# I Introduction

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# 1 Gorani in its historical and linguistic context

**Abstract:** Gorani refers alternately to a subgroup of the Iranian languages spoken in the borderlands between Iraq and Iran with small islands of speakers stippling the map from the Iranian border to Nineveh or to a literary standard used widely until the decline of the Ardalan dynasty in the 19th century. Here, we explore both these uses of the term to understand the place of Gorani varieties among the regional languages. The role of Gorani has, at times, been the local idiom of minoritized groups or a prestigious literary standard. Gorani and its speakers have substantially impacted its neighbors, including Neo-Aramaic, Southern and Central Kurdish, and Laki. It has been the chosen literary language and spoken vernacular of various religious groups. The conservative character of Gorani varieties has made it essential to understand Iranian dialectology. Here, we explore all aspects of Gorani, explicitly focusing on its diachronic and sociolinguistic developments and the history of its study.

**Keywords:** Gorani, Laki, Kurdish, Neo-Aramaic, Diachrony, Language Contact, Literature

## 1 Overview of Gorani and its significance

In Western academia, "Gorani" refers to a group of under-documented and endangered language varieties spoken in the Zagros Mountains of Iran and northern Iraq. Despite the relatively small number of academic works devoted to Gorani, the language is vital for Iranian studies and linguistics. The term "Gorani" is represented variably in literature. It is spelled as "Gorani", aligning with the Hawrami and Sorani pronunciation (e.g., MacKenzie 2002), and as "Gūranī", reflecting the South Kurdish pronunciation (e.g., Bailey 2016). Various comprehensive studies on Gorani varieties are available, one notable example being in Haig's work (2019: 295). The core of the Gorani-speaking area is the Mountainous Hawraman region in the Western-Iranian provinces of Kurdistan and Kermanshah. It is well-established by scholars, including MacKenzie (2002), that Hawrami once had a wider distribution, which was then displaced by Kurdish

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and other varieties. The islands of Gorani speech in Iraq from between Halabja and Xanaqīn till the Mosul plane suggest an earlier far-reaching Gorani continuum.

Gorani represents a unique linguistic group within the Iranian language family. Its distinct phonetic, morphological, and syntactic features offer insights into the diversity and complexity of Iranian languages.

Gorani's uniqueness reinforces its status as a crucial link in tracing the historical development of Iranian languages. Gorani, in general, and Hawrami, in particular, are known to be particularly conservative compared to other Western Iranian languages.[1] Gorani's conservative qualities likely influenced scholars such as Izady (1992) and Fattah (2000) to sub-categorize Gorani with Zazaki. Zazaki is also characterized by rich complexity, especially in its nominal morphology, complexity often being equated to conservatism. According to Paul (1998b) and Karim (2021), if you also take into account other grammatical features that influence the morphological markers like attribution (genitival and attributive), animacy (animate and inanimate), and definiteness (definite, indefinite, and absolute), the number of paradigm cells increases exponentially. The rich complexity of Zazaki led Paul (1998: 172) to remark "why [the Middle Iranian language] Parthian, spoken nearly 2000 years ago, should be in its noun morphology more modern than any of the closely related NW varieties spoken today".[2] Due to this conservatism, both language groups, Zazaki and Gorani, are likely to have an outsized influence on the scholarly understanding of the historical development of the Iranian languages.

Gorani's conservative elements can shed light on the evolutionary paths of modern Iranian languages, aiding linguists in reconstructing the near ancestors of the modern Iranian languages and understanding linguistic shifts over time. The archaisms in the Gorani nominal system include the preservation of case, number, and gender and an innovative system for attribution marking. Among several noun classes, the most common – the first class – features masculine singular nominals ending in *-ø* and feminine singular nominals ending in *-e*. This declension is highly distinctive, with unique formatives in every cell, except for one notable case: there is syncretism between the feminine singular oblique and the direct plural, as illus-

**1** In this work, we use the term Western Iranian in its original sense as a reference to both the Southwestern and Northwestern Iranian languages. Note that the original geographic distinctions have been questioned in recent years, and it is now thought that the two groups are only distantly related to each other. However, as the separation of the Southwestern group and the Northwestern group is generally upheld despite the change in relationship with each other, we use Western Iranian as a cover term for the two groups (for more on the current state of these subgroupings, see Korn 2016; 2019)

**2** Note that Karim (2021: ch. 4–5) suggests that the conservatism of Zazaki (and Northern Kurdish) might actually be an innovation in one facet of the grammar while paradoxically preserving seemingly archaic features in another.

trated in Table 1. According to Arkadiev (2007: 694), this type of syncretism is unique to Iranian languages. The presence of this syncretism in various Iranian language varieties indicates its importance, necessitating consideration in the reconstruction of many of the immediate ancestors of the "New" Iranian languages.

**Table 1:** Hawrami Luhon 1st declension 'old' (adapted from MacKenzie 1966: 14).

| | M.SG | F.SG | PL |
|---|---|---|---|
| DIR | *pîr-ø* | *pîr-e* | *pîr-ê* |
| OBL | *pîr-î* | *pîr-ê* | *pîr-a* |

The Hawrami second declension class is slightly less distinguished, with masculine singular nominals ending in *-e* and feminine singular nominals ending in *-ê.* This class also features the syncretism of the 1st declension class, adding to it the feminine singular direct case (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Hawrami Luhon 2nd declension 'old (things)' (adapted from MacKenzie 1966: 14).

| | M.SG | F.SG | PL |
|---|---|---|---|
| DIR | *kon-e* | *kon-ê* | *kon-ê* |
| OBL | *kon-ey* | *kon-ê* | *kon-a* |

The Hawrami second declension class is the likely reflex of the *-ag extension. This assertion is based on the fact that the past participle belongs to the second class, e.g., *kere, kerê, kerê* 'done', [M.SG.DIR], [F.SG.DIR], and [PL.DIR], respectively. The cognate forms in other Iranian languages, such as Northern Kurdish *kirî,* Central Kurdish (Suleymani) *kirdû,* Central Kurdish (Sine) *kirdig*, New Persian *kærde,* Balochi *kardag,* etc., show that these are the reflexes of the Middle Iranian *-ag participle (also *-ig and *-ug). The *-ag participle itself was the reflex of the Proto-Indo-Iranian *-(V)kă extension, which, according to Whitney (1993: §1222), attached to a variety of bases to create adjectives of appurtenance, diminutives, and sometimes imparted no discernible meaning. In other contexts, these same formatives developed into definiteness markers (following Nourzaei 2020), including the Hawrami *-eke*, implying different phonological developments in different contexts. The development of a separate declension class in Hawrami from the forms with an *-ag extension has parallels across the Iranian world. For instance, the *-ag extension is the

source of the third declension in Pashto (Table 3). Note the syncretism between direct singular, oblique singular, and direct plural in the feminine, shared with the Hawrami second declension, despite Pashto's genealogical distance from Gorani.

**Table 3:** Pashto 3rd declension 'dog' (David 2014: 84–86).

| | M.SG | M.PL | F.SG | F.PL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DIR | *sp-áy* | *sp-í* | *sp- ə́y* | *sp-áy* |
| OBL | *sp-í* | *sp-ó* | *sp- ə́y* | *sp-áyo* |

The existence of this conservative *-ag declension also links Gorani with Zazaki according to Gippert's (2009:90) suggestion that the Zazaki masculine singular oblique ending has descended from masculine nouns in *-a-ka (not other classes). There are several insights that this comparative evidence gives us when reconstructing early Iranian:

(1) Whenever we observe the pattern of syncretism between oblique singular and direct plural, the *-ag participle emerges as a likely candidate for reconstructing that declension class.

(2) Various phenomena associated with *-ag participles and their reflexes can be postulated for the common ancestor of these forms. For instance, the *-ag extension is responsible for the colloquial New Persian definiteness marker *–(h)e* (following Jahani 2015, Nourzaei 2022, etc.). Reflexes in Zazaki (Paul 1998b), Vafsi (Stilo 2008), Pashto (David 2014), etc., show a definiteness and animacy distinction on nouns purportedly having this extension. No systematic corpus-based study has investigated the effects of definiteness and animacy on differential case marking in these languages. However, grammatical studies have identified differential case marking in Hawrami, Northern Kurdish, Vafsi, and Zazaki. The extent to which definiteness and animacy influence case marking in Northern Kurdish and Hawrami remains an open question.

There are further archaisms and developments in Gorani grammar that shed light on the lateness of many changes, including the preservation of the active participle in the form of the copula *hen, hene, henê*, etc. 'is [3sg.M], is [3SG.F], are[3PL]' < Proto-Iranian *hant-.[3] These conservative features and others will continue to provide insight into historical developments in languages across the Iranian world.

**3** The theory that the Hawrami copula *hen* is the reflex of the active participle of 'be' Old Iranian *hant (< PIE *Hes) is well-known in Iranian linguistic circles. However, this is not the only proposal.

In addition to the historical linguistic insights that can be gleaned from Gorani varieties, the study of Gorani provides valuable information on the historical sociolinguistic interactions among various ethnic and linguistic groups in the region. For instance, using a copula from the historical imperfective present participle described in the previous paragraph is an uncommon feature in Iranian languages. However, it is ubiquitous in the Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) varieties historically spoken in the same towns and villages as Hawrami. Note the past imperfective form of the copula in the NENA dialect of the Jews of Sanandaj, *'yēlē'*, derived from the imperfective active participle of the root 'h-w-y' `to be' (Khan & Mohammadirad 2023: 176). This form ultimately descends from the participle *pāʕel* form of the copula, with a shift from *w* to *y* unique to this variety, which was in contact with Gorani. The influence of Gorani varieties on neighboring Neo-Aramaic, Central Kurdish, Southern Kurdish, and Laki languages serves as a linguistic testament to historical socio-cultural exchanges in the region.

Furthermore, the immense diversity between Gorani varieties is fertile ground for dialectological research. For instance, Gorani varieties tend to have a rich pronominal system with pronouns *îne, ane, ûne, ewe, eð,* and *að*, which encode speaker, listener, and far deixis, as well as animacy and have various uses. The precise set of pronouns and their function constitutes an isogloss among Gorani varieties. The Gorani varieties spoken outside the Zagros in Iraq show different phonological developments from their core Hawrami sisters. For instance, the Shabaki varieties do not show the effects of the *Zagros d* sound shift by which postvocalic /d/ surfaces as an approximate represented here as *ð*. This difference can be observed when comparing Hawrami Luhon's *êð* 'he[PROX]' (MacKenzie 1966: 25) with Shabaki's *êd* 's/he' (MacKenzie 1956: 420).

