SOME USEFUL PHRASES IN SORANI

سلاو
[slaw]
/SLAHW/
Hello.

ناوبیت چبه؟
[ˈnawit ˈtʃiː]
/NAH-weet CHEE-yeh?/
What is your name?

خوشحالت به ناسینت
[xoʃˈhalt bɛ ˈnasint]
/khosh-HALT beh NAHS-eent/
Pleased to meet you.

جۆنی؟
[ˈtʃoni]
/CHO-nee/
How are you doing?

(لێم) ببووره
[(lejm) biˈbʊre]
/LEYM bih-BOO-reh?/
Excuse me./Sorry.

خڵکی کوی؟
[xɪˈkɪ kɔˈjɪ]
/khall-KEE KOY-yee?/
Where are you from?

سویاس؟
[suˈpas]
/soo-PAHS/
Thank you.

خوا لهگهل؟
[ˈxʷa lɛˈɡɛl]
/KHWAH leh-GHELL/
Good-bye.

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FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD LEARN MORE ABOUT KURDS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

1. Sorani is spoken by approximately 10 million of the estimated 25 million Kurdish speakers. The largest population of Sorani speakers can be found in eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, northwestern Iran, and Northern Syria, a land often referred to by Kurdish nationalists as Southern Kurdistan.

2. A member of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family, Sorani shares many structural features with other Indo-Iranian languages, such as SOV word order.

3. Sorani uses a modified version of the Arabic script, so those already familiar with Arabic or Persian can learn to read and write Sorani with ease.

4. The Kurds are a nation of about 25 million people, but have never in history had their own nation state.

5. History buffs will enjoy studying Sorani and learning more about Kurds because of their ancient history: they have been around since 700 AD!

ABOUT US

The Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR) at Indiana University develops materials for learning and teaching a wide variety of Central Asian languages.

For more information, go to celcar.indiana.edu.

Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR)
The major language closest to Sorani is Kurmanji, which is mutually intelligible. Not all such groups use these terms, though some Sorani speakers live in Northern Iraq and neighboring regions in Northwestern Iran. There regions together are sometimes referred to by Kurdish nationalists as Southern Kurdistan. There are also some speakers of Sorani living in diaspora communities in the United States and Europe.

**WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE IS SORANI?**

Sorani is part of the Northwest sub-branch of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European group of the Indo-European language family. It has changed considerably under the influence of Gorani (the historically dominant Northwest Iranian language in the region), Persian (a Southwest Iranian language), and Arabic. The terms ‘Kurd’ and ‘Kurdish’ have been used by a number of groups throughout history. In general, they can refer to any of a number of languages of Iraqi Kurds and neighboring regions, though not all such groups use these terms to refer to themselves. Not all languages spoken by communities in the United States and Europe.

**WHAT ALPHABET DO THE KURDS USE?**

Standard Sorani is written in a form of the Arabic alphabet invented in the 1920’s by Kurdish intellectuals, activists, and religious scholar Saïd Kaban Sedqi. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein (whose regime was often at odds with the Kurds) there has been an abundance of media produced using the Sorani Arabic alphabet. Since Sorani is not the only variety of Kurdish with official status in any major political entity, it is swiftly becoming the most widely accessible written Kurdish language.

**WHO ARE THE KURDKISH PEOPLE AND WHERE DO THEY LIVE?**

Sorani speakers have historically had close contacts with speakers of Arabic, Gorani, Syriac (Eastern Aramaic), Iraqi Turkmen/Azeri, and Persian. Their culture shares aspects with all of these, but is especially close to those of other Iranian speaking groups.

Most Sorani speakers now practice Sunni Islam, though there is a sizable Christian minority. There are also some Sorani speakers who profess the Yezidi faith, a syncretic religion particular to Kurds. Because of centuries of persecution, its practitioners tend to be very secretive; however, according to the few existing accounts, it centers on the worship of angels and resembles many of the other religions -- old and new -- which have passed through Kurdistan.

Throughout history, Kurds have played a crucial role in the formation of various Armenian, Byzantine, Persian, and Turkish states and empires. Kurds commemorate their history with a rich oral storytelling tradition. Through the most popular style of epic recitation -- called dengê -- Kurds have passed down the stories of their ancestors, like the Kurdish hero Saladin who founded the great Ayyubid dynasty.

Kurds espouse a strong sense of community, expressed in their communal celebration of important traditional and religious festivals. Among the most important aspects of Kurdish celebratory culture is the **govend** or **hilperkê** -- a large dance performed in a circle, usually led by an important member of the community.