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Dynamics of Ethnicity in Iraqi  
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# The Shabak and the Kakais: Dynamics of Ethnicity in Iraqi Kurdistan

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## **Abstract**

The Shabak and the Kakais are two of the many heterodox communities in Iraqi Kurdistan. They probably emerged as distinct ethnic groups around the 16th century, against the background of Ottoman-Safavid rivalries in the region. Recently, they have had an ambiguous position amidst the ethnic diversity of the region. Special attention is paid to the destructive policies of ethnic homogenization and assimilation carried out by the Iraqi government in the 1970s and 1980s. The paper concludes with some dialect samples, which show their vernaculars to be varieties of the Gorani or Hawrami dialects.

## *Introduction*

Very little is known as of yet about the small pockets of heterodox groups scattered along the fringes of Iraqi Kurdistan, stretching all the way from Tell 'Afar and Mosul over Kirkuk to Khanaqin and beyond. These communities, such as the Shabak, the Bajalan, the Sarli, the Kakais or Ahl-i Haqq, and the Yezidis all have a hereditary class of religious specialists of different ranks; the laymen are associated with such religious specialists, who thus have an important role in maintaining group cohesion. In this, these groups resemble orthodox Sufi orders or *tariqats*, but their religious beliefs and practices form a mixture of heterodox Islam and pre-Islamic elements. Except for the Yezidis, who speak Kurmanci or Badinani Kurdish, they are also marked off by their dialect: many (though by no means all) of their members speak a variety of Gorani, or Hawrami or Macho as it is usually called by locals. However, the local varieties in religious doctrine and dialect, and the relations between these groups, have hardly received the attention they deserve. The present paper deals with some of the characteristics of two of them: the Shabak and the Kakais. A third, the Sarli, will appear to constitute an interesting area of contact between these two. Little new ethnographic information will be presented here; the focus lies rather on some recent developments in their social structure (especially the dramatic influence of recent policies of the Iraqi government), and on the dialect varieties they speak. The new data I have been able to gather are still preliminary and limited in scope, but I believe that they may be of interest even in their present state. Nonetheless, it is to be hoped that these notes will be supplemented, if not rendered superfluous, by more detailed future investigations.

### *1. Historical background*

Much of the history of the groups under consideration remains unclear, as they largely developed outside the major centers of the Islamic world. It has repeatedly been attempted to trace the origins of the heterodox communities in present-day Eastern Turkey, Northern Iraq, and Western Iran back to pre-Islamic times, but their emergence as distinct ethnic groups should primarily be seen against the background of the turbulent period between the Mongol

invasions and the consolidation of the Ottoman and Safavid empires (13th-17th centuries CE). This period was characterized by political uncertainty, a quick succession of various local dynasties, and a relative power vacuum in the countryside. At the local level, intensive contacts between peoples of diverse ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds took place. These circumstances were a fertile ground for the emerging of new local forms of social organization, and the blending of divergent religious ideas. The Turkoman tribes that had started entering the region in the tenth century were outwardly orthodox Sunni Islamic mystics imbued with a strong *ghazi* (religious warrior) spirit, but in fact their religious beliefs were quite heterodox, and contained elements from Shi'ite Islam, Central Asian shamanism, and Christianity. They seem to have mixed freely with the rural population of Anatolia, which at first was still largely Christian, but quickly converted to these folk varieties of Islam. Several authors suggest that various Christian elements found their way into the religious practices of the newly emerging groups, and that these elements may have derived from heterodox Christian sects like the Paulicians living in the mountainous parts of eastern Anatolia, rather than from the orthodox Byzantine church which at that time still constituted the state religion in that area (cf. Barnes 1992: 35). Many of these practices of presumably Christian origin can still be found today among the Alevi, the Shabak, and the Kakais.<sup>1</sup> Others, e.g. Roux 1969, stress the parallels between the religion of the Ahl-i Haqq and the Turkish Alevi on the one hand, and the pre-Islamic beliefs and practices of the Turkish peoples of Central Asia on the other.

In the countryside, wandering mystics (e.g. qalandars and babas) appealed to the peasant population with distinctly millenarian ideas, such as the promise of an end to injustice and the dawning of a new era for the faithful. These charismatic leaders organized their following largely in the form of Sufi orders. They tended to downplay the differences between mystical Islam and other religious ideas. Under the cover of orthodox Sufism, they spread doctrines that could hardly be called Islamic, such as the belief in metempsychosis and in the manifestation of the divine in human beings. Although the conceptual and doctrinal base of Sufism had been laid by the ninth century CE, Sufi orders or *tariqats* became widespread as a form of social organization from the twelfth century onwards, following the social upheaval caused by the Seljuk and especially the Mongol invasions (Lapidus 1992: 26; cf. Trimmingham 1971: ch. 2). The rise of local orders in this period may perhaps be compared to the rapid growth of especially the Naqshbendi Sufi order in the power vacuum that followed the abolishment of the Kurdish emirates in the Ottoman empire in the nineteenth century (cf. Van Bruinessen 1989: ch. 4). Hamzeh'ee (1990: ch. 8) specifically argues that the Ahl-i Haqq emerged as a social movement which proclaimed millenarism, egalitarianism, nativism, and a dualistic theology during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; in this respect, he considers them comparable to earlier Iranian social movements like the Mazdakites.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ivanow 1953 discusses possible Paulician influences on the Kakai rites; Birge 1937: 215ff. briefly discusses the question of Christian influences on the Turkoman tribes that developed into Bektashis. Sarraf (1954: 47; cf. Vinogradov 1974: 214) mentions the drinking of wine during rituals, confession to the *baba*, and the worship of a 'Holy Trinity' consisting of Allah, Mohammed, and Ali as having a Christian origin.

<sup>2</sup>In his review of this book, however, Kreyenbroek (BSOAS 1991) argues that Hamzeh'ee overemphasizes the millenarian and egalitarian elements; likewise, the dualistic elements were probably not yet very explicit at this time (cf. Van Bruinessen n.d.).

One of these *tariqats*, headed by Shaikh Safi al-Din in Ardabil, developed into a militant movement of ghazis during the fifteenth century; Safi's descendants, the founders of the Safavid empire in Persia, started propagating heterodox Islam and portraying themselves as manifestations of Ali, in order to appeal to the Alevi predilections of the masses in Eastern Anatolia (cf. Mazzaoui 1972). The largely Turkoman warrior tribes that fought on their side were marked by their red headgear, and were consequently called *Qizilbash* ('redheads').

Over several centuries, folk Islam and Sufism thus grew at the expense of orthodox Sunni and Shi'ite Islam. Only during the 16th century did the Ottoman and Safavid authorities start to impose anything like a state religion on the local population. After the battle of Chaldiran (1514), Sultan Selim had thousands of Alevis massacred; the Qizilbash remaining in Ottoman territory thus had to hide their religious beliefs, e.g. by joining the (outwardly Sunni) Bektashi order, if they wanted to escape persecution.<sup>1</sup> Most Sufi orders were not disbanded, however. The reason for this was obvious: they had been used, and continued to be used, as fighter bands by the central authorities. Thus, the Bektashi order continued to play a leading role in the janissaries, the sultan's elite troops, until the nineteenth century. Other groups whose orthodoxy could similarly be doubted likewise retained, or acquired, a privileged position: the Bajalan, who came to Mosul in the eighteenth century, were reportedly employed as tax collectors; the Kakais also seem to have maintained good relations with the Ottoman *valis*, and at times even to have supplied local notables (Edmonds 1957: 190). This partly explains the fact that heterodox groups like the Shabak could continue to live without major problems in the plains near Mosul, and the Kakais around Kirkuk, - not exactly areas that are isolated from the rest of the world or remote from the central authorities.