Other morphological isoglosses include the phonologically conditioned loss of the present indicative/imperfective prefix *me-*, occurring with verbs that begin with specific consonant sequences. Compare Hawrami Taxt's *zanû* 'I know' (Mohammadirad in prep), Hawrami Luhon *mizanû* 'I know' (MacKenzie 1966: 70), Paweyane *mezanû* 'I know' (Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2019: 554), and Shabaki *mezanî* 'I know' (MacKenzie 1956: 429). Additionally, the Paweyane variety exhibits a second-person singular past imperfective ending *-şî*, which may represent the preservation of the Proto-Indo-Iranian second-person singular *š/h formative, ultimately derived from Proto-Indo-European (PIE) *s. This retention suggests that the loss of this formative in most varieties represents a relatively late shift and thus may

Another possibility is that *hen* is the result of the existential prefix *he-* (also from the root *Hes) and a demonstrative element, e.g., *ne*, the result of a reparsing of the demonstrative circumpositon *în=e* > î=ne (p.c. with Masoud Mohammadirad).

not be a significant development for establishing genealogical subgroupings. Ultimately, these and other isoglosses assist linguists in evaluating and understanding regional linguistic variations within the Iranian linguistic sphere, contributing to broader dialectal mapping and comparative studies.

The unique vocabulary and grammatical structures of Gorani offer a wealth of information for lexicographers and grammarians. One example of this is conservatism in the formation of verbal stems. One feature indicative of Iranian languages is suppletive present- and past-tense verbal stems. The present-tense (non-past) stem descended from finite verbal forms, and the past-tense stem descended from the historical past participle in *-ta. For example, the New Persian verb 'to do' shows the stem *kon-* in the present and *kard-* in the past. The equivalent in Hawrami recruited another present stem allomorph yielding *ker-* and *kerd*, respectively. Gorani varieties have preserved many suppletive forms, e.g., Shabaki *gn-/ket-* 'fall' (MacKenzie 1956: 422), Hawrami Luhon *gin-/kewt-* (MacKenzie 1966: 100) cf. Vafsi *gen-/kætt-* (Stilo 2018: 711), etc.

This suppletion tends to be regularized in different varieties. For instance, Central Kurdish shows strong suppletion[4] on the verb 'to see' with the present-tense stem *bîn-* and the past-tense stem *dî(t)-*. The past-tense stem of 'to see' is regularized in some Central Kurdish varieties, e.g., Silêmanî: *bîn-/bînî-*. Older speakers use the inherited de-participial past-tense stems in the Hawrami variety spoken in Hawraman Taxt. In comparison, younger speakers tend to regularize them by adding the past suffix *-a* to the present tense stem, e.g., *taş-/taşt- vs. taş-/taşa-* 'to shave' (Mohammadirad in prep). The same pattern is observed with the Hawrami verb 'to see', which typically shows strong suppletion with the forms *wîn-/dîe-*. However, some speakers regularize it, showing *wîn-/wîna.* The regularization strategy can be seen as an isogloss among regional languages. Northern and Central Kurdish tend to regularize with the *-īd extension; Gorani tends to regularize with the *-ād extension and Southern Kurdish tends to regularize with various strategies, including the *-ist extension. These features and others in the conservative Gorani lexicon provide valuable comparative data for the grammatical analysis of Iranian languages.

Gorani also plays a significant role in studies related to language and identity. It offers insights into how language functions as a marker of ethnic and cultural identity, particularly in a multilingual and multi-ethnic context. The region where Gorani is spoken is highly multilingual, with Gorani varieties including Hawrami,

**4** "Strong suppletion" is defined as suppletion from ultimately different etyma. In contrast, "weak suppletion" is defined as suppletion that developed from language-internal phonological changes that obscure the etymological unity of forms. See Kim (2019) for copious examples of both types of suppletion and examples of their development.

Northern, Central and Southern Kurdish, Laki, Luri, Neo-Aramaic, and Turkic varieties. Despite this high level of multilingualism, ethnic and linguistic identity are not perfectly coupled. Western linguistic ideologies that enforce a strict one-ethnicity-one-language correspondence are relatively new ideas in the region. Speakers of Gorani varieties can identify as Kurdish, Hawrami, Gorani, or part of the regional Hegemonic identity, Persian, Arab, etc.

Political issues complicate the ethnic and linguistic identities of various regional groups. Recognizing these languages as separate linguistic units is often coupled with political ideologies that seek to separate these groups into different ethnic identities. This type of movement has its roots in native-born desires for the equitable treatment of the local language and customs of groups within a unified "Kurdish" community and in externally imposed efforts to promote disunity and discord among groups minoritized within the nation-states. One example of the latter strategy was an effort to Arabize the Shabak as part of the Anfal genocide campaign conducted against Kurds in Iraq by Sadam Hussein and his cohort. According to Leezenberg (1994: 9), the irony of the mistreatment by the government combined with the attempts at Arabization led a Shabak to ask, "if we are Arabs as they say we are, then why did they deport us like the other Kurds?"

The study of Gorani faces numerous methodological challenges, particularly in data collection, which significantly affects the quality and validity of the data. This issue is evident in the works of scholars like Benedictsen and Mann. These early researchers had to rely on a minimal pool of informants and often conducted their work under highly unfavorable conditions. They encountered suspicion and hostility, frequently forcing them to conclude their fieldwork prematurely.

Furthermore, the current situation in the regions where Gorani is spoken remains complex, posing significant obstacles to conducting fieldwork that meets the high standards of language documentation. The variability of data and difficulty obtaining a comprehensive and representative sample continue to be significant hurdles in Gorani studies. Ensuring the reliability and accuracy of collected data under these circumstances is challenging, and overcoming these obstacles is crucial for advancing our understanding of the Gorani language and its nuances.

Using terminology in past research was not always reliable, as colonial interests and an oversimplification of complex situations heavily influenced it. This simplification was often a result of limited access to the community and a lack of understanding of the real circumstances. Despite their problematic nature, these concepts have been taken seriously in subsequent years and continue to be considered valid. However, little effort has been made to decolonize and thoroughly understand them or to address their problematic aspects. In the following sections, we discuss several of these problems.

# 2 Complexities in Gorani studies: An overview

The investigation of Gorani encompasses a range of intricate challenges that have captivated linguists, anthropologists, and regional specialists for years. Among the significant linguistic complexities are the subdivisions and genealogy of Gorani (section 2.1.), the challenges in defining a unified Zaza-Gorani group (section 2.2), and the evaluation of the out-of-the-Caspian hypothesis (section 2.3). From a sociolinguistic perspective, the nuanced usage of Gorani as both an endonym and exonym (see section 2.4), along with Gorani's intricate relationship to Kurdish identity (refer to section 2.5), are significant areas of complexity. The subsequent section will delve into these issues in greater detail:

## 2.1 Subdivisions and genealogy

Establishing the precise relationships between literary and spoken varieties of Gorani/Hawrami is significantly limited by two main factors. Comparison between spoken varieties is made difficult by the lack of documentation and the extreme endangerment of these varieties. The literary language is difficult to place in the genealogy of these languages because its precise qualities are not necessarily apparent from the text. For instance, the Perso-Arabic script does not accurately represent vowel (and sometimes consonant) quality. As such, the texts do not represent many sound changes that serve as isoglosses among the spoken varieties. According to a proposal by Karami and Gholami (Chapter 2 of this volume), the language we now know as literary Gorani is likely a formulaic version of spoken Hawrami, transformed by L2 speakers in a relationship of diglossia with their local varieties. Speakers learned Hawrami for its use in poetry and its association with Muslim and Yaresani religious traditions. Note that because literary Gorani absorbed and was transformed by speakers of other languages, it does not aid in assessing the genealogical developments within Gorani. Because of this unique cline of development, it may be more accurate to view literary Gorani as a "tree of one", much like historical linguists view Pidgins, Creoles, and Mixed Languages.

As for the spoken languages, it is recognized that there is a Hawrami core of Gorani representing what are widely thought to be the most conservative varieties (see MacKenzie 1966: 4). In addition to the Hawrami core, there are peripheral varieties spoken outside of Hawraman, such as Paweyane (as discussed in Christensen & Benedictsen, 1921), Zerdeyane (Mahmoudveysi & Bailey, 2013), and Gawrajui (Mahmoudveysi et al., 2012). These varieties are generally considered less conservative than the core Hawrami varieties, particularly evident in the case of Gawrajui. This variety has adopted many morphological features from neighbor-

ing Kurdish varieties. For instance, Gawrajui exhibits present tense verbal endings similar to Kurdish ones (see Table 4). Notably, except for the second-person singular and the vowel quality of the first-person plural, the personal affix markers in Gawrajui are more closely aligned with Southern Kurdish than with genetically related Hawrami Luhon.

**Table 4:** Present-tense affix person markers in Gorani and Southern Kurdish.

| | H Luhon | G Gawraju | SK Kolyâi |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1sg | *-û* | *-m* | *-m* |
| 2sg | *-î* | *-î* | *-î* |
| 3sg | *-o* | *-ê* | *-ê* |
| 1pl | *-mê* | *-am* | *-îm* |
| 2pl | *-dê* | *-e* | *-n* |
| 3pl | *-a* | *-n* | *-n* |

Hawrami varieties are spoken at high elevations in the Mountainous Hawraman region. Speakers of core Hawrami varieties are often fluent in other local languages. In contrast, speakers of other regional languages (Central and Southern Kurdish, Northeastern Neo-Aramaic, Persian, Laki, Luri, Turkic, etc.) do not tend to learn Hawrami as an additional language. This socio-linguistic situation is undoubtedly true today. However, this may be a recent development after the end of the diglossic situation described by Karami and Gholami (Chapter 2 of this volume).

The variety spoken in Pawe City (Iran), Paweyane, is often grouped among the innovative non-core varieties. However, it is crucial to remember that all varieties retain some inherited features, no matter how innovative. Moreover, some of those retained features could be preserved there and not anywhere else. One possible feature of this type is the second-person singular imperfective suffix *bêşî* [be. IPFV.2SG] (Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2019: 550). The rest of the Gorani varieties, which have a separate past imperfective (i.e., not just a combination of the present-tense imperfective marker *me-* and the past tense stem), feature the form *bênî*. Although it has never been studied directly, the *ş* Paweyane form resembles the original *s formative (palatalized under the RUKI rule). Likewise, the present-tense imperfective/indicative marker *me-* occurs with 100% of verbs, while in core Hawrami, it only occurs with approximately 20% of verbs (see Karim & Mohammadirad, in review). The Hawrami division of verbs into classes that take the marker or do not is undoubtedly the more complicated situation and not entirely predictable synchronically. However, Karim & Mohammadirad show, as MacKenzie (1966: 32) suggested, that the m- prefix placement in Hawrami (Taxt and Luhon) is phonologi-

cally conditioned. This distribution implies that all verbs originally had the marker, which was subsequently lost in specific contexts. Additionally, this places Paweyane in the more conservative category according to this one isogloss. An innovation in the Paweyane dialect is the loss of gender marking in the first- and second-person plural of the perfect construction. For comparison, in H Luhon, we have masculine singular forms like *kerd-e-n-a* [do.PST-PTCP.SG.M-COP-1SG] and *kerd-ê-n-a* [do.PST-PTCPL.SG.F-COP-1SG], whereas in Paweyane, the equivalent form is *kerdê-n-an* [do.PST.PTCPL-COP-1SG], lacking gender distinction.

