

Appendix A

The Wisdom of the Kurds: 100 Proverbs

Some cultures are best understood through their arts. Others reveal themselves through their military lore. As much as the Kurds love dance, music, and art, there is an even richer understanding of their thinking to be found in the counsel of their proverbs.

Like all proverbs, these Kurdish sayings are short, practical, and pregnant with meaning. They are meant to be contemplated and to expand their meaning over time. They are the shorthand by which a people preserve what they consider wise, urge that wisdom upon each other, and pass it on in its most distilled form to the next generation. We can almost hear these words crackling from the conversations of old women, from the scolding of the young, or as the conclusion of a tale just told among laboring men.

What we find reflected in these proverbs are a people close to nature, eager for friendship, disgusted with low character, intensely concerned about fairness, clear-eyed about the ills of the world, and reaching always for a simple brand of happiness. They have much to teach us about themselves and about wise living in our own time.

Character

If you give him cloth, he'll ask for the lining.

In a flat country, a hillock thinks itself a mountain.

It is more difficult to contend with oneself than with the world.

Thorns and roses grow on the same tree.

Everything is pardoned the brave.

Those away from the battlefield boast about their swords.

A thief not caught becomes a king.

Those who do not go to war roar like lions.

Consequence and Justice

Every sheep is hung by his own leg.

One gives twice who gives quickly.

Whoever digs a pit for his neighbor should dig it his own size.

When a bald man dies, the mourners give him curly hair as a present.

Destiny

No matter where you go, your destiny follows you.

Wish well, be well.

Friendship

A cup of coffee commits one to forty years of friendship.

A good companion shortens the longest road.

A thousand friends are too few; one enemy is one too many.

Better a wise foe than a foolish friend.

Eat and drink with your friends, but do not trade with them.

Of everything else the newest; of friends, the oldest.

Once a friend, always a friend.

Loneliness is a nest for the thoughts.

Deal with your friends as if they will become your enemies tomorrow, and deal with your enemies as if they will become your friends tomorrow.

God

Both the hunted and the hunter rely on God.

God finds a low branch for the bird that cannot fly.

If God closes one door, He opens a thousand others.

One is equally indebted to one's teacher and to God.

Hospitality

A visitor comes with ten blessings, eats one, and leaves nine.

An open door invites callers.

At table, keep a short hand; in company, keep a short tongue.

Guests bring good luck with them.

A home without guests, a village without shepherds, both are hopeless indeed.

Hunger

A hungry stomach has no ears.

Empty words will not fill an empty stomach.

Jealousy and Property

A neighbor's hen looks as big as a goose, and his wife as young as a girl.

Better a calf of one's own than a jointly owned cow.

Kindness

A kind word warms a man through three winters.

If you wish to do a good deed, consult no one.

What you give away, you keep.

Love and the Heart

A heart in love with beauty never grows old.

See with your mind; hear with your heart.

Men and Women

A shy woman is worth a city; a shy man is worth a goat.

A woman is a fortress, a man her prisoner.

Parents

One beats one's breast who does not beat one's child.

One can never repay one's debt to one's mother.

A girl without a mother is like a mountain with no paths; a girl without a father is like a mountain with no streams.

Patience

Patience is bitter, but it bears sweet fruit.

With patience, mulberry leaves become satin.

Trouble or Evil

A tribulation is better than a hundred warnings.

An illness comes by the pound and goes away by the ounce.

Do not roll up your trousers before reaching the stream.

Even the highest tree has an axe waiting at its foot.

Every “bad” has its “worse.”

When a cat wants to eat her kittens, she says they look like mice.

Whoever speaks evil to you of others will speak evil of you to others.

A hundred men can sit together quietly, but when two dogs get together there will be a fight.

Wealth and Fortune

A fool dreams of wealth, a wise man, of happiness.

A red apple invites stones.

Give nine, save ten.

God has created us brothers but has given us separate purses.

The miser and the open-handed spend the same in long run.

The rich man’s wealth tires the poor man’s jaw.

What is loaned goes away smiling but returns weeping.

Whoever is fond of cream should take the cow around with him.

With fortune on your side, you can sow salt and harvest grass.