The status of these groups as distinct ethnic entities leaves room for discussion. Because of the considerable dose of pre- and non-Islamic belief elements among them, it seems somewhat of an oversimplification just to call them *ghulât* (extremist Shi'ite) sects, as e.g. Moosa (1988) does; in fact, at present some of them have such heterodox beliefs that their neighbours do not see them as Muslims at all. There are indications, however, that several of these groups, e.g. the Kakais and the Yezidis, were at first still considered orthodox Sufi *tariqats*; in other words, the heterodoxy of these groups either increased over time, or came to be stressed more as the mark of a distinct ethnicity.<sup>2</sup> Ethnically, however, the members of these groups that I talked to all appeared to consider themselves Kurds without hesitation; some of them had long been active in the Kurdish nationalist movement. Clearly, they saw no contradiction between themselves as members of a religiously and linguistically distinct group, and as Kurds in a more generic sense. There need of course not be any friction in seeing oneself as a member of different ethnic groups at different levels of integration: for example, an individual may equally well consider himself an inhabitant of a specific village, a Shabak, a Kurd, and an Iraqi national, and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Trimmingham (1970: 82-3). Vinogradov (1974: 210) states that the Shabak, Bajalan and Sarli also practiced *taqiyya* (the dissimulation of one's real faith) under the protective cloak of the Bektashis, but I found no evidence that they ever had any formal ties with that order.

<sup>2</sup>Van Bruinessen (n.d.) notes the apparently recent development of a dualist theology among the Yadegari and Khamushi Ahl-i Haqq in the Guran district of Iran, in opposition to the Ibrahimi subsect. He further argues that these doctrinal innovations are based on older, orally preserved dualist traditions, or are perhaps borrowed from the Yezidis with whom some Yadegari sayyids appear to have had close contacts in the nineteenth century.

emphasis any one of these respective ethnicities in different contexts. The Shabak and the Kakais, like the other heterodox groups, thus occupy a somewhat ambiguous position in the ethnic mosaic of the region. At one point in the 1980s, however, the inhabitants of Northern Iraq were forced to make a single and unambiguous choice as to their ethnic affiliation, - a choice which, as we shall see, could have dramatic consequences.

The choice of a generic label for these communities deserves some further attention. Al-Shwani (1989) discusses the Arabic ethnic labels that could apply to the Kakais, but his discussion is equally relevant for the other groups. To begin with, the Kakais and other groups do not appear to think of themselves as having a separate 'national identity' (*qawmiyya*), as the Kurds as a whole or the Arabs would. Because of their nontribal organization, labels for tribes or subtribes such as *ashîret* or *qabîle* do not fit either. Likewise, the term *tariqat*, 'path', the conventional label for Sufi orders, would present these groups as more orthodox than they really are (the notion of a 'path' to God suggests that each individual can experience the divine, whereas in fact the groups dealt with here are more esoteric, with only initiates of different ranks, such as the *pîrs* and *babas*, approaching full knowledge of the divine, expressed as *haqq*, or 'truth'), and downplay their features that cannot be traced to Islamic traditions. It also emphasizes doctrinal rather than organizational aspects. Al-Shwani concludes that the Kakais are best called a *nihla* (sect or creed); but this term also overemphasizes the religious aspect. In fact, the most appropriate term to cover all of these groups would be *tayfa*, a general expression that can refer to groups of different kinds, such as religious sects or denominations (Yezidis, Kakais, and Christians), and even to tribes and dervish orders.<sup>1</sup> The main points to be kept in mind concerning these communities is that they do not have a tribal or kinship-based organization themselves, although some of their members may have tribal affiliations, and that they are considered separate ethnic groups in virtue of their religion rather than their language.

## *2. The Shabak*

Traditionally, the Shabak mostly lived in a number of small villages east of Mosul, all the way up to Eski Kalak on the Greater Zab river (see map). Their direct neighbours are Christians and Bajalan (with whom they sometimes live in the same village), Turkomans, Arabs, and a bit further northward Yezidis. Among his neighbours, one Shabak informant also mentioned Kakais, especially living near the Greater Zab river; by these, he presumably meant the Sarli living around Eski Kalak. The present-day number of Shabak is difficult to estimate. My informant claimed a total of 100,000, living in 60-odd villages and including several thousands living in the city of Mosul. The 1960 Iraqi census listed 15,000, living in 35 villages; the British had estimated their number at around 10,000 in 1925 (Vinogradov 1974: 208).

Early ethnographic reports give scanty, and sometimes inadequate, information: Rich (1836: 83, 84, 105) mentions that some of the villages he passed on his way from Arbil to Mosul were inhabited by 'Rozhbian and Bajilan Koords' (groups that are close to the Shabak), but does not give any information about their dialects or religious practices. Austin Henry Layard (1867: 216), who spent considerable time conducting archaeological excavations in the Shabak area, considered them descendants of Kurds originating from Persia, and believed

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<sup>1</sup>I owe this point to Martin van Bruinessen (personal communication).

they might have affinities with the Ali Ilahis or Ahl-i Haqq (cf. Minorsky 1920: 84). Among the Kurdish tribes in the Ottoman empire, Sykes (1908: 455-6) lists 500 Shabak families, 'sedentary, said to be Shias by some, others affirm them to have a secret religion, others that they are Babis, others that they acknowledge a prophet named Baba'. *Baba* is in fact the title of their highest religious leader, rather than the name of a specific individual. Incidentally, all of these authors consider the Shabak, and their close neighbours the Bajalan, as Kurds.

There are also some studies in Arabic, e.g. al-Karmali 1902, al-Ghulami 1950, and Sarraf 1954; these stress the Shabak's Turkoman features.<sup>1</sup> Sarraf (1954: 47, 89f) discusses the Shabak against the background of the Bektashi-Qizilbash. He offers several hypotheses regarding their origins, and tends to favour the view that they came to Northern Iraq together with the Safavids. He does not consider the Shabak to be Kurds, because they 'speak a different language' (which he believes is a mixture of several languages, with Turkish predominating). Moosa (1988: ch. 1), who largely relies on these works, argues that the Shabak are probably Turkomans originating from Anatolia, who became adherents of Shah Ismail, and consequently had to resettle in the Mosul region after the latter's decisive defeat by the Ottomans at Chaldiran (1514). As circumstantial evidence for this hypothesis, he also adduces their language (which he, like Sarraf, considers 'basically Turkish mixed with Persian, Kurdish, and Arabic'); the fact that their sacred book, the *Buyruk* or *Kitab al-Manaqib* ('Book of Exemplary Acts'), is written in Turkoman; and their doctrinal affinities with the Bektashis and Alevis in Turkey. This view is certainly an oversimplification: the spoken Shabak vernacular is, in fact, a Gorani or Hawrami variety (see below), and there is no evidence that the Shabak already had contacts with the Bektashis in the early sixteenth century.