No systematic study has ever been conducted to establish the subgroupings of Gorani. Hints to a subgrouping can be found in studies of single historical changes (e.g., Karim and Mohammadirad, in review). For instance, several sound changes occurred during the loss of the imperfective prefix in core Hewramî varieties, altering the present imperfective's form (affirmative and negative). In (1), we summarize the changes presented in Karim and Mohammadirad (in review). The original imperfective marker in the vast majority of Gorani is *me-* as exemplified by the Paweyane forms in (1a). There is a pretonic reduction of the vowel *e* to *i* or *ø*, depending on the syllabification. At this point, there is a split where some varieties extend the phonologically-conditioned *mi-* prefix to the negative contexts, as Qałā and Zerdeyane in (1c2). The rest of Hewramî loses the vowel *i*, changing the stress location in the negative (1c1) and reducing the initial consonant clusters (1d1), preserved in the variety of Bzłana. Finally, the *nm* cluster is reduced, the most common result in core Hewramî varieties.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | a. | *me-* | *ker* | *-ó* | ~ | *ní-* | *me-* | *ker* | *-o* | (Pawe) |
| | b. | **mi-** | ker | -ó | | ní- | me- | ker | -o | |
| | c1. | m- | ker | -ó | | **n-** | **mé-** | ker | -o | |
| | d1. | ***ø-*** | *ker* | *-ó* | | *n-* | *mé-* | *ker* | *-o* | (Bzłana) |
| | e1. | *ø-* | *ker* | *-ó* | | *ø-* | *mé-* | *ker* | *-o* | (Text) |
| | c2. | *mi-* | *ker* | *-ó* | | *ní-* | ***m-*** | *ker* | *-o* | (Qałā) |
| | | IPFV- | do.PRS | -3SG | | NEG- | IPFV- | do.PRS | -3SG | |
| | | 's/he does.' | | | | | | | | |

If we examine only the feature of imperfective marking, there are several clear divisions: (1) the *mi- ním-* varieties like Qałā and Zerdeyane that diverged early in the relative chronology; (2) the *ø-/mé* group including most of core Hewramî, Taxt, Lohun, etc. (Bzłana branched off from this group before the loss of the nasal); and the *me-/níme-* group, which represents no change.

It is well established that the "only generally accepted criterion for subgrouping is shared innovation" (Campbell 2013: 175). As such, this discussion of what can be considered innovation is an integral part of the discussion on the relationships

between Gorani varieties. However, no such study has ever been conducted. The current genealogical divisions of Hawrami are based on superficial similarity and geographic unity. It is unclear whether the known groupings correspond to regional divisions in Hawraman: Hawraman-i Luhon Hawraman-i Taxt, Šāmyān and Dizlī, Hawraman Řazāw-u Kamara, Hawraman Gāwaro, and Hawraman Žāwaro (see Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2019: 534).

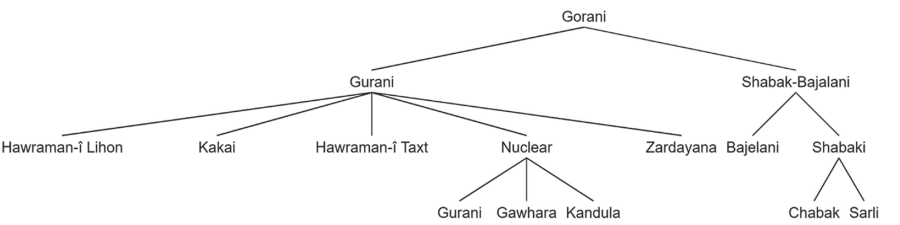


**Figure 1:** Tree of Gorani (based on Hammarström et al. 2020).

Note that the tree in Figure 1, based on the family tree from Glottolog, does not accurately reflect what is known about the grammar or geography of Gorani varieties. It is not immediately clear if the tree represents a distribution based on superficial similarity. Even if one were to agree with subgroupings containing both Shabaki and Bajalani hypothetically, there is no reason why other varieties like Kakai would not equally fit into that group. Little evidence suggests that Shabaki and Bajalani are linguistically distinct entities. According to MacKenzie (1956), the distinction is between Shabaki, the language and Bajalani, the tribe. According to Karim's fieldnotes, many speakers who identify as Shabak and speakers of Shabaki recognize the difference as a religious distinction: Shabaki (Sunni), Bajalani (Shi'i), and Kakai (Yarsani). Unfortunately, these varieties are sufficiently underdocumented, rendering all attempts to classify them speculative at best.

The arbitrariness of the tree in Figure 1 is further exemplified by the omission of certain varieties, such as the relatively well-studied Paweyane, and the inclusion of a group labeled 'Nuclear Gorani'. 'Nuclear Gorani' suggests a core, dense concentration of Gorani speakers. However, these varieties are spoken outside the Hawrami core, which MacKenzie (1966: 4) referred to as 'probably the most archaic.' Given the preliminary stage of Gorani research, scholars should exercise caution in creating genealogical trees. This caution is particularly warranted when considering the understudied Gorani varieties spoken in Iraq, far from both the Hawrami core and periphery. These include Shabaki, Bajalani, Sarli, Maço, and Zangana, among others. At this point, no definitive conclusions about their relationship to the varieties spoken in Hawraman or each other can be drawn.

## 2.2 The concept of a Zaza–Gorani language family

While the reasons for establishing the Zaza–Gorani language family do not appear to have been discussed explicitly, the language family has surprisingly been considered a relatively established subgroup of the northwestern Iranian languages. Benedictsen's (Benedictsen & Christensen 1921) and Oscar Mann's (Mann & Hadank 1932) views have played important roles in including this group within Iranian linguistics.

Benedictsen, who undertook fieldwork in the summer and autumn of 1901 in the west of Iran, stated that Awromânï and Zâzâ appeared to be isolated remnants of a group of ancient Iranian varieties that were more widespread and that their unity had been disrupted by the invasion of foreign peoples, particularly by the expansive movement of the Kurds (Benedictsen & Christensen 1921: 6). Over eight years later, in his letter of July 4, 1906, Oskar Mann mentioned that Zazaki and Gorani were closely related (Mann & Hadank 1932: 25).

In the broadest sense, a detailed comparison of Zazaki and Gorani can be traced back to 1932, beginning with the work of Mann and Hadank. Eleven years previously, E. B. Soane had highlighted the connection between Gorani and Zazaki. His theory was based on the fact that Zazaki shares 'the repugnance to initial *kh-*, giving initial *w*, where Avestic and Old Persian have initial *hw, hv*' with Gorani (Soane 1921: 60). He added that, 'Unlike Gorani, however, Zazaki is archaic in its numerals, particularly in terms of such words as *hirye* for 'three' and das for 'ten'' (Soane 1921: 60). Regarding this statement, Hadank pointed out that Soane overlooked the fact that the words *yerî* and yere for 'three' and *čûâr* 'four' were found in Kandūlayī and Hawrāmi (Mann & Hadank 1932: 24). In addition to the similarities that Hadank found between the Zazaki spoken in Siwerek and Kandūlayī, he established a list of differences between Gorani and Zazaki; these included differences in the field of phonology (containing sound levels for twelve nouns), as well as morphological characteristics, such as the conjugation system, present stem formation and the semantics of the present tense. Other salient differences that he mentioned included the lack of the durative prefix in Zazaki, the lack of the verbal particles *dô, -ô* and *wâ* in Gorani, differences in gender distinction, and the rare use of the determinative suffix in Zazaki.[5] However, despite this list of differences between Zazaki and Gorani, the topic of the independence of Zazaki and Gorani and their relationship to Kurdish remained unresolved. Many later works have been based on Hadank's list to a large extent.

5 Note the rare use of the determinative suffix in Zazaki that Mann & Hadank (1932) describe for Zazaki may be a misinterpretation of the *ek* diminutive extension, i.e., *keynek* 'girl'.

The close relationship of Zazaki and Gorani has been theorized in various works, including those by Blau (1989) and Paul (2009). Blau (1989: 337) pointed out that, despite the linguistic neighborhood and the speakers' deep feeling of belonging to the Kurdish national entity, these two languages could not be linked to Kurdish because they had not undergone the transformations that characterize Kurdish. Paul suggested that, linguistically, Zazaki was a Northwestern Iranian language that was more closely related to Gorani and the (Iranian) Azari varieties than it was to Kurdish (Paul 2009: 545). In addition to an overview of morphological and syntactic isoglosses (mainly taken from Tedesco 1921) across the Iranian speech area to 'present the typological dynamics of the Iranian languages through time and space', Windfuhr (2009: 5–42) noted several similarities between Zazaki and Gorani, including features such as the use of the imperfective and the irrealis marker *-en* (the Parthian optative *-ēndē*), word order (N-EZ1 ADJ) and the development of *z, sp, (h)r, s, w, b, rz, r.* According to Windfuhr, the continuum of isoglosses on both sides of the Alborz range reconstructed the linguistic situation during Parthian times and supported the suggestions of various other scholars (Windfuhr 2009: 30).

In his article 'The position of Zazaki among West Iranian Languages', Paul (1998) evaluated the outcomes of certain Proto-Indo-European consonants and consonant clusters in Parthian and several modern Iranian languages. These included Persian, Gorani, Āzari, Zazaki, Tāleši, Semnani, Caspian varieties, and dialects of central Iran, Balochi, and Kurmanji (referred to by Paul as Kurdish). This evaluation led him to categorize Zazaki, along with Gorani, Āzarī, and Tāleši, as part of the 'most northern' western Iranian dialects. He noted that Zazaki was closer to 'southern' Persian than Gōrānī and Āzarī, primarily because Zazaki shared the development of *y- to *ǰ-* with Persian (Paul 1998: 174). Focusing on two morphological isoglosses – kinship *-r* and present tense in *-nt – he identified a similar northern belt of northwestern dialects. However, he placed Gorani closer to the periphery, with the Semnani group more central to the 'northernness'. Paul mentioned that historical phonology and morphology separated Gorani from the 'core of northernness', possibly due to Kurdish influence (Paul 1998: 174). Based on these findings, he proposed a historical migration theory confirming 'Zazaki's origin around the ancient region of Deylam south of the Caspian Sea at pre-Achaemenian times'. In his view, centuries later, probably during the Sasanian period, Kurdish pushed Zazaki in the west more north and northwest, maintaining contact with Azari, Semnani, Talešī, and Caspian languages. Echoing MacKenzie's (1961) perspective on Kurdish development, Paul suggested that 'Gorani, on the other hand, soon found itself surrounded by a sea of Kurdish. Eventually, it was reduced to small language islands, exerting considerable influence on southern and central Kurdish varieties' (Paul 1998: 175).

However, Jügel argued against this scenario. Indicating the fact that 'language communities may split and migrate', he noted:

> 'if Kurmanji spread into Gorani speaking territory and differences among Sorani and Kurmanji are due to the Gorani sub-stratum, it is hard to explain why today's Sorani does not have morphologically marked case, because today's Kurmanji and Gorani still preserve it' (Jügel 2014: 129).

