

**The Emergence of Kurdism with Special Reference to the  
Three Kurdish Emirates within the Ottoman Empire,  
1800-1850**

Submitted by student Sabah Abdullah Ghalib to the University of Exeter

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## Note on Transliteration and Translation

One of the difficulties faced writing in English is, challenging original words spelled in Arabic script. To provide uniformity, this thesis has tried to establish a consistent pattern in spelling Kurdish, Ottoman, and Arabic and Persian words. Therefore, regardless of origin, all Kurdish proper names are rendered in romanized form.

Kurds in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan generally write Kurdish in Arabic script. The best way to transliterate Kurdish into English is a matter for debate. There is more than one system but in this study the romanization scheme originally developed by Jeladet Bedir Khan for writing Kurmanjî and Sorani is followed.

The list below indicates how written romanized Kurdish should be pronounced:

- a ..... as in the English “far”, for instance the Kurdish word “*Naz*”
- e ..... as in the English “baker”, for instance the Kurdish word “*Seywan*”
- ê ..... as in the English “text”, for in Kurdish word “*dê*”
- ç ..... as in the English “teacher”, for in Kurdish word “*çaw*”
- î ..... as in the English “deal”, for in Kurdish word “*sîr*”
- î ..... as in the English “feel”, for in Kurdish word “*dîl*”
- ô ..... as in the English “ball”, for in Kurdish word “*gôvar*”
- ř ..... as in the English “red”, for in Kurdish word “*řaw*”
- ş ..... as in the English “she”, for in Kurdish word “*şaş*”
- û ..... as in the English “foot”, for in Kurdish word “*jûr*”
- x ..... as in the English “sheikh”, for in Kurdish word “*Xanî*”

## Abbreviations

FO	Foreign Office
IOR	Indian Office Record
TBL	The British Library
TNA	The National Archive
WO	War Office

## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to study the concept of Kurdistan and its emergence in the first half of the nineteenth century. The study explores the foundations, origins and evolution of Kurdistan nationalism, which has grown out of Kurdistan. It focuses on the three Kurdistan emirates of Soran, Botan and Baban and their relationship with the Ottomans during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Warm Ottoman-Kurdish relations continued until the beginning of the New Order (*Nizami Cedit*) under Sultan Selim III 1789-1807 and Sultan Mahmud II 1808-1839, and the modernisation and administrative reform (known in Turkish as *Tanzimat*) of the empire, which took place between 1839-1876. At this time, central power was in the hands of the Sultan who abolished all local authorities in the capital and in the Ottoman provinces, including Kurdistan semi-autonomous emirates. This direct rule was met by strong Kurdistan resistance.

From this point, the Kurds conceived of the Ottomans as the “other” whose direct rule over them was unwelcome. They resisted the Ottoman policy of centralisation and the notion of Kurdistan flourished. This can be regarded as a key turning point for the development of Kurdistan nationalism, reinvigorating a Kurdistan consciousness in respect of politics, language and literature. Kurdistan *Melas* (Islamic scholars), popular poets and Kurdistan folkloric poets played a major role in the creation of Kurdistan in the first half of the nineteenth century in Soran, Botan and Baban emirates. Kurdistan writers and scholars turned to literary forms for the expressions of Kurdistan cultural politics. This thesis examines a range of literary sources to consider the role of Kurdistan *mirs* (princes), in politics, and the position of Kurdistan intellectuals in the politics of language and culture in Kurdistan emirate in the first half of the nineteenth century. This study shows how identification with Kurdistan had enabled the Kurds to articulate their claim to their community and their emirates.

Kurdism went on to engender Kurdistan nationalism, whose growth was reflected in the late nineteenth century through the Kurdistan revolt of 1880 by Sheikh Ubeydullah

Nehri, the establishment of the first Kurdish newspaper in 1897 and the literature of the period, and which matured further in the twentieth century.