

Kurds, Good and Bad



A Kurd of the Turkey-Persia Border.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)
THE Kurds, who have revolted along the Turkish-Persian border and against whom large Turkish forces have been operating near famous Mount Ararat, have been fighting periodically against the established states of Asia Minor for thousands of years. Always their favorite method of strife has been guerrilla warfare. They have been historic marauders, but perhaps they have every reason, so far as environment is concerned, to lead such lives. State after state has struck against them with forces more powerful than any they could raise.

The days of Assyrian power in Mesopotamia seem pretty far back toward the beginnings of history. Records of that empire show that time and again its soldiers were sent into the rough country around the headwaters of the great rivers to subdue the mountaineers—ancestors of the Kurds—who harried Assyria's outlying settlements. These same mountaineers fought the Armenians when the latter came into the region between 1,000 and 600 B. C.

Xenophon retreated from Asia Minor in 401 B. C. the Kurds (then called the Carduchi) attacked his 10,000 Greeks, rolling great stones down on them from cliffs and mountains. They fought continually against the Bagdad caliphs. Since the Turks rose to power in Asia Minor the Kurds have fought them repeatedly; in fact, the Turks never established any considerable measure of control over these fierce, freedom-loving highlanders.

Since the World War the European territory of Turkey has been negligible. The country has consisted almost solely of the big, fat peninsula lying between the Black sea on the north and the eastern arm of the Mediterranean on the south, and an extension to the east about as broad as the Asia Minor peninsula, reaching roughly half way from the Black sea to the Caspian. The southern half of this eastern extension—the southeastern corner of present Turkey—is what is loosely called Kurdistan. The other half of the eastern extension, immediately north of Kurdistan, was once Turkish Armenia.

Kurdish Sphere Is Large.
 Now that tens of thousands of the Armenian residents have been driven across the Russian border, while other tens of thousands have perished, the region hardly deserves the old name. The Kurdish population was always high in Turkish Armenia; now it is proportionately much greater. The whole eastern end of present Turkey, constituting almost a third of the territory of the country, therefore, may roughly be considered the Kurdish sphere of influence. It is in the northeast corner of Turkey that the Kurds have recently been most active.

Geographic and political and economic complications aplenty are found in this region. On the east Kurdistan touches Persia, and the people for a considerable distance into that country are Kurds, too. Indeed, Kurdish people inhabit the entire Zagros mountain range which extends from Turkey for 600 miles to the southeast, forming the boundary between Persia and Iraq.

The Kurds belong to the Iranian branch of the white race. Because of the open-air lives which they live, most of them have harsh features. The great majority are nominally Mohammedans.

The plateau region lying partly in old Armenia, partly in Kurdistan, where many of the most warlike Kurds live, presents a good example of the effects on man of a mixture of rugged uplands and fertile valleys. Limestone mountains and recently extinct volcanoes occupy the upper levels. Lower are magnificent canyons cut by the Tigris and Euphrates headstreams, and numerous broad, basin-shaped valleys whose floors are fertile plains. The ancestors of the Kurds were pushed from many of these desirable

lowlands by the Armenian invasion and from others by the later arriving Turks.

Some Recent Revolts.

Even the fairly recent regime of Kemal Pasha has had several Kurdish revolts on its hands. There was a sporadic uprising in 1929; and in 1925 the tribesmen made an unsuccessful effort to set up their own government. The scrapping of the caliphate at Constantinople aroused them and nearly every change in old Moslem customs has irritated them. Revolt after revolt has been quelled but as soon as the Kurd replenishes his forces and supplies, he is ready to attack again.

The Kurd farmers of the Iraq plains are more prosperous than the tribesmen of the hill country. Travelers climb the trails of Kurdistan for miles without seeing a village. When one does appear, it is usually situated in a well protected spot. Houses are placed without regard to building line and a bird's-eye view of a village reveals a jumble of mud and stone structures.

The peasant's house is a one-room structure which might be mistaken for a stable. The tribesmen reserves one side of his abode for his animals while his family occupies the other side. Kurds sit on the floor when they rest or eat, therefore they do not need tables or chairs.

The tribal chief or headman fares better. He has a house for his family and a guest house where he lives and entertains guests. He is offended if a traveler does not stay with him. Once the traveler has stopped, he must remain for dinner. The food is placed on the floor in the center of the diners. Should a guest stretch his legs toward another person, convey food to his mouth with his left hand, or fondle the dog, his host is offended. No knives and forks are to be found in the Kurd silver chest but if a guest has difficulty in feeding himself with his hands, a spoon will be handed to him. Few meals are served that do not include mast (curdled milk) the favorite dish of the Kurd. A little water mixed with the mast makes mastao, the Kurd "national" drink. The tribesmen like vegetables but seldom serve meat.

They Buy Their Wives.

Under Moslem law, the Kurd may take four wives. Wives are bought, so the peasant usually has only one. The chiefs take the full quota. Wives are priced according to their rank. The tribesman can get a wife in exchange for a pony or goat, or one may cost the equivalent of \$2,500. The wedding entails a season of merry-making in which the whole tribe joins, but it takes less than a minute to dissolve a union. The man simply says "I divorce you" three times and the parties are free.