Jügel (2014: 124) provided a comparative study of different Kurdish varieties in the same article. This study focused on selected features in the nominal system, including grammatical gender, case, and articles. It also examined verbal agreement, verbal stems, and encoding patterns of clausal agreements, such as object marking. The study suggests a relative chronology for the individuation of the languages discussed.

Another essential source regarding this topic is Haig and Öpengin's (2014) article Introduction to Special Issue, Kurdish: A critical research overview. Focusing on the presence of an initial [*w*-] in Zazaki words such as "eat" and "read/study", a feature also noted by Soane and found in Gorani, Haig and Öpengin (2014: 107, 110) argued against forming a distinct subgroup for Zaza and Gorani. They pointed out that this characteristic is also present in Balochi and considered this similarity insufficient evidence to propose a Zaza-Gorani group (Haig & Öpengin 2014: 107). This feature is also shared across the Caspian region.

A detailed systematic review of the arguments for and against establishing the Zazaki-Gorani group is still lacking. Clarifying the relationship of Zazaki and Gorani to each other and their connection to other Iranian languages is a crucial part of the future of Iranian linguistics. This task requires a detailed examination of the relationships between Zazaki and Kurdish and between Gorani and Kurdish. Additionally, it involves exploring the connections of both these languages with the Caspian group, aiming to test the Caspian homeland hypothesis. The most challenging aspect is identifying significant shared innovations that could be used to support a theory of a deeper relationship between Gorani and Zazaki or with the Caspian group. No comprehensive study has been conducted to date.

## 2.3 The validity of the out-of-the-Caspian hypothesis

The out-of-the-Caspian hypothesis primarily concerns the origin of the Zazas. Their endonym, Dimili, has some superficial similarities with the region of Daylam near the Caspian. Despite the known origin of this term from the name of a local tribe, scholars have proposed that the Zazas have their origins in Daylam. As mentioned above, Paul (1998) presented a picture of historical migrations that confirmed the theory

of 'Zazaki's origin around the ancient region of Deylam south of the Caspian Sea at pre-Achaemenian times'. In Paul's view, centuries later, probably during the Sasanian period, in the west, Zazaki 'was driven more to the north and northwest by Kurdish but remained in contact with other languages, Azari, Semnani, Talešī and Caspian'.

As with Zazaki, many scholars such as Minorsky (1943) and Blau (1989) have pointed out that the origin of the Goran might have been in the Caspian provinces, from whence the group first moved to southern Zagros at an unknown early date, with the Iraqi Goran group moving after them to their present positions (MacKenzie 2002). Citing Felix (1995) in terms of the earlier location of Zazaki in the mountainous region of Gilan and MacKenzie (2002) regarding the origin of Gorani in the Caspian provinces, it appears that Windfuhr suggested the close relationship of Gorani and Zazaki to the Caspian group and, probably indirectly, the independence of these languages from Kurdish. A detailed multilayered linguistic comparison of Gorani and Zazaki with the languages of the Caspian area is crucial to determine whether the origin of these languages could be from that region.

## 2.4 Gorani as endonym and exonym

The term "Goran" is employed both as an endonym and an exonym.[6] "Goran" has undergone significant semantic evolution throughout history, reflecting the complexities of linguistic and cultural identities among the community members and outsiders.

Understanding the precise meaning of "Goran" necessitates a comprehensive knowledge of the context in which the term is used. Crucial to this understanding is recognizing whether the term is being utilized by insiders (the Gorani community) or outsiders, as well as identifying the target audience group. The interpretation of "Goran" can vary markedly depending on who employs the term and to whom it is

**6** Endonyms and exonyms are terms that can refer to place names, languages, as well as ethnic groups. The use of endonyms and exonyms for ethnic groups and their languages is a significant aspect of sociolinguistics and anthropology. It often encompasses issues of self-identification, cultural respect, and political recognition. Endonyms can be a vital part of a group's cultural heritage and identity, while exonyms may reflect historical, social, or political relationships with other groups or nations. Understanding and respecting these terms is crucial in cross-cultural communication and studies of ethnic and social groups.

Endonyms in the context of ethnic groups are the names that the members of the group use to refer to themselves. This is an expression of their own cultural and linguistic identity. For example, the people and language commonly known in English as the "German" refer to themselves and their language as "Deutsch" in their own language. In Persian, the exonym "Ālmānī" is used for Germans and their language "German".

directed. This distinction is not merely about vocabulary but also about recognizing the subtle nuances of intra-group and extra-group dynamics and hierarchies that shape the term's usage and meaning.

For instance, an individual in Pawe who self-identifies as Goran might choose to describe themselves as a Kurd when conversing with someone from Tehran or a German in Germany. This decision often stems from an understanding that outsiders might not recognize the distinction between Goran and Kurd. However, in interactions within their community, particularly with individuals who identify as Kurds, this person firmly maintains their Goran identity. In such contexts, they assert the distinctiveness of their ethnic and linguistic background, emphasizing the unique aspects of their Gorani heritage as separate from Kurdish identity. This nuanced self-identification highlights the complexities of ethnic and linguistic identities in the region.

While it is possible today to study the meaning of the term "Gorani" among community members, such a study has already been conducted (see Gholami 2023), and understanding its semantic value in a historical context is challenging. This difficulty arises from the lack of manuscripts, appropriate information regarding the production of the texts, and detailed knowledge about the authors, their languages, the histories of their lives, and the audience of those books.

The study of the term "Goran" reveals a broad spectrum of meanings and associations, each contributing to a complex and layered understanding of the community's identity. This diversity of interpretations highlights the intricate interweaving of historical, cultural, and social factors that shape the community's collective memory and sense of self.

Based on fieldwork involving 120 community members, as detailed in Gholami's 2023 research, the majority of participants believe that "Goran" means "noble" (*bozorg* in the Persian language). Another interpretation of the meaning of Goran includes an adjective for high-spiritedness and a term denoting places associated with grandees (in Persian: *ǰāy-gāh-e bozorgān*). Some informants associate "Goran" with Zoroastrianism, interpreting it as a variation of the term "Gabr", which has historically been a pejorative designation for Zoroastrians.

Furthermore, the interpretation of "Goran" as symbolizing "change", as indicated by a smaller group of informants, links it to the transformational themes in the Yāri religion. This meaning embodies the cyclical nature of life and death, highlighting the spiritual and philosophical dimensions. A smaller yet significant group perceives "Goran" as a geographical term or as the name of a religious leader, specifically Sulṭān Sahāk.

Additionally, less common interpretations further enrich the diversity of meanings. Views of "Goran" as a "name for God", "a regional language", or "a polo player" highlight the term's semantic complexity.

In a historical context, however, the situation is significantly more complicated. Our understanding of how community members have designated themselves is limited to only a few manuscripts and historical records.

The term "Goran" is frequently used as an ethnic designation in these limited sources. Additionally, the term "Kurd" is often used interchangeably with "Goran", indicating that the authors of these Texts may have considered Gorans to be either a subgroup of or integrated within the greater Kurdish ethnicity.

The name "Goran" as a Kurdish tribe appears in Sharafnāmeh by Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi, a 16th-century Kurdish historian, which chronicles Kurdish tribes, including the Gorans. Similarly, the Setāyesh-nāmeye Mostūfī by poet Mīrzā Maḥmūd Moṣtūfī (also known as Maḥzūn), published in 1932, mentions the Gorani family as part of Kurdish pride. In Jonge Ashʿār's colophon, a collection of Kurdish poets' works, the author self-identifies as Kurds.

The "Divan-e Gawra" manuscript features an author who identifies as a "Kurd from the mountains", while in Sheykh Madi's manuscript, the author describes himself as a "Kurdish poet." The family name Al-Kordi Al-Gorani, appearing in a 1678 manuscript titled "Eṯāf al-Khalaf be-taḥqīqe maẕhabe al-salaf", authored by Esmā'īl Al-Kordi Al-Gorānī, combines "Kordi" and "Gorani." This fusion of names further reinforces the inclusion of Gorani within the Kurdish identity.

Contrary to other manuscripts, a few, such as the poems of Sayedi, distinctively use "Goran" and "Kurd" in their marginal notes (see manuscript Nr. Or. 9872 at the Berlin State Library, fol. 117), suggesting a separate Goran identity. However, some orthographic evidence indicates that this marginal note was likely added later to the manuscript and may reflect a more recent concept regarding the independence of the Gorani from the Kurdish identity (Gholami 2023: 96).

Another oversimplification regarding using the term "Goran" lies in the failure to recognize the linguistic and religious diversity among the community's members. While some Gorans follow the Yārī religion (Ahl-e Haqq), others are Sunni Muslims. In regions like Khorramābād, Sarpol, and Shahābād, many Shiites are present, possibly originally Gorans who transitioned from Yārsān to Shia Islam. Additionally, the Gorans' language is not solely Hawrami; they also speak Central Kurdish varieties like Jāfi and Sorani and Southern Kurdish varieties such as Kalhori. This diversity creates ambiguity in defining the Goran community and culture. Misconceptions often arise from assuming homogeneity among the Gorans, such as believing they all follow the Yāri faith or exclusively speak Hawrami, overlooking the community's diverse reality. Thus, it is crucial to recognize and consider the Gorans' heterogeneity in discussions about them.

A prime illustration of this complexity is evident in the poems of ʿĀbedin Jaf (1320–1394 AH / 1902–1977 CE), composed in the Sorani Kurdish language. Jaf, a significant figure in the Yarsan religion, uses the terms "Kurd" and "Goran" in

his poems, potentially indicating different religious affiliations rather than ethnic identities.

He was born into a Sunni family in the city of Shahrezā. His poems, composed in a syllabic meter, mostly revolve around the Yarsan religion and are written in the Sorani language (Jāfi). In the verse below, he identifies himself as Kurd and distinguishes the audience or outgroup as Goran:

| | |
|---|---|
| *min kurdim tu ew Goran* | "I am a Kurd, and you are a Goran." |
| *meyke we de'way satûran* | "Let us not engage in swordplay." |
| *esłi tu kurd û esłi min gûran* | "Your origin is Kurdish, mine is Gorani." |
| *min tîrê mewzî we kêshûn wêran* | "You throw an arrow at me and destroy me." |

If we consider the ʿĀbedin Jaf as a Jaf Goran, speaking the Sorani language, it seems plausible that the term "Goran" in this poem refers to the Yarsan religion rather than an ethnicity since the poet was deeply devoted to Yārī religion, and the term "Kurd" likely refers to Sunni Muslims (see Gholami 2023). An alternative interpretation of this poem suggests that Jaf underscores the triviality of using designations like Kurd and Gorani, which can lead to conflict. Contrary to the first hemistich, where he identifies himself as a Kurd, in the third hemistich, he claims his origin as Goran. This apparent contradiction might imply that he views these designations as sources of unnecessary conflict.

In the Yārī Texts, the term "Goran" is frequently used to denote the "Yāri belief" and the "Yāri religion". Vali (2022) explores the Goran people's views on their ethnicity, language, and identity using secondary sources like Yāri editions. His research finds that the Gorans see themselves as Kurds and that Yāri writers consider Gorani not a separate language but a Kurdish dialect. Additionally, Vali points out the significance of the word "Gor" in Yārī belief, suggesting its crucial role in defining the identity of the Goran people.

