CONVERGENCE OF SOME KURD TRIBES WITH OTTOMANS DURING SHAH ISMAIL SAFAVI'S ERA: INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF IDRIS BITLISI

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ABSTRACT

As one of the oldest tribes in Middle East, Kurds have a lot of historical and cultural things in common with Iranians. In the course of history, they have acted as a robust barrier in confrontation with the foreigners considering their geographical position. But, a pact was signed between the ottoman Sultan Salim I (1497-1506) and some Kurd leaders with the emergence of Shah Ismail I (1486-1509) and his adoption of some policies in respect to Kurd tribes as well as with the excitations Idris Bitlisi (death in 1502), as one of the thinkers and influential figures, who had joined ottomans following Chaldoran defeat; based on the pact, a vast part of Kurdish dwelling regions and numerous Kurd tribes were separated from Iran forever and accepted ottoman citizenship. Considering the subtle effects and persistence of this event for centuries on Iran-ottoman relations, on the one hand, and Iran-Kurds relations, on the other hand, the present study, meanwhile exploring the reasons and outcomes of this important incident, tries investigating the role of Idris Bitlisi in this regard using a descriptive-analytical method with an emphasis on first-hand resources.

Keywords: Kurd tribes, ottoman Sultan Salim I, Idris Bitlisi, Shah Ismail Safavi I.

INTRODUCTION

After the death of Taimur (1404) and collapse of Timurid emperor, Iran once again found itself in political distress and the subsequent establishment of Feudal system. The northwest and west of the country, especially Kurdistan, had become the battlefield of Timurid commanders and Qaraquyunlou and Aq Quyunlou Turks at this time (Tehrani, 1978: 89-90). In such a political situation, the various Kurd tribes endeavored to follow the superior power hereby to preserve their political independence to some extent. In most of the historical periods, Kurdistan has been the supportive barrier between its adjacent governments. It had the same role and stance in the then period of time. This gave the Kurd tribes the required freedom of action to choose one of the several rulers. Such a bilateral relation, of course, completely depended on the weakness and strength of the local sultans (Van Bruinessen, 2001: 192-193). During the late years of Aq Quyunlus' reign, the Kurd commanders found it opportunistic to begin relatively independently rule inside their territory due to the weakness and internal discrepancies of them. The famous Kurd historian, Sharif Khan Bitlisi, has a detailed and exact explanation of the aforementioned sultanates and the quality of their relations and the discoordination between them in Sharafnameh (Bitlisi, 1986: 213-223). Therefore, the Kurd commanders who had achieved relative independence for the absence of a central power and their eccentricity had become strengthened were faced with new conditions with the

establishment of Safavid government and were inflicted by multiplicity of ideas and scattering of positions because the Safavid founder was seeking to omit the local and feudal governments by establishing a centralized government. Under such circumstances, the centrism tendencies of Shah Ismail I (1486-1509) was in conflict with the eccentricity of the Kurd leaders and a special space was created in the bilateral relations that needed the devising of far-sighted strategies by the parties. But, Shah Ismail started removing the local powers and replacing Qizilbash commanders in relation to his overall policy of corroborating the central government and integration of the country. Due to the same reason, the ground was set for the divergence of some Kurd tribes and Safavids and their convergence with ottomans.

Many of the historians and researchers are of the belief that the religious policies exercised by Shah Ismail parallel to religious homogenization and Shiism generalization were the pivotal factors contributing to this historical disintegration because the Kurds had preserved their extensive cultural and historical commonalities with the other Iranians before that (Mardukh, 1973, 2:38). But, it seems that the other effective factors have been neglected in the aforementioned perspective. Thus, considering the importance of this historical incident and its influential outcomes till the contemporary era, besides investigating the outcomes of this important event in the early years of Safavid's overtaking of power, the present study intends to find an answer to the question as to "what has been the fundamental cause of this important event?" The present study presumes that religion has not been the essential factor for such an incident rather it knows conflict and tension resulting from Shah Ismail's centrism and Kurd leaders' eccentricity along with Idris Bitlisi's excitations as the pivotal factor for such a diversion.

