot and seen much.

But 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 bestîyar dibînim ku mamoste-tiya gundeki weha bûye para min. I count myself lucky that a teaching job in such a village has been my lot.
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 derketî.
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:

cê (ez dê) biçîm emê (em dê) biçîn cê (ez dê) neçîm emê (em dê) neçîn
tê (tu dê) biçî hunê (hun dê) biçîn tê (tu dê) neçî hunê (hun dê) neçîn
ewê (ew dê) biçê ewê (ew dê) biçîn ewê (ew dê) neçê ewê (ew dê) neçîn

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 (وێ wê) of the verb وئست wîstin ‘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 mijîl 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.
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 subjective. A full inflection of the present tense of ‘to want to go’ is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez dixwazim biçim</td>
<td>em dixwazin biçin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu dixwazi biçi</td>
<td>hun dixwazin biçin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew dixwaze biçe</td>
<td>ew dixwazin biçin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 direj biçim.  
I don’t want to prolong this discussion.

Ew dixwaze ji avakirina Cumhûriyetê re bile piştîgir û afîkar.  
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’:
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ez dikarîm biçin  em dikarîn biçin  ez nikarîm biçin  em nikarîn biçin
tu dikarî biçî  hun dikarîn biçî  tu nikarî biçî  hun nikarîn biçî
ev dikare biçî  ev dikarîn biçî  ev nikare biçî  ev nikarîn biçî

Hevalê héja, tu karî xwe bi me bîdi nasandin?
Dear friend, can you introduce yourself to us?

Tu dikarî, ji kerema xwe re, hînekî behsa xwe û jîyana xwe bîki?
Can you please talk a bit about yourself and your life?

Meriv nikare di hengamekê de li çendid 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- bibe bíbin
-bûn ‘become’ -b- -be -bin
cûn ç- biçe bícin
gîrtin gîr- bígré bígirîn
hîldan hîl-d- hîlde hîldîn
kîrîn k- bîke bîkin
rûnîstîn rû-nê- rûnê rûnên
sûstîn şo- bîso bîson
vekîrîn ve-k- véke vékin

Hatin and çûn form imperatives on their second present stems, wer- and
The negative imperative prefix is né-.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Né-</th>
<th>Nébin</th>
<th>Néchin</th>
<th>Négire</th>
<th>Négirin</th>
<th>Hilméde</th>
<th>Hilmédin</th>
<th>Néke</th>
<th>Nékin</th>
<th>Néso</th>
<th>Néson</th>
<th>Venéke</th>
<th>Venékin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bûn</td>
<td>b-</td>
<td>nébe</td>
<td>nébin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>çûn</td>
<td>ç-</td>
<td>néce</td>
<td>nècin</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>gîrtin</td>
<td>gîr-</td>
<td>négire</td>
<td>négirin</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hilîtan</td>
<td>hil-d-</td>
<td>hilméde</td>
<td>hilmédin</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kîrin</td>
<td>k-</td>
<td>nèke</td>
<td>nèkin</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rûnîştin</td>
<td>rû-nê-</td>
<td>rûnênê</td>
<td>rûnênên</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şustin</td>
<td>şo-</td>
<td>nèso</td>
<td>nèson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veqîrin</td>
<td>ve-k-</td>
<td>venêke</td>
<td>venékin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASC. SING.</th>
<th>FEM. SING.</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ô</td>
<td>-ê</td>
<td>-ên/-no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hiş be, kûro!** Be quiet, boy!
**Were, kêçê!** Come here, girl!
**Kûrkerên, yekgîrin!** 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFTER CONSONANTS</th>
<th>AFTER VOWELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Examples of the simple past inflection are from hatin ‘to come,’ bun ‘to be,’ tirsin ‘to fear,’ and man ‘to remain.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HATIN</th>
<th>BÜN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez hatim</td>
<td>em hatin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu hati</td>
<td>hun hatin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew hat</td>
<td>ew hatin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIRSI^K</th>
<th>MAN</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez tirsîm</td>
<td>em tirsîn</td>
<td>ez mam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu tirsîyî</td>
<td>hun tirsân</td>
<td>tu mayî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew tîrsî</td>
<td>ew tîrsîn</td>
<td>ew ma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The negative is formed by prefixing nê-:

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez néhatim</td>
<td>em néhatin</td>
<td>ez nébûm</td>
<td>em nébûn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu néhatî</td>
<td>hun néhatin</td>
<td>tu nébûyî</td>
<td>hun nébûn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew néhat</td>
<td>ew néhatin</td>
<td>ew nébû</td>
<td>ew nébûn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez nétirsîm</td>
<td>em nétirsîn</td>
<td>ez némam</td>
<td>em némân</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu nétirsîyi</td>
<td>hun nétirsîn</td>
<td>tu némayî</td>
<td>hun némân</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew nétîrsî</td>
<td>ew nétîrsîn</td>
<td>ew nêma</td>
<td>ew nêman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Tu bi pelikan çûyî jor. You went down the stairs.