Wisdom or Ignorance

A man is as wise as his head, not his years.

A wise man does his own work.

A wise man remembers his friends at all times; a fool, only when he has need of them.

Beauty passes; wisdom remains.

Do what your teacher says but not what he does.

Fear an ignorant man more than a lion.

For every wise man there is one still wiser.
It is easier to make a camel jump a ditch than to make a fool listen to reason.
Many will show you the way once your cart has overturned.
Study from new books but from old teachers.
To speak is to sow; to listen is to reap.

Words and the Tongue

A knife-wound heals, but a tongue-wound festers.
Kind words will unlock an iron door.
Listen a hundred times; ponder a thousand times; speak once.
Open your eyes, not your mouth.
Part with your head, but not with your secret.
Those who know do not talk; those who talk do not know.
What the heart thinks, the mouth speaks.
A threat does not lengthen your sword.

Work and Effort

A man is judged by his work.
A small key opens big doors.
Ability has no school.
Activity breeds prosperity.
Dogs bark, but the caravan goes on.
Habit is worse than rabies.
If skill could be gained by watching, every dog would become a butcher.
If you are an anvil, be patient; if you are a hammer, be strong.
It is easy to catch a serpent with someone else's hand.
It is easy to say, "Come" but difficult to say, "Go."
Stairs are climbed step by step.
Stretch your feet according to your blanket.
The devil takes a hand in what is done in haste.
Work as if you were to live forever; live as if you were to die tomorrow.

He who wants pearls has to dive into the sea.

The devil tempts all, but the idle man tempts the devil.

Appendix B

The Kurds in Film and Fiction

The Kurds in Film

Kurds love stories. Much like other people groups who have lived hard, isolated lives, they treasure the way stories lighten the dreary hours, interpret life and make the past of meaning to the young. The Kurds also love the storyteller's art because it is their best tool for making the world understand who they are and what they have endured. It is no wonder, then, that a younger generation of Kurds and sympathetic non-Kurds have turned to film to tell the Kurdish story.

Film is the literature of our time. While there was once a time when all educated people would understand the briefest allusion to Homer or Cicero or Dante, now our metaphors are found in popular movies. The lesson is obvious, particularly to the young: to make yourself known in our modern world, film is the stage and story is the language you must use.

The Kurds and those moved by their tale know this. It is why some of the most engaging films of our time focus upon the people of Kurdistan. If you can overcome the distraction of subtitles and resist the temptation to demand Hollywood-quality cinematography at every moment, you may discover a world that will live wondrously in your imagination all your days.

Here, then, are some of the better films about the Kurds as of the writing of this book.

1. *Salaam Dunk*

Director: David Fine

Screenwriter: David Fine

Year: 2011

Length: 78 minutes

Awards: "Best Documentary," Chicago International Film Festival; "Best Documentary Feature," Florida Film Festival 2012, Grand Jury Award, Nashville Film Festival.

Summary: The girls' basketball team at The American University of Iraq—Sulimaniya and their American coach learn about friendship, basketball, and living in a troubled land during an academic year together.

2. *1001 Apples*

Director: Taha Karimi

Screenwriter: Taha Karimi

Year: 2013

Length: 74 minutes

Awards: Best Asian Documentary, Asiatica; Best Kurdish Documentary Film, Duhok International Film Festival.

Summary: The story of Saddam Hussein's *Anfal* against the Kurds is told by a survivor who honors other survivors and their families with the gift of an apple.

3. *A Time for Drunken Horses*

Director: Bahman Ghobadi

Screenwriter: Bahman Ghobadi

Year: 2000

Length: 80 minutes

Awards: Cannes Golden Camera Award

Summary: Iranian-Kurdish children survive by smuggling along the Iran/Iraq border.

4. *Jin*

Director: Reha Erdem

Screenwriter: Reha Erdem

Year: 2013

Length: 122 minutes

Awards: Adelaide Film Festival: Best Film Award, 2013, Melbourne International Film Festival, 2013

Summary: A 17-year old girl flees her Kurdish guerrilla unit to find solace in the wild.