It is unclear precisely when the Shabak emerged as a distinct ethnic group, and what their ethnic background is. Likewise, the relation between the Shabak and the Bajalan (also called Bajwan) living in the Khosar valley North of Mosul, remains unclear. Sykes (1908: 456) appears to consider the two wholly distinct: he lists 800 Bejwan families, who 'speak a mixed language, apparently half Arabic, half Kurd, said by neighbours to be of Turkish origin and to be followers of Hajji Bektash'. MacKenzie 1956, by contrast, uses the two names as practically synonymous, or, perhaps, 'Shabak' as the word by which they call themselves, and 'Bajalan' as the name given them by their (Arab) neighbours. Undoubtedly, the two groups are quite closely related, but there is reason to keep them apart: the Bajalani vernacular is linguistically quite close to, but not identical with, the Shabak dialect (see § 5).<sup>2</sup> The Bajalan, unlike the Shabak, are organized tribally, and they seem to be heterodox Sunnis rather than Shi'ites. A Shabak informant spoke of three *tayfa*'s of Shabak: the Shabak proper, the Bajalan, and the Zengana (which all speak Gorani), but did not elaborate on this. He also referred to the Shabak as an *ashîret* and as a *mantiqa* (territory) at times, and listed three tribes (*ashîret*) of Shabak: the Hariri, the Gergeri, and the Mawsilî. Informants in Sfêye likewise considered the Bajalan a Shabak tribe. Taken as a whole, however, the Shabak have never been a tribe, so these remarks perhaps indicate the status

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<sup>1</sup>Unfortunately, these studies were largely inaccessible to me; Philip Kreyenbroek, kindly supplied me with Xerox copies of relevant passages from Sarraf's book. Moosa (1988: ch. 1) summarizes the main arguments of these authors.

<sup>2</sup>Local informants also classified Rojbeyani as a Gorani dialect, which would make it a close relative of Shabaki and Bajalani, but I was not able to collect any samples to verify this claim.

of the Bajalan as a distinct tribal subgroup among the Shabak community. Locals see the very name *Shabak*, which they derive from Arabic *shabaka*. 'to intertwine', as an indication that the Shabak are composed of many different tribes (cf. Vinogradov 1974: 210). For nationalists of various kinds, it has been tempting to overemphasize one of these component features, and to claim that the Shabak are 'really' Arabs, or Kurds, or Turkomans.

Although the Shabak's religious beliefs seem to be comparable to those of other groups with a Qizilbash background, so little is known with certainty that I will abstain from a more detailed description. The Shabak with whom I spoke were reluctant to talk about their religion, and claimed to be 'just Muslims'. Their social organization appears to be much like that of a Sufi order: adult laymen (*murîds*) are bound to spiritual guides (*pîrs* or *murshîds*) who are knowledgeable in matters of religious doctrine and ritual. There are several ranks of such *pîrs*; at the top stands the *Baba*, or supreme head of the order. Theoretically, individuals can choose their own *pîr*, but in practice the *pîr* families often become associated with lay families over several generations, and thus help to give some social coherence to the otherwise rather loose community (Vinogradov 1974: 214). The Shabak maintain good relations with the Yezidis, and make pilgrimages to Yezidi shrines. This, incidentally, contradicts the beliefs of some scholars that the Yezidis are just extremist Sunnis, and thus hereditary enemies of everything Shi'ite.<sup>1</sup> The Qizilbash background of the Shabak also shows in the fact that they consider the Safavid Shah Ismael's poetry to be revealed by God, and recite it during meetings (Vinogradov 1974: 217n). Daûd Chelebi (quoted in al-Azzawi 1949: 98) reported the Shabak as making pilgrimages to Shi'ite holy cities such as Najaf and Kerbela, rather than to Mecca.

Apart from these religious leaders, the Shabak also had two kinds of patrons in more worldly affairs. In pre-revolutionary Iraq, the Shabak were a rather low-status group; most of them worked as sharecroppers on land privately owned by orthodox holy families (*sâda*, plural of *sayyid*) living in the city of Mosul. These *sâda*, originating from Kufa and Hijaz, had been brought to Mosul by the Ottoman authorities, who also gave them land in return for their services; they acted as intermediaries between the Shabak and the government in case of conflicts with neighbouring tribes, and helped Shabak coming to the city to sell their products. Apart from these urban landlords, there also were rural patrons, themselves Shabak, who had been able to buy their own land. Interestingly, the Shabak who achieved such upward social mobility and moved to the city quickly became Arabized, and converted to orthodox twelver Shi'ism; some of them even started claiming *sâda* status for themselves. These rural *sâda* could also act as mediators in conflicts, but this bond of patronage was apparently less stable and institutionalized than that with the urban *sâda* (Vinogradov 1974: 210-213).

After the 1958 and 1963 land reforms, a good many of the formerly landless Shabak peasants bought their own land; others migrated to the city to find work in factories. Because of this new economic independence, traditional relations between *sâda* and tenant started to disintegrate. To some extent, the ties with the urban *sâda* persisted, the former landlords now providing food and lodging to rural Shabak visiting Mosul, and helping them with the sale of their products in the markets (cf. Rassam 1977). In general, the Shabak appear to have steadily

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<sup>1</sup>A Yezidi *pîr* from Sheykhan, however, denied that Shabaks pray in Yezidi sanctuaries. He added that the two groups have close contacts (thus, the Mamusi tribe contains both Yezidi and Shabak members), but are not allowed to intermarry.



disintegrated as a social group in the republican period. Many Shabak who had moved to Mosul to find work quickly became assimilated to their predominantly Arab surroundings; as said, according to Vinogradov, many of them converted to Twelver Shi'ism. Another way of upward social mobility and integration into the state was the army. Many Shabak joined the armed forces, a development perhaps somewhat in contrast with the Shabak's traditional reputation: they were held in low esteem, and not considered fighters by their neighbours (Vinogradov 1974: 216).

As a result of the changing social and economic environment in the Republican era, the traditional double patronage system either weakened or changed in character: the Shabak gradually became more directly integrated into the state, and started losing their status as a distinct group relying on its own middlemen. From the 1970s onwards, the Shabak gradually became entangled in the conflict between the Arabic-nationalist Baath government and the Kurdish movement led by Barzani. I have no information, however, that they sided *en masse* with either party. The government tried to co-opt them, and to impress on them that although they were religiously distinct, they were Arabs rather than Kurds. Apparently, however, it came to feel that it had been less than successful in these assimilation policies: in the late summer of 1988, it had many Shabak villages evacuated and destroyed, and their inhabitants deported. The reason for the Shabak being deported was, according to several informants, the fact that they had declared themselves Kurds rather than Arabs.

At least twenty-two Shabak villages were destroyed in whole or in part (variants of names in other sources appear in brackets): Baderna, Bajarbo, Barzikta, Baskhra, Bazwiya, Gogceri (= Gogjali, Tm. Gökçek?), Kani Kerwan, Karkashan, Keberlin, Minara, Muftiye, Qahrawa, Shaikh Emir, Shaikh Sheley, Shawkuli, Muftiyeh, Tercileh, Teyrawa, Toba Ziyaret (=Toprak Ziyaret?), Tobzawa, Xezne, Xrawa (= Orta Xarâb?), and Zara Khatun.<sup>1</sup> From these villages, an estimated 3,000 Shabak families were deported to the *mujamma's* or collective towns of Desht Harir and Basirma north of Shaqlawa (Arbil governorate), and to Bazian, Tekkiya and Chor near Chemchemal (Kirkuk). In these resettlement camps, they no longer had any sources of income, and became wholly dependent on the state. They were not given any compensation for destroyed or confiscated property, and not allowed to return or to buy cars. In the autumn of 1990, however, most of them were allowed to return to their home regions, reportedly after one of their leaders had said that they were Arabs after all. Another reason, probably more relevant for the government, may have been the fact that Iraq was facing an economic embargo since the occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, and therefore needed to stimulate the domestic agricultural sector, which in the North had been largely destroyed in the preceding years.