Demekê ji midûrê dibistanê bûm. For a time I was a school principal.

Hemû man bêdeng. They all remained 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
present, as in the following:

Kaset û cd derket li hemû mûzik marketan.  
The cassette and CD *have come* to (are available in) all music stores.

Konferansa Tevgera Jinên Azad bi dawî bû.  
The conference of the Liberated Women’s Movement *has ended*.

Li başûrê Kurdistanê di 10 salên dawî de 2733 kes mirin, 4913 kes ji birîndar bûn.  
2,733 people *have died* and 4,913 people *have been wounded* over the last ten years in the south of Kurdistan.

A distinction between the two meanings of the verb bèn, ‘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 bèn.  
He was a talented and worthy officer.

Ew bèn 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple Past</th>
<th>Past Habitual</th>
<th>Past Progressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez dîhaṭin</td>
<td>em dîhaṭin</td>
<td>ez dîçûm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tû dîhaṭî</td>
<td>hun dîhaṭin</td>
<td>tû dîçûyî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew dîhaṭ</td>
<td>ew dîhaṭin</td>
<td>ew dîçû</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gava dîçûm dibîstanê û vedigeriyam, délike teva du cewrên xwe li ser riya min xuya dîbûn 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 tîrêk wêk pelkên daran di ser piştâ hespan de dîhaṭîn 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-):
I remember well that sleep used not to come to my eyes until my mother had told me a story. 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGENT OBL. CASE</th>
<th>PATIENT NOM. CASE</th>
<th>VERB AGREES WITH PATIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>min</td>
<td>ew</td>
<td>← dit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>saw-him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi</td>
<td>ez</td>
<td>← ditim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>saw-me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wê jinê</td>
<td>tu</td>
<td>← ditî</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that woman</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>saw-you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te</td>
<td>ew</td>
<td>← ditin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>saw-them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>min ew dît</td>
<td>I saw</td>
<td>me ew dît</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te ew dît</td>
<td>you saw</td>
<td>we ew dît</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi ew dît</td>
<td>he saw</td>
<td>wan ew dît</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STABLE AGENT; DIFFERENT PATIENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wi ez dîtim</td>
<td>he saw me</td>
<td>wi em dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi tu dîti</td>
<td>he saw you</td>
<td>wi hun dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi ew dîti</td>
<td>he saw him</td>
<td>wi ew dîtin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negatives are formed by prefixing né- to the affirmative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wi ez nedîtim</td>
<td>he didn’t see me</td>
<td>wi em nedîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi tu nedîti</td>
<td>he didn’t see you</td>
<td>wi hun nedîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi ew nedîti</td>
<td>he didn’t see him</td>
<td>wi ew nedîtin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>min ew didît</td>
<td>I used to see him</td>
<td>wi ez nedidîtim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, serweteke mezîn li dû xwe hîşê.

Alfred Nobel left behind a large fortune after his death.

Mêrîk bi kene kê ji di 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.

Jîneke kê çaya me anî. A woman brought our tea.

Wi mirovi çây anî. That man brought tea.

Gundiyân tîşêk 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 fi kûrû 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 ka xîz ji dest wî girt. She took the page from his hand.
Wê ka xîz 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 xîz.

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 kisandin ‘to attract attention,’ which can be extended as bala \ldots kisandin ‘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:

\begin{align*}
\text{Wî ji min re behsa serpêhatiyan xwe kirin.} & \quad \text{He discussed his adventures with me.} \\
\end{align*}

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

\begin{align*}
\text{Wêneyên min bala rojname û hunermendan kisandin.} & \quad \text{My pictures attracted the attention of newspapers and artists.} \\
\end{align*}

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

\begin{align*}
\text{Kemalistên têr fermana bî dardakirina Emîn Eli Bedîrzan û hersê kurên wî ji derxistîn.} & \quad \text{The Turkish Kemalists issued an order to hang Emin Ali Bedirkan and all three of his sons.} \\
\end{align*}

In this example the extended patient is fermana bî dardakirina Emîn Eli Bedîrzan û hersê kurên wî ‘an order to hang Emin Ali Bedirkan and all three of his sons,’ and the plural verb derxistîn agrees with the last element in the extended patient, hersê kurên wî ‘all three of his sons.’