In Western academic works, much like emic perspectives, the definition and identification of Gorani present considerable complexity. Individual and colonial perceptions deeply influence this complexity, the authors' degree of knowledge about the community, and their particular areas of expertise. When reviewing literature from the 18th and 19th centuries, including works by Rich (1836), Rawlinson (1898), Houtum-Schindler & Justi (1884), and Zhukovski (1888), we find that Gorani is primarily viewed as an ethnic or tribal name. These authors characterize the Gorans in various ways: Rich and Rawlinson describe them as Kurds, while others perceive them as mountain inhabitants, peasants, members of an inferior caste, or tribes. Rawlinson specifically refers to them as one of the unruly mountain tribes. Rich distinguishes between Gorans and Hawramis, noting that Gorans are settled

in specific areas. Houtum-Schindler categorizes Gorans into Black Goran and White Goran tribes and sheds light on their internal differentiation.

The works from the 20th century include Soane (1921), Benedictsen & Christensen (1921), Mann and Hadank (1930), and Minorski (1943). Oskar Mann, a field researcher in 1901, was among the first to observe the Goran people and their language directly. In Nowsud, he noted that Gorans were tent and village dwellers, listing six Goran clans in Qalʿ-e Zanir. Mann indicated that some Gorans also lived in other villages like Gahvāre, Tushāmi, and Chiqā Bur. Soane suggested that Gorani, seen as a Kurmanji term meaning 'bondmen' and 'peasants', refers to a diverse tribal group in the area. Minorski viewed the Gorans as an independent ethnicity with their language distinct from Kurdish, inhabiting the mountains north of the Baghdad-Kermanshah highway.

Works from the 20th century elaborate more on Gorani as an independent language. Soane proposed that Gorani might be a Persian dialect isolated from Modern Persian's evolution due to its mountainous location. He argued that it is not a Kurdish dialect spoken by various tribes but is being replaced by Kurmanji. Soane also noted linguistic similarities between Gorani and Zazaki and mentioned the decline of the Ardalan dynasty's impact on the Gorani language.

The classification of Hawrami's subgroup of Gorani, as initially suggested by Mann and Hadank and later echoed by scholars such as MacKenzie (1965), Blau (1996), Mahmoudveysi (2016), Mahmoudveysi et al. (2012), and Bailey (2018), presents a perspective that may simplify a complex and multifaceted situation. The issue arises in determining whether Hawrami and Gorani represent a single ethnicity and language. Regarding the language aspect, the question is whether they embody different forms of a language, such as high and low varieties in a diglossic situation (as discussed in Chapter 2, this volume), or if they should be considered as two distinct languages. If the latter is the case, it becomes crucial to identify what grammatical features support the notion of these two varieties being separate languages.

The debate over whether Gorani should be regarded as a subgroup of Hawrami or vice versa has sparked serious discussions, particularly among the region's elites.[7] The preference for using "Goran" over "Hawram" by a group of elites in the region aims to assert Gorani's independence from Kurdish, especially since "Hawrami" is closely associated with Kurdish. Emphasizing "Gorani" as an inde-

7 Elites refer to influential individuals and organizations within the Gorani community, which includes academics, social activists, and writers. These elites are significant in shaping public discourse, especially through social media platforms. They use these platforms to spread their views to a larger audience, further their interests, and promote their ideologies on various topics (for more information see Gholami 2023: 102–103).

pendent identity becomes a strategy to preserve its distinctiveness. This perspective is reflected in the work of local scholars like Sajadi, who use the term "Zabān-e Goran" in his translation (Sajjadi 2021) for Mackenzie's 1966 book "The Dialect of Awroman (Hawraman-ī Luhon)". Through this approach, they view Hawrami as a subgroup of Gorani and emphasize Gorani's independence from Kurdish.

Some elites view the use of "Hawrami" instead of "Gorani" as a betrayal, believing that it signifies more significant support for pan-Kurdism groups and prioritizes Kurdish identity over a distinct and separate one. Critics of the term "Hawrami" believe that "Gorani" is more closely related to ancient Texts and, therefore, a more appropriate term for the language in broader contexts encompassing regions beyond Hawraman. They typically reference historical and poetic sources that have employed the term "Gorani" to describe the region's language and people. They argue that current Pan-Kurdish influences favor the use of "Hawrami" due to its close association with Kurdish identity. For this reason, the followers of Goranism believe it is not appropriate. Instead, they assert that "Gorani" better represents the region's independent identity.[8]

Social media platforms, particularly Telegram channels, have become essential in presenting the viewpoints associated with these trends. Each group uses these channels to share historical materials supporting their theories, effectively highlighting and reinforcing their perspectives. The Telegram channels @horamanhistory and @uromonakam have contributed a wealth of historical and contemporary materials advocating the view that Gorans are Kurds, and their language is Kurdish. In contrast, the channel @sharomag has presented historical evidence, including manuscript images, suggesting that Gorans should not be considered Kurds, and their language is distinct from Kurdish. The content on these channels typically involves interpreting or reinterpreting history, traditions, and myths to establish a coherent group identity. This process of reinterpretation or reassessment of history is a common aspect of ethnogenesis, wherein narratives about a group's origin, journey, and place in the world are constructed or redefined (for details, see Gholami 2023: 103–106).[9]

**8** For an example of this kind of discussion, please refer to the Telegram group "zuvān va adab-e Gorān".

**9** Goranism-movement aligns well with the theory of ethnogenesis. Ethnogenesis, a sociocultural anthropology and ethnology concept, explains how new ethnic groups, identities, or nationalities emerge, often within existing groups. A key aspect of our scenario in line with ethnogenesis is that a subgroup (in this case, "Gorani") within a group (the "Kurds") has begun to establish its own distinct identity. This process has led to further subdivisions and an increasing focus on an independent identity characterized by unique language, culture, and religion. Ethnogenesis often occurs in response to external pressures such as discrimination, conflicts, or the need for a stronger, unified group identity in the face of challenges.

### 2.4.1 The complexity of Gorani as language designation

In the Western academic tradition, the term Gorani has generally been used to refer to the spoken language(s) of the Goran as well as written evidence, which has traditionally been classified as a Northwestern Iranian language (Soane 1921, Minorski 1943, Mann and Hadank 1930; MacKenzie 1961, 1999, 2002; Blau 1989; Paul 2007; Mahmoudveysi et al. 2012). In contrast, using the term Gorani as an epithet for a spoken language is uncommon among community members (unless schooled in the Western academic tradition). Most speakers regard their language as a dialect of Hawrami. For instance, in Zarde, speakers frequently describe their language as "Zardayāna of Hawrami" when asked about their language. Gholami's analysis suggests that community members do not primarily use the designation Gorani to refer to a language but rather to refer to "music and songs." Only 1.6% of the interview participants consider Gorani as the language of Yārī Texts (Gholami 2023: 102, table 8).

There is another language designation, "Mačo", which has its origins in the Gorani word meaning 'he says' (Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2013: 3). This word is an apt descriptor as it varies widely among the Iranian languages, e.g., Northern Kurdish: dibêje, Central Kurdish (Mukrî): dełê, Central Kurdish (Slêmanî): *ełê*, Southern Kurdish (Bijar): *īšī*, Laki (Harsin): muše, Central Kurdish (Sine): *eyžē*, Gorani: *māčo*, Central Taleshi: *bate*, Jondani: *vājue*, Naeini: *ovāja*, Koroshi Balochi: *ašī*, Bandari: *agay*, etc. (Mackenzie 2002; Mohammadirad 2020; Belelli 2021).

Mačo has two essential uses: (1) it is used as a blanket term to refer to the Gorani varieties of Iraq Bāǰalānī, Kākāyī, Šexānī, Šabakī, and Zangana. Speakers of each of these varieties use their endonyms, sometimes substituting Mačo to emphasize the mutual intelligibility connectedness of their varieties. According to Leezenberg (1994), Mačo is one of several such blanket terms, including the more common Hawrami and the less common Gorani, used only by speakers who are familiar with the Western Academic tradition (see Leezenberg 1994: 15 and Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2013: 3). (2) Mačo is explicitly used to refer to the Gorani variety spoken by the Kaka'i. The term Kaka'i 'Brotherhood' refers to practitioners of the Yaresan or Ahl-e Haqq religion in Iraq.

Following (Bailey 2018: 644), the Kaka'i/Mačo community is found around the towns of Tōpzāwa (near Kirkūk), Xānaqīn and Arbil. According to Leezenberg (1993), the Sarlī should also be included in this group. He describes the dialect of the Sarlī as "an intermediary between Shabak and Macho", based on his interactions with the Ibrahimi 'family' of the Kakai from the village of Sfêye near Eski Kalak. According to Moosa (1988: 168), Sarlī is an exonym intensely disliked by that particular Kaka'i community.

Although the Kaka'i/Mačo variety of Gorani is poorly documented, the little research that exists shows several distinctive features that distinguish it: (1) a merger of *ū* and *ī* to *ü*, merging the first- and second-person singular present-tense personal affixes, e.g., *me-wīn-ü* [IPFV-see.PRS-1SG], *me-wīn-ü* [IPFV-see.PRS-2SG] (Leezenberg 1994: 16). (2) The loss of final *n* after *ā*. This deletion affects the third-person plural present-tense personal affix, e.g., *me-wīn-ā* [IPFV-see.PRS-3SG], cf., Paweyane: *mu-wîn-an* [IPFV-see.PRS-3SG]. (3) The reflexive pronoun *yo*, cf. Shabaki: *hē,* Central Kurdish xo, Northern Kurdish *xwe*, Hawrami (Taxt): *wē,* etc. (4) Haig (2019: 301–302) questions the possibility that differential object marking is a feature of Mačo as there is only one example that points to such a conclusion and it is ambiguous. However, differential object marking may be a more widespread Gorani feature that has been poorly studied.

The recent classification of Gorani as a variant of Southern Kurdish was popularized by Bamshadi and his colleagues through a series of articles and dissertations (e.g., Bamshadi 2012 and Bamshadi and Ansarian 2017). They focus on the variety of Southern Kurdish spoken in the Goran regions, specifically emphasizing the city of Gahvareh and Dalahoo county.

There are many debates regarding how reliable the Gorani designation for living varieties has been. Still, its unequivocal acceptance has posed serious methodological problems, and, in our view, this has forced us always to attempt to see these varieties as having a close hereditary relationship and to link them.

A methodological problem in the Western scholarly tradition is the use of Gorani without a precise definition; thus, it is not clear that the term "Gorani" used in these sources refers to "Literary Gorani" or "living dialects". If "Gorani" refers to living dialects, to which variety does it refer, Hawrami? Since each group exhibits different linguistic features in specific cases, not considering the group and not mentioning its name poses serious obstacles to drawing any conclusions. A better solution is to use the term Hawrami independently and not as a variation of Gorani and to use the term Gorani only to refer to the literary genre to avoid unnecessary idiomatic complexities. In addition, when referring to spoken varieties, it is preferable to use the local geographic name of the dialect, such as Kandūleyī, Zardayāne and so on.

