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A Study of Political Situation and Relations of Ardalan Dynasty in Qajar Era

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Abstract

Iran's Kurdistan in general and Ardalan's Kurdistan in Qajar era in particular was of paramount importance due to its geographic situation as it was located on Iran's western borders with Ottoman Empire and Baban states.

When Qajar government came to power in Iran, Kurdistan region and its environs, was under the leadership of a local dynasty called Ardalan. From the second half of the seventh century of Hijra to the thirteenth century of Hijra, this dynasty in points of its political life dominated parts of Hamadan, Kermanshah as well as some regions of Lorestan besides reigning Kurdistan. Swearing their allegiance to the central government during the reign of First Shah Abbas, Ardalan warriors turned to a covering power between two Iranian and Ottoman empires and offered various services to Iran from Safavid era to Qajar era. Ottomans who had succeeded to prevail over almost three-fourth of Kurdish regions during their quarrels with Safavids were always interested in owning Kurdistan region. Thus, they decided to found the Baban state in Shahrzur region (now is known as Sulaymaniyah) in the eleventh century of Hijra in order to expand its influence in this region and reaches a power equilibrium against Ardalan Dynasty in Iran. From this time on, these two local powers were serious political rivals and each one was in some way following the orders issued by their respective central government.

Keywords: Kurdistan, Ardalan dynasty, Qajars, Military function, Border protection function, Economic function.

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Problem Statement

Ardalan government was in power in northwest Iran during feudal era in 1169 H./1867 A.D. In Kurd's history, the dynasty of local commanders who were leading the southern Kurdistan and parts of northern Kurdistan and central Gulf region from the seventh century of Hijra has been called Ardalan governors. Moreover, Ardalan is the name of the clan from which these governors have emerged. In some regions, Qajar regime could not retain its sovereignty due to a number of reasons including the enormous influence of some local governments. Then they sought to use local influential elites, chiefs, and families for management causes. This was the reason that in Kurdistan Ardalan governor generals were allowed to be part of the political system and also have their positions. They continued to be the governor generals of the region for three quarters of the century during Qajar era. This itself shows their importance and power in the political and administrative system of this era. Ardalan governor generals retained their internal independence and had certain functions for Iran's central government (Bahrami and Muzaffari, 2011: 57).

As the deputy of the central government and due to their relations with the crown and people who lived within their territory, one of the key functions of Ardalan governor generals for the central government was collecting annual taxes and sending them to the court. Generally, besides the collected taxes the governor general did usually send some tribute as presents and gifts for the King (ibid: 57-60).

One of the other relations that Ardalan Dynasty had with the central government was military assistances of this dynasty to Qajar government. Till the emergence of Pahlavi dynasty, previous governments were deprived of having a systematic army. Of course, some Qajar kings made efforts with the assistance of foreign consultants for the establishment of a systematic modern army (Dosarsi, 1983: 107). But they failed to finish this project for various reasons. Among others, one can refer to the insensibilities of Qajar kings and sabotages of foreign states and many other similar reasons. Then, they were dependent on guerrilla fighters and irregular troops in suppression of rites inside the country and protection of territorial integrity of country in the battle with foreign forces. These guerilla fighters and troops were hired from the states and villages. This recruitment was assigned to the local chiefs and governor generals as the deputies of the central government (Lambton, 1996: 140). Then, one of the other services that local governors, including Ardalan commanders, did offer to the central government was recruitment of fighters and arranging the troops and sending them to

the fronts. This was an important factor in securing their relations with the central government and continuation of their reign in the region (ibid: 139).

Another significant function of Ardalan Dynasty for Qajar regime that played an important role in the relations between this dynasty and central government was protection of borders, particularly protection of the western borders of Iran against the influence of Ottoman empire. Due to their strategic circumstances of their territory in western borders, Ardalan governor generals were in charge of this important task from Safavid era to Qajar era.

As to the importance of the study of political relations of Ardalan Dynasty in Qajar era one can say that knowing these political, economic, military and social relations and terms can provide us with a clear and helpful approach concerning historical judgement of this dynasty as the representative of Kurd tribe as well as the services that this tribe has offered to Iran in the long course of history particularly in Safavid and Qajar eras.