\section*{§ 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”:

\begin{align*}
\min xwest (ku) ez bibêjîm & \quad \text{me xwest (ku) em bibêjîn} \\
\te xwest (ku) tu bibêjî & \quad \text{we xwest (ku) hun bibêjîn} \\
wî xwest (ku) ew bibêje & \quad \text{wan xwest (ku) ew bibêjîn} \\
\end{align*}
I wanted to get out of the village and walk by myself along the river.

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 goštîn ku… I said that… (not min goš̌î)

Min dîštîn ku… I saw that… (not min dîš̌î)

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.

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 -i, the past participle is identical to the past stem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSONANT STEMS</th>
<th>VOWEL STEMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>haštîn &gt; hat &gt; haštî ‘come’</td>
<td>man &gt; ma &gt; mayî ‘remained’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şustîn &gt; şust &gt; şustî ‘washed’</td>
<td>çûn &gt; çû &gt; çûyî ‘gone’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kirîn &gt; kir &gt; kirî ‘done’</td>
<td>kirîn &gt; kirî &gt; kirî ‘bought’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In meaning the past participle corresponds fairly closely to the English past participle: haštî ‘come,’ ve kirî ‘opened,’ şustî ‘washed’ as in

venî şustî washed clothes
welâtekî pêşkêti an advanced country
THE VERB

welatekip lipasmayi
a backward country
kitibeke capkiri
a published book

Negative participles are formed by prefixing ne-, as in

kitben neçapkiri
unpublished books
cilen nesusti
unwashed clothes
benen nesuyayi
unseen bonds
tištên 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEMS ENDING IN CONSONANTS</th>
<th>STEMS ENDING IN VOWELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ime</td>
<td>-ine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-iyê</td>
<td>-ine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-iyê</td>
<td>-iyê</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

ez hatime    em hatine    ez çûme    em çûne
ću hatiye    hun hatine    ću çûye    hun çûne
ew hatiye    ew hatine    ew çûye    ew çûne

The negative is formed by prefixing né-

ez nehatime    em nehatine    ez neçûme    em neçûne
ću nehatiye    hun nehatine    ću neçûye    hun neçûne
ew nehatiye    ew nehatine    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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIFFERENT AGENTS; 3rd-PERSON SINGULAR PATIENT</th>
<th>3rd-PERSON SINGULAR AGENT; DIFFERENT PATIENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>min ew dîtye</td>
<td>me ew dîtye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te ew dîtye</td>
<td>wi ez dîtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi ew dîtye</td>
<td>wi em dîtye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>min ew nedi'yiye</td>
<td>me ew nedi'yiye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te ew nedi'yiye</td>
<td>wi ez nedi'tine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi ew nedi'yiye</td>
<td>wi em nedi'tine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>min ew nedî'ye</td>
<td>me ew nedî'ye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te ew nedî'ye</td>
<td>wi ez nedî'tine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi ew nedî'ye</td>
<td>wi em nedî'tine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Min ëhta niha çar kitêb çap kirine.     Until now I have published four books.
Gelo ew ji wek min winda bûye.           I wonder if he too, like me, has become lost.

But the Kurdish present perfect is in all respects the exact equivalent of the Persian past narrative (hatime = مانده است, maye = آمدام). 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:

Wi tu caran tîşteki wilô negot.            “He never said any such thing.”
Wi tu caran tîşteki wilô negotiyê.         “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 gelekê bi şequdeq bihuriya. Tenê dê bi kurtî bibêjîm: Ez di Sibata 1953’an de, li Hedhedêkê hati-mê dinê. Pêşî, min xwendina ollê lêm bavê xwendiyê. Icar piştre ez derkêtime feqîtiyê u li hin medrese-yê 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 Hedhedîk. 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 iroj li her du hêlên xeta hesin bî cîh 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 i in the stem to î (i.e. ez tersibûm ‘I had feared’ for ez tersîbûm). Examples of conjugation are from hatîn and çûn.

εz haṭîbûm em haṭîbûn εz çûbûm em çûbûn

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

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{tu hātibûyî} & \text{hun hātibûn} & \text{tu çûbûyî} & \text{hun çûbûn} \\
\text{ew hātibû} & \text{ew hātibûn} & \text{ew çûbû} & \text{ew çûbûn}
\end{array}
\]

The negative is formed by prefixing né- to the verb:

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{ez nehaṭibûm} & \text{em nehaṭibûn} & \text{ez neçûbûm} & \text{em neçûbûn} \\
\text{tu nehaṭibûyî} & \text{hun nehaṭibûn} & \text{tu neçûbûyî} & \text{hun neçûbûn} \\
\text{ew nehaṭibû} & \text{ew nehaṭibûn} & \text{ew neçûbû} & \text{ew neçûbûn}
\end{array}
\]

Tu caran neketibû bîra min ku ezê rojekê ji hîvé ji nêfret bikin. Never had it occurred to my mind that one day I would hate the moon.

