Research Article

The Structure of the Kurdish Emirates in the Abbasid Era (750–1258) (Hasanawayhid Barzikani and Bani Marwan)

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Abstract

For the first time in the Abbasid Caliphate, a kind of local government called the Emirate emerged in some Kurdish regions under the realm of the Abbasid Caliphate, which was indeed an attempt on the part of the heads of Kurdish tribes and clans to establish a local government within the realm of the Abbasid Caliphate. Although this governmental structure continued until the end of the Ottoman and Qajar empires in the form of different emirates, it failed to prepare the ground needed for the formation of a Kurdish state.

This article aims at explaining the structure of these emirates and providing the pathology of the emirates focusing on the two emirates of Hasanawayhid Barzikani (1015-959) and the Marwanids (990-1096) as the first Kurdish emirates in the Abbasid era.

The findings of this study indicate that these emirates were the product of the weakening of the Abbasid caliphate due to on the one hand the domination of the Buyids (Āl-e Būya) (932-1055) over Baghdad, the center of the Abbasids, and on the other hand the will of the tribe and nomad leaders to form local governments. The structural features of these emirates, such as their reliance on central governments, tribal disputes and rivalries, weak economy, and the lack of a defined political framework, prevented the emirates from moving toward the formation of a Kurdish government in the region.

Keywords: Structure, kurdish emirates, hasanawayhid, bani 'annāz, marwanids, abbasid caliphate.

Introduction

How was the structure of the Kurdish emirates? Since, although, they were the first attempt by the heads of the Kurdish tribes and nomads to form a ruling territory, called "Emirneshin" (Emirate/Principality), not only did they not have the ability to expand their scope of power to all Kurdish regions, but they also lacked the necessary

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grounds to establish a strong and independent Kurdish government when the nation-states were formed. Moreover, they were also constantly exposed to internal disputes and rivalry, and upon gaining the slightest power of central governments and increasing tribal rivalries, they collapsed.

This research deals with the social, political and economic grounds and the structure of the Kurdish emirates of the Abbasid era and aims to explain how the Kurdish emerged. It tries to answer these fundamental questions: Why were these emirates in constant transition? How, despite this transition, did these emirates emerge in most Kurdish regions while such empires as the Abbasid, Seljuks, Mongols, Safavids and Ottomans dominated throughout the territory of the Kurdish regions? More importantly, why, instead of trying to unite and create an all-encompassing and powerful emirate in the Kurdish regions, did they engage in rivalries and animosities, thus accelerating each other's downfall?

Ibn al-Athīr's *"Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh"* (The Complete History), Ibn Meskawayh's "*Tajāreb   al-Omam wa Taʿāqeb al-Hemam*" ("Experiences of the Nations and Consequences of High Ambitions") and Al-Dhahabī's *"Siyar A`lam Al-nubala"* ("The Lives of Noble Figures"), are among the classic sources of historiography of the Abbasid era. *A brief history of Kurds and Kurdistan* by Mohammad Amin Zaki Bag, *Kurdish Emirates during the Buyids and Kurdish tribes and powers in the middle Ages* by Zrar Sedeeq are among the recent resources and studies that have addressed these emirates. However, these sources have not mentioned the structure of these emirates, but focused more on their political history. It seems for the first time, this study has dealt with the structure of these emirates and the reasons for their emergence, as well as the reasons for their inability to form an all-encompassing Kurdish government in the Kurdish lands.

The method used in this research is analytical-library method. In order to analyze and discover the realities of these emirates and to depict of the general situation of Kurdish emirs and the emirate community in the historical sources the paper is organized and structured as follows: the first part deals with the concept of Emirate, and the second part addresses the political, economic and social structure of the Kurdish emirates of the Abbasid era.