1- Study of the Political and Historical Structure of Ardalan Dynasty

Reconstruction and elucidation of inner structural conditions of Ardalan Dynasty are impossible because the existing sources of the local history are silent in this regard and have only discussed the political developments and geographic qualities and tribes and nomads. We only know that Ardalan state like many other similar local governments had its own particular bureaucratic system for management of affairs that had been designed based on the central government's system in a smaller scale.

What is important for the explication of this point is that there were some inner structural problems in Ardalan Dynasty that prevented them to take part in the political developments. The rivals who were competing each other to win the power inside the Ardalan Dynasty was one of the key problems that reduced the power of this local government.

The social structure of Kurdistan is based on the variety of tribes and nomads who always seek to have their residing areas in their control and influence. This variety was not just due to the linguistic or religious differences, rather we should understand it in the context of historical developments of Kurdistan region as a whole.

The formation of various tribes in the history of Kurdistan before the nineteenth century has its origin in a historical, social and political necessity. Due to the absence of an integrated and systematic union of tribes and nomadic communities and inability of Kurdish states of uniting them –because of insecure geographic structures in the course of history– as well as the

inability of the states of supervision of nomads, Kurdish tribes and nomadic communities were dispersed through various regions in the form of different correlated groups. These tribal groups which lived in migrating and semi-migrating forms and even would leave the migration and reside in a particular region with the same nomadic traditions and allow strangers to become a member of the tribe due to the insecure conditions of various regions have been the general characteristic of Kurdistan community in the nineteenth century. Thus, in early Qajar era, there had been sixty tribes in Kurdistan (Turkaman, 2004: 233-4). Various factors were involved in the formation of this tribal and nomadic variety such as geographic structures of Kurdistan along the impassible mountains, the lack of roads, rivers for shipping, large urban communities and the existence of a kind of self-sufficient rural economy. These factors gave rise to a kind of social isolation and attachment to a particular region in a limited fashion.

This form of life led to the formation of a type of social solidarity, cohesion, and coherence inside the tribes under the leadership of tribal chiefs who conducted the existing forces in line with the social and political currents, on the one hand, and it gave rise to the same-level forces in the region who struggled to compete with other surrounding nomads and tribal groups for playing an active role in the political developments of Iran, on the other. Upon a study of the political developments of Iran in medieval history, we can be acquainted with the role of these tribes in the political development of Iran. Ghaznavi, Saljuqi, Ilkhani, Afshar and Qajar governments were all based on the arrival of tribal forces and their participation in the political developments of Iran.

Since central government lacked efficient forces and institutions for controlling the tribes, it sought to use the existing differences and conflicts among these tribes for reinforcing the current divisions and instigating these tribes against each other for expanding its influence even to the remotest regions.

One can trace the formation of various tribes in Kurdistan and their potentiality for playing a political role back to the political developments of western regions of Iran. Of course, Iran's continuous hostile relations with the Ottoman Empire due to the politics of territorial and religious expansionism and distribution of certain religious ideologies by each power made the situation even worse for Kurdistan nomads and tribes. For example, Baban state and its allied tribes were financed and supported by Ottomans and instigated to invade Iran's western regions particularly Ardalan state in Safavid and Qajar eras. This was indeed one of the key

crises in western regions of Iran. Sometimes Iranian government used Baban warriors as a pressure leverage against Ardalan Dynasty via giving some western states of Iran and Sulaymaniyah and Zur city to them – e.g. Karim Khan of Zand endowed a state to Sulayman Pasha of Baban in 1176 (Afushtei Tatnzi, 1994: 82) and to his brother Muhammad Pasha after him. Ottomans also used these flowing nomadic forces for changing the political functions in western Iran. For example, after the actions that were taken by Khosrow Khan for dominating the Jaaf tribe as one of the largest tribal forces in southern Kurdistan – and killing their two chiefs named Mehr Ali Sultan and Khosrow Beik during hunting by Khosrow Khan –the relations between Jaaf and Ardalan people were darkened and this persuaded Jaaf people to turn to Baban state and develop close relations with Ottomans and this, in turn, triggered long-standing clashes in the region until the end of Ardalan regime. Besides the role of Iranian and Ottoman central governments in instigating Kurd tribes against each other, the tribes themselves were leverages against the central governments or local governments who were following the footprints of the central government and sought to expand their influence on the tribes.

