

Kurdish and Armenian

The earliest, irregular and sporadic contacts between Armenians and Kurds date back approximately to the 11th -12th centuries AD. However, it was not until the movement of Kurds to various parts of Mesopotamia and Armenia had grown into mass migration in the first half of the 16th century that the Armenian-Kurdish relationships became active. Since that period and up until the late 1920s - prior to the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire - these two peoples had been in close and constant contact. As a result, in some Western Armenian provinces a certain Armeno-Kurdish ethno-linguistic situation emerged, characterised by widespread Armenian-Kurdish bilingualism, which could not but leave obvious traces – local dialects of both languages, to some extent, influenced one another.

Judging from the existent linguistic materials, the influence of Armenian on Kurdish appears to have been much greater as it manifests itself not only in vocabulary, but also in phonetics, and partially, word formation. Meanwhile, the influence of Kurdish on Armenian, or, more precisely, on the Western Armenian dialects, was limited to vocabulary, and to a lesser degree as well. This can be explained by the fact that Armenian had somewhat become a sort of substrate language for the Kurmanji dialects spoken in the historical Western Armenian areas.

The Armenian-Kurdish linguistic relationships were in the form of direct contacts; they did not affect other linguistic aspects of public life, and were exemplified only on the dialect level.

The paper presents the analysis of the Armeno-Kurdish linguistic connections, particularly the interrelations between the Western Armenian dialects and the Kurdish dialects of the same area.