

NOTES

CHAPTER I KURDISTAN GLOBAL

1. How should ethnicity be rendered linguistically, as a noun (“Kurd”) or an adjective (“Kurdish”)? A noun can be understood to make an ontological statement about someone’s very being, and implies fixity. An adjective assigns to a person a trait, and implies flexibility. My preference would be to use the more flexible term, the adjective. However, during my time in Iraq I have come to see how deeply ontological ethnic identity is for many people, especially given that ethnicity has been the basis on which many have been victimized and killed. So, even though the English language seems to be moving away from ontological statements about ethnicity, and in English describing a person as “Kurdish” is becoming more common than describing someone as “a Kurd,” I would not feel comfortable doing so all the time. What would that take away from people for whom claiming to be “a Kurd” is a right that they have not always had and insist on, going forward? In the Kurdish spoken in Iraq, I still hear people saying “I am a Kurd” (*Ez Kurd im*) on a regular basis. (In Turkey, I have heard this less frequently. People will more often make a reference to speaking the Kurmanji dialect than to “being” Kurdish.) In this book, to both show respect for my friends and to convey the constructed nature of identity, I switch off between “Kurd” and “Kurdish.” A related term, “Kurdistani,” refers to people belonging to the population of Kurdistan without specifying ethnicity.
2. “Hewler” is the city’s name in Kurdish. It is known as “Erbil” in Arabic, a name that is sometimes used in Kurdish as well. “Arbela” is the city’s historic name in English-language literature.
3. Armenians were the majority in Eastern Anatolia, which from a Kurdish point of view is “northern Kurdistan.” Armenian and Turkish nationalists eschew the term “Kurdistan.” After the Ottoman regime of Sultan Abdulhamid II, followed by the Young Turks, massacred and attempted genocide against Armenians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kurds became the majority.
4. Ismet Sheriff Vanly’s geographical and historical overview of Iraqi Kurdistan (1993) is a good source on population figures to the early 1990s.
5. As I point out in this book, identity categories in Iraq such as ethnicity and religion are constructed along patrilineal lines. Ethnicity may be passed on by a