Pîrraniya mirovên bajiê çûbûn havîna xwe li ber lêvên derî û dengizên başar derbas kin. Most of the people of the city had gone to spend their summers on the shores of the seas in the south.

Heta demek pir dirêj bi heval û dostên xwe re ji nepeyivibû. He hadn’t spoken to his friends and buddies 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-.

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
mîn dîtibû & \text{I had seen (it)} & \text{me dîtibû} \\
\text{te dîtibû} & \text{you had seen (it)} & \text{hun dîtibû} \\
\text{wî dîtibû} & \text{he had seen (it)} & \text{wan dîtibû} \\
\text{wî ez dîtibûm} & \text{he had seen me} & \text{wî em dîtibûn} \\
\text{wî tu dîtibûyî} & \text{he had seen you} & \text{wî hun dîtibûn} \\
\text{wî ew dîtibû} & \text{he had seen him} & \text{wî ew dîtibûn}
\end{array}
\]

Îngilîzan zimanê hindiyân qedexe nekîrîbûn.¹ The English had not banned the Indians’ language.

Wî pîrr caran bîyrar dabû ku… Many times he had decided that…

¹ For the reason for the plural verb, see §18.3.
On that day the heat of summer had made you dizzy.

Thinking that the man might resist the police and use something [as a weapon], a policeman had drawn 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.

When, during a conversation with Osman Sebri, I asked (not “had asked”) when he started writing, he said (not “had said”) that …

Where have you been till now? — I went to Ahmad’s house for a bit. From there we went to the society.

§ 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 nedî-. 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 (گفتی به دوم, sormuştum and گفتی به دوم, demişti) 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.
Çavên Nazê nedîkaribûn ëdî hêstiran paş ve veğerînîn. Nazê’s eyes couldn’t keep back the tears any longer.

Wî baş dizanibû ku wê rê şaş ne kirîye. He well knew that he hadn’t made a mistake.

A rastî me nîzanibû 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 ëdì nikaribûm li ser lingan rawestî-yama. I was still not able to get up on my legs.

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 çakêtê vala dûr bikî. You couldn’t take your eyes off the empty sleeve of the jacket.

Qederê mehekê min nikarîbû dora xwe bidîta. For a month I wasn’t able to see my surroundings.

§ 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 bi- subjunctive prefix (which may be omitted for stylistic reasons) or né- for the negative. As with all past tenses, the past subjunctive is nonergative with intransitives and ergative with transitives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>TRANSITIVE/ERGATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez bihaṭîbîm</td>
<td>em bihaṭîbin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu bihaṭîbî</td>
<td>hun bihaṭîbin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>te bidîtiîbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we bidîtiîbe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 barîbe.  
It must have rained.

Ger car caran di hin cihan de çirûskin pêketibin ji, 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 nebîhistibin pir kêm in.
Kurds who haven’t heard the names of Salih and Jeladet Ali Bedir-Khan are very few.

Herçiqas me berhemên van nivskaran baş nexwendibin ji …  
However much we haven’t read the works of these writers well…

Te išev či kiribe divê tu ji min re bibêjî.
Whatever you’ve done tonight, you have to tell me.

Kê bi či awayîi neraźbûna xwe ya li diji dewletê anîbe ziman, kê bi či awayîi li diji dewletê derketibê, kê bi či awayîi ji bo bidesxîstina mafên gelê kurd ŋeķosîn dabe, dewlet heṭa 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.’

\[
\text{wek peza ku go li serî kețibe} \quad \text{like a sheep on whose head a stick has landed}
\]

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

\begin{align*}
\text{Insan naxwazin ku kesên din bizanîbin} & \quad \text{People don’t want others to know that they read such things.} \\
\text{Em dixwazin bizanîbin.} & \quad \text{We want to know.} \\
\text{Ev girîng e ku mirov bizanibe \ldots} & \quad \text{It’s important that one know that…} \\
\text{Ez ne bawer îm ku tu kes bikaribe} & \quad \text{I don’t believe that anybody could say that the style of Kurdish language and literature is good.} \\
\text{bîbêje ku rewşa ziman û edebiyata} & \quad \text{There are few works belonging to other such ancient groups and nations that one could understand without the help of a dictionary.} \\
\text{kurdi baş e.} & \quad \text{In order that I be able to sleep, I was formulating a plan in my head how and by what means I would be able to kill that creature.}
\end{align*}

§ 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{zanîn} &: \quad \text{ezê bizanîbim} \quad \text{emê bizanîbin} \\
\text{karîn} &: \quad \text{ezê bikaribim} \quad \text{emê bikaribin}
\end{align*}
\]

\text{tê bizanîbî} \quad \text{hunê bizanîbin} \\
\text{tê bikarîbî} \quad \text{hunê bikaribin}

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THE VERB

ewê bizanîbe    ewê bizanibin    ewê bikarîbe    ewê bikarîbin

Êdî her kes wê bizanîbe ku karê me çiqas bi zehmetê e.