The fact that the Shabak were deported after declaring themselves Kurds suggests that the administrative basis of these deportations was the census held by the Iraqi government in October 1987. In this census, people could register their ethnicity as either Arabic or Kurdish; other options for indicating a distinct

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<sup>1</sup>I have not been able to locate all of these villages, but most of them lie near the Mosul-Arbil highway, i.e. East and Southeast of Mosul. A spokesman of the Iraqi National Turkoman Party confirmed some of these villages to have been destroyed (incidentally, he considered them Turkoman). Surprisingly, none of them appears in Rasool (1990), which does list 19 villages destroyed in the same period in the Sheykhhan region, slightly further North.

ethnicity based on either linguistic or religious criteria, such as 'Turkoman' or 'Assyrian', were not given. In this way, the census forced the inhabitants of the North to 'rejoin the national ranks' by declaring themselves Arabs, or in the case of the Kurds living in 'prohibited zones' (i.e., areas under peshmerga control), to leave their villages for the *mujamma's* in government-controlled territory. Many whom the government considered to be Arabs, but saw themselves as Kurds were to be deported from their home villages. Those who lived in 'prohibited zones' and failed to register lost their Iraqi citizenship, and were from then on considered deserters; they became prime targets during the notorious Anfal operations (Middle East Watch 1993: 84-90).

The testimonies regarding the Shabak are to a large extent corroborated by a classified document from the Arbil Security Office (*'Amn Arbil*) to local security branches, dated August 31, 1988, which was captured during the 1991 uprising. The full text of the document, with reference number SH.S.5//13069//, reads:

'We were informed as follows:

1. There are elements from the Shabak who joined the National Defense Battalions and who changed their ethnicity (*qawmiyya*) from Arab to Kurd and are residents of Nineveh governorate.
2. The Struggling Comrade Ali Hassan Al-Majid, head of the Northern Bureau, has ordered the destruction of all their houses, and their deportation to the housing complexes (*mujamma'*) in our governorate. They will absolutely not be compensated.

For your information. Take whatever measures are necessary, and keep us informed.

[Signature] Colonel of Security/Director of Security of Arbil Governorate'  
(Middle East Watch 1994: 29-30, MEW Ref. 45/5-B)

This document strongly suggests that it was indeed the 1987 census that determined the fate of the Shabak villagers who wanted to consider themselves Kurds rather than Arabs. The reason why the deportations were not carried out right after the census was probably that the Iraqi army was still largely preoccupied with the war against Iran at that time. After the armistice in August 1988, the Fifth Army Corps was moved to Mosul region in order to carry out the Final Anfal operation in the Badinan region, and these troops were also engaged in carrying out the deportations of the Shabak living in Nineveh Governorate slightly further South, which did not contain any 'prohibited zones'. No executions or mass arrests are claimed to have occurred in these operations. A Shabak interviewed in 1992, however, stated that the Fifth Army Corps was still stationed in the area at that time, and that it continued to terrorize the returned villagers.

The deportations of Shabak, then, were not part of the Anfal operations proper, but rather a final stage in the Arabization program of the entire Northern region that had been initiated by the government in 1975. In all likelihood, however, they were carried out on the basis of the same census that served as the basis for the Anfal, and the Arbil Security letter makes clear that the ultimate responsibility lies with the same individual that organized the Anfal operations: Ali Hassan al-Majid, Saddam Hussein's cousin and at that time Head of the Northern Bureau of the Baath party.

The choice of which superordinate ethnic group one belongs to appears to have had particularly dramatic consequences for the Shabak. Deprived of the option to identify themselves as a distinct group, they were left with the choice

of declaring their loyalty to the government by defining themselves as Arabs, or registering as Kurds and facing harsh government reprisals. It is impossible to measure the effects of the deportations on their (already eroding) specific ethnic identity, but it seems to have been further effaced. The Shabak in the liberated area see themselves more unambiguously as Kurds, and less as a distinct (sub-) group, than they did earlier. As one of them asked: 'if we are Arabs as they say we are, then why did they deport us like the other Kurds?' Their religious ties seem to have been partly severed by their dispersal. The majority, living in Mosul and its environs, undoubtedly continue to be subject to assimilation efforts; but as this territory is still under government control, hardly any information about their predicament is available.

### *3. The Kakais or Ahl-i Haqq*

The Ahl-i Haqq ('People of the Truth') live scattered over Iraqi Kurdistan, and in various regions in Iran, especially the Guran district and Azerbaijan. Estimates as to their numbers vary from several tens of thousands to over two million; the majority live in Iran. In Iraq, they are usually referred to as Kakais, whereas in Iran they are called Yaresan. Most descriptions focus on the Ahl-i Haqq on the Iranian side of the border: this holds for the earlier works, like Rawlinson (1839), Gobineau (1859), and Minorsky's important monograph (1920, 1921) as well as for more recent studies, such as Van Bruinessen (n.d.) and Hamzeh'ee (1990). The branches in Iraq receive due attention in al-Azzawi (1949), Edmonds (1957: 182-201), (1969), Hawramani (1984) and Moosa (1988: ch. 14-21).

Apparently, the order of the Kakais was founded in Hawraman by a Sayyid Ishaq (later also called Sultan Sohak) originating from Barzinja in the early fourteenth century CE.<sup>1</sup> There have been doubts as to whether this Sultan Sohak was a historical person, but his name is mentioned in a 17th-century document concerning his successor Baba Yadegar (Mokri 1970). Interestingly, this text also suggests that at that time, the Kakais were still considered a Sufi *tariqa* rather than a heterodox group (cf. Van Bruinessen 1991: 68). Associated with Sultan Sohak were seven disciples called the Haft Tan; the most important of these, Daûd, became the superintendent of the Haft Khalifa ('seven vicars') selected by Sultan Sohak to be *dalîls* (guides) for the whole Ahl-i Haqq community. Sultan Sohak's seven sons, called the Haftawana, are considered the basis of five 'founded families' of *sayyids*; the Ibrahimî 'family' appears to be by far the most widespread of these in Iraqi Kurdistan. Later on, five other families of *sayyids* arose. The most important of these are the Baba Yadegari and Ateshbegi families, both concentrated in Iran; the latter in particular introduced a number of doctrinal innovations. These differences in doctrine and practices make it difficult to speak of a single Ahl-i Haqq tradition (cf. v. Bruinessen n.d.)