Put it tersely, it seems that the weakness of the Abbasids and the domination of the Buyids over Baghdad, the center of the Abbasid caliphate, as well as the desire of the Kurdish tribes and nomads to gain political leadership, paved the way for the formation of these Kurdish emirates. It was expected that over time the first Kurdish emirates would spread all over Kurdish areas, that is, the power of these emirates would be established in all Kurdish areas. However, internal disputes, tribal rivalries, and the intervention of regional and central powers have prevented the continuation of the organization of the Kurdish emirates and their dominance all over the Kurdish regions. Although after the collapse of the first Kurdish emirates of the Abbasid era, the Kurdish emirates continued to emerge in the following eras, including the Seljuk, Safavid, Ottoman and Qajar eras, the multiplicity of emirates and the recurrent rivalries among tribes and clans, as well as the dependence of each of these emirates on a central power, prevented the formation of a single Kurdish emirate or paving the way for the formation of a Kurdish government in the region.

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The Concept of Emirate

In Kurdish, the word "Emirneshin" comes from the word "Emir" meaning commander of a corps and the head of a tribe and clan, and the second part, "neshin" means place, and the place of residence and principality of the Emir of a tribe (Hazhar, 2009: 841). The compound word "Emirneshin" in Kurdish means the gathering of a group of people in a specific geographical location who are under the obedience of an emir. Thus, the emirate in Kurdish society was a political, administrative, social, and tribal institution whose realm of power sometimes transcended tribal boundaries and was in fact the image of a limited state (Qaradakhi, 2004: 89).

The Emergence of Kurdish Emirates

In 945, a chain of important and decisive developments took place in the history of the Abbasid Caliphate, which caused a fundamental change in the way the Abbasid Caliphate was governed. In this year, Mu'izz al-Dawlah Buwaihid dominated Baghdad and took power of the Caliphate, he was able to dominate the political power of Baghdad and the caliphate (Ibn al-Athir, 1997: 7/157). The circumstances in the territory of the Abbasid Caliphate provided an opportunity for several tribes to expand their local power within a limited framework. The experts in the history of the Abbasid era used the term emirate to describe the emerging powers formed during the Abbasid period. The term Kurdish emirate was used by Sibt ibn al-Jawzi for this type of local government in the Kurdish regions (Sibt ibn al-Jawzi, 2013: 19/151).

Analysts in the field of history have used the concept of "Emirates" meaning the ruling emir to describe local governments arising from the power vacuum created by the weakening of the Abbasids. In other words, this concept was forged to define these local governments, and even some historians used the concept of emirate to mean government and used the government of Hasanawayhids instead of the emirate of Hasanawayhids (Zaki Beg, 2018).

However, the fact of the matter is that the Kurdish tribal power could not take advantage of time and space. For example, even though the Buyids converted to Islam after the Kurds and their lands became part of the territory of Islam much later, they rushed to Baghdad from the north of Iran and took control of Baghdad. It seems that the Kurdish regions have constantly been exposed to the campaigns of the superior powers, which is one of the reasons why the Kurds have resorted to defending instead of attacking. From this perspective, they never sought to attack and even the establishment of Kurdish emirates in this period was defensive rather than seeking to expand their territory to other areas, such as invading the Caliphate. Therefore, none of these emirates ever sought to invade and dominate the territory of the Caliphate or other governments in the region. This defensive approach led the Kurds, unlike the Buyids, to seek ostensible obedience and create a limited emirate that would not provoke a strong reaction from Baghdad and subsequently from the central powers. Of course, on the other hand, due to the fierce rivalries, Kurdish tribes and clans did not tolerate the dominance of one tribe/clan over the others; hence, the Kurdish leaders' desire to establish their rule developed in the form of Kurdish emirates.

In short, as mentioned, the governing style of the Abbasid Caliphate underwent fundamental changes during the reign of the Buyids. Among these changes were the weakening of the Abbasid power in the Kurdish regions and the change of relations between the Kurds and the Caliphate. The most prominent of these Kurdish emirates during the Abbasid caliphate and introduced here, are Hasanawayhid from the Barzîkânî tribe and Bani Marwan.