Now everybody would realize how difficult our work was.

Tiştêk ne dihat xuya kirin ku mirov bîbêje ev ê bikarîbe bîbe sedema ewte ewta kêçikên gund.

Nothing could be made out that one might say it could be 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 pişek wilî ji te bîke, tu ê navê kîjan romana xwe bide? —Mîxabin, ez ê nikarîbin bersîva vê bidim.

When someone asks you such a question, which novel of yours would you name? —Unfortunately I wouldn’t be able to give him an answer.

Ji bo ku ew bikarîbe alfabeya xwe di nava kurdan de belav bîke, ew biryara dersîstina kovarekê dide.

So that he could spread his alphabet among the Kurds he decided (hist. pres.) to bring out a journal.

Asûrî, ereh, ermen, ê farîs cûranên me ne ê yên heri kevin in, lê mixabin di bareya edebiyata wan de tiştêkî nizanim ku bikarîbin ya me ê yên wan bidim ber hev.

Assyrians, Arabs, Armenians, and Persians are our neighbors, and very anciantly so, but unfortunately I don’t know anything about their literatures that I could 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 bi- and adding the following endings to the past stem. In close compound verbs the bi- prefix may be omitted.
The past conditional of intransitives is intransitive and non-ergative; the past conditional of transitives is ergative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>ERGATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez bihaţama</td>
<td>em bihaţana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tû bihaţayî</td>
<td>hun bihaţana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew bihaţa</td>
<td>ew bihaţana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez nehaţama</td>
<td>em nehaţana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- ez bûma
- tû 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.

Even a really intrepid hunter would not have dared to pass through in the daytime.

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 nîkaribû barê giran hil-gîrtâ.
He wasn’t able to carry heavy loads any more like before.

Heta destpêka salên 1930’î jî, Celadet Ali Bedir-Xan nîkaribû nameyek bi kurdî binivîsanda.
Until the beginning of the 1930s Jeladet Ali Bedir-Khan couldn’t write a letter in Kurdish.

Her mileti di hundurê sînorên împere-toriyê de dîkaribû hunera xwe bî pêš bixîsta, edebiyata xwe biafîranda, bi zimanê xwe perwerdeya xwe bikîra.
Every nationality within the borders of the empire could advance its own art, create its own literature, and carry out its education in its own language.

(2) It is similarly used as the complement to the past tense of diviya or diva 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 nedixwast navê sultan bibîhîsê.
Mir Zoro did not want to hear the sultan’s name.

Dî vê dersê de her şagîrtekî diva bû li ser serpêhatîyek xwe bipêyîyiya yan jî çironek jî çiranên ku bibiştibû bigota.
In that class every student had to speak about an adventure or to tell a story he had heard.

Li gorî peymana İngiliz û Sovyetîyan û li gorî bîryara Yekîtîya Neteweyan, diviyabû Sovyet di demeke kurt de ji Îranê derketa.
In accordance with the Anglo-Soviet pact and in accordance with the decision of the League of Nations, the Soviets were supposed to withdraw 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 bí- for the affirmative or né- for the negative and suffixing -(y)a to the past perfect:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>ERGATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ez bîhatibûma</td>
<td>em bîhatibûna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>min bîdîtibûya</td>
<td>me bîdîtibûya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second past conditional is formed by prefixing the subjunctive bí- or né- and substituting ba- in place of bû in the past perfect.

### Transitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intransitive</th>
<th>Ergative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tu bihašibûya</td>
<td>hun bihašibûna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>āw bihašibûya</td>
<td>āw bihašibûna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez nehašibûma</td>
<td>em nehašibûna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu nehašibûya</td>
<td>hun nehašibûna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>āw nehašibûya</td>
<td>āw nehašibûna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 bîkarişibûya felsefa xwe pêk bine? 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 tirki nivîsandibûya, ma wê bîkarişibûya Mesnewî biafirine? 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 neçâbûma Dêrikê, min Girê Tûrcêl nedîtiba. If I hadn’t gone to Dêrik, I wouldn’t have seen Turjel Hill.
THE VERB

Ez bawer im ger ez ne kurd bûma ji, min ê disa li ser kurdan binivîsanda. I believe that, even if I weren’t a Kurd, I would have written about Kurds anyway.

Ger wîlî dom bikira ew ê şerpeze û dîn bibûya. If it had continued like that, he would have gone crazy.