The Kakais, like the Shabak, have a hereditary group of religious specialists. Their social hierarchy contains four levels: *sayyids*, *bawas* (cf. Persian *baba*), *mams*, and *murîds*. Doctrinal expertise resides with the *kalamkhwans*, who may come from any of these classes. Kakai *murîds* must be associated with a *sayyid* from one of the ten families who acts as their *pîr* or spiritual guide, and also with a Khalifa family acting as representative of a *dalîl*; in theory, laymen are free to

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<sup>1</sup>According to Al-Shwani (1989), the Arab historian al-Mas'udi (d. 346 AH) already wrote of the Kakaiyya as a distinct tribe rather than as a distinct religious group; but it may be doubted whether he was really referring to the same group as the present-day Kakais, who cannot be traced further back than the fourteenth century.

choose their own guides, but in practice these relations are usually passed on between the generations. As individuals belonging to a *sayyid* are considered part of his 'family', *murîds* cannot intermarry with their *pîr* or *dalîl*. In this way, a symbolic kind of kinship is created among the adherents, who are otherwise not organized along kinship lines. According to some *kalamkhwans*, the *pîr* is as God to his *murîds*. One of them once heard some *murîds* address their Ibrahimi *sayyid* as 'son of Shah Ibrahim', the word *Shah* suggesting that Ibrahim had been an incarnation of the Deity; he corrected them and said that they themselves were Ibrahim's sons, because their *sayyid* was [the reincarnation of] Ibrahim himself.<sup>1</sup> Organizationally, the Kakais are thus essentially a 'dervish brotherhood' or *tariqa* (Edmonds 1957: 190), but like the Shabak, they have more strongly esoteric beliefs, focused on a divine reality (*Haqq*) revealed to only a few members of the community. As seen above, the term *tayfa* is most appropriate to this kind of organization, but at times the Kakais are also referred to as a Kurdish tribe (*ashîret*) by outsiders.

The most important Kakai area in Iraq is a group of villages around Taûq (also called Daqûq), Southeast of Kirkuk. Interestingly, these settlements are relatively recent, the lands having been bought by some 19th-century Ibrahimi *sayyids*, and populated with Kakai *murîds* from the nearby hills. Other concentrations of Kakai villages, also mostly Ibrahimi, are around Khanaqin and Qasr-i Shirin.<sup>2</sup> Of the original heartlands of the Kakai community on the border with Iran, near Halabja, only the pilgrimage center of Hawar remains. Some Ibrahimis live in Tell 'Afar; these are probably largely Turkomans. Edmonds (1957: 195) also lists seven Kakai villages on the banks of the Greater Zab near Eski Kalak, whose inhabitants are called 'Sarli' by their neighbours.<sup>3</sup>

In the Ottoman period, several mayors in Tell 'Afar were elected from the Ibrahimi family of Taifa-i Wahhab Agha living there (Edmonds 1957: 191), who also mentions Ateshbegi Kakais in that town). In this period, and also in monarchical Iraq, the Kakai leaders seem to have maintained reasonably good relations with the central authorities, although they kept their independence. Their power base lay not only in their religious adherents, but also in their wealth: in 1958, the Kakai *sayyids* of Kirkuk province were among the most important land owners in Iraq, with almost 200,000 donums of land in their possession (Batatu 1978: 58). It is unclear in how far this position was affected by the successive land reforms in Republican Iraq. Although the various Kakai communities may have lost some of their original cohesion because of the far-reaching economic and political changes, their religious practices and political loyalty to the *sayyids* appear to have remained largely intact. The Ibrahimis in Arbil, for example, still have a monthly ritual, closed to outsiders, in which food is symbolically shared and, as their *sayyid* put it, 'all become equal'. There have even been conversions to the Kakai faith in quite recent times (see § 4).

Apparently, the Kakais experienced no major frictions with their Muslim neighbours either. They were generally considered a Kurdish subgroup, and their religious beliefs and practices do not seem to have been considered as

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<sup>1</sup>This view would contradict the opinion held by some that, strictly speaking, the name 'Kakai' does not apply to the community as a whole, but only to the *sayyids* (cf. Edmonds 1957: 188).

<sup>2</sup>Incidentally, there also are, or used to be, pockets of Bajalan around these places.

<sup>3</sup>My informants in Sfêye listed eight Kakai villages on the banks of the Zab: Sfêye, Matrat, Tuleben (=Tell al-Liban), Gezekan, Qûlebol, Wirdet, Zengerd, and Kebero. Only the first four of these coincide with names supplied by Edmonds.

heterodox as e.g. those of the Yezidis, who are often not even thought of as Kurds by their Sunni Kurdish neighbours. The Kakais were usually quite secretive about their religious beliefs and practices: when asked by outsiders, they would often claim to be orthodox Sunnis or, sometimes, Twelver Shi'ites. Reportedly, one Kirkuki *sayyid* even bought up all copies of al-Azzawi's 1949 book that he could find and had them destroyed, because it betrayed religious secrets and argued that the Kakais were not Muslims. At present, the Kirkuk Kakais consider themselves very close to the Ja'faris (Twelver Shi'ites) in the neighbouring towns of Tuz Khormatu and Daqûq (Taûq).<sup>1</sup>

Linguistically, the Kakais are a quite heterogeneous community. They have their own language, Macho, which is a variety of Gorani (see §5). According to some, the Kakais mostly use this dialect among themselves, while they employ whatever happens to be the language of their surroundings for communication with their neighbours; others say they use Macho as a secret language (*lisân al-khâss*), especially during their rituals. However, Macho is certainly not the mother tongue of all Kakais; some groups speak it only as a second language, or perhaps not at all. Most Kakais also speak Sorani Kurdish, Turkoman, or Arabic.<sup>2</sup> According to one Kakai informant, all Kakais around Taûq are fluent in Macho; with other Kurds they speak Sorani, while some of them also know Turkoman or Arabic. Another source claims that many, if not most Kirkuki Kakais speak Turkoman more easily than Kurdish, but consider themselves Kurds. Most 'Sarli' (Kakais from Eski Kalak) speak Macho, Shabaki, Sorani, and to some extent Arabic; none of them knows any Turkoman. Practically all Kakais know at least some Arabic as a second language; there are some Arabic-speaking Kakais in Khanaqin and Mendeli, but these are all 'awwamis (commoners), not *sayyids*. They are claimed to be relatively recent converts.

The *sayyids* have also remained influential and largely independent, whatever changes in their original position as landlords may have occurred. Fattah Agha, who was one of the strongest Kakai leaders until his death in the 1950s, seems to have been something of a Kurdish nationalist; for example, he refused to join the neighbouring Talabani and Daûdi tribes, who had sided with the government against the rebellious Kurdish leader, shaykh Mahmoud Barzinji. One of his sons, Adnan Agha, has subsequently become the most active Kakai leader. Another branch of the Kirkuki *sayyids* had traditionally preferred to speak Turkoman, and only acquired fluency in Kurdish during the early 1970s; subsequently, these leaders joined the 'National Defence Battalions' (Kurdish irregulars), and started to proclaim themselves Arabs. The government was anxious to portray the Kakais as Arabs; it argued that their *sayyids*, being descendants of Imam Ali and of the prophet Muhammad as their title indicated, were Arabs by definition. Kakai religious specialists countered this claim by stressing that they believe their leaders to be *sayyids* in virtue of reincarnation rather than direct descent.

In the 1970s, the Kakais did not unambiguously side with the Kurdish movement. Some *sayyids* stayed neutral, while others openly sided with the Baath government. The oil-rich area around Kirkuk was a prime target area of the Baath government's Arabization policy in this period. Some Kakai villages

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<sup>1</sup>These Shi'ite groups are for the most part Turkomans, and used to be Qizilbash who were in the present century 'converted' to Twelver Shi'ism (Edmonds 1957: 269).