For instance, in Gippert (2008), the examples listed under the Gorani category are predominantly Hawrami forms, primarily sourced from MacKenzie (1966). A notable example is the conjugation of the verb 'to come.' What is labeled as Gorani reflects the conjugated forms in Hawrami, which, in terms of the consonant system, are more conservative than other Gorani forms.

The term "Gorani" may be appropriate for referencing literary works in this language, as it has historically been used in such Texts. However, there are debates regarding whether this designation indeed refers to a language or if it

instead denotes a particular literary genre. In this context, the question of whether "Hawrami" might be a more suitable term for the language designation arises. We will explore this topic in greater detail.

Many manuscripts provide evidence of the term "Gorani" used as a language designation. Examples include references to "Lafẓe Gorani" and "Goran Zūvānān" in a manuscript of "Molūd Nāme", dating back to the 14th century AH (19th century CE). Mulla Khadr Ravari (1725–1790), from Ravar near Marivan, referred to his poetic language as the "Gorani language", identifying its speakers as Kurdistani. Additionally, Darvish Sifoor Baniarani (1814–1877), a Yārsān leader, in one of his poems, explicitly referred to Gorani as the language of the Gorans, stating "*gûranî gûyish hozi gûranen*", which means "Gorani is the dialect of the Gorans" (see Gholami 2023: 98). This raises the question of why the term "Gorani" is not more widely used for a language designation.

Modares Saeedi (2022) presents a theory regarding language classification in manuscripts. He suggests that while the poetry in the manuscripts is primarily in the Hawrami language, only those poems written in the Qaṣīda style, consisting of ten syllables, should be classified as Gorani. This theory is supported by the "Kashkūl-e Mahmūd Pāshāy Jāf" manuscript, dated 1309 AH (1892 CE), where Gorani is mentioned alongside other literary genres. The theory that Gorani is a poetic style is exemplified in a poem from the manuscript titled "Gorani va Robāʿīyāt-e Kāk Aḥmad Khosrochāvosh", which translates to "The Gorani and Robāʿīyāt of Kāk Aḥmad Khosrochāvosh." Such evidence may explain why community members do not commonly refer to their language as "Gorani", reserving the term for specific poetic and song genres.

## 2.5 The complex interplay with Kurdish identity

Just like the question of the relationship between Zazaki and Gorani or among varieties within these groups, the question of their relationship to Kurdish varieties is very much an open question. This question is further complicated by European language ideologies imposed on the region. Of particular note is the belief in one-people-one-language, which has been the impetus for the oppression of linguistic minorities both by the nation-state and by other linguistic minorities with higher local prestige. These political considerations are, in a sense, a separate issue from the linguistic status of Kurdish, Zazaki, and Gorani varieties. However, linguists do not work in a vacuum, and the language of linguistic science has directly affected the politics of language in the region. During a survey conducted as part of the LOEWE research project exploring emic and etic perspectives on language and identity, a participant remarked, "well, I think we're Kurdish, but a linguist came

here and said we're not". Likewise, linguistic descriptions that refer to Zazaki and Hawrami as "not Kurdish" have been the basis of burgeoning nationalist groups at home and in the diaspora.

Irrespective of the genealogical affiliation between these language groups, there is no doubt that there are many points of convergence between Zazaki and the local Northern Kurdish varieties, as well as between Hawrami and the local Central and Southern Kurdish varieties. The scholarly literature disagrees historically with what the precise contact relationship is between these groups, with MacKenzie (1961) attributing the aspects of the divergence of Central Kurdish from Northern Kurdish in favor of affinity to Gorani as the result of Kurdish overtaking and replacing a Gorani substrate, while Leezenberg (1993) rejects this hypothesis. Karim (Chapter 6this volume) suggests that although aspects of Central Kurdish and Gorani have converged, most possible convergences are better explained through mutual inheritance from a common ancestor. In opposition to MacKenzie's (1961) account, the places where Northern Kurdish diverges from Central Kurdish are innovative features due to convergence with Zazaki.

## 3 Theoretical background

Despite some early work by Mann and Hadank (1930) and Christensen & Benedictsen (1921), later work by MacKenzie (1956; 1966), and more recent work by Mahmoudveysi et al. (2012)/ Mahmoudveysi & Bailey (2013), there has been comparatively little theoretical and documentary work on Gorani languages and varieties. Up to this point, the comparative linguistic study of Gorani has focused primarily on Tedesco's (1921) and Mann and Hadank's (1930) isoglosses.

Tedesco (1921) proposed a set of phonological and morphological isoglosses that differentiate the Southwestern Iranian language, Middle Persian, from the Northwestern, Parthian. Paul (1998), in a study focused on Zazaki, reexamined Tedesco's (1921) phonological isoglosses to determine the place within Western Iranian of not just Zazaki but Gorani, Azeri, Taleshi, Semnani, Caspian, Central Dialects, Balochi, and Kurdish. These varieties were placed an a "scale of Northernness" from Persian in the south to Parthian in the north. The significance of these isoglosses and the efficacy of their application are questionable. Furthermore, Middle Persian and Parthian represent a convenience sample of Middle western Iranian; their status as prototypes of "southwesternness" and "northwesternness" has been imposed on these varieties only because of the accident of attestation.

One example from Paul (1998) is the relationship between the reflexes of Proto-Iranian *rz and *rd, where *r* is the reflex of both Proto-Indo-European *r

and *l. He claims that Gorani has *ł, r* as the reflexes of *rd and *rz as the reflex of *rd. However, looking at only a single variety, one gets a different view. For instance, the Hawrami (Luhon) word for heart, according to MacKenzie (1966), is *ził* showing the reflex of *rd. In contrast, the preverb *hʊr* 'upward' (Cf. Avestan *ərəzu*) shows *r* as the reflex of *rz. These sound correspondences suggest that there is, in fact, a systematic distinction between there reflexes *ł* and *r*. Any difference is obscured if one looks at literary Gorani, which has forms from various vernacular languages, including those from neighboring languages. The literary Gorani developed as a high (H) variety in a diglossic situation, paradoxically simplifying the language as it was learned by adult L2 speakers outside the Hawraman heartland (see Gholami and Karami, this volume). Paul's (1998) claim that "in some words [Gorani] shows velarized *ł* beside *r* as the outcome of *rd" needs to be reevaluated based on spoken (not literary) varieties, which are more likely to show the inherited reflexes.

Another issue that may serve to obscure the type of analysis that Paul (1998) conducted is Indo-European ablaut control. Essentially, the reflex of the vocalized *r (*ərə* in Avestan) followed by a *d or *z may give a result that differs from the reflex of true consonantal *rz and *rd clusters.

Another issue with this type of analysis is the distinction between inherited forms and borrowing. It is no secret that Iranian languages have borrowed massively from genetically related languages. The word for hand in many Iranian languages is *dest, dast, des,* or other variations. These forms clearly reflect the Persian reflex of PIE *ǵ. However, in many languages, Central Kurdish, Hawrami, and Mazandarani, the forms *zest, zast, zes,* etc. occur in the restricted domain of old proverbs and idioms. To compare forms that were part of a common proto language and can, therefore, provide insight into that protolanguage, one must not just look at core vocabulary but also old or specialized domains within the relevant languages.

The final aspect of why attempts at this type of analysis have proven problematic was articulated in Korn (2003), where she shows that many of Tedesco's (1921) isoglosses are not significant in the Neo-Grammarian comparative sense. In other words, many of these developments are so common cross-linguistically that they are just as likely to have occurred independently as to have occurred when the languages were the same. One such example is the reflex of Proto-Iranian non-syllabic high front vowel *i̯, which shows up as the affricate *j* [dʒ] in Zazaki, Taleshi, Semnani, Caspian, Central Dialects, Balochi, and Persian. However, such a shift is so common that it occurs in many distant languages that could not be the result of shared innovations, e.g., English *John* from Aramaic *yoḥanan*, geminus < PIE *yemH- 'twin' (Pokorny 1959: 505), etc. Indeed, the entire concept of a scale from Persian to Parthian assumes that these two varieties represent the terminal nodes on a language continuum. This hypothesis should not be taken as fact a priori.

Future work on the prehistory of the Iranian languages must incorporate traditional comparative methods with new techniques. Additionally, good data must be acquired from languages, many of which are highly endangered. Although the current volume does not represent a documentary effort, several chapters represent the only fieldwork-based empirical research on the respective varieties. For instance, Khan and Mohammadirad (this volume) look at the Northeastern Neo-Aramaic variety spoken by the Jews of Sanandaj, a variety almost exclusively known to the scholarly community from Khan's (2009) grammar and the hitherto undocumented Gorani variety of Hawraman Taxt. Rasekh-Mahand (this volume) includes a brief sketch and ethnographic survey of the Laki variety spoken in Češin, the only such study ever produced. Any future study of these varieties must use the data presented here as a foundational piece of their study.

The study of modern varieties prompts the question of what precisely these languages and subgroupings are. Perhaps the most glaring gap stems from the naming of these languages. The term Gorani, traditionally used to refer to Literary Gorani, has come to be applied by linguists to the spoken varieties and the genetic sub-family that contains them. However, the relationship between the spoken varieties and the literary language has not been established. Gholami and Karami (this volume) establish a connection between Literary Gorani and the spoken languages as one of diglossia. Literary Gorani, therefore, represents a variety that underwent massive restructuring due to an influx of L2 speakers.

As Linguists impose their perspectives on the local languages, local ideologies have internalized the linguistic ideologies of language and ethnic classification. Now, native speakers in the field often appear confused about the validity of their self-identification, based mainly on what ethnographers, elites and linguists have told them. The connection between a unified language and a culture is, in many ways, a foreign introduction to the region.

If we are to separate the political from the linguistic to understand relationships between these varieties, the question of how many languages/varieties we are dealing with remains. For instance, MacKenzie (1966), in his 17-page sketch of the Grammar of Shabaki, a language in the Gorani group spoken in an "island" far from the Hawrami core, gives a particular impression of the language. In a presentation by the documentarian Parvin Mahmoudveysi at the "Minorities in the Zagros – Language & Identity" workshop at Goethe University Frankfurt, she presented data from Shabaki speakers, showing a language different from the Shabaki described by MacKenzie (1966). One example comes from the Shabaki verbal system: Mahmoudveysi gave the example *urzā-ymē* [get.up.PST-1PL], reflecting what is observed in Hawrami (Taxt) *hurzā-ymē* [get.up.PST-1PL]. In contrast, MacKenzie (1966: 424) shows the form *urzā-y-m* [get.up.PST-INTR-1SG] (with the expected equivalent form *urzā-y-man* [get.up.PST-INTR-1PL]). Since MacKenzie's (1966) sketch of Shabaki, the

existence of a past-tense intransitive conjugation consisting of the past-tense stem, an intransitive marker, and the pronominal enclitics *-m, -t, man, -tan, šan* [-1SG], [-2SG], [-1PL], [-2PL], AND [-3PL], respectively, has been understood as a distinguishing feature of Shabaki. It is not clear whether the existence of this seemingly more conservative past tense intransitive conjugation is a variant that exists in some well-defined context or if it is the reinstatement of an older form borrowed back from its sister languages, or even perhaps mirroring the language of the documentarian's Paweyane variety.

