



## A Fire in My Heart: Kurdish Tales (World Folklore)

By Diane Edgecomb

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### A Fire in My Heart: Kurdish Tales (World Folklore) By Diane Edgecomb

From a culture too often forgotten, overlooked or even oppressed; here are more than 30 tales, representing all regions of Kurdistan and the four main Kurdish dialects—from the Kurdish Cinderella story and animal stories to stories based on legendary figures (e.g., Rustemé Zal—the Kurdish Hercules)—organized by theme and type. Most of these stories have been collected from contemporary Kurdish storytellers, with others translated and adapted from transcripts of oral tellings and small tale collections in the Kurdish dialect. Background information on the people, their history, their land, and their customs is provided, along with color photos, maps, a glossary, and sample recipes, crafts, and games. All levels.

The largest ethnic group without their own nation-state, there are an estimated 30-40 million Kurds living throughout the world today. The majority live in Kurdistan, a region stretching over parts of Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. As a minority in these countries, the Kurds have struggled for independence throughout history and into recent times and have often been oppressed, persecuted and deported from their land. The purpose of this volume is to introduce readers to the Kurdish people, their cultural traditions and their stories. This unique collection, the first of its kind in English, features tales collected first-hand by the author during several years of travel to the Kurdish region of Turkey. *A Fire In My Heart* serves as a reference and program resource for educators and librarians, introducing students and the public to this ancient culture. The book is especially suited to those working with Middle Eastern children and their families in the US and abroad. From the Kurdish Cinderella story, Fatima, and humorous animal tales to stories based on legendary figures, for example the Herculean Rustemé Zal, these thirty-three tales from the varied regions of Kurdistan and the four major dialects are a wonderful resource for storytellers, folklorists and scholars. After seven years recording Kurdish tellers and traveling to remote mountain villages the author provides a valuable collection of previously unpublished tales, traditional recipes and games. The book is augmented by stories translated and adapted from small tale collections in Kurdish, as well as rare color photos from Iraqi-Kurdistan in 1955 and recent photos of village life. Background information on the Kurdish people, their history, land and customs is provided. All levels.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"From her own collecting efforts and from the contributions of several Kurdish friends Diane has amassed here a useful collection of Kurdish tales. The book includes also recipes and games. We are fortunate to have had these tales collected in this trying time for the Kurdish people. Diane is to be lauded for her efforts and Libraries Unlimited for its publication." - **In The Wind**

"A labor of love and a magnificent achievement, this collection of tales, legends, recipes, games and history takes readers vividly into the traditional village life of the Kurds, a little-known and politically beleaguered ethnic group whose homeland straddles the borders of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. Supported partly by grants (including one from NSN), Edgecomb traveled into Turkish Kurdistan, collecting stories from villagers whose language itself had been banned. The resulting book brings lively and unusual stories to light, each one carefully placed in its social and historical context." - **Storytelling Magazine**

"*A Fire in My Heart: Kurdish Tales* introduces readers to the Kurdish people, their cultural traditions, and their stories. It presents 33 tales representing all regions of Kurdistan and the four main Kurdish dialects--from the Kurdish Cinderella story Fatima to animal stories and stories based on legendary figures (e.g., Rusteme Zal, the Kurdish Hercules)--organized by tale type." - **Library Media Connection**

"Diane Edgecomb has spent seven years traveling all around Turkey gathering traditional Kurdish fairy tales, animal fables, and hero tales like that of Shahmaran, a half snake, half woman. Her book, *A Fire in My Heart: Kurdish Tales*, is the first comprehensive collection of those stories to be published in English." - **The Boston Globe**

"This is the first book in my library covering tales from this specific region. A few of the tales are familiar but even those are interesting variants of stories collected from other regions. This book also contains the most detailed information about the culture from which the stories were collected and is illustrated throughout by photo's of people going about their daily work, providing an insight into the lives of the people. The stories vary in length and cover a fascinating range of material." - **Storylines**

"In this volume, an excellent team has collected many folk tales about the culture, but the volume is more than that. It begins with a brief history of the culture and peoples spreading over several countries of the Middle East and includes authentic recipes and typical meals eaten by the Kurds, before launching into various stories, legends, and folktales. Thus, it is a great place to introduce or have students introduce the culture to the rest of us." - **Teacher Librarian**

". . . an excellent source for enhancing a cultural diversity program. The folktales are generally brief and no longer than a few pages -- good for novice storytellers. While recommended for all ages, the stories, though some have double meanings, are generally appropriate for use with young children incorporating rhymes and finger plays; but the greatest use would be by the middle and upper elementary/middle school students and teachers. Exploring different areas of the world in their classroom curriculum as well as extending cultural programs would be greatly enhanced by this series." *Reviewed as part of the World Folklore series.* - **Catholic Library World**

#### About the Author

**Diane Edgecomb** is an award-winning storyteller and theater artist who resides in Boston, Massachusetts. In 2001, she initiated The Kurdish Story Collection Project an international endeavor to document the stories and storytelling traditions of the Kurdish people. Beginning by recording Kurdish tellers in the United States and then abroad, Edgecomb made numerous trips to villages in the Kurdish region of Turkey filming and archiving a large complement of tellers. Selections for this book were taken from her collection of over 150 Kurdish tales and legends. In addition to her writing, Edgecomb has continued her work as storyteller and experimental theater artist, performing throughout the United States and abroad. Information on her audio recordings, recipients of two Storytelling World Honors Awards, can be found at [www.livingmyth.com](http://www.livingmyth.com).

**Mohammed M.A. Ahmed** served the United Nations in various capacities for many years, first as a resident expert in Jordan, Syria, Bahrain and Sri Lanka and then as Senior Social Affairs officer at the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia. Upon leaving, he founded the Ahmed Foundation for Kurdish Studies, a non-partisan organization. Dr. Ahmed has organized numerous conferences on Kurdish issues and has published, as editor, in cooperation with Professor Michael Gunter several books on Kurdish topics including *The Kurdish Question* and the 2003 Iraqi War and *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*.

**Çeto Ozel** is a Kurdish linguist and author of several books, including *Kurdiya Nujen* (Modern Kurdish), a primer on the Kurdish language and *Kurdish, Education and Linguistic Rights* - his most recent book published by Tevn Press. He is a founding member of the Kurdish Language Academy of Brussels and was on the board of the Istanbul Kurdish Institute for ten years.

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