Ger wî destê xwe ji siyasetê bikişanda, wî ê hewcedariya ku ew nameyekê dirêj ji Mustefa Kemal Atatürk re bişine, nedîta. If he had given up politics, he would not have considered it necessary to send a long letter to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

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

Ne ji Celadet Beg büya, me nîzanîbû ku zimanê kurdî zimanê nivîsandinê ye an na. Were it not for Jeladet Beg, we wouldn’t have known whether Kurdish was a language for writing or not.

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

Lêbelê lazîm bû ku me ji derekê ve destê bi vî kari bikira û me kir. On the other hand, it was necessary that we begin this labor somewhere, and so we did.

Rîskeke mezin hebû ku wan ez tewqif bikirama. There was a great risk that they would arrest me.

Diviyabû Sovyet di demeke kurt de ji Îranê derketa. The Soviet [Union] was supposed to have withdrawn from Iran in a short time.

Xelkê wê çaxê newêribûn xwe nêzîkê kesên sosyalist bikirana. 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.
You wanted there to be a blond-haired, white-skinned, well-built woman with you.

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.

In the initial months I wasn’t able to be helpful to him.

He could have become one of the most famous poets of his age.

One could call them anything but not …

There were no possibilities for me that I could return to Batman, Siirt, or even Diyarbekir and remain and live there.

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.

Others before me had put this business in their heads. Why shouldn’t I do it?

But he had made his decision: he would study.

---

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ez pê bawer bûm ku meriv ê bikaribûya, bi zimanê kurdi, romanek ava bikira.</th>
<th>I believed that one should be able to produce a novel in Kurdish.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ji rûniştevanên wê, mirov dê bigotaya Kurdistan e.</td>
<td>To judge by the inhabitants of it, one would say it was Kurdistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ew ê gelek nebaş bikûya.</td>
<td>It would have been very bad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

| Ax, xwezî wî zanibûya ez çiqasî bi vê peyvê dişiyam. | Oh, would that he had known how pained I was by those words. |
| Xwizîya wî satila Nazi ji bi xwe re ani ba tîjî 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 hatîn (conjugated in all persons, moods, and tenses) plus the infinitive. Examples of the passive are the following conjugations of hatîn dîtin ‘to be seen.’ For any other passive verb, simply substitute the infinitive for dîtin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESENT INDICATIVE</th>
<th>PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I am seen, &amp;c.’</td>
<td>‘that I be seen, &amp;c.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez têm dîtin</td>
<td>em têm dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu têyî dîtin</td>
<td>hun têm dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ew tê dîtin</td>
<td>ew têm dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUTURE</td>
<td>SIMPLE PAST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I will be seen, &amp;c.’</td>
<td>‘I was seen, &amp;c.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ezê bem dîtin</td>
<td>emê bên dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tê bêyî dîtin</td>
<td>hunê bên dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ewê bê dîtin</td>
<td>ewê bên dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESENT PERFECT</td>
<td>PAST PERFECT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I have been seen, &amp;c.’</td>
<td>‘I had been seen, &amp;c.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez hatime dîtin</td>
<td>em hatine dîtin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ez hatibûm dîtin</td>
<td>em hatibûn dîtin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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In the present and present subjunctive of hatîn, the third-person singular forms are sometimes tête and bêtê (cf. Sorani بَيَتَ betê) 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 hêvidar in ew ê ji di nêzik de bêtê çap kirin. We are hopeful it will soon be published.

Her ziman û edebiyat bi hin nav û kesan ve tête nasîn. Every language and literature is known by a few names and persons.

Ji xwe ez ji welatê xwe hatibûm dûr-xistin. I had been exiled from my country by my own self.

Bi salan bi vî navî ve hatîye naskirin. He has been known for years by this name.

Ew di nava kurdên her çar perçeyên welêt de tê naskirin û hezkirin. It is known and loved among Kurds of all four parts of the country.

lê carekê hatibû vêxistin û divabû ku were kîsandîn. but once it had been lit it would have to be smoked.

Gavên wî bi lez pêş ve dihatîn avètin. His steps were being taken quickly.
THE VERB

Sê rê hebûn; an ez dê bihatama girtin, di girtîçêhê de biriziyama, an ez ê ji aîlê MÎTê ve bihatma kuştin, an ji min ê welatê xwe terk bîkira. There were three alternatives: I would be caught there and thrown into prison, or I would be killed by the MIT, or I would leave my country.

