



HELMI, RAFIQ

HELMI, RAFIQ, Kurdish historian, poet, and political activist (b. Kirkuk, 1898; d. Baghdad, 4 August 1960). He was the son of Şāleḥ ‘Abd-Allāh, an officer in the Ottoman army. Helmi began school in Solaymāniya and Baghdad and then went to the Military Academy and the Technical School of Istanbul, where he received a solid education. He mastered Kurdish as well as Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and French.

At the request of Shaikh Maḥmud Barzanji (d. 1956), the governor (*ḥokumadār*) of Iraqī Kurdistan installed by Major Noel from December 1918, he accompanied Major Noel in his travels throughout Kurdistan between 1918 and 1922 and taught him Kurdish and Persian. In November 1922, when Shaikh Maḥmud, who had been just reinstalled as governor in Solaymāniya, proclaimed himself king of Kurdistan, he entrusted Rafiq Helmi with the task of conducting secret negotiations with the Turkish officer ‘Ali Šafiq Beg.

Helmi wrote for *Rōj-e Kordestān*, the official newspaper of Shaikh Maḥmud’s government, and for *Bāng-e Kordestān*. He participated in the Solaymāniya uprising, which broke up after the Iraqī army opened fire on the Kurdish civilian population on 6 September 1930.

Helmi was also an educator and served as inspector of education in Solaymāniya (July 1934) and director of culture of the provinces of Bašra (September 1945) and Dayāla (November 1946). After the coup d’état of 14 July 1958 that put an end to the monarchy in Iraq and declared it a republic, he was appointed cultural attaché at the Iraqī embassy in Ankara (1959).



Helmi was one of the main founders and the first head of the Hewā Party (founded in 1937), which grew out of the merger of different Kurdish organizations, such as Komala Brāyati, Dārkar, etc. It brought together nationalist activists, intellectuals, as well as army officers who played a very important role in its development. They published the *Āzādi* newspaper and the bulletin *Šilān*. A representative of Hewā, captain Mir Hājj Aḥmad, was present when Komala-ye Jiānawa-ye Kordestān was founded in Mahābād (16 September 1942). The two parties remained in close contact.

Helmi also wrote books and translated into Kurdish many literary and scientific texts from French, Arabic, and Turkish. His most significant work is *Yāddāšt: Kordestāni ‘Erāq o šoreškāni Šeḳ Maḥmud* (6 vols., Baghdad, 1956-58), an incomparable source of information about Shaikh Maḥmud’s insurrections and of the Kurdish national movement at a crucial moment in its history. A further volume of unpublished texts (*Yāddāšt 3*) was put out by Pākiza Rafiq Hēlmi in Baghdad in 1993. The rest of his works include *Moḍākarāt* (Ar. tr. by Jamil Bandi Rojbayāni, Baghdad, 1957); *Kurd la saratāy mejuwawa tā ku 1920* Mosul, 1934; *Še’r o adabiyāt-e kordī*, 2 vols. Baghdad 1941-53, new ed. by Pākiza Rafiq Hēlmi and ‘Ezz-al-Din Moṣṭafā Rasul, Baghdad, 1988.