The Emirate of Hasanawayhids Barzikani (959-1015)

The founder of this emirate is Mir Hossein Barzikani, the chief of Barzikani tribe in Shahrazour. He took advantage of the weakness of the Abbasids and established the emirate in the Shahrazur region of Sulaimaniyah province in Iraqi Kurdistan. As soon as the Abbasid Caliph learned of Amir Hussein's insubordination, he rushed to fight against him but was defeated (Amin Zaki, 346). After his death, his son Hasanwayh came to the throne and expanded his territory to the mountains, the Kurdish region of present-day Iranian Kurdistan, tacking control of the territory of Dinavar, Hamedan, Nahavand and some parts of Azerbaijan.

The beginning of his rule coincided with the reign of Mu'izz al-Dawla Buwaihid (946-967) over Baghdad who sent an army to suppress Hasanawayhids, which he defeated as well (Amin Zaki, 2018: 346). Of course, the Buyids tried several times to suppress and defeat him, but they failed and were forced to make peace with him and accept his power (Ibn al-Athir, 1997: 7/292).

In order not to face any threat from the Caliphate, Hasanwayh moved his seat of government from Shahrazur near Baghdad to the mountains far from Baghdad. After more than three decades of rule, he died in the year 980 and after his death; his territory was divided among his seven sons. ʿAżod-al-Dawla took advantage of this opportunity, captured the territory of Hasanawayhids, and handed it over to Badr, one of Hasanwayh's sons (Ibn al-Athir, 1997: 8/597).

After the death of ʿAżod-al-Dawla, Sharaf al-Dawla Buwaihid, the ruler of Baghdad, tried again to seize the territory of Hasanawayhids, but was defeated by Badr. This defeat strengthened the financial means and military power of Badr bin Hasanwayh. Therefore, he even attempted to capture Baghdad. His intention to occupy Baghdad was probably to incite the Caliph to save Baghdad from the power of the Buyids, and for this reason, the Caliph gave the title of Nasser al-Dawlah, meaning supporter of the government, to Badr ibn Hasanwayh (Ibn Meskawayh, 200: 311).

Despite Badr's power against the Buyids and Baghdad, his disputes with his son Hilal weakened Hasanawayhids' power, and he eventually fell victim to a father-son rivalry and was killed by a group of his troops in 1015. Although the Hasanawayhids ruled the area sporadically until 1047, Badr's death weakened their power and paved the way for their collapse. As in 1047, the Shazinjani Kurds, who had tribal disputes with them, destroyed the Hasanawayhid Emirate (Amin Zaki, 2018: 355).

In fact, the collapse of Hasanawayhids was the result of internal rivalries (between father and son), the lack of a prospective for politics, and tribal rivalries as the Kurds of the Shazinjan tribe destroyed them.

Marwanid Emirate (990-1096)

The Marwanids were from the Kurdish tribes living in the districts of Diyarbakir and Mosul. The ground for the formation of this emirate was prepared by the head of the tribe, Abu Shujā' Badh, who was supported by Al-Qādir Bi'llāh, the Abbasid caliph, due to the war with the Armenians, and he received the title of *shāh* (king) and *Shujā'* (brave) from the caliph. After his death, his nephew Abu Ali Hassan Ibn Marwan founded this Kurdish emirate in 990 and by choosing Hisn-Kayfa in Diyarbakir as the seat of his government, he ruled over the areas from Mosul to Diyarbakir, and called himself a king and issued coins in his name. However, after several years of rule, he fell victim to internal and tribal rivalry and was killed in an assassination attempt in 387 (997) (Ibn al-Athir, 1997: 7/439).

After the death of Abu Ali, his brother Mansour, who was the ruler of Mayyāfāriqīn, called himself a king and issued coins in his name, but after 14 years of rule, he was killed by one of his tribesmen in 1012.

Abu Nasr came to power after his brother and ruled for 52 years. He was interested in cultural activities; therefore, he prospered Diyarbakir and tried to turn Diyarbakir into a cultural center. In this regard, he took several measures such as establishing a library and inviting well-known scholars. However, rivalries and disputes after him prevented the city from continuing to strengthen its cultural aspects.