Stranên ku heța niha nehatine goṭin, zimanê ku nehatiye vejandin, edebiyata ku nehatiye nîvisandin, klasîkên ku nehatine çapêrîn û belavêrîn, kultura ku nehatiye nasandin û gelek tîşîn din… Songs that haven’t been sung yet, a language that hasn’t been revived, literature that hasn’t been written, classics that haven’t been printed or published, a culture that hasn’t been recognized, 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 digîhîşîn wan welatan jî even those few copies that reached those countries

Ew ji welatê xwe dengbêj û stranbêjên He brings singers from his country to tîne Stenbolê. 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. hatîye ‘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 xîşxîşêkê 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 Teşkilâtı, National Intelligence Organization, the Turkish secret police.
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dition of -(y)ê to the verb.

Min gotê. I said to him/her.

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

§ 28. Factive 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-.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>PRES.STEM</th>
<th>FACTITIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mirin ‘to die’</td>
<td>mir- &gt;</td>
<td>mirandin mirîn- ‘to make die, kill’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şewîtan ‘to burn’</td>
<td>şewî- &gt;</td>
<td>şewîtanîn şewînîn- ‘to make burn, set fire to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tîrsîn ‘to be afraid’</td>
<td>tîr- &gt;</td>
<td>tîrsandin tîrsîn- ‘to scare’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mala wî şewîta. His house burned down.

Wan mala wî şewîtan. They burned his house down.

Ez pirr dîtîrsim. I’m very afraid.

Çi wan dîtîrsîne? What is scaring them?

Exceptional are the verbs nivîsin and nivîsandîn, both of which mean ‘to write’ without any apparent difference in meaning.

§ 28.1. The Periphrastic Factive 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 gundîyan bi eskeran didane zanîn. He used to communicate the villagers’ troubles and sorrows to the soldiers.

Gelo tu ê bikaribî xwe bîdî naskirin? I wonder if you could introduce yourself.
Ew di wir de dide xuya kirin, ku kurd ne tirk in.  

There he makes it clear that Kurds are not Turks.
§ 29. **Subordinate Clauses and Subordinating Conjunctions.** Subordinating conjunctions in Kurdish consist generally of prepositions + ku. A short list of common subordinating conjunctions follows:

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

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

- **Pasê ku** min piştîya wan dî, ez ji wan bi dûr ketim. 
  After I saw how bad they were, I avoided them.

- **Piştî ku** vi merovi çend goînên xwe peyîvî, şagîrî 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 bajari de bigire, ji piştî chîyan rojêke bêhawe xweş bilind dibe.
  Before a black cloud of mourning covers this city, an extraordinarily nice day breaks from behind the mountains.

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Before we start our lessons, I want to discuss something with you.

Before I answer this question of yours, let me say a little something about what you all have said.

Before I wound up outside the homeland, I hadn’t heard Sorani.

Before the soldiers looked in front of themselves, Ferzende attacked them.

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

*Gava* *kū* mirov ji derve li avahiya hotêlê dinîhêrî, hotel gelekî xweş û luks xuya di kir. *When one was looking at the hotel building from the outside, it looked very nice and deluxe.*

*Pirr nîvîskar, dema dixwazin li ser kurdan binivîsin, jîyana kurdî di pencerek teng de dibînîn.* *Many writers, when they want to write about Kurds, see Kurdish life through a narrow window.*

*Dema em dê bighêjin Evropa keçên porzer li Ferensa û li Swêdê wê li ser porê me din bibûn.* *When we get to Europe, blonde girls in France and Sweden will go crazy over our hair.*

*Dîbe ku anuha pir neyêše, lê wexta ku ėşiya, 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 *zânîn*, which use the past subjunctive form for the present subjunctive).

*Jî bo ku bê tîrs û fikarê bikarîbim razêm, min di serê xwe de pilana ku ezê cawan bikarîbîm wî benderûhî bikujim, çêdi kir.* *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.*
You have to go to town in order that you attend to school.

Commander İhsan Nuri, sent Ferzende with sixty cavalrmen among the tribes of the borders in order to find a hundred horses.

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.

As you may know…

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.

The higher the sun rises, the more the Mahabadis fall into activity.

As he approaches the school, the closer he comes, the more it becomes apparent that he is an old man of great age.

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…”).

The noise from the sky kept getting louder.

The world keeps getting smaller.
§ 30. Relative Clauses. Relative clauses in Kurdish are introduced by the relative pronoun ku (or the variant ko) ‘who, which, that.’ Unmodified antecedents of the relative are in the construct case (tistê ku ‘the thing that,’ sala ku ‘the year which,’ welateki ku ‘a country that,’ tistekê ku ‘a thing which,’ tistên ku ‘things that,’ gîrokên ku ‘stories which’). Modified antecedents have the construct extender (zimanê me yê ku ‘our language, which,’ dayka xwe ya ku ‘his mother, who,’ tistên dîn yên ku ‘other things which’). When relative clauses are embedded within the main clause, there is no distinction between restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses.