5. *Son of Babylon*

Director: Mohamed Al Daradji

Screenwriter: Mohamed Al Daradji

Year: 2009

Length: 90 minutes

Awards: Berlin International Film Festival: Peace Film Prize; British Independent Film Awards: Raindance Award; Edinburgh International Film Festival: Honorable Mention; Sundance Film Festival, Seattle International Film Festival: Emerging Masters Award; all in 2010.

Summary: A boy and his determined grandmother cross Iraq in search of a son and father lost in war.

6. *Turtles Can Fly*

Director: Bahman Ghobadi

Screenwriter: Bahman Ghobadi

Year: 2004

Length: 98 minutes

Awards: 2005 Berlin International Film Festival: Peace Film Award; 2004 Chicago International Film Festival: Special Jury Prize Runner-up; Rotterdam International Film Festival

Summary: On the Turkish/Iraq border, refugee children await their fate on the eve of the U. S. invasion of Iraq.

7. *Min Dît: Children of Diyarbakir*

Director: Miraz Bezar

Screenwriter: Miraz Bezar & Evrim Alatas

Year: 2009

Length: 102 minutes

Awards: 29th International Istanbul Film Festival: Best Director; 18th Filmfest Hamburg, 36th Ghent Film Festival: Special Jury Prize

Summary: A Kurdish brother and sister lose their parents and are eventually forced to live on the streets of Diyarbakir, a city in eastern Turkey.

8. *Kick Off*

Director: Shawkat Amin Korki

Screenwriter: Shawkat Amin Korki

Year: 2009

Length: 81 minutes

Awards: 2009 Dubai International Film Festival: Golden Horse Awards Special mention; 2009

Pusan International Film Festival: Best Movie

Summary: Refugees from Saddam Hussein's tyrannies find shelter in a run-down stadium in the Iraqi city of Kirkuk only to discover friendship during a makeshift soccer tournament.

9. *The Herd*

Director: Zeki Ökten

Screenwriter: Yilmaz Guney

Year: 1978

Length: 114

Awards: 30th Berlin International Film Festival: Otto Dibellus Film

Award; 1979 Locarno International Film Festival: Golden Leopard Award; Voted one of the ten best Turkish films by the Ankara Cinema Association.

Summary: A Turkish peasant is forced to sell his sheep in far-off Ankara due to blood feuds in his remote home village.

10. *Marooned in Iraq*

Director: Bahman Ghobadi

Screenwriter: Bahman Ghobadi

Year: 2002

Length: 97 minutes

Awards: 2002 Chicago Film Festival: Gold Plaque

Summary: A Kurdish musician takes his two sons on a journey through Iraq in search of his lost wife.

11. *Half Moon*

Director: Bahman Ghobadi

Screenwriter: Bahman Ghobadi

Year: 2006

Length: 114 minutes

Awards: 2006 San Sebastian Film Festival: Golden Shell Award (top prize).

Summary: The Iraqi journeys of a Kurdish musician and his sons bring them in contact with the varying textures of Kurdish culture.

12. *Vodka Lemon*

Director: Hiner Saleem

Screenwriter: Lei Dinety, Pauline Gouzenne

Year: 2003

Length: 90 minutes

Awards: 2003 Bangkok International Film Festival: Best Film; Jury Award at Newport Beach Film Festival, 2003 Venice International Film Festival: San Marco Prize

Summary: An aging man, who has only a son in remote Europe to rely upon, carves out a meaningful, poignant life in the stunning Zagros Mountains of Kurdistan.

The Kurds in Fiction

Kurdish journalists and intellectuals complain constantly about the meager state of Kurdish fiction. It is easy to feel their frustration, but the problem is not in a lack of material. It is in the small number of publishers willing to champion Kurdish-themed books, in the lack of translations of Kurdish writing, and in a biased international publishing industry.

Though there are many novels that could be and ought to be listed in this brief list of Kurdish-themed novels, it serves little purpose to list books not available in English or on Amazon.com. We should hope that digital publishing and more enlightened attitudes will help remove some of the barriers to a long-awaited Kurdish literary renaissance. Until that day arrives, the following are some of the most helpful novels about the Kurds that are readily available in English.