Climatic Conditions and Geographical Scattering of the Kurds:

The authentication of the term "Kurdistan" in the sixth hegira century (Seleucids' era) has been first proposed by Lesterange (Farrokhi, 2018: 42). Substantiating on Nozhat Al_Qolub, he states that "the thing said about the origin of Kurdistan State is that Sultan Senger Saljuqi separated the western part of Jebal State, i.e. the part that was a district of Kermanshah, and named it Kurdistan during the first half of the sixth hegira century and commissioned his nephew, Solaiman Shah, known as Abaveh (Ayweh) to the governing of the region" (Lestrange, 1986: 208). Hamdollah Mostawfi, as well, explicates the geographical domain of Kurdistan for the first time in eighth hegira century as follows: "and it is comprised of sixteen states and its borders are stretched to the states in Arabian Iraq and Khuzestan and Persian Iraq and Azerbaijan and Diyarbakir". He recounts that such Kurdish dwelling regions as Diyarbakir and Arbil are outside Kurdistan's geography (Mostawfi, 1984: 107). Sharaf Khan Bitlisi, as well, has the following words, in Sharaf Nameh, about the limits of Kurdistan and the geographical scattering of the Kurd tribes therein several years after Mostawfi: "and Kurdistan begins from the side of Hormoz Sea and it is bordered with the coasts of Indian Sea and it is stretched from there on a straight line to Malatiyeh village and ends in Mar'ash; in the northern side of this line, Fars and Persian Iraq and Azerbaijan and the lesser Arman and the greater Arman are situated; on its southern edge, Iraq and Musel and Diyarbakir are positioned" (Bitlisi, ibid., 24-25). It is noted in an investigation and comparison of the two perspectives by Mostawfi and Bitlisi regarding Kurdistan's geographical borders that the author of Nozhat Al-Qolub has dealt with the description of parts of Kurdish dwelling region in a formal manner in terms of tribute and tax payment within the structure of an independent office named Kurdistan state in

Ilkhanate era and not the entire realm of Kurd tribes' residence. This is why he has considered Diyarbakir, Jazireh and Arbil that were dwelled by Kurds as lying outside this territory. But, the author of Sharafnameh aims at delineating the scattering realm of all the Kurd tribes disregarding the affiliation and political and administrative structures thereof and it has been for the presence of Shabankareh Kurds in Persian Gulf coast that he has considered the Kurds' territories stretched thereto and this is historically incongruent with Kurdistan's territory.