Min meqaleyên ku bi zimanê kurdî haştûne nivîsandin diţin. I saw articles that had been written in the Kurdish language.

Jî dengê zarokên ku li der û dor dîlistin pêşîr deng tunebû. There was no sound from the children who had been playing in the vicinity before.

Dîgel ku gelek salên dirêj di ser re derbas bûne, ew alfabe û rézîmana ku ji aliyê Celadet Bedir-Xan ve hatîye dânîn û di kovarên wi de hatîye bîkar-anîn, îro ji bersîva hewcedariya zimanê kurdî dide. Although many long years have passed, the alphabet and grammar that were established by Jeladet Bedir-Khan and were used in his journals satisfy the needs of the Kurdish language even today.

Ew wî zimanê ku li ber mirinê ye jîn-dar dike. He is revivifying this language, which is on the verge of dying.

When relative clauses follow the main clause they are introduced by yê ku, ya ku, and yên ku and are nonrestrictive.

Dengê segên gund Şerko disa hişyar kir, yê ku ji kêfesweisîyê hema hindîk mabû bîfire. The sound of the village dogs once again awoke Sherko, who was almost flying from happiness.

Li ser milek wî ji türek mezin hebû, yê ku di hindirê xwe de şekir û tistên dîn yên ku ji qaçaxciyên haştûne kirin, dihewandin. Over one of his shoulders there was a large sack, which contained sugar and other things that had been bought from smugglers.
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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”).

The thing of which Jeladet Bedir-Khan was afraid has happened to the Kurds of Turkey.

I wonder why you don’t go to that country, where you were born and which you like so much.

The fellow showed me my room and the bed in which 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.’

After the year 1972, when I went off to Europe...

After September 12, 1980, when 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.’

The one (fem.) who opened the door for me was her servant.

Today among our Kurds in Syria, those who write Kurdish in the Arabic alphabet are practically nil.

Those persons who want art and literature 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 nìvísibûn, I understood that the things I had written ne šir bûn.
were not poetry.

Te xwest bibi başêke, ew teyrê te pirî jê You wanted to become a falcon, that hez dikir. bird you liked so much.

§ 31. The Emphatic Ji. The Kurmanji enclitic jî, equivalent to the Sorani enclitic -iš, the Persian ـしましょう, 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 jî as a spoken underscore.

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

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

Di gelek waran de ew he jî mamostaïya 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 saët e ku ez li vir im. I’ve been here for two hours.
...zimanêkî mîna kurdi ku bi sedsalan ...a language like Kurdish, which has e nebyê zimanê nîvisandinê not been a language of writing for centuries

Ji kengê ve ye ku tu bi kurdi dinîbûn? Since when have you been writing in Kurdish?
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 welê. 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 têghişîme, ku welateki bê ziman ne tu welatê. 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

| **Wi his kir ku tenê ye.** | He felt he was alone. (i.e., at the time, he would have verbalized his feelings as “I am alone”) |
| **Ez têghiştîm ku zîmane-kî min yê taybetî heyê.** | I came to the realization that I had a special language. (i.e., what I said to myself at the moment of realization was, “I have a special language”) |
| **Min diîtîm ku mamoste ne té ye.** | I saw that the teacher was not there. (i.e., what I would have said to myself at that moment was, “The teacher is not here”) |
| **Em difîkîrîn ku ev roj ê neyê.** | We used to think that this day wouldn’t come. (i.e., what we used to think was, “That day will not come”) |
| **Mîna ku dizanibû wê polîs destê wî kelemeçê bikin, herdu destên xwe dirêjî polîs kirin.** | As though he knew the policemen were going to handcuff 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”) |
| **Min zanibû wê saetê ava germ peyda nabe.** | I realized that at that hour there was no hot water to be found. (i.e., at the time, I would have said to myself, “there is no hot water”) |

§ 34. **Questions with Ma.** The particle ma, which is the equivalent of the Persian مگر، 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 ê karîbîm careke din rûyê dînyê bibînim?** I won’t ever be able to see the face of the earth again, will I?
- **Ma ji bo me tu derên bê tehîle, 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 ji eynî tîşt nakin?** We do the same thing, don’t we?
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 disa got,_
—Erê, ma ne wilo ye?
—Na, ne wilo ye! mêrik bi hêrs got._

"When the husband remained silent, the wife said once again, “Yes, that’s how it is, isn’t it?”"

"No,” the husband said irritatedly, “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 girtî bûn û germa dijwar lașê te sist kirîbû, te gêj kirîbû. _Ma hisê 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 kî yî?_

Yes, it’s me, _but_ who are you?

_Min 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 saêt çand e?_

_I wonder what time it is._