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**Editorial:** |  
**Kurdish Studies in seven volumes** | Ibrahim Sirkeci <sup>‡</sup>

I first developed an interest in studying Kurdish demography and population movements in the early 1990s. It was, perhaps, one of the most adverse political periods for Kurdish politics in Turkey and studying anything connected to the Kurds was fraught with danger and indeed a rarity. It was a period marked with waves of Kurds fleeing the country to seek asylum elsewhere, whilst those that remained faced turmoil. For a young social scientist, it seemed to me the obvious choice of topic to study. However, the more I was immersed in this line of research, the more I was intrigued, and perhaps provoked, by the extent of the politically corrupted pseudo-science that dominated the limited existing literature on the Kurds then.

The prevailing political contest at the time was how to practically determine what could be inferred from very limited data sources. For population researchers, studying the Kurds has been like reading coffee grounds due to the “managed scarcity” of data, which has led me, like many others in the field, to read between the lines but without ignoring the actual figures, albeit limited. In such a polarised society, the resulting interpretation of such data is unlikely to please the many factions involved and my own research did not gain me many friends on either side of the fence. Studying the Kurds has almost always been a challenge, not only for those of Kurdish ethnicity but also for anyone who has some interest in issues relevant to Kurdish populations and geographies. There are many who have paid the “price” for their interest and commitment to this subject and the bravery of these researchers is something to applaud and celebrate.

Launching *Kurdish Studies* in 2013, it was essential for our academic integrity that we maintained impartiality and a robust peer review process in the face of a highly contested and politically charged field. I believe that after seven years, we can comfortably say that we have been successful in this pursuit.

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## 2 Editorial

At a conference in Hewlêr, Kurdistan in Northern Iraq in 2012, we held what I believe to be the first ever large editorial meeting for *Kurdish Studies* journal. Just a few years later, the Journal founders organised a conference dedicated to “Kurdish Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, hosted at Regent’s University London. Migration Conferences in London in 2014, Prague in 2015 and Vienna in 2016 have all featured panels on Kurdish migration, contributing to the development of the Journal and the wider field. We are also proud to have the Journal recognised by the Web of Science and Scopus as well as many other international abstracting and indexing bodies. We thank our authors, reviewers, translators and editors who all contributed selflessly to this effort

It is important to recognise the voluntary effort that goes into each and every issue produced. We cannot thank Welat enough for what he has done for the Journal and the field in general. Martin, a doyen of the field, in his role as the chief editor has not only shared his wisdom and knowledge but also guided the team at times when we have faced challenges. Of course, there are dozens of others who have been critical to the Journal’s success and we thank all of them wholeheartedly.

As one of the three founding editors of *Kurdish Studies*, I have shared the responsibility with Welat as joint managing editor for the entire seven volumes. However, over the last twelve months, mainly due to an increased workload at the university, that I have decided to step down from this role. I do so with a heavy heart, but knowing the high quality of the team who have been running the Journal, and witnessing the obvious enthusiasm and dedication of several new colleagues, is a great reassurance that the Journal is in safe hands. Nevertheless, I will continue to support the Journal however I can, hence, this is in no way a final farewell. I wish everybody involved continued success.

In this issue, we bring you four fresh pieces of research. The first article by Kaveh Ghobadi reflects on the development of Kurdish prose fiction between 1961 and 2002. He also outlines the restraints and inherent limitations within the wider context of Iran. He argues that over time, and more recently, Kurdish fiction writers have moved towards embracing aesthetics along with the political concerns.

The second article by Michiel Leezenberg bridges fiction with nationhood and politics. In this article, Leezenberg explores the role Xani’s *Mem û Zîn* can play in Kurdish nationalism. The central role of the king in this ancient poem is emphasised but more importantly the poem is placed in its historic and rather personal context. Leezenberg argues that the poem was addressed to Xani’s madrasa students rather than to the wider Kurdish public.

Bajalan’s article focuses on the period between 1878 and 1913 in search of understanding the complexities of identity politics in the late Ottoman period. Bajalan examines the attitudes and views of Kurdish activists of the period on the retreat of Ottomans from the Balkan Peninsula. Bajalan argues that most Kurdish activists, then, regarded the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans as “a profoundly negative political development”.

The final article is by one of the Journal's founding editors, Joost Jongerden. Joost is the leading scholar for the history and analysis of the PKK. He does not only bring an intriguing analysis of the PKK's evolution discussed around the concept of *learning from defeat*, but also offers an archival piece with very rich content collected through interviews and personal communications with some key figures. Joost argues that, as opposed to common criticisms in the literature, the transformation of the PKK was substantial in terms of offering a new mindset leading to the PKK's revival.

### **Acknowledgement**

As always, special thanks go to Ergin Öpengin and Aram Razaat for the translation of the abstracts into Kurmanji and Sorani. This issue features for the first time translations of the abstracts into Zazaki and we are grateful to Mahir Tornap for making this possible. We would also like to thank our copy-editor Naomi Houghton for her meticulous work in editing the articles. Finally, we are pleased to welcome Beja Protner to the editorial team.

*London, May 2019*