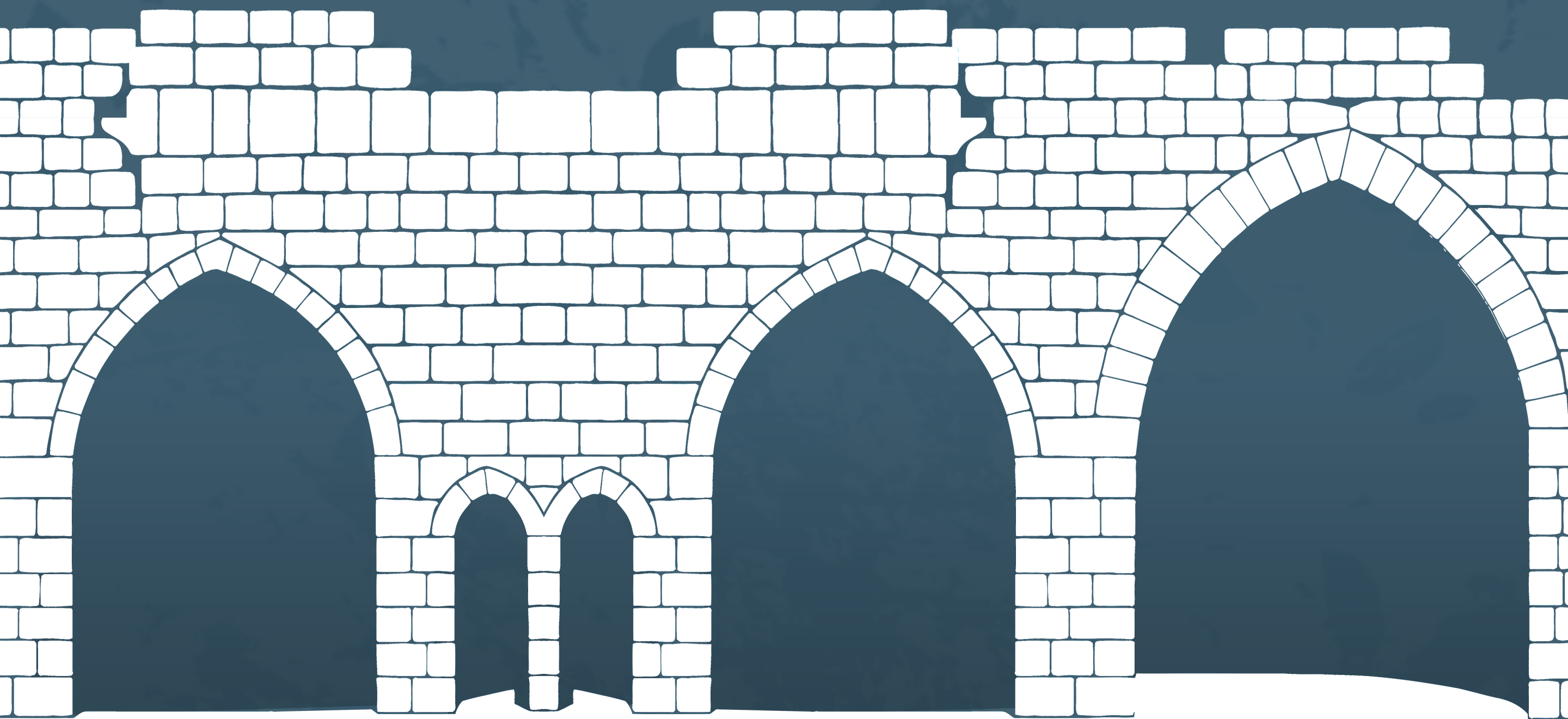


The Kurdish Traditional Madrasas in the Modern and Contemporary Era

The Zakho Center for Kurdish Studies, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zakho, is pleased to announce its upcoming international conference, titled: "The Kurdish Traditional Madrasas in the Modern and Contemporary Era", to be held on April 21-22, 2026



International
Conference
May 2026 ,22– 21



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Background:

In the modern era, or during the period when Kurdistan was part of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish principalities played a significant political and administrative role. This influence extended to the strengthening of scientific and educational foundations in Kurdistan. Kurdish Mirs, leaders of Kurdish principalities, supported scholars and teachers. This support led to the writing of books and, importantly, to the establishment of madrasas where Kurdish children could receive an education.

Through their efforts, the Mirs helped establish madrasas that provided education to the youth of Kurdistan and paved the way for the growth of prominent and influential institutions. Originating in the medieval period and gradually evolving, these traditional madrasas became major centers for the spreading of knowledge and science across the region.

The classical madrasas and their students have been a fundamental part of Kurdish society for centuries. They have emerged and evolved through various stages that had given the role in preserving knowledge and culture in Kurdistan. These madrasas are classified into two main categories.

Category One: Madrasas founded by Mirs or members of ruling families, who funded them through family endowments (waqif) and large charitable trusts. These madrasas attracted the best teachers and built extensive libraries for scholars and students. Children of Mirs and nobles studied languages such as Persian, Arabic, and Turkish, as well as various scientific subjects, to prepare for leadership roles and political responsibilities within and beyond Kurdistan's borders. Examples include prominent madrasas in all Kurdish emirates, such as Qubehan, Murad Khan, and Sayyid Khan in Bahdinan, Zainaliye and Meydan in Hakari, and Ikhlasiyah in Bedlis, as well as Sur and Abdaliya madrasas in Jazirah Bohtan. These madrasas were led and staffed by distinguished Kurdish scholars such as Mulla Jaziri at Sur madrasa, Ahmad Khani at Bayazid madrasa, Mulla Yahya Mizuri and Mulla Khalil Sirti at Bahdinan madrasa, Sheikh Muhammad Sharanshi, Mawlana Muhammad Belqali at Ikhlasiyah madrasa, along with many others.