It can be concluded from the investigation of the historical and geographical data that, since eighth hegira century on, the vaster domain drawn by Mostawfi for Kurdistan for the first time has been presented in the resources as the Kurds' territory and realm in the resources. Hence, it can be asserted that the historians and geographers after Mostawfi recall Kurdistan as a region with a majority of Kurd population but with no political power or a special geographical domain (Mcdowel, 2005: 36). In other words, the interval between the Ilkhanate government's downfall in the first half of the eighth hegira century and the emergence of Safavids, the term "Kurdistan" has not been a pervasive and general name featuring a specified and fixed geographical domain the way Mostawfi's report points to it as a specified region rather the borders of Kurdistan region have been variable during the periods after eighth hegira century (Hadiyan, 2011: 29). In fact, it can be stated that there was no consensus regarding the description and geographical demarcation of Kurd tribes and Kurdistan borders until before Safavid era. Therefore, the majority of the researchers and orientalists, as well, have dealt with the geographical description of Kurd tribes' scattering different from what the author of Sharaf Nameh has mentioned. For example, Mardukh, the contemporary Kurd historian, has the following words about Kurdistan's geographical limits: "Kurdistan is limited by Armenia in the north; it is stretched in the east to Azerbaijan and Persian Iraq and Khuzestan wherein Zagros Mountain Range is situated and it shares borders with Arabian Iraq in the south and it is limited by Euphrates River and Middle Eastern territories in the west (Mardukh, no date, 2:63). In addition, the author of the book "Tohfeh Naseri", as well, has the following statements in this regard: "in western and northwestern Iran and beyond the political borders and in the upstream section of the two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, and the foothills of Ararat, originally Iranian tribes, named Kurd, are residing" (Sanandaji, ibid.: 3). Owlia'a Cheleppi, as well, writes in his Siahat Nameh as follows: "Kurdistan is stretched from the north to the south and from Roman lands to Van and Hakkari and Jazireh and Ammariyeh and Mosul and the city of Zour and Ardalan and Darband thence to Basra; the territory is about seventy houses long but smaller in its width" (Cheleppi, 1986: 75). Figuera, the Safavid contemporary traveler, as well, states in this regard that "Kurds live in the mountainous regions between Azerbaijan and Shush Province" (Figuera, 1985: 266). Minorsky, as well, believes that the lands in Torres Mountain range and the left banks of Tigris, to wit Kharput, Butan and Zaab Olia, are the first homelands of the Kurds at any time of studying the history" (Minorsky, 2001: 21). He also introduces three spots as the main territory of the Kurds: the high Armenian mountain ranges, Turksih Kurdistan and mountains in the west of Iran (ibid.: 26).

As it is observed, Kurds' territory is not limited to specified and integrated political borders (Nikitin, 1988: 75) rather it is substantially expanded within the political geography structure of four countries: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. What was presented in the previous lines,

besides introducing the geographical domain of historical Kurdistan, puts a special stress on the scattering geography of the Kurd tribes.

In climatic terms, Kurdistan is comprised of rough and difficult-to-pass mountains that have always been barriers to the entry of the invading armies and considered as shelter for the fugitives of the annoyance and harassment. Generally speaking, Torres and Zagros Mountain Ranges form the backbone of Kurdistan mountains and the low southern moors and the lofty eastern plains delimit the natural borders of Kurdistan and these same geographical conditions have caused Kurdish people to grow as horrendous warriors (Van Bruinessen, ibid.: 21-22). It was by relying on these same geographical conditions that the Kurd leaders could achieve relative independence in Kurdistan during the reign of Qaraquyunlous and Aq Quyunlous, especially in the verge of Safavid government's emergence.

Religious Policy of Shah Ismail Safavi I:

There are two major perspectives held by the researchers regard the religious policies of Safavid Dynasty founder. The first signifies the political nature of Shah Ismail's religious approach and the other implies his religious belief in his mission for authentication of Shiism. It has been stated in confirmation of the idea that "Shah Ismail deeply believed in Shiism for which reason he became the enemy of the ottomans and Uzbeks at the expense of his own life and withstood the scarce resistances in the inside" (Espenaqchi, 2001: 47). In fact, he considered doing so as his prophecy and, based thereon, he devoted himself to the beliefs of such a mission (history of Safavid Era's Iran, 2011: 319) and he did his best in promoting Shiism and took powerful measures for overthrowing Sunnism (Gonabadi, 2009: 66). But, the proponents of the first perspective believe that his objective of authenticating Shiism has been more of a political nature and it has been in line with domestic unification and political independence of the country. Thus, the formation of Safavid government and authentication of Shiism by Shah Ismail I at a time that the powerful Sunni ottoman governments and Uzbeks were present respectively in the west and the north of Iran have been remarkably important in political terms (Nasr, 1974: 273-274) and this was perceived as a serious threat by the aforementioned governments, especially Ottomans who claimed the caliphate of the Islam world.