After his death, his son, Nasr, ascended the throne. Due to his father's clever measures, he also ruled for 22 years. After him, his son Amir Mansour Marvani came to power. Upon gaining power of the Caliphate, he was arrested under the influence of the seduction of the Caliph's vizier, Ibn Jahir. After his death in prison, the Kurdish Umayyad Caliphate was abolished in the year 1096 (Amin Zaki, 2018: 346).

The Grounds for the Emergence and Formation of the First Kurdish Emirates

The weakening power of the Abbasid Caliphate, the domination of the Buyids over Baghdad and their efforts to further weaken the Abbasid Caliphate, as well as the will of the Kurdish tribes and clans to seize political power over the regions and territories under their administration are the most important factors in and grounds for the formation of Kurdish emirates in the Abbasid era. More importantly, trying to avoid confrontation with the Caliphate along with accepting the legitimacy of the caliph as the spiritual leader of the Muslims has been one of the factors in the continuation of these emirates in the Abbasid era. On the other hand, tribal and internal divisions, as well as the lack of a clear mechanism for the continuation of the government, including the transfer of power from father to son, as well as the sensitivities and rivalries of the Kurdish tribes, prevented the consolidation and expansion of these emirates to all Kurdish regions.

Kurdish Emirate as a Social Structure

The family is the basis for the formation of larger units of clans (Khāndān, Tyrah and Tayfah) and tribes ('Ashirat and Ilat), and these units were formed on the basis of blood relations. The position of the individual in the tribal structure depended on the status of the family, clan, and tribe. The attainment of power and leadership of the clan

and tribe depended on personal capability, influence, and having armed people or ownership of wealth and property, and sometimes forging an ancient lineage and a line of descent tracing one's line of descent back to mythological personalities. As the tribe grew up under the support of an emir, an emirate with a tribal identity was formed.

Historical sources frequently refer to the nomadic life of the Kurdish regions, but it was not just the phenomenon of nomadism that predominated the lives of all the tribes. Rather, some of the Kurdish emirs, like the Turkish and Arab emirs, lived in aristocratic and large tents, or owned shelters made of trees and wood that could be moved (Al-Isfahani, 2002: 286). An example of this lifestyle was specific prevalent in areas where the temperatures in cold and hot seasons were very different. The source of livestock fodder was so affected the Kurdish lifestyle that they were forced to migrate.

Because of this lifestyle, sedentarization can rarely be seen among Kurdish tribes. In addition, due to the nomadic life, the population of the tribes has been constantly changing, so it has faced the greatest challenge among the tribes themselves, causing some tribes to separate from one tribe and join another tribe. This situation itself has led to instability in Kurdish territory and the demarcation of borders.

The most prominent of these tribal conflicts in the Abbasid era can be seen among the Hasanawayhid clan themselves and also between the Hasanawayhids and the Annazid Kurds. Moreover, as mentioned, some of the rulers of Hasanawayhids were dethroned by their children, and the emirate itself was destroyed by the Annazid Kurds (Ibn al-Athir, 1997: 7/ 376-593).

In addition, these emirates sometimes had to enter into political marriages in order to resolve tribal problems. Nevertheless, rancor, or a sense of tribal revenge and a lack of mutual trust and lack of public interest, hindered the success of these political marriages. For example, Tahir, son of Amir Hilal, son of Badr ibn Hasanwayh, married the sister of Amir Abashk Annazi, but despite this political marriage, Tahir killed Annazid emir's brother, in revenge for the death of his father (Ibn al-Athir, 1997: 7/608). In other words, the political solution fell victim to tribal revenge. In the end, despite their political marriage, Hasanawayhids preferred revenge as a tribal tradition to resolve the tribal problem with the Annazids. On the other hand, the Annazids took revenge and overthrew the emirate of Hasanawayhids.