<sup>2</sup>The data I have about the language distribution among the Kakais are quite limited and not always consistent. They are partly based on personal observations, and partly on information supplied by well-informed locals (some of them Kakais).

around Taûq were evacuated; their inhabitants were taken to Sulaimaniya or Arbil. One *sayyid* started selling land to Arabs; the lands of another *sayyid*, who had joined the Kurdish movement, were seized and to some extent repopulated with Arabs. This *sayyid* got his lands back when his son joined the National Defence Batallions. Likewise, Khanaqin and Qasr-i Shirin have been subject to Arabization.<sup>1</sup> Their inhabitants were deported to Kalar and Southern Iraq. In order to create a 'security zone' along the Iranian border, the Iraqi government also destroyed many villages in the original Kakai heartlands, among them the pilgrimage site of Hawar.

The Iraqi government and the Kurdish nationalists were not the only ones who attempted to coopt the Kakais, however. In the 1970s, Turkoman nationalists wanted to present them as a Turkoman subgroup: thus, the Kakai poet Hijri Dede, who had written works in Persian, Kurdish and Gorani (but not in Turkish) was made a member of the Turkoman Writer's Union in Baghdad. Hijri's offspring, who were stated to have become *jash* ('donkey foal', i.e. government agents) in the 1980s, consider themselves Turkomans. The Iraq National Turkoman Party, founded in 1988, continues this line of stressing the Turkoman side of the Kakais; it also considers the Shabak and other *ghulât* groups in the region to be Turkomans. A Turkoman informant (himself an opponent of Turkoman chauvinism) stated that many Kakais in Kirkuk, but also in Tell 'Afar, had started claiming to be Turkomans recently. This stress on their being Turkoman seems to have been used as a means of maintaining a neutral position in between the government and the Kurdish movement. Although the results of the 1977 and 1987 censuses were never made public, some Ibrahimis and *sayyids* are said to have been registered as Turkomans. The latter, as said, only gave the options of registering as a Kurd or as an Arab; at least some of the *sayyids* registered themselves and their adherents as Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

The Third Anfal operation, conducted in the Germian region in April 1988, had as its targets the Daûdi villages East of the road from Kirkuk to Baghdad, and the area of the Talabani tribe (cf. Middle East Watch 1993: 129-66). Apparently, however, the neighbouring Kakai area around Taûq was not included in these operations. A main reason for this was probably the fact that Taûq *nahiya*, which was near the strategic oil-rich city of Kirkuk, had always remained under strict government control. For that reason, it did not form part of the 'forbidden zones' targeted in the Anfal operations. In other words, its inhabitants had been registered in the 1987 census, whether as Kurds or as Arabs, and did not run the risk of losing their Iraqi citizenship. Some of the Kakai *sayyids* had openly sided with the government, while even those who had not joined the National Defence Batallions apparently wielded enough influence with the authorities to rescue their community. Finally, the fact that there was a case for considering the Kakais to be Turkomans rather than Kurds may have played a role as well. After all, the Anfal operations were primarily directed at the Kurdish villagers, and to a lesser extent against the Christians in the Badinan area, who were believed to have sided with the Kurdish movement. Turkomans and Arabs in the region, or people who had registered as such, were hardly, or not at all, affected. A number

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<sup>1</sup>Rasool (1990: 13-22) reports several of the Kakai villages in this region listed by Edmonds (1957: 195n) as having been evacuated in 1975; I could identify Barika, Dar-a-Khurma, and Mêkhas, but others may have been affected as well.

<sup>2</sup>A senior PUK official claimed that a copy of the 1977 census results had been captured during the uprising; it showed the population of Kirkuk governorate to be 38% Kurdish, 15% Turkoman, and the remainder Arab.

of Kakai families were deported, because the Iraqi Security had found out that their relatives had joined the Kurdish insurgents. According to local informants, these Kakais from Kirkuk were deported to Baqûq *mujamma* and later resettled in Halabja Taze a few miles west of Halabja, together with a number of Jafs from Hawar. Some appear to have been resettled near Chemchemical. In Halabja Taze and other nearby *mujamma*'s, numerous (Sunni and Kakai) Hawrami speakers from the villages near the Iranian border, including Hawar, had also been resettled. Some Kakais returned to Hawar after the 1991 uprising; they fled the region again during the Kurdish internecine fights in the summer of 1994.

The Kakais from Eski Kalak, like the Shabak, appear not to have been affected by the Anfal operations proper. The Sarli villages were reported to have been evacuated in the summer of 1988,- that is, at approximately the same time as the Shabak. Presumably, they had also registered as Kurds in the 1987 census. The inhabitants of Sfêye were deported to Halabja Taze, but could return after their *sayyid*, Adnan Agha, had intervened with the government.

#### *4. Contacts between the Kakais and the Shabak: the 'Sarli'*

The 'Sarli' deserve some further attention. On the whole, the Kakais are linguistically and religiously close to the Shabak; they are also geographically adjacent to them near Eski Kalak, and in fact significant interethnic contacts have been taking place there. As said, the Kakai inhabitants of this area are called 'Sarli' by their Sunni neighbours, but Edmonds (1957: 195) already expressed doubts as to whether they themselves accept the name. Their *sayyid*, who himself lives in Arbil, confirmed that they don't. I found that the people living there are Ibrahimî Kakais, and unhesitatingly consider themselves to be such; the terms 'Sarli' and 'Sarlû' are used exclusively by outsiders, or more precisely, their direct (Sunni) Arab and Kurdish neighbours. By contrast, a Shabak informant called them 'Kakais' rather than 'Sarli'; I was also told that the Shabak, unlike the Yezidis, maintain good relations with the Kakais, and 'respect' them, despite some religious differences. As said, the 'Sarli' villages have survived, or recovered from, the Arabization operations, but after the liberation of part of the Kurdish region, they ended up right at the front line, established at the Zab river, between the Iraqi government troops and the Kurds. Many of their inhabitants sought a safer haven in the Tobzawa *mujamma* several miles down the road to Arbil. The villages near the river were periodically shelled by Iraqi artillery, but at the same time they became a focal point for smuggling activity, especially for an intensive traffic of petrol products across the river, often on makeshift rafts.

Edmonds (1957: 195) remarks that 'the Sarli are quite distinct from the other group of unorthodox Kurds found in the Mosul *liwa* and known as Shabak, who are Kurdish Qizilbash', but at present at least, this distinction is much harder to make. Many inhabitants of the Sarli village I visited, including the younger ones, appeared to speak both Kakai and Shabaki (all of them also spoke Sorani). When I asked the mother of one family, which had been introduced to me as Kakais, whether there were many Shabak in their village, she said, surprisingly: 'We are Shabak ourselves'. Upon further questioning, it turned out that numerous Sarli families were of mixed Shabak-Kakai origin. Many of them had become Kakais in quite recent times, some less than a generation ago. Apparently, intermarriages between Shabak and Kakais have taken place as well. Nowadays, the inhabitants of these villages participate in Kakai rituals, and bring presents such as petrol to their *sayyid*.