In fact, authentication of Shiism caused the creation of a clear-cut distinction between Safavid government and Ottoman government as the substantial power of the Islam world in the tenth hegira century and this provided Safavid government with territorial and political independence and identity. In sum, the establishment of Twelver Shiism as the country's formal religion by Safavid caused more awareness of the national identity thereby the creation of a more centralized and stronger government (Saiwari, 2014: 29). Moreover, George Karzen, as well, finds authentication of Shiism necessary for the safeguarding of Safavid government's economic interests and states that "it was necessary for Safavid to shift the pilgrimage and capital exhaust route from Mecca to Mashhad and turn the latter into a center of attention and pilgrimage for Shiites" (Karzen, 1989, 1:213). This was the issue that was disregarded by the Safavid Dynasty's founder and had to wait for the establishment of jurisprudential Shiism since Shah Tahmasb time. Furthermore, the author of the book "the history of Islamic Revolution between the elites and the general public", as well, believes that, besides being followed by advantages for the Safavid government, the shift in religion from Sunna and Jama'ah to

Twelever Shiism could also politically prevent ottomans from advancing more into Iran (Espenaghchi, no date: 55-57).

It can be generally stated that religion was overshadowed by politics during Safavid era (Mazavi, 1990: 206). In this period, the religious and political changes did not work independently from one another. So, every change on each side influenced the structure of the other (Sefat Gol, 2003: 129). In fact, it can be stated that since Shah Ismail's government had been laid on the foundation of merging Shiism with politics, the religion and government were accompanying one another in this state. Thus, in this era, religion served the political goals (Aghajery, 2011: 62). This is what reminded by Mazavi as overshadowing of religion by politics (Mazavi, 1990: 206).

In regard of Shah Ismail's religious politics parallel to generalization of Shiism in Iran, it can be discerned from the reports by Safavid era's resources that the expansion of Shiism has been accompanied by pressure and threat of the opponents until before the occurrence of Chaldoran war. For instance, Eskandar Baik Turkman, meanwhile explaining the conquering of Tabriz by Shah Ismail and his enthronement, writes: "on the day that the sermon was changed and Twelver Shiism was declared as the main religion, streams of the opponents' blood were flowing in passageways of Tabriz and nobody had ever seen such a scene" (Turkman, 2004, 3:59). The author of the book Ilchi, Nizam Shah, as well, states in this regard that "in Persian territories, it had become so difficult for Sunnis that nobody dared and had the courage to express his Sunnism" (Qobad Al-Hosseini, 2001: 7). Thus, it can be understood that Shah Ismail I's insistence and efforts for promoting Shiism in Iran and imposition of it on this country's people who were mostly Sunni at that time have been accompanied by threat and pressure and caused the murdering of many innocent people (Ravandi, 1996, 8: 48). On the contrary, as well, the authentication of Shiism in Iran provided the Uzbeks and Ottomans with the opportunity of exercising cruel methods in respect to Shiites. Such murders by Safavids or Ottomans, though was conducted under the title of supporting the religion, had no religious basis rather it was done based on the political approaches of the aforementioned governments. The political histories of Safavid and Ottoman governments in this period of time had become interwoven from many aspects in such a way that Shah Ismail was looking for creating political and religious unity inside his borders by authentication and expansion of Shiism in Iran, on the one hand, and he could create a solid barrier by doing so against the expansionism of his Sunni neighbors and prevent the merging of Iran into the caliphate claimed by ottomans, on the other hand (Bagheri Telvajegani, 2016: 5). Furthermore, Ottomans, having dominated over the Arabic territories, knew themselves as the Muslims' caliph and found Safavids as a barrier to their idea of expanding their territory hence rose up in opposition to the Shiite government and, besides engaging in numerous wars with it, started annoying and killing Shiites in their territories (Sarafrazi, 2015: 88).

It has to be mentioned that Shah Ismail revised his extremist and domineering anti-Sunni policy following his defeat in Chaldoran and stopped annoying the Sunnis in Iran and began a peaceful way of promoting Shiism (Ja'afariyan, 2001: 517-518). Thus, the necessary ground was set for the emergence of Shah Tahmasb's government (1509-1563) and his moderate religious policy in respect to Sunnis (Aghajeri, ibid., 66-67).