The social situation of the Kurdish emirates, like any other Muslim community, underwent a series of changes. Nevertheless, the positive effects on them were very limited, due to the difficult nature of social life and the power of tribal traditions. In this case, most historians of the Islamic period, when discussing the Kurds and Kurdish regions, have used the concept of "Akrad" (Kurds), which expresses the tribal approach, and this word is analogous to the word "Aarab" that urban Arabs used to referred to Bedouin and nomadic Arabs (Lashkri, 2009: 118).

Hence, tribal traditions were the most effective factor in tribal upbringing because the individual's relationship with the family and family affiliations to the tribe and clan was based on tribe and clan traditions. Disobedience also meant being outcast and homeless, and as a result, exposure to the attacks of other tribes and clans. This mere

obedience has been the only criterion of tribal affiliation, or tribal upbringing. Therefore, revenge has been a salient feature of the tribe and the policy of the tribe and the emirate was not based on public interests but on the traditions of the tribe.

In this regard, banditry was one of the characteristics of tribal life and upbringing and considered as a privilege. In relation to this criterion, i.e. tribal banditry, there have been effective and determining factors, most of which indicate the tribal nature and the prevention of non-tribal power, i.e. central power. In other words, banditry and disobedience to the central power were interpreted as honor and courage (Lashkri, 2009: 136).

This complicated situation kept the Kurdish emirates in a state of regression and retrogression and deprived them of the capability to innovate and change. However, occasionally some emirates reflected a different image, which was mostly due to the personal ability of the emir himself. As the Marwanid Emirate was different because of the effective role of Nasser al-Dawla, who provided public services such as baths, mosques, castles and libraries in the city of Mayyāfāriqīn (Al-Fariqi, 2007: 92). However, in general, the cumbersome tribal traditions have always hindered the growth of political culture and transcending tribal boundaries in these emirates.

Kurdish Emirate as a Political Structure

Tribal and clan-based prejudice has been the biggest factor in forging a strong alliance among tribes, which creates such strong relations that it gives them a sense of dominance and mastery over other tribes, and this is primarily based on power (Ibn Khaldun, 1988: 175/1).

The political composition of the Kurdish emirates is comprised of the emir and the ruling family, and is free of any institution that imposes restrictions on the emir and makes him accountable. For this reason, we do not see any political activity or policy-making outside the will of the emir in these emirates. Even closer relations between the Emirate, had no political purpose for the partnership and peaceful relationship and, in the best case, was mostly for disputes and conflicts and competition (Al-D̲h̲ahabī, 1993: 272/30).

Tracing politics and policy-making in these emirates is so difficult that customs and traditions play a role instead of the principles of politics, and for some of them the political background of the tribe was related to the customs of the tribe and were interpreted as a spirit of cooperation, respect and support (Ibn Khaldun, 1988: 180/1).

In this case, there are some prominent historical examples. Emir Badr ibn Hasanwayh was a shrewd, knowledgeable and wise man, sheltering several Buyid figures, preparing thousands of warriors for war, and achieving several war successes. However, because of internal disputes, especially the dispute with his son and also with Annazid kurds, he was killed by them (Sibt Ibn al-Jawzi, 1414: 232/18). During this period, the political marriage between the emirs of Hasanawayhids and Annazids was done to limit each other. As they later began to take revenge on each other based on the teachings of tribal upbringing (Ibn al-Athir, 1997: 608/7). This feature is closer to the character of the wild life (Ibn Khaldun, 1988: 178/1).

Most examples of Kurdish emirates reveal the fact that none of these emirates succeeded in pursuing a unified policy with a clear prospect. It seems that, based on the political structure of the Kurdish emirates, in internal conflicts and rivalries, the negative principles of tribal traditions were more prominent than the politics. In the meantime, in the foreign relations, they adhered to the positive principles of ethnic etiquette and customs. Therefore, it can be said that these emirates lacked a justified and clear political structure.

Kurdish Emirate as an Economic Structure

Economic activity in Kurdish emirates depended on geographical location, agriculture and the amount of agricultural and livestock products and handicrafts, and the effects of nomadic and semi-nomadic life and sedentarization in small towns, that is, it was related access to means of production and production relations.