These 'conversions' (or perhaps more appropriately, crossings of the low ethnic boundary between Kakais and Shabak) have taken place primarily under the abovementioned Ibrahimī *sayyid* Fattah Agha. Fattah was an enlightened man who, himself illiterate, had a school, a hospital and a mosque opened in his village of Topzawa near Taûq in 1938; apparently, he was also influential with the central government of the time. I was told that a fair number of families, both Arabs and Kurds (especially Barzinjis, Jaf, and Hamawand), had become Kakais in this period. After Fattah's death in the late 1950s, the number of conversions decreased considerably; conversions of Shabak thus seem to have been due at least in part to his personal charisma, and to the possibilities of upward social mobility that the Kakais had in that period. But also more recently, in 1986, one Shabak and one Gergeri from Mosul became Kakais, apparently because of the greater opportunities for upward social mobility this crossing offered; another motivation seems to have been that they considered the Kakai faith a typically Kurdish religion, and wanted to become 'Kurdicized' rather than 'Arabized', which would be a likely concomitant of seeking social mobility in more state-oriented circles. In other words, the boundaries between some ethnic sub-groups appear to be relatively permeable, and individuals can cross them without great difficulty. Such individual crossings, however, have not led to a total disappearance of the distinctions between the two groups. These intergroup contacts remain an intriguing subject for further investigations.

##### *5. Dialect notes*

A few remarks on the dialects spoken by the Shabak and the Kakais will conclude these notes. Little is known with certainty about the vernaculars of these and other heterodox communities in Iraqi Kurdistan. Minorsky (1920, 1921) mostly dealt with Turco- and Persophone Yaresan in the Guran district and Azerbaijan in Iran (but see Minorsky 1943 for some religious Ahl-i Haqq poetry or *kalâm* in Gorani). Mokri has primarily studied the written Ahl-i Haqq literature, which is partly in Persian, and partly in a Gorani *koine* that does not coincide with any single spoken variety. About the spoken dialects, much less information is available. As seen above, even their nature was disputed; in the literature, claims appear that they are forms of Turkoman, Baluchi-related dialects, or 'mixtures of Turkish, Persian and Arabic'. These claims were rarely backed by dialect samples or analysis, and usually took the written documents as evidence.

From the samples I collected, it appears that the spoken dialects of the Shabak, (some of) the Kakais near Taûq, and the 'Sarlı' all belong to the Gorani or Hawrami branch of Indo-Iranian languages.<sup>1</sup> The possibility remains, however, that more extensive investigation will yield further variations and complexities; for example, the Shabak seem to be linguistically somewhat more homogeneous than the Kakais, but there may yet turn out to be Shabak with Turkoman as their mother tongue, or at least as a second language. It should also be kept in mind that all of my informants were multilingual; the question of precisely where and when they speak Gorani rather than some other language remains unanswered.

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<sup>1</sup>Blau (1989) summarizes the main grammatical features of the Gorani dialects. Mann/Hadank 1930 mostly contains samples of various Gorani dialects spoken Iran, but includes Bajalani material from Bishkan near Zohab, Qasr-i Shirin, and Khorsabad north of Mosul. MacKenzie 1956 presents Bajalani material from Arpaçî (also near Mosul). The most detailed description of a single Gorani dialect, viz. that of Nawsûda near Awroman in Persia, is MacKenzie 1966. The 'Kurdishness' of Gorani is still disputed; see Leezenberg 1993 for discussion.



Considerations of space, and the uneven quality of the data (mostly gathered amidst the euphoric confusion of the 1992 regional elections), preclude a fuller grammatical analysis, but some of their distinctive traits seem to be worth pointing out anyway.

My informants in Sfêye distinguished between ‘Shabaki’ and ‘Macho’; by the latter they meant the vernacular of the Kakais (as did my informant from Topzawa). According to Edmonds (1957: 10), the term ‘Macho’ is also used by locals as a generic label for all the dialects referred to as ‘Gorani’ in the scholarly literature. Most of my informants, however, used ‘Hawrami’ as a blanket term for these dialects; only those acquainted with Western literature on the subject used ‘Gorani’ in this sense. Here, I will use the label ‘Macho’ to refer indiscriminately to the Topzawa and Sfêye Kakai dialects; the limited data did not permit me to compare them systematically, but a local informant who had contacts with both claimed that they are practically identical.

Abbreviations: M.: Macho from Topzawa; Sh.: Shabaki from Qahrawa; Sf.: Sfêye variety of Macho or Shabaki, respectively; B.: Bajalani from Arpaçî (source: MacKenzie 1956); H.: Hawrami from Byara.

Numerals:

1. M. ek<sup>wê</sup>, Sh. îkyê (cf. B. ikkê, H. yue)
2. M. dua, Sh. dû (cf. B. dûwe, H. duî)
3. M. sa, Sh. se (cf. B. se, H. yerî)
4. M., Sh. çwar (cf. B., H. çwar)
5. M. penc, Sh. pen (cf. B., H. penc)
6. M. shish, Sh. ses (cf. B., H. shish)
7. M. heft, Sh. haft (cf. B. hâft, H. hewt)
8. M., Sh. hesht (cf. B., H. hesht)
9. M., Sh. no (cf. B. nû, H. no)
10. M., Sh. de (cf. B., H. de)
11. M., Sh. yazde (cf. B. yazde, H. yanzeh)
20. M., Sh. wîst (cf. B. bîst, H. wîs)
100. M. sad, Sh. sayd (cf. B. say, H. sal?)

white: M., Sh. çerme

green: M. sawz, Sh. saûs (cf. B., H. sawz)

yellow: M., Sh. zerd (cf. H. zart)

red: M. sûr, Sh. qermez (cf. B. qirmiz, H. sûr)

blue: M. mawî, kew (Sf.), Sh. kô (cf. B. kô)

eye: M. çem, Sh. çaw (cf. B. çam)

blood: Sh. xîn, cf. H. winî

Personal pronouns:

- Sg. 1. M. min, emin, Sh. emin  
2. M. tu, etî (Sf.) Sh. tu/etû (Sf.) (cf. B. etû)  
3. M. ew, Sh. ew/îne (Sf.) (cf. B. ew)
- Pl. 1. M. ême, Sh. ême/homan (Sf.) (cf. B. hême)  
2. M. shima, Sh. shime (cf. B. êshma)  
3. M. ewshan, Sh. ewshan (Sf.)/ôshan (cf. B. êshan)

Reflexive pronoun:

M. *yo-* with suffixed personal pronoun: *ême yoma mewînin*, 'We see ourselves'

Sh. *hê-* with suffixed personal pronoun: *emin hêm metî*, 'I see myself'

(cf. B. *hê-*; H. *wê-*, as in *min wêm wînu*, 'I see myself')

Demonstrative pronouns/adjectives:

M. *îne*, 'this', *ane* 'that': *îne/ane çeshin?* 'what is this/that?'

Sh. *î*, 'this', *û*, 'that' (Sf.): *î/û zilam kê?* 'who is this/that man?'