Shah Ismail I's Policy in Respect to Sunni Kurds:

The thing obtained from the historical accounts testifies that Shah Ismail's behavior towards the Kurds has been more of a political nature than religious. In fact, not all Shah Ismail Safavi's cruelties have been religious in nature (Aghajeri, ibid.: 67). Thus, his violence against Kurds, as well, was not stemmed from religious bigotry rather it was done aligned with centralization of power and political goals the same way that he violently treated Khuzestan's Mosha'sha'ei Shiites (Turkman, ibid., 1:34-35) and the Shiite Hossein Kiya Chalavi (Alam Aray-e-Shah Ismail, 2010, 120) with political motivations. Therefore, Shah Ismail's relations with Kurd tribes can be defined within this same general structure, though the violent behavior of Qizilbash commanders in the strategic Kurdistan region could provide the enemies with the excuse they needed and deepen the gap between the Safavid and Kurd tribes in such a manner that the tensions resulting from religious discrepancies between some Kurd tribes and Iran's central government were gradually expanded (Sanandaji, 1997: 96) and, as it will be seen, Ottomans took the best advantage of these disagreements and tensions.

However, even with the existence of these tensions in the relationships between Safavid and Kurds, the Kurd commanders were still looking for preserving their governor houses away from any religious bigotry. By means of their nomadic structure and intergroup competitions for preserving and increasing their power, they made efforts to get close to one of these two adjacent powers in disregard of religion and ideology of them (Van Bruinessen, ibid., 192-193). In between, each of the two power (Safavid and Ottoman, with more realistic and rational perspective could benefit from powerful Kurd tribes parallel to its interests (Zakibaik, ibid., 1:127). Now that the Kurd commanders were willing to keep Iran's citizenship away from religious biases and based on political interests and take measures in line with guarding Iran's borders with their talented military forces, Shah Ismail I could take advantage of the Kurds' military potency and expand his territories to the heart of Minor Asia if he had adopted a wise policy in this auspicious space. Although he refrained from exerting the pressures ordinarily imposed on the other Iranians for change of creed, not only did he not take advantage of this potential force but, as it will be seen, he also exercised a series of policies devoid of any far-sightedness, mostly originating from excitations by Qizilbash commanders and his pessimism of the Kurd leaders, that caused many Kurd commanders join Ottomans following Chaldoran defeat and the ground was this way set for the separation of Diyarbakir and the other Kurdish dwelling regions from Iran (Bitlisi, ibid., 531-532). Although the separation of Diyarbakir and the other adjacent Kurdish dwelling regions should be considered as resulting from Chaldoran defeat, it is well evident that the Ottomans could not keep these regions without constant cooperation of Kurd tribes residing therein.

It is worth explaining that Shah Ismail did not have a fixed and single policy, like ottomans, towards Kurds for which reason he adopted two different approaches towards Kurds in two sensitive time spans in such a way that he treated some Kurd leaders peacefully in the beginning of his reign and even granted them with royal clothing and welcomed them warmly; as an example, Haji Rostam Baik, a commander in Chashmgazak who transferred all his castles to Shah Ismail was presented by the Safavid King with Chashmgazak's governor house (Yasemi, 1991: 204). Shah Ismail had even established kinship relationship with some Kurd chieftains from long ago; as a specimen, he agreed to his sister's marriage with Malek Khalil, an Ayyubi Kurd commander (Bitlisi, ibid., 206). But, the good relations between the two

parties did not last long and Shah Ismail, who had lost his trust in Kurds, changed his approach towards them for various reasons like consecutive rebellions by the Mentesh's Kurds (Romlou, 2006, 2: 955), mutinies by Sarem Kurd Yazidi (Qomi, 2001, 1:88) and Mahmoudi Kurd tribe in the course of Ala'a Al-Dawleh Zu Al-Qadr's suppression (Alam Aray-e-Shah Ismail, ibid., 214) as well as the dominance of Qizilbash commanders' thoughts and their excitations. Of course, the Kurd commanders also had not had a single policy towards Iran's central governments in the majority of the historical epochs rather they predominantly exhibited variable and flexible policies before the aforementioned rulers based on certain temporal and spatial conditions and in consideration of their own interests (Pourmohammadi Amlashi, 2014, 120). They always attempted to keep their political independence to some extent by following the region's superior power.