In this regard, Mavardi divides the conventional economic activities of the Abbasid era into four categories: agricultural growth, livestock products, commercial and industrial profits (Al-Māwardī, 1986: 211). This text illustrates that in the past, agricultural activity has been distinct from animal husbandry. Because agriculture and animal husbandry had their own characteristics and at the same time they influenced political power.

Ṣūrat al-ʾArḍ ("The Shape of the Earth"), when referring to the Kurdish regions, presents two distinct images of Kurdish life. While discussing the eastern Kurdish regions, Ibn Ḥawqal refers to the urban life of the cities of Nusaybin and Mardin, which have tall buildings made of large stones and plaster, as well as urban symbols such as baths, bazaars, squares, etc. However, in discussing the ethnic structure, he writes that most of the inhabitants of Nusaybin are Arabs (Ibn Ḥawqal, 1938: 1 / 214-215).

This example indicates that the urbanization of the eastern regions of Kurdistan has been very limited due to their geographical location, i.e. neighboring the European countries. Although when discussing the eastern Kurdish regions, several large cities have been mentioned that had the capability to turn into large commercial and agricultural centers, the writer argues that the population of these cities within the realm of Kurdish regions was non-Kurdish and it seems that the Kurds in this period were not interested in sedentarization (Ibn Ḥawqal, 1938: 358/2). When referring to the eastern regions of the Tigris as the other center of Kurdish regions, i.e. along the crescent, the least development and urban and residential areas can be seen and this region mostly includes rural areas inhabited by Kurds and Bedouin Arabs who were mostly engaged in animal husbandry (Ibn Ḥawqal, 1938: 247/1).

In general, the power of the Kurdish emirates varied based on the way of life of the people. Nomadic and semi-nomadic life lacked the least stability, but in areas of sedentarization, especially urban areas, relative stability has led to familiarity with other civilizations and regions. As a result, the economic growth of the Kurdish emirates was very limited, and at the same time, the lack of trade routes and the poor condition of the roads, have been effective in isolating the economy of these emirates. Therefore, they had to rely on local products, which led to the spread of the commodity-to-commodity economy and limited exchange within the Emirate. Although this factor in itself indicates the richness of livelihood resources, on the other hand, it created a vulnerable economy

among the Kurdish emirates. In other words, the geographical location and the way of life of the people in the Kurdish emirates, the desire for livelihood, adherence to tribal traditions, refusing sedentarization and the lack of defined communication with other regions, kept the Kurdish emirates deprived of a strong economy to expand their territory and to continue their political life.

Conclusion

The emirate system, as a model of local government in Kurdish areas, began in the Abbasid era. It can be said that this model of local government was the product of the weakness of the Abbasids and the rise of the Buyids on the one hand and, on the other hand the desire of the Kurdish tribal leaders to rule in their tribal territory and expand their territory to neighboring tribes. This expansion of the territory and its preservation was not based on the adoption of a basic policy, which has been one of the main factors in the weakening and eventual fall of these emirates.

In general, although it is difficult to provide an accurate picture of the politics of Kurdish emirates, it mostly involved internal and tribal rivalries within a few families. They were also the tools of these central powers. At the same time, some of these emirates supported political and religious powers in the region and, of course, they served as tools and puppets in the hands of the central powers.

The sources of livelihood of the Kurdish emirates were rich, but they had a vulnerable and weak economy. The existence of natural resources without industry and trade in the Kurdish emirates has been an important obstacle to their growth and development.

In conclusion, the characteristics of the Kurdish emirates of the Abbasid era have been constantly repeated and reflected in Kurdish history in many ways, the traces of which, even today, can be seen in limiting borders and increasing differences and intensifying hostilities; even though, the Kurds have settled down and even formed a semi-independent government called the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. The two ruling parties in Iraqi Kurdistan today, like the emirates of the Abbasid era, are in constant tribal rivalry and trying to rely on neighboring central powers to eliminate and weaken each other; therefore, the premodern tradition of emirates seems to be a constituent part of Kurdish politics in modern times.

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