The nomads and tribes acted upon their ancestral and territorial ideology. “Tribe and state are mutually contradicted entities and their relations in the best conditions are temporary” (Turkaman, 2004: 239). States are essentially static and continuously struggle to exert their power and influence through institutions and bureaucratic mechanisms. On the other hand, tribes are seeking to play their role in a particular region and defend their territory. This shows the friction that undeniably exists between the tribal and state forces. Whenever these tribes have succeeded to come together in the form of a tribal confederation or union they have managed to play an efficient and remarkable role in the course of political developments. For example, Mogul tribes once became united under the leadership of charismatic figure of Genghis Khan and were of a crucial and deciding role in the political development of Asia and even parts of Europe.

Since Kurdish tribes and nomads could not get united under the banner of a tribal confederation and all efforts that were made by Kurdish statesmen for uniting these tribes failed, the potential forces of these tribes that could be at the service of further successes of their states were vitiated and turned to the troubles for the local governments like Ardalans.

Political Relations of Ardalan Dynasty in Qajar Era

The emergence of Ardalans in the political scene of Iran from the seventh century on, as an influential dynasty in the course of the local history of Iran, is an important issue of the Mongol era to Qajar era. Political turmoil in Iran after the death of Nader and a short presence of Zand dynasty until the transition of power to Qajar dynasty changed the western parts of Iran to the main front of political conflicts. In this part of Iranian history, Ardalan Dynasty played a major role in power transition (from Zands to Qajar).

The emergence of Ardalan Dynasty as the leader of one of the Iranian emirates in the western region of the country from the Mongol era to the middle of Qajar era is one of the most important historical issues regarding Iranian local governments that have not been sufficiently discussed yet.

The crucial role of this emirate in the transition of political power from Zands to Qajars particularly when the governor general of this emirate, Khosrow Khan of Ardalan, ruled over Kurdistan of Makr, Kermanshah, Hamedan, Garoos and Golpayegan, and surrendered them to Aqa Muhammad Khan of Qajar.

In considerable parts of Safavid and Qajar eras, Iranian and Kurdish dynasty of Ardalan has ruled over the Kurdish regions of western Iran. In domestic and foreign areas, Ardalan government has had a distinctive, influential and crucial place and as compared to other local governments, it owned a special status and was among the few provincial states. The relations of this government with the central government of Iran have been studied in view of convergence and divergence and it has been inferred that despite some difference in religion, language, ethnicity and the like, Ardalan Dynasty has had warm relations with the central government.

On the other hand, due to its adjacency with Ottoman Empire, Ardalan government has played an indispensable role in the foreign policy of the country. An analysis of the functions of the local government of Ardalan in foreign policy from a broad and comprehensive point of view demonstrates this historical fact that Ardalan Dynasty has been continuously faithful to the foreign policies adopted by the central government focusing on the suppression of foreign threats. One of the most important issues that can make a good research topic regarding the rule of Ardalan Dynasty in Kurdistan region is this dynasty's relations with the central government of Iran during Qajar period. Part of this importance lies in the fact that since the early years of the thirteenth century when the Qajar dynasty came to power in Iran, Khosrow

Khan of Ardalan played a key role in the establishment of Qajar power with the public announcement of his allegiance to the Qajar King Aqa Muhammad Khan. Furthermore, political and military actions of Ardalan governors during the reign of Fath Ali Shah, Muhammad Shah and Naser al-Din Shah in Kurdistan, had a significant influence on the relations of the two sides. On the other hand, after several centuries Ardalan dynasty's rule came to its end when Qajar dynasty was in the most glorious moments of its history, during the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah who struggled after centralization of political power in the country around the Majestic King the Lord of the Land and People, in the year 1284 of Hijra with the appointment of Farhad Mirza Etemad al-Saltanah as the governor of Kurdistan.