So little is known about Shabaki that it is impossible to say how many varieties with distinctive grammars exist—the problem of "how many Shabakis" cannot be solved in this volume. However, the existence of the problem can be highlighted here. Of course, the question of "how many languages" is not restricted to woefully understudied varieties. Even in the Hawrami core, there is disagreement about the number of varieties and their spread. According to Mahmoudveysi & Bailey (2019: 534), Hawraman is divided into four main parts: "1) Hawraman-i Luhōn; 2) Hawraman-i Taxt; 3) Šāmyān and Dizlī; and 4) Hawraman Řazāw-u Kamara. There are also two other parts: 5) Hawraman Gāwaro and 6) Hawraman Žāwaro (these might be a part of Řazāw-u Kamara)." This grouping differs from MacKenzie (1966: 5–6), who shows the Groups Luhon, Hajij, Jwanro, Pawa, Taxt, and Razaw. Only Luhon, Taxt, and Razaw directly correspond to Mahmoudveysi & Bailey's (2019: 534) groups.

The currently most well-known varieties are Hawrami Luhon (MacKenzie 1966), Zerdeyane (Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2013), and Gewrecûî (Mahmoudveysi et al. 2012), which are known from dedicated volumes. Each contains a sketch grammar and translated texts based on fieldwork.

MacKenzie's (1966) study is the most comprehensive and has shaped how the scholarly community perceives prototypical Hawrami features. This study can be regarded as having a generally high level of accuracy. However, it suffers from several shortfalls: (1) it is the result of interviews with a single male speaker. (2) The single male speaker was interviewed to gather information about his native dialect, the variety of Luhon. This variety was deemed his native dialect as it was the language of his family going back many generations. However, the speaker was born in a different country (Iraq), surrounded by speakers of a different variety and a different societal language. (3) The speaker eventually returned to his family's home country (Iran) to live in Pawe city, where they speak yet another variety differing in many ways from his "native" language.

The effects of these languages and varieties, mainly Kurdish, on the speaker's language obscure the nature of shared features. For instance, the speaker uses many applicative constructions (labeled "absolute prepositions" by MacKenzie), which are common in Kurdish but less common in Hawrami. Compare the Hewrami example in (1a) with the Central Kurdish Suleymanî in (1b). In both examples, the Agent is

marked by a clitic, and the verb features object indexing. Adding the post-verbal element in Hawrami *=pene* and the pre-verbal element in Central Kurdish *pê=* tell the listener how to interpret the thematic role of the object.

(1) *a.* *wat-e-b-ê* *=m* *=pene*
say.PST-M.SG-SBJ-3SG.OAPPL =1SG.A =DAT.APPL
"I would have told him."

b. *pê=* *=m* *wut*
DAT.APPL= =1SG.A say.PST. 3SG.OAPPL
"I would have told him."

Both languages can express the oblique argument with an adpositional phrase, as shown in (2). The applicative constructions are the standard way to express oblique pronominal arguments in Central Kurdish Suleymanî. However, they are much rarer in spoken Hawrami. It is unclear if the frequent use of applicative constructions in the idiolect of MacKenzie's (1966) consultant represents an influence from the dominant Central Kurdish, some effect of MacKenzie's (1966) elicitation and translation process, or a native feature of the grammar of Newsûd.

(2) *a.* *wat-e-b-ê* *=m* *be* *pya-k-an*
say.PST-M.SG-SBJ-3SG.OAPPL =1SG.A to man-DEF-PL
"I would have told the men."

b. *wut* *=im* *be* *pyaw-ek-an*
say.PST. 3SG.OAPPL =1SG.A to man-DEF-PL
"I would have told the men."

An additional issue with MacKenzie's (1966) grammatical analysis was his articulation of the ergative system. Captured within his data was a complex alignment system. There is an aspectually-split ergative system. The nominative-accusative imperfective stem is used for present, future, and past imperfective. The ergative-absolutive perfective stem is used for the simple past, perfect, pluperfect, past conditional and other past tense constructions. Like Central Kurdish, the ergative conjugation consists of the past-tense stem conjugated to index a pronominal object or as third-person singular in the presence of an overtly expressed nominal object. The agent is co-indexed by a left-leaning clitic person marker, which can never attach to the agent in which it indexes: A O=CPM V. This is the construction often referred to as remnant ergativity (Jügel 2009). In the event of a topicalized agent, the ergative structure changes, featuring the agent declined in the oblique case directly preceding the verb: O A-OBL V. This can be understood as canonical ergativity.

An idiosyncrasy of MacKenzie's (1966) data/analysis is his examples of the canonical ergative construction that occurred with impersonal subjects such as (3a). He described this construction thus: "When the agent is impersonal, it may be expressed by a noun in the oblique case." Data is now available showing canonical ergativity with personal agents (3b) and (3c). In (3b), Hîwa, a proper noun, is marked oblique *-y,* and there is no agent clitic *=ş.* Slightly less clear is (3c), where the first-person singular pronoun *min* occurs without a corresponding agent clitic *=m.* The pronoun *min* is not synchronically marked for case per se. However, historically, it is the oblique pronoun contrasting with the now defunct first-person singular direct *ez.*

(3) a. *yex-ek-e* *germa-y* *taw-n-a-we*
ice-DEF-M.SG.DIR heat-SG.OBL melt-CAUS-PST.3SG-PV
"The heat melted the snow." (MacKenzie 1966: 51)

b. *sipal-ek-e* *Hîwa-y* *şet*
cloths-DEF-M.SG.DIR PN-M.SG.OBL wash.PST.3SG.M
"Hiwa washed the clothes." (Rasekh-Mahand & Naghshbandi 2013: 22)

c. *ī* *gīr=e* *čēš* *bī* *min*
DEM.PROX hook. M.SG.DIR=DEM what COP.PST.3SG.M 1SG(OBL)
*wārd*
eat.PST.3SG.M
"What is this situation that I am caught in?" (Mohammadirad fieldnotes)

MacKenzie's (1966) grammatical sketch is the largest and most comprehensive to date. However, it is not enough to understand the complexities of Hawrami grammar or the spread of Hawrami features. The variety of Luhon may be particularly conservative and a prototype of the Hawrami core. However, this has not been established scientifically. Future research must be data-driven and grounded in fieldwork to establish the answers to these questions: how many Hawrami/Gorani varieties are there? What isoglosses separate groups?

Regarding field methods, two recent publications are important: *The Gorani language of Zarda* (Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2013) and *The Gorani language of Gawraju* (Mahmoudveysi et al. 2012). These two books are sketch grammars accompanying a set of oral folktales gathered in Iran as part of the DOBES project, which funded Language documentation efforts around the globe supported by the Volkswagen Foundation. These two collections are essential reading in Gorani linguistics. However, completeness was not a goal of the authors. Many linguistic questions remain unanswered, especially regarding conditioning environments for morphological allomorphs and full paradigms. For instance, Mahmoudveysi et al. (2012: 16) show four ezafe allomorphs *-e, -y, -a,* and *-ø.* However, they were

not able to specify the environments that condition the presence of either *-a* or *-ø.*, *-e* and *-y* being identified as general and post-vocalic. Likewise, the language of *Zarda* (Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2013) has the allomorphs *-e, -u(-w), -ø, a* and *-ī(-y)*. However, their functions are not demarcated.

All three of these works represent a substantial increase in our knowledge of Gorani, adding significantly to the early works of Mann and Hadank (1930) and Christensen & Benedictsen (1921), as well as targeted studies such as Mahmoudveysi & Bailey's (2019) overview of Hawrami Luhon and Paweyane, Minorsky's (1943) study on the Goran people, Blau's (1989) brief sketch on Gorani, MacKenzie's (1956) brief sketch of Shabaki, and targeted linguistic studies like Rasekh-Mahand & Naghshbandi (2014), Holmberg & Odden (1966), Sultan (2011), Mohammadirad (2020), etc.

## 4 Objectives

To address the complexities such as those outlined in Sections 2.1 to 2.5 and to fill at least some of the research gaps, as partly discussed in Section 3, a workshop titled "Minorities in the Zagros – Language & Identity" (MIZLI) was organized on the 19th and 20th of September 2022 at Goethe University Frankfurt.

The present volume is a collection of selected articles based on the lectures given at MIZLI. The papers have been peer-reviewed for inclusion in this volume. This volume explores the Gorani language, focusing on its classification, relationship with spoken varieties like Hawrami, and sociolinguistic implications. It investigates the impact of Gorani on regional languages and cultures, with particular attention to unique traditions like Judeo-Gorani, and examines the influence of linguistic interactions on its development. The aim is to offer updated insights into Gorani, enhancing the understanding of its role and evolution in linguistic and cultural contexts.

In addressing these core objectives, the volume navigates through intricate questions. It scrutinizes the effectiveness of endonyms and exonyms, particularly 'Gorani' and 'Zazaki', as descriptive tools. It discusses the emic and etic perspectives, reflecting the complexity of the use of these terms and their influence on identity formation and identity conflicts.

Another important aim of this volume is to examine the intricate relationship between Literary Gorani and the spoken varieties known as Hawrami. It considers whether the language in the manuscripts can be seen as a written form of spoken Gorani. Additionally, the volume explores whether Gorani Texts are indeed written forms of Hawrami and investigates whether specific Literary Gorani Texts exhibit features of their authors' native languages.

Central to this volume explores the relationship between Literary Gorani and the languages of those composed in this idiom. It seeks to understand how Literary Gorani contrasts with the living spoken varieties co-existing in the same territories.

A critical issue in the dialectology of Literary Gorani manuscripts concerns the nature of the language of these Texts. Two main theories have been suggested concerning the nature of Gorani. Rieu (1881), Mackenzie (1965, 2002) and Blau (1996) viewed this literary language as a 'koine', by which they meant a variety that emerged from the contact between two or amongst several varieties of a given language.

From a different perspective, Kreyenbroek and Chamanara (2013) and Chamanara and Amiri (2018) proposed that this language is better represented as a 'continuum'. Based on their definition, a continuum refers to an idiom that is not confined to a specific language but can rather be comprised of different varieties in a given region. They claimed that this language served as an instrument to convey the culture of the Zagrossian region to the maximum number of audiences. Leezenberg pointed out that Gorani had practically become extinct as a literary dialect (Leezenberg 1993: 9).

Based on several common features, mainly in a corpus of poems from Hawraman dated to around the 1800s, which were edited versions, Mahmoudveysi (2016: 125) concluded that Literary Gorani had a single, coherent linguistic system. Following Kreyenbroek and Chaman Ara's views regarding the nature of the Gorani language, Mahmoudveysi pointed out that the poets had developed a written language for poetry that was never used as a spoken language.

One of the main objectives of this book is to update the theories regarding the nature of Gorani. To achieve this goal, Chapter 2 of this volume proposes the hypothesis that Literary Goranī and Hawrami constitute a single unified language. In this context, Goranī functions as the high variety and Hawrami as the low variety in a diglossic situation.

