

**STORIES BEHIND
THE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE OF IRAQI KURDISTAN**

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Abstract

Small cities and villages in Iraq used to live in the shadow of the big cities; in spite the fact that many of them have a remarkable historic value and enjoy a beautiful nature; moreover, many of them have been a home for a diverse mix of ethnic and religious groups who live together for thousands of years.

Those small cities and villages, which capture the layers of memory that reflect their inhabitants' ethnicity and religious rituals; were subject to poverty, heritage neglect and bad built environment and infrastructure. Still, the real threat they face has been related to the political mood and wars that made those cities and villages be exposed to violence and destruction during different political epochs since the establishment of the Iraqi Kingdom in 1921; especially in Kurdistan Region as a large portion of Northern Iraq where the widest diversity exists and horrible genocides occurred.

This study, which is a part of an interdisciplinary edited book entitled "Collective Memory and the Built Environment in Northern Iraq"; sheds the light on the importance of protecting, documenting, studying and understanding these small cities and villages in Iraqi Kurdistan; considering them as an evident historic document of the various ethnic traditions and religious rituals that this land has witnessed. The study therefore, tries to cover deferent types and sizes of settlements in Iraqi Kurdistan that vary in their characteristics and has been the land of one or more of the ethnic and religious groups; the key task of this study is to recognize the reasons behind the formation of those cities and villages, and to track the reflection of religious rituals and social traditions on their forms and transformations through time.