Category Two: These were smaller madrasas that spread throughout Kurdish villages and were often connected to village mosques or located within mosque compounds. They were designated specifically for religious scholars (faqihs) and the servants of the mosques. They were primarily established by Kurdish sheikhs and mullahs. The education was offered in Kurdish, Arabic, and Persian. Although these madrasas were modest in size and had limited resources, often accommodating only a small number of students, their impact was no less significant than that of the formal madrasas of the principalities. In fact, their numbers were so large that each year they produced a considerable number of educated individuals and scholars across Kurdistan. Some of these scholars even gained international recognition, such as Mulla Sa'id Kurdi (Naursi), who received his education in one of these madrasas.

The Kurdish madrasa system has played a major role in the history of Kurdistan. It was in these madrasas that lessons began to be taught in the Kurdish language. Within these schools, Kurdish was established as a language of instruction. Many teachers and graduates of these madrasas went on to influence the promotion of the Kurdish national language and identity. Over time, many of the most important Kurdish leaders and intellectuals emerged from these classical madrasas.

Objectives

This conference focuses on the important but often overlooked role of Kurdish madrasas as early centers of learning and community development in Kurdistan. Although these madrasas have played a significant part in Kurdish cultural and intellectual history, they have not received enough attention from researchers, and many related manuscripts remain unexplored. By bringing together scholars and experts, the conference aims to illuminate the educational, cultural, and social impact of Kurdish madrasas and to emphasize their essential role in shaping Kurdish language, education, and society. Through open discussion and detailed study, the event hopes to deepen our understanding of these historic institutions and emphasize their lasting importance in Kurdish life.

Vision

The conference seeks to shed light on Kurdish traditional madrasas and their role in Kurdish society from multiple perspectives which include their geographical distribution, typologies, systems of instruction, and curricular content. It will also explore the forms of knowledge and aesthetic traditions that emerged within these traditional madrasas. It highlights the intellectual contributions produced within these institutions and the role of their scholars in the political and social life of Kurdistan. It examines how Kurdish traditional madrasas have been studied, directly or indirectly, through formal Ottoman archival sources, classical Islamic historians, and European travelers' works.



The Scope of the Research

The conference places particular emphasis on topics related to the Kurdish madrasa during the modern era, specifically from the onset of Ottoman rule in Kurdistan following the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514 up to the year 1950. This period is critical due to the emergence of centralized educational institutions and transformations in curricula, as well as the policies of certain occupying states in Kurdistan that systematically weakened or led to the decline and eventual disappearance of these madrasas. The conference titled “The Kurdish Traditional Madrasas in the Modern and Contemporary Era” is structured around several major themes:

Historical Perspectives:

- 1- Official madrasas of Kurdish principalities and the periods of their establishment.
- 2- The role of Kurdish Mirs as founders and supporters of the traditional madrasas.
- 3- The influence of the traditional madrasas on the development of Kurdish Mirs’ personalities.
- 4- The architectural designs of Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 5- Madrasas as centers for Kurdish national identity.
- 6- Kurdish traditional madrasas in official documents and national archives.
- 7- The contemporary Mir schools and their opposition to the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 8- The policies of occupying states in the four parts of Kurdistan toward Kurdish madrasas.

Language and Literature

- 1- The role of the traditional madrasas in the emergence and development of Kurdish literature (poetry and prose).
- 2- The Kurdish language in the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 3- The attention given to Persian, Arabic, and Turkish in the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 4- Libraries in the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 5- Manuscripts in the Kurdish traditional madrasas.

Religion and Sufism

- 1- Curricula and educational programs in the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 2- The influence of Islamic civilization on the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 3- The role of Sufism and Sufis in the establishment of the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 4- The emphasis on Islam in the Kurdish traditional madrasas.

Economy

- 1- The source of income of the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 2- The endowment (waqif) of the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 3- The expenses of the Kurdish traditional madrasas.
- 4- Economic challenges related to the educational process in madrasas.

Writing Guidelines

1. The Scientific Committee welcomes research papers written in Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, or Persian.
2. Each submission must include an abstract of no fewer than 500 words, along with five keywords.
3. The full paper should not exceed 10,000 words.
4. Authors are required to use the following fonts:
 - Unicode for Kurdish and Persian
 - Simplified Arabic for Arabic
 - Times New Roman for English and Turkish
5. All references and citations must adhere to the Harvard referencing style.

Important Dates

1. Announcement: July 1, 2025
2. Abstract Submission Deadline: September 20, 2025
3. Notification of Abstract Acceptance or Rejection: September 25, 2025
4. Full Paper Submission Deadline: December 10, 2025
5. Notification of Full Paper Acceptance or Rejection: December 30, 2025
6. Conference Dates: April 21-22, 2026

Contact Information

For the submission of abstracts and full research papers, please use the following official email address of the conference:

hum.isc2023@uoz.edu.krd

For any additional information, questions, or clarifications, you may contact the Conference Organizing Committee at the following number:

+964 (0) 751 536 1550

Note

All conference-related expenses will be covered by the organizing institution except travel costs.

8. Scientific Committee

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