Kurdish dynasties, including Donboli, Zanganah, and particularly Ardalan, were themselves potentially qualified enough to dominate the country as the ruling body of the central kingdom like the Kurdish dynasty of Zand, and expand their power to a national level, on the one hand, and played a key role in the transition of power to the then incumbent dynasties like Qajar, on the other (Huzni, 2005). This essay seeks to notice the fact that some remarkable Kurdish dynasties, such as Donboli, Zafaranloo, Shadloo, and particularly Ardalan, were of a decisive influence in the formation of Qajar government. In other words, this essay insists that the role and functions of Ardalan dynasty in the time of formation of Qajar dynasty, has gone beyond the limits of a local government and found a national aspect and it was indeed the assistance of the elites of this dynasty that has helped the central Qajar government to establish itself as a ruling body of the country.

In the final years of the reign of Muhammad Shah of Qajar, Reza Qoli Khan of Ardalan the governor of Kurdistan was accused of cooperating with Bahman Mirza the governor of Azerbaijan and enraged the Qajar king. Georgian Khosrow Khan was ordered to go Kurdistan and arrest Reza Qoli Khan the governor and bring him to Tehran and incarcerate him in the artillery base of Tajrish in Shemiranat. Then Georgian Khosrow Khan is appointed as the governor of Kurdistan.

Moreover, in *Tuhfeyeh Naseri* we are informed of the events that happened after the death of Muhammad Shah of Qajar for Kurdistan in Tehran: "After his arrival to the capital Nasir al-Din Shah mounted to the throne and started to manage the government affairs. Mirza Taqi Khan Farahani who was one of the prominent scholars and servants of the time got honored with the title Amir Kabir (Commander the Great) and became the chancellor of the state. With the order of Amir Kabir, the governors of most provinces and states changed but the governor of Kurdistan who was kept in the office due to some speculations".

Modern historiography is no more the linear documentation of the political history of governments and regimes. Today the structure of governments is not considered separated from the social orders. Rather the conflation of history and sociology and the formation of historical sociology and “analysis of the social foundations of politics and the complex relations between the state actions, political organizations and social structures” from a historical perspective are indeed a set of efforts that are made for better understanding of the past from the point of view of current sociological concerns and discussions.

Considering this significant issue in modern historiography and in view of the importance of social, economic, cultural and political structures in the formation of political development we will endeavor to elucidate why Ardalans even with the power and influence that they had in northwestern regions of Iran did not compete with Qajars over the political power after the decline of Karim Khan after whom the only rivals of Ardalans were Qajars. The establishment of Qajar dynasty as the ruling power of Iran with the assistances of Ardalans particularly First Khosrow Khan was accompanied with a set of developments in Kurdistan. This event strengthened the position of Ardalans in Kurdistan and also made them the closest ally of Qajars. In this era, particularly during the governorship of Aman Allah Khan, gradually some groups of elites, merchants and rich families moved to Jorabad and Qatarchyan. Due to the peace and security that prevailed the region other neighborhoods were also added to the city including Chahrbagh, Charlan Palace and Kermanjha. This also caused major changes in the architectural and social structure of the city neighborhoods. These changes were not only in favor of the residents but they also revolutionized the whole structure of the city. With the presence of the social groups in the neighborhoods, some large buildings were constructed. Furthermore, some public buildings like mosques, Bazaars, and baths were built in the neighborhoods. These developments can be seen in the Qatarchyan, Jorabad, Charlan Palace neighborhoods. These constructions not only changed the face of these neighborhoods but they also brought comfort and welfare for the residents (Tatavi, 2008). During the conflicts of Zand and Qajar khans, Ardalan Dynasty sided with Aqa Muhammad Khan and helped him to ascend to power. During the reign of Fath Ali Shah, a new phase of political activity started for this dynasty. Aman Allah Khan is considered the greatest and most powerful governor of Ardalan Dynasty. Fath Ali Shah supported Aman Allah Khan and let his daughter marry him and this made the two dynasties closer to each other. Of course, this was more in the interest of the central government of Iran as Ardalans was a good pressure leverage against Ottomans and this ensured the security of northwestern regions. After Aman Allah Khan, his son

Khosrow Khan, continued his father's path and he married with one of the King's daughter and this made the relations more secure and Iranian government took advantage of his services in securing the western borders (Borzooei, 1999).