This volume also focuses on special cases that display the unique situation reflecting the complexity and diversity of Gorani Texts. For example, Chapter 3 focuses on the unique works of a Gorani poet, Saydi, whose compositions diverge from the mainstream Literary Gorani and reflect aspects of living languages, particularly Hawrami. The aim is to demonstrate how Literary Gorani is connected to these living varieties.

Another case study reflecting the specialty and uniqueness of Literary Gorani is the Judeo-Gorani tradition. Judeo-Gūrānī, which is absent from the study of Gūrānī literature, is an increasingly important area in investigating social, intellectual, and linguistic interactions between Jews and Muslims in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is worth knowing how the Jewish scribes used the Hebrew script to

transliterate Gūrānī Texts and how their Hebrew knowledge influenced their Text productions.

Judeo-Gūrānī Texts exhibit a variety of unique features due to the contact with different languages, such as Persian, South Kurdish, and Gūrānī. They are thus of particular importance for the study of code-switching, language convergence, borrowing, pidgins, and related topics. Chapter 4 of this book introduces this important collection and explores its significance for understanding the sociolinguistic aspects of developing the Judeo-Gorani tradition.

Regarding language contact, the volume evaluates the extent to which Gorani varieties have been shaped by their linguistic interactions. It looks into the influence of Literary Gorani or spoken Hawrami on neighboring Kurdish and Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) varieties.

Finally, attention is given to the related languages, Zazaki and Laki, particularly the linguistic profile of the Laki variety spoken in Češin, an area of Gorani influence in Iran's Hamadan province. This comprehensive exploration contributes significantly to the broader understanding of Goranic linguistics, highlighting its complex interplay with neighboring languages and the cultural dynamics of the region.

## 5 Outline of the book

This volume comprises four parts, including this introductory chapter. This introduction by Saloumeh Gholami and Shuan Osman Karim explores Gorani in its historical, social, and linguistic contexts, primarily highlighting the challenges and research gaps in Goranic studies.

Part two focuses on Literary Gorani, the character of the Texts, the relationships between literary and spoken varieties, and the manuscript tradition. This part sheds light on major methodological questions regarding the relationship of literary Gorani to spoken varieties and the socio-cultural life of the Goran living in the Zagros mountains from the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries, contributing to our understanding of their community.

In Chapter 2, Saeed Karami and Saloumeh Gholami present a new hypothesis, examining whether Literary Gorani and Hawrami constitute a single, unified language. Although these languages have significant structural differences, people in the region and even speakers of modern Gorani varieties often conflate them. It is undoubtedly the case that Gorani has a greater affinity to modern spoken Hawrami than it does to Kurdish, Laki, Neo Aramaic, or the newly arrived Persian. However, they have wildly different morphological systems. Gholami and Karami explain

the seemingly simplified system of Literary Gorani as compared to modern spoken varieties as a type of creolization that took place as part of an influx of L2 speakers when Gorani became the H variety in a diglossic situation involving speakers of many regional languages. Hawrami, spoken in the secluded mountainous region of Hawraman, has largely retained its original form. Conversely, Goranī, utilized as a religious and literary language, has come into contact with different varieties.

Chapter 3 introduces the singular Gorani poet Saydi Hawrami. Philologists have noted that Saydi's poetry exhibits aberrant characteristics compared to other Gorani poets. This divergence from Literary Gorani is similar to the innovation seen in the works of another poet, Dizlī, who also brought a fresh perspective to the Literary Gorani tradition. Saydi's oeuvre can be divided into two distinct types. The first type aligns well with the mainstream Literary Gorani in concept and language. However, in the second type, Saydi intentionally manipulates the language, uniquely rendering it enigmatic and incomparable to any known speech type, as discussed by Habibi in 2019 (Karami et al. 2023: 480). Such deviations in Saydi's poetry led MacKenzie (1965: 268) to question the authenticity of a poem attributed to Saydi that was published in the newspaper Galawēž. As part of the European Research Council-funded ALHOME: Echoes of Vanishing Voices in the Mountains: A Linguistic History of Minorities in the Near East project, Parwin Mahmoudveysi conducted a preliminary study of the modern Hawrami variety spoken in the village of Bzłāna. She observed that numerous elements in Saydi's works, previously identified as irregular by MacKenzie (1965), were standard features in the dialect of Bzłāna village. The available data on Bzłāna's dialect is limited, and the insights from Mahmoudveysi's survey should be considered as initial findings, underscoring the necessity for more comprehensive documentation. Notably, Mahmoudveysi's research provides initial evidence supporting the notion that Gorani mirrors an actual spoken dialect in at least one instance. The concept that Gorani accurately represents any spoken dialect has not been conclusively established. Scholars have historically been puzzled by the contrast between the traditional nature of contemporary spoken varieties and the seemingly innovative features found in the earliest surviving Literary Gorani Texts.

Chapter 4 examines a recently discovered corpus of Gorani manuscripts written in the Hebrew script. Hamid Reza Nikravesh, in his chapter titled "Judeo Goranî Texts", offers an insightful examination of this collection. These manuscripts are among the richest sources for delving into the development, mechanisms, and essence of the Gorani language, showcasing unique features that highlight linguistic, cultural, and historical variances. Without reliable material, this project focuses on the Judeo-Gorani manuscripts in the National Library of Israel (NLI) for the first time. In addition to introducing the manuscripts and their translations, Nikravesh provides a detailed background on the Jewish communities in

Kermanshah, Iran. Although they no longer exist there, their history can be pieced together from secondary sources. The Judeo-Gorani manuscripts offer clues to their integration level within the local societies. The adherence of many Gorani speakers to the Ahle Haqq religious minority allowed for a deeper connection between the Gorani and the Jews of Kermanshah. This bond was notably more profound than that between either group and their Muslim neighbors, reflecting a unique socio-cultural dynamic in the region.

Part Three focuses on contact between the various regional languages. Chapter 5, "Gorani Influence on Northeastern Neo-Aramaic" by Geoffrey Khan and Masoud Mohammadirad, examines the significant convergence between Gorani and Northeastern Neo-Aramaic. This examination centers on the NENA variety spoken by the Jews of Sanandaj and the Hawrami variety of Taxt. Geoffrey Khan has previously published his foundational study "The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Sanandaj" in 2009. Mohammadirad and Khan realized that the spoken Neo-Aramaic had undergone contact-induced changes. However, while preparing Mohammadirad's forthcoming grammar on the Hawrami variety of Taxt, they realized that it was not Kurdish — the current dominant regional language spoken in Sanandaj — but Hawrami that influenced these changes. This contact scenario supports the view that Gorani had a broader distribution in the past (see MacKenzie 1961) and that the Jewish communities interacted more closely with Gorani speakers than either group did with their Muslim or Christian neighbors (see Nikravesh in this volume). Following the theoretical framework of Matras and Sakel (2007), the chapter outlines 'Matter' borrowing, which includes loanwords, morphemes, calques, and phonemes, as well as 'Pattern' borrowing, encompassing aspects such as phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Chapter 6, by Shuan Osman Karim, looks at the convergence between Gorani and Southern Kurdish grammatical structures. Southern Kurdish has long been understood as highly innovative, though rarely in publication. However, these varieties, almost exclusively known through Fattah's (2000) "Les Dialects Kurd Meridineaux", are more diverse than any other subgroup. Karim's study is framed in light of the argument between MacKenzie's (1961) "Origins of Kurdish" and Leezenberg's (1993) "Gorani Influence on Central Kurdish: Substratum or Prestige Borrowing". The core of their argument is a debate over how (and when) Kurdish came to replace the indigenous Gorani population and its effect on Kurdish. Essentially, MacKenzie proposed the overtaking of the Gorani population by Kurds early on, leading to substratum effects on Kurdish brought in by the Gorani speakers shifting to Kurdish. His evidence comes from a few basic features of Central Kurdish grammar that differ from Northern Kurdish. Leezenberg argued that Gorani was

not a substrate language that was overtaken but rather a prestige variety that explicitly demarcated domains of use in early Kurdish society. Chapter 6 does not explore the sociolinguistic validity of either Leezenberg's (1993) or MacKenzie's (1961) arguments. Instead, Karim focuses on the specific examples of convergence proposed by MacKenzie (1961), showing that much of what MacKenzie proposed to be Gorani effects on Central Kurdish are widespread inherited features from Middle Iranian and the ways that Northern Kurdish differs from Central and Southern Kurdish are innovative in Northern Kurdish. Setting aside the arguments of Leezenberg (1993), MacKenzie (1961) shows real examples of convergence at the dialect level. It is possible to say that there are specific Gorani varieties that underwent significant, undeniable changes under the influence of Kurdish, and likewise, there are Kurdish varieties that have undergone changes under the influence of Gorani.

The fourth and final part of the volume, which focuses on related languages, includes two chapters. Chapter 7 focuses on the Laki language and is authored by Mohammad Rasekh-Mahand. This chapter discusses the Laki language as spoken in Češin, a village in the Hamadan province of Iran. Unlike other Laki villages, Češin is surrounded by Persian- and Turkish-speaking communities. Additionally, Češin is distinguished from its neighbors because its inhabitants follow the Ahl-e Haqq religious minority. Laki varieties are woefully understudied, and the variety of Češin is no exception. Adding to the mystique of Laki is its affinity with both the Luri languages, traditionally classified as Southwestern Iranian, and Kurdish, classified as Northwestern Iranian. Recent evidence (e.g., Korn 2021) suggests that these two groups are much more distantly related, rendering the status of Laki as a transitional variety highly unlikely. Thus, Laki's controversial relationship with Kurdish underscores the importance of its study. Rasekh-Mahand et al.'s study is based on natural data gathered through fieldwork and compared to two other Laki varieties, Laki Kakavandi and Laki Harsini, and Southern Kurdish varieties.

In Chapter 8, Mahîr Dogan presents the use of Zazaki as both an endonym and an exonym. By highlighting the importance of acknowledging the impact of historical colonialism on Kurdish communities and its influence on their linguistic practices, he emphasizes using emic glossonyms in linguistic studies to avoid perpetuating colonial and hegemonic attitudes. Although Gorani is this volume's primary focus, including a discussion on Zazaki terminology is warranted due to its intriguing parallels with the Gorani case. The necessity of including a discussion of Zazaki is particularly evident in the similar processes observed in ethnogenesis, which are also pertinent to the study of Gorani.

## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | first person |
| 2 | second person |
| 3 | third person |
| A | agent |
| APPL | applicative |
| CAUS | causative |
| COP | copula |
| DAT | dative |
| DEF | definite |
| DEM | demonstrative |
| DIR | direct case |
| F | feminine gender |
| IPFV | imperfective |
| M | masculine gender |
| NEG | negative |
| OAPPL | applied object |
| OBL | oblique case |
| PL | plural |
| PN | proper noun |
| PROX | proximal |
| PRS | present tense |
| PST | past tense |
| PTCP | participle |
| PV | pre-/post-verb |
| SBJ | subjunctive |
| SG | singular. |

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