
ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

FARHOD KARIMOV. THE PROBLEM OF ETHNIC KURDS IN THE MIDDLE EASTERN REGION: THE HISTORY OF ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION // *The article was written for the bulletin "Russia and the Moslem World."*

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Abstract. This article examines the problem of the Kurds in ensuring regional stability and security in the Middle East, the history of this problem in comparison with the history of the countries of the region in the 14–19 centuries. The analysis of the facts presented in the historical literature about the Kurds is carried out. The attitude of the Middle East countries to these issues, the factor of external power in this matter, the relationship of the problem with other confessional problems in the region are also being studied.

Introduction

The history of the Kurds is rooted in ancient times, but there are different approaches, various hypotheses of the origin of the Kurds are put forward. The version of the origin of modern Kurds from the Kurtians who inhabited Northern Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau is also confirmed by ancient sources. The fact is that the natural state and opinions about the history of all nations differ. The problem lies not in the diversity of opinions related to the origin of peoples, but in the fact that when describing historical events, they are interpreted according to political interests of a nation or a state. The main problem and difficulty in social research is also that scientists in this field act independently (without pursuing political goals) in research. Some scholars also argue that this is not possible.

Main part

Although there is no consensus about the place of historical residence of ethnic Kurds, many sources indicate that the central parts of the Zagros Mountains are their historical homeland [1]. As noted by the American researcher Michael Gunther, "in these regions they lived from the 6th century BC."¹ Before the spread of Islam in the 7th century, the Kurds, who remained under the rule of several empires such as Persia, Rome and Byzantium, maintained a divided cultural structure throughout all the history based on Ashirat (tribal structure) [2]. In subsequent periods, they were under the Arab Caliphate, Seljuks, Khorezmshahs, Mongols, Timurids.

From 1510 to the First World War, the Ottomans, and then the Safavid dynasty in Iran, even during the rule of the Kojars, failed to create a single Kurdish state. The Russian orientalist M.S. Lazarev writes about it too. It should be noted that the development of the Kurds has always proceeded in extremely unfavorable conditions, constantly escalating and leading to

acute, bloody and long-term conflicts. The state that ensured the domination of the Kurdish ethnos, i.e. Kurdistan never existed [3]. However, the Kurds were tribal states or Emirates that were ruled on the basis of strong tribalism. These emirates, as Michael Eppel writes, ruled the tribes, subjugating less powerful tribes as well as influential Kurdish tribal dynasties. The first dynasties of the Kurdish tribes were the Hasanwahids (Hasanwia) (959-1095), the Annazids (990-1116), the Shaddadids (951-1075) and the Banu Marwan (Marvanid) (948-1083) [4].

Tribalism is a characteristic feature of the Kurds, and the reason why the Kurds have not been able to build any strong state in history is also because they live in this tribal format. The formation of Kurdish political rule in this format has reached such a level that even another tribe of its own people seems to be a more dangerous threat than an external enemy.

Zia Gokalp, a sociologist well acquainted with Kurdish society, wrote that, "In all primitive societies, there is no concept of individual or mass right." This right belongs only to the tribe. As a result, a feud for the post of a head will arise between his uncle's son and his brothers. The struggle for the post of head of a tribe usually lasts a long time. The defeated side leaves the tribe and seeks refuge from the other tribe. "The Kurds had a developed tribal ideology, not the ideology of the homeland." [5].

The head of the Idris-i-Bitlis tribe wrote an invitation letter to the Ottoman Sultan Yovuz Sultan Selim, in which he noted that: "... the Kurds live as separate tribes, and not as a single one. We are in a state of union only when we know Allah and are the ummah of Muhammad. Otherwise, our closeness to each other is impossible. This is how the Sunnah was applied to us" [6].

It should be noted that such a division of the Kurds, on the one hand, served to prevent their assimilation into other peoples, to preserve their language, traditions and customs throughout history, and on the other hand, their inability to unite did not allow building a single state. The influence of tribalism helped in the creation of "puppets" under the rule of other nations and

turning them into permanent vassals, fighting with each other. The famous historian Arnold Toynbee wrote in 1934: "The worst enemy of the Kurds is tribal and feudal strife. This factor creates an opportunity for the Iraqi, Turkish and Persian governments to pursue "divide et impera" policy."² The Kurds have historically been in the constant focus of attention of large states, politically, culturally and strategically. They were mainly on the side of the Turks in the wars between the Ottoman Turks and the Iranian Safavids, because most of the Kurds are Sunni Moslems who opposed the Iranians and supported the Ottoman Turks. The security of the eastern borders of the Ottoman Turks has always been preserved thanks to the Kurds.