The Decline of Ardalan Government: Causes

As to the factors that were involved in the decline of the Ardalan Dynasty one can refer to: the existence of local powers in Iran, influence and role of King's disciples and relatives in deciding on the destiny of a dynasty, cultural differences, civil society and so on and so forth. The results show that geographical factors were of key role in the decline of Ardalan Dynasty because this region has better ecological conditions, mines and agricultural reservoirs, green pasture for cattle breeding as compared to other regions. This is why this region has been always under invasions of domestic and foreign powers. The other issue that has to be noticed is the involvement of Ardalan governors in corruption and political promiscuity of Qajar governors. The trade off positions and office in Qajar court was an ordinary matter. One of the examples of this corruption is the Subhan Verdi Khan of Ardalan's appointment as Tehran's governor during the reign of Hassan Ali Khan for 20 thousand gold coins. Although Fath Ali Shah himself appointed Aman Allah Khan as the governor of Kurdistan there had been certainly some issues that played a key role in this appointment. From this era till the dismissal of Aman Allah Khan the Second in 1284 of Hijra we have only records of the conflicts and battles of this dynasty with the local rites, particular those of Uramis, who were dissatisfied with the government of Ardalan governors whose major role was collecting taxes and sending them to the central government as well as the records of internal conflicts and personal revenge.

People's dissatisfaction of Ardalans' actions, numerous local rites against them, and Nasir al-Din Shah's visit of Sanandaj in 1275 of Hijra and seeing the inappropriate conditions of the city and the elimination of Baban dynasty by Ottomans led to the appointment of Farhad Mirza as the governor of Kurdistan in 1284 of Hijra after the death of Aman Allah Khan the Second instead of an Ardalan governor. This was the end of the effective presence of this dynasty in political developments of Kurdistan from Mongol era to the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah. Almost all works that have been authored on the emergence and decline of Ardalan government and discussed the lives of the commanders and their families are based on political history and descriptive results. Thus, studying this era and the causes and factors that

were involved in the decline of this local government, uncovered new aspects for us (Mardookhi Rouhani, 2008).

Conclusion

We can conclude that Kurdish tribe's convergence with the central government and great society of Iran as an authentic Iranian tribe is based on the historical, religious, and cultural common grounds. This convergence is indeed a historical reality that can be objectified more than before if some obstacles are tackled and the necessary preliminary requirements and premises are provided.

Ardalan Dynasty as a major tribe in western Iran from Mongol era onward can be traced through the historical sources. This dynasty came under the supervision of Iranian central government. One of the most important periods of this dynasty in Iran is the interval time from the death of Karim Khan of Zand to the reign of Aqa Muhammad Khan of Qajar. One of the most powerful governor generals of Ardalan Dynasty, i.e. Khosrow Khan, dominated the western regions of Iran after defeating the rivals and the remnants of the Zand dynasty.

Due to tribal and nomadic structures of Kurdistan community and the competition that is always running among these various tribes for participation in and having the upper hand in power functions and Ardalan dynasty's inability of prevailing them as well as the internal problems of this dynasty and the emergence of competition inside the members of this dynasty and the absence of political thought among them and their getting the habit of living under the supervision of the Safavid dynasty threw major obstacles in the way of Khosrow Khan of Ardalan and prevented him from becoming a serious rival for Aqa Muhammad Khan of Qajar while he had considerable influence on major parts of western regions of Iran. Then he surrendered the western regions of Iran to Aqa Muhammad Khan and like his ancestors he was satisfied with controlling his emirate territory. Ardalan Dynasty had several functions for Qajar dynasty. Qajars were used to spend huge amounts of money for their luxuries and courts and the major part of this spending was provided with the collection of taxes, revenues of imperial lands, customs, and the rents. Moreover, Ardalan commanders were always dependent on skillful forces and troops for protection of their strategic territory and these forces and troops were recruited from among the people of the towns, villages and even the tribes and nomads. These forces and troops were ready to assist Qajar government in case of emergency. The other major contribution of Ardalan Dynasty was the protection of border regions in western Iran against the threats of Ottomans. Since Ardalan Dynasty lived in western regions it undertook this important task from Safavid era to Qajar era.

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