To the foreigner, the Kurds seem to know little else than the "art" of highway robbery. Many of the mountain tribesmen are adept thieves, but in the hills as well as the plains, many Kurds earn honest livings by farming and cattle raising. Kurds are pastoral people, seldom moving from their villages except to migrate to higher altitudes during the summer for new pasturage.

In spite of exciting events in the fighting history of the Kurds, the tribesmen were almost unknown outside the Near East before the World War. When a delegation of Kurds appeared at the peace conferences in 1919 newspaper men did not know who the sunburnt tribesmen might be. When their identity was revealed the Kurds went on the front pages and frequently have been there since.

The presence of Kurds in the Mosul region of what is now northern Iraq was a hard diplomatic problem for the treaty drafters to solve after the World War. Except in Mosul City, the population of this region is almost solely Kurdish. It is the odor and power of petroleum that in some ways dominate all else in this region. What promises to become one of the major oil fields of the world centers about Mosul.

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Woman, 90, Uses Telephone First Time on Visit to U. S.



Mrs. Catherine McManus is shown in the home of her son in Philadelphia as she made her first telephone call. Mrs. McManus, who is 90 years old, never saw a telephone or a skyscraper until she came to the United States from Ireland recently.

Helpful

The widow of a farmer was being consoled by a neighboring farmer, who happened to be a widower. "Cheer up, woman," he said. "Ye're young yet, and good looking, an' you could soon get another husband." "Oh, no, no," she replied. "who would take me?" "Why, if I had a better pair of boots on I'd run away w' ye myself," said the widower, gallantly.

The widow, lifting her face and wiping her eyes, said, earnestly: "I wonder would John's fit you?"—England Birmingham Weekly Post.

Pleasant Time in Store

The umpire had just made a bad decision. The crowd was calling him evil names and hurling pop bottles in his direction. "Why don't you say something?" said an irate fan to a quiet, sad-faced spectator who sat near him. "My time is coming," replied the stranger. "The umpire is a relative of my wife's and she has asked him to the house for dinner this evening."

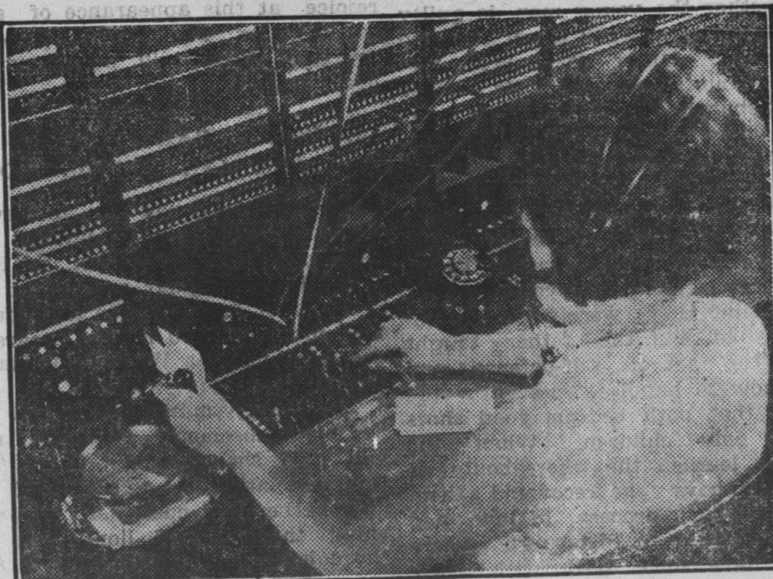
Fearsome Creature

Maud Rex Allen says: "As known in Japan, the conception of the dragon is undoubtedly derived from the products of the imagination of the early Chinese, who were especially fond of evolving supernatural forms by combining parts of various animals. It is essentially a serpent, with horns of a deer, the head of a horse, eyes like that of a red worm, scales like those of a carp, ears like a cow, paws like a tiger and claws like an eagle. It has flamelike appendages on shoulders and hips. On either foot are three, four or five claws—the imperial dragon of China has five; that of Japan three."

Build New Arena for Bull Fighting

Madrid, Spain.—The 1930 bull fighting season will be inaugurated in Madrid in the old Plaza de Torres, but in April the new plaza will be dedicated. The new arena seats 26,000 persons, or double the capacity of the old one, and one of the first fights to take place therein will be a benefit for University City (Ciudad Universitaria) now under construction.

How Telephone Calls Are Timed



The clock-like device above is the calculagraph—an electrically operated mechanism that records the elapsed time on out-of-town telephone calls. Upon receiving the details of a call from a subscriber, the operator writes them on what is known as a ticket, and when the conversation starts she places the ticket beneath the dial of the clock, which stamps the time. At the conclusion of the call, a ticket is again placed under the calculagraph and restamped. In this way the time consumed in the conversation is computed with unerring accuracy. This photograph was taken in the operating room of a dial central office.

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