It should also be noted that as a result of the war between the Ottomans and the Persians, the population growth of Eastern Anatolia changed in favor of the Kurds. The reason is that in these wars the Persians supported the Turkmen tribes, who were Shiites, and the Ottoman Turks helped the Kurdish tribes, who were Shafiites. As a result, many Kurdish Shafiites under Iranian rule moved to Eastern Anatolia, and a minority of Turkmen Shiites migrated from the Ottoman state to Iran. Thus, although the "Turkization" began in the eastern part of Anatolia, the population of Eastern Anatolia after these wars increased mainly at the expense of the Kurds [7]. Evliya Çelebi, who lived in the 17th century and is best known for his travels, left important information about the Kurdish lands. He used the term "Diyar-ı Kürdistan" to refer to the Kurdish region, calling it "a great country."³ He writes: "There are people who speak Kurdish in seventy places, from Erzurum to Van, from Hakkari to Jizra, Imadiyya, Mosul, Shehrisar, Harir, Erdelan, Baghdad, Derna, Derteng and Basra".. For the Ajam people it would be very convenient to invade Ottoman land if there were no strong barrier between 6,000 Kurdish tribes and tribes in these high mountains between the Arabs of Iraq and the Ottoman Turks"⁴ He also mentioned Kurdish resistance to Ajam, saying, "There are fifty armed Muhammad's Shafi Ummah-i in this region."

"... And if it were not for the Great Wall of Kurdistan between Ali Usman and Ajam, Ali Usman would not have had peace. Ajam hasm-i kawi, sheju feta ..." means that Iran, opposing the Ottomans, is a dangerous enemy. For this reason, the Ottomans are focused on the Kurds and the lands of Kurdistan. From the point of view of the stability of the Ottoman state, he admits that "in this sense, the Ottomans are considered the patrons of the Sunni world, and Kurdistan is a very strong wall between the Safavid protectors of the Shiites against it".⁵

In general, from 1510 until World War I, the Kurdistan Region was the center of the conflict between the Turks and the Persians. In 1638, a year after the complete conquest of Baghdad by the Ottoman Turk Murad IV, the boundaries of the Turkish-Iranian treaty were clearly defined. Although the agreement was in effect until World War I, Kurdistan remained a hotbed of conflict between the two countries and sometimes escalated into hostilities. In particular, there were several attempts by the Ottomans to occupy Kurdish areas during the reign of Nadir Shah in Iran, but they were unable to completely take over Baghdad, the land of the Kurds that was previously owned by the Persians. Nevertheless, Nadirshah managed to capture Tbilisi from the Ottomans.

In addition, during the Zand and Kojar dynasties in Iran, there were several military clashes with the Ottomans in Baghdad and the Kurdish regions. However, the treaty was finally signed in 1639. The border in accordance with this agreement of 1639 is still in force between Turkey-Iran and Iraq-Iran. After the Battle of Haldiran on August 23, 1514, most of the lands inhabited by Kurds were part of the Ottoman-Turkic state. Some areas inhabited by Kurds, such as Kermanshah and Urmia, remained part of Iran. By the 1820s, as the Ottoman Turks began to weaken, there were Kurdish uprisings in several areas. However, after the defeat of the Ottoman Turks by the Egyptians in Nizip (near Gaziantep) in 1839, the Kurds began a major uprising led by Nurulla Bey in Hakkari and Bedirkhan in Jizre

(near Shirnak). In the 1850s, the Middle East region became the largest playing field in the world political games of Russian, British and French politicians. While the Russians helped the Kurds against the Ottoman Turks to take control of the Istanbul Strait and the Dardanelles, the British and French supported various Arab tribes. In short, the colonial policy of the imperialist states was the main reason for the development of the Kurdish-Turkish, Kurdish-Armenian, Arab-Turkish, Arab-Kurdish and Armenian-Turkish and other similar ethnic and religious conflicts. This happened not only in the Ottoman-Turkic state, but also in many other countries and regions such as Iran and India. We see the continuation of this policy today.

Conclusion

From an analysis of the history of ethnic Kurds and the Kurdish problem in the Middle East, as well as their impact on regional security, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1) Kurds live in the form of a confederation of tribes (tribe / clan). Ashirat leaders play an important role in the social and political life of the Kurds. Historically, the Kurds did not lose their tribal way of life, which served to prevent their assimilation with other peoples and preserve their own language and customs.

2) Kurds could never unite. This situation has historically led to the fact that their life depended on one or another state. In addition, the fact that the Kurds lived in mountainous areas also led to their geographical isolation and, consequently, to the preservation of their linguistic and tribal traditions, and the empires and states that established their rule over them did not interfere in the internal affairs of peoples living in mountains (sometimes it was just impossible to do this).

3) Although there is a lot of controversy about who the Kurds are, the initially generally accepted point of view is that they are one of the peoples of Iran. Their language belongs to the

Iranian-Persian language family. The Kurds, mostly Sunni, played an important role in the Islamic world (for example, Salahuddin, the founder of the Ayyubids, who became famous after winning the battle against the Crusaders for Jerusalem, was a Kurd).

4) The Kurdish people, who for a long time lived side by side with different peoples, formed a powerful national-ethnic movement that has survived to this day. While the First World War gave many nations the right to independence or autonomy that determined their fate, the Kurds were deprived of such a right and became the largest nation in the world without a state of their own. This situation today is becoming decisive not only for the Kurds, but also for external forces.

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