



# Sweet Tea with Cardamom: A Journey Through Iraqi Kurdistan

*Teresa Thornhill*

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After the month-long Gulf War of 1991, Iraq's Kurdish minority began to rise against Saddam Hussein's regime, which had in previous years engaged in genocidal campaigns, including assaults with chemical weapons, that killed as many as 180,000 people. United Nations peacekeeping forces helped established a "safe haven" in Iraqi Kurdistan (a section of northern Iraq that runs along the borders of Turkey and Iran) and elections were soon held. Teresa Thornhill, an English barrister who became concerned with the plight of the Kurds through an ex-partner's personal connection to Iraq, took two trips to the region in 1993 to see for herself how the efforts at democracy were progressing.

"The Iraqi Kurds claimed that they did not wish to establish an independent state," Thornhill writes. "Rather they wished to be part of a post-Saddam Iraq under a federal arrangement." But their efforts were hampered by the economic sanctions of the UN against Iraq, which affected them as well as Saddam, and Iraqi troops were poised at the edge of the border, ready to reclaim their land. In addition, rival Kurdish groups began engaging in violent conflict. Thornhill particularly concerns herself with the Kurdish women who survived Saddam's atrocities, but she encounters people from every level of Kurdish society. Her fascination with the region and its people is perceptible even in the restrained journalistic tone with which she recounts her journey.

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