1. *A Fire in My Heart: Kurdish Tales* by Diane Edgecomb

Every culture has its stories. In fact, cultures are largely created by stories. The Kurdish culture is no different. This collection of thirty fairy tales reveals more of who the Kurds are than most histories. From a uniquely Kurdish version of Cinderella to the Kurdish Hercules—Resteme' Zal—these are the tales that have helped to keep Kurdish identity alive for generations.

2. *Five Sisters: A Modern Novel of Kurdish Women* by Kit Anderson

Written by a teacher with extensive experience among the Kurds, this tender novel is built upon the genuine stories of heroic Kurdish women.

3. *Honor: A Novel* by Elif Shafak

A powerful exploration of Kurdish culture as it survives outside of Kurdistan, this novel is by an award-winning writer who is also the most-read woman novelist in Turkey. The London Times called *Honor* a “stunning novel . . . exotic, evocative, and utterly gripping.”

4. *The Word Not Spoken* by Laurie Fraser

This first novel by Fraser, an award-winning poet, reveals an admittedly Western perspective on the Kurdish and Turkish cultures. The narrative captures fascinating yet sometimes inexplicable details of Kurdish beliefs and daily life.

5. *The Lost Word* by Oya Baydar

The plight of the Kurds in modern Turkey is the theme of this popular Turkish novel only recently translated into English. Part political thriller, part psychological drama, and part textured love story, this novel by a world-renowned author is finely woven and historically accurate.

Appendix C

A Word About Christopher Hitchens

I never feel quite as divided of heart as I do when remembering Christopher Hitchens. I loved him for his wit, his learning, his courage, his humor, and his unfashionable patriotism. I loved him, too, for his costly devotion to the Kurds. When I saw him on a cable news program wearing a Kurdish flag lapel pin and extolling the Kurds—*my* Kurds—as heroic people, I thought I had never seen such a man.

Yet he despised the religion I've staked my life upon and never sidestepped an opportunity to urinate upon what I hold dear. He celebrated the deaths of men who were fathers to me and once suggested suicide as the only remedy for people of my religious "malady." After digesting one too many of his rants against Christianity, I began referring to him simply as "The Antichrist."

He would have taken it as a compliment, had he even noticed. He barely knew who I was. We met in a green room at MSNBC in New York where I was to appear on the *Topic A with Tina Brown* with Paul Krugman and he was pre-recording an interview for another show. We shared pleasantries for a few minutes before he asked me about the topic of my interview. I told him that Krugman and I would be talking about the influence of religion on the Bush administration. My book *The Faith of George W. Bush* was on the bestseller lists at the time. He knew of it but had not read it. He had no intention of reading it, he said. Religion was what he most despised about Bush and his ilk.

And so it began. The next five minutes were among the least civil of any I've known. Mercifully, a producer interrupted us to summon me to the set. I rose to shake Hitchens' hand. He remained seated, shook my hand, and said, "Well, at least you've not been lobotomized." I think he meant that I was not as stupid as most of the stupid people in my stupid faith.

What I wish is that we had met at a later time when we might have joined forces in behalf of the Kurds. I admired his tireless championing of their cause and would have happily stood with him. He knew nothing of my history with the Kurds. Perhaps he would not have cared, but I think he was the kind of man who would have welcomed aid from any source in support of a

noble cause. The Kurds are just that and no one knew it as well as Christopher Hitchens.

I have chosen to begin each chapter in this book with his words. It is my way of honoring the part of him that I can honor and, hopefully, of reminding us all that Christopher Hitchens the anti-religion bigot was the same Christopher Hitchens who risked his life to travel Kurdistan and then risked his career to explain Kurdistan to the world.

He could be both a bully and a bore, but he evidenced a greater moral clarity and sense of honor than most of the guardians of morality and honor I have met. He wrote fearlessly, as in the sentiments below about international affairs, and only the small and the desiccated would refuse to esteem him for it.

Sooner or later the Saddam Hussein regime will fall, either of its own weight or from the physical and mental collapse of its leader or from endogenous or exogenous pressure. On that day one will want to be able to look the Iraqi and Kurdish people in the eye and say that we thought seriously about their interest and appreciated that, because of previous interventions that were actually in Saddam's favor, we owed them a debt. It's this dimension that seems to me lacking in the current antiwar critique.

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