Verbal morphology:

-present tense

M. *emin piyawê mewînü*, Sh. *emin zilamê metî*, 'I see a man'

M. *tu piyawê mewînü*, Sh. *etû zilamê metî*. 'You (sg.) see a man'

M. *ew piyawê mewîno*, Sh. *ew zilamê metô*. 'He/she sees a man'

M. *ême piyawê mewînim*, Sh. *ême zilamê metimî*, 'We see a man'

M. *shima piyawê mewînde*, Sh. *shime zilamê metê*, 'You (pl.) see a man'

M. *ewshan piyawê mewîna*, Sh. *oshan zilamê meto*, 'They see a man'

-In the past tense of transitive verbs, the verbal inflection is added as a clitic to the direct object in both dialects:

M. *min piyawyê (Sf. piyawê) dî*, Sh. *emin zilamem tî (Sf. dî)*,  
'I saw the man'

M. *tu piyawyê dî*, Sh. *etû zilamete tî*, 'You (sg.) saw the man'

M. *(ew) piyawyêsh dî*, Sh. *ew zilamesh tî*, 'He/she saw the man'

M. *ême piyawyêman dî*, Sh. *ême zilamema tî*, 'We saw the man'

M. *shima piyawyêtan dî*, Sh. *shime zilamete tî*, 'You (pl.) saw the man'

M. *ewshan piyawyêshan dî*, Sh. *oshan zilamesha tî*, 'They saw the man'

Copula:

M. *min pîrana*, 'I am old'

*tu pîranî*, 'you are old'

*ew pîrin*, 'he/she is old'

*ême pîrenme*, 'we are old'

*shima pîrende*, 'you (pl.) are old'

*ewshan pîrane*, 'they are old'

Sh. *emin nisaghana*, 'I am ill'

*tu nisaghana*, 'you are ill'

*ew/îne nisagha*, 'he/she is ill'

*gishtman nisagha*, 'we are all ill'

*shime [gisht] nisaghane*, 'you are [all] ill'

Positive/comparative

M. *min çeto dirêshterena*, 'I am taller than you'

Sh. *î zilam diraze*, 'this man is tall/old'

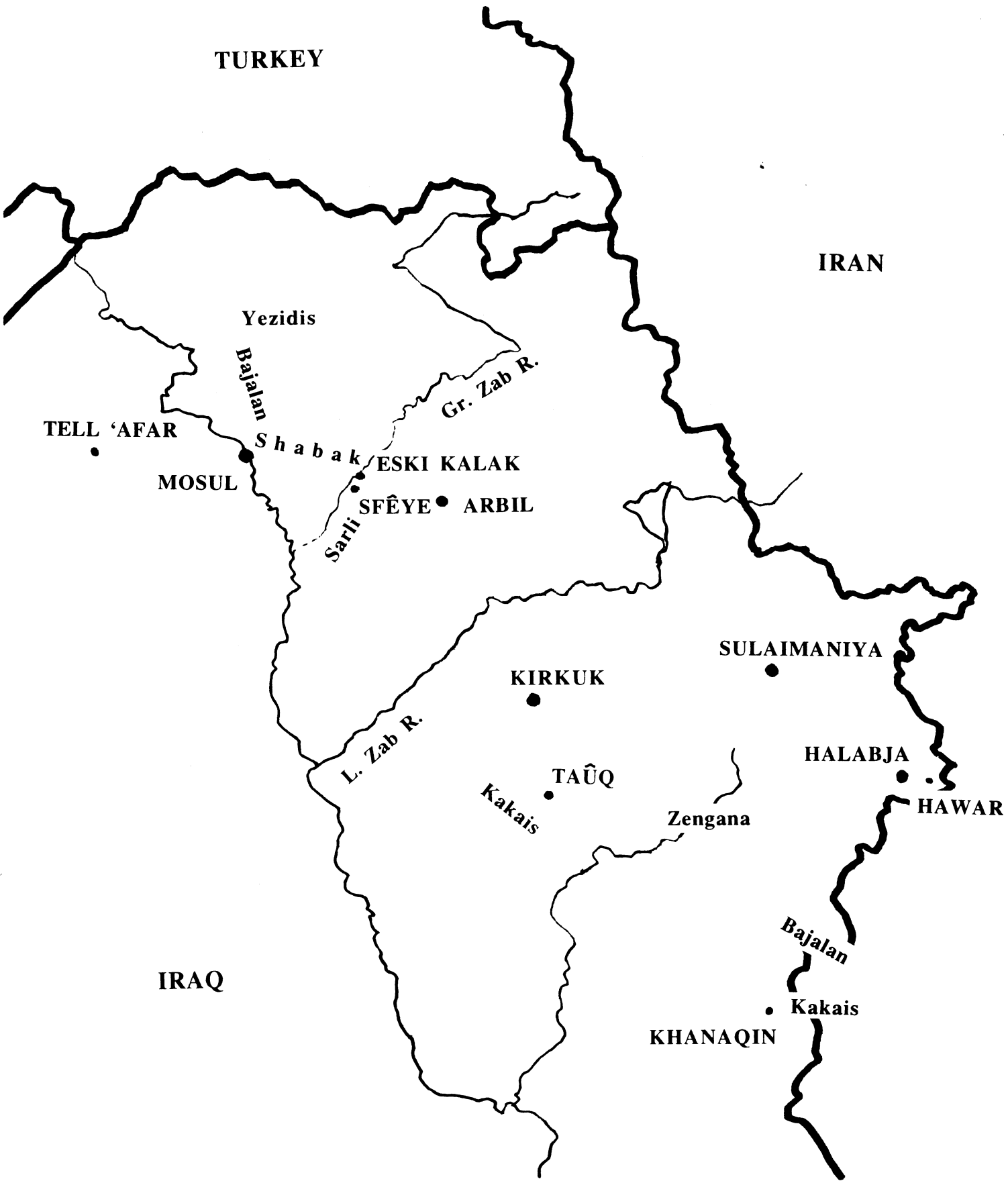
*tu çemin dirasterenî/-ê*, 'you are taller than I am'

The Kakai present tense prefix *me-* followed by a verb stem with initial *w-* contracts to practically a single syllable: *mewînü* is pronounced /möynü/, *mewarî* as /môrî/. A sound similar to Kakai /ü/ also occurs in Zengana, a Gorani dialect spoken around Awaspî near Taûq (thus e.g. Zg. *min ma'açü*, 'I say'; a *piyaw mewînü*, 'I see that man'), but not in any of the other Gorani varieties.

The Old Iranian initial \*hw- developed into w- in all Gorani dialects and into khw-/kho- in Kurmanji and Sorani Kurdish, viz. Shab./Kak. *ward-* vs. Km./Sor. *khwar-*, 'eat'. However, the reflexive pronoun (also with initial \*hw- in Old Iranian) does not follow this pattern: in fact, the Gorani dialects widely diverge here: M. *yo-*, Sh. *hê-*, B. *hê-*, H. *wê-*, cf. Kurmanci *xwe* (without pronominal suffix), Sorani *xo-*.

The 'Sarli' I met were all fluent in the Arbil dialect of Kurdish proper; some of the phonetic peculiarities of that dialect (cf. MacKenzie 1961: 27-29) could also be heard in their pronunciation of Macho and Shabaki, e.g. *çem*, 'eye', was pronounced as /tsem/, *çerme*, 'white', as /tserme/. Otherwise, their pronunciation of both dialects differed little from the samples from Taûq and Qahrawa. They perceived the two as hardly different, and repeatedly mixed them up.

In conclusion, the differences between these Gorani varieties seem to be primarily phonetic; their morphology shows fewer variations, except in the reflexive and suffixed personal pronouns. Lexical differences may be related to borrowings from various sources, such as different dialects of Kurdish proper, Persian, and Turkoman. Hopefully, further gathering of data will lead to a fuller and more systematic treatment of these dialects on another occasion.



TURKEY

IRAN

Yezidis

Bajalan

Gr. Zab R.

TELL 'AFAR

MOSUL

Shabak

ESKI KALAK

Sarli

SFÊYE

ARBIL

L. Zab R.

KIRKUK

SULAIMANIYA

HALABJA

TAÛQ

Kakais

Zengana

HAWAR

Bajalan

Kakais

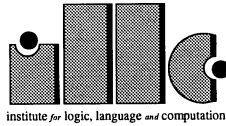
KHANAQIN

IRAQ

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