In fact, the difficult-to-pass conditions in Kurdistan served as a barrier between the governments in adjacency thereof and this same issue per se granted the Kurd commanders more freedom of action required for the selection of a superior power amongst the existing ones. Such relations between the local governor houses and the central government were always dependent on the weakness and strength of the central government and the local governments (Van Bruinessen, ibid., 192-193). Thus, Kurds did not adopt a single and specified policy towards Safavid government and Kurd commanders did not have a single approach towards Safavids and Ottomans in such a way that, a short while after the foresaid initial uprisings, eleven of the other Kurdistan's leaders "started off towards Khouy with a peaceful approach and for declaring their obedience of the newly emerged Safavid Dynasty in 1492 and with the purpose of proving allegiance to the king and, after being granted the honor of kissing the king's hands, were seminally treated respectfully and dearly but, in the end, the Kurd commanders were imprisoned by the excitation and the grudge Khan Mohammad Estajlou, the governor of Diyarbakir, had of them for their insults (Bitlisi, ibid., 531-532). After that, Shah Ismail occupied their territory and the Kurd tribes' heads were unseated of their hereditary positions and Qizilbash commanders were installed in lieu of them. Qizilbash commanders displayed very strict behaviors during their reign over Kurdistan (Zaki Baig, ibid., 1:127).

It has to be also stated that although Shah Ismail Safavi did not adopt a realistic policy towards the Kurds and, by doing so, caused dissents amongst their general public, it is not true to imagine that all Kurd tribes became frustrated of and turned away from Safavid Government because some Kurdish dwelling edifices, especially those situated in the political geography of Safavid government after Chaldoran, like Ardalan family, always and till the end of Safavid era, remained loyal to it (Eh Lahv Sini, 2002: 24) and the historical Kurdistan still remained in Iran's obedience. But, as it was mentioned, many Kurd tribes, got disappointed of Shah Ismail I's policies and started thinking about the Safavid's rival power (Ottomans) for safeguarding their interests. As it was mentioned, Shah Ismail I's approach towards Kurds was aligned with his overall policy of centrism. Thus, he insisted on destroying the Kurds' governor halls and corroboration of the Qizilbash commanders' influence. It seems that the adoption and exertion of such exigency-free policies by the founder of the newly established Safavid government in respect to Kurds had stemmed from his and Qizilbash commanders' incorrect perceptions of the position and geographical situation of Kurd tribes in such a way that he had not truly comprehended the difference between the border governor houses and the local governor

houses that were existent during the early years of his overtaking of power in the center of the country, including in Yazd, Abarqou, Kashan and Fars; the Kurds were indeed a barrier between Safavid and Ottomans and had a particular and different strategic situation in contrast to the other local governments.

In fact, Shah Ismail encountered many difficulties on his way to found a centralized and powerful political system because centrism had been long proved to be very costly in Iran with its natural characteristics. Nature always played a very important role in centralization of political system in Iran and there had always been a direct relationship between the centrism and eccentricity and the natural factors played a very considerable role therein (Sefat Gol, ibid.: 69). Therefore, according to the natural and geographical situation of Kurds' territory, i.e. as a barrier between Iran and Ottoman Empire, the expansion of the central power amongst the Kurd tribes was a difficult task for the Safavid government and required the exertion of a far-sighted and well-calculated policy. However, in his general policy's structure, to wit suppression and elimination of the local governments in favor of the central power and creation of political unity in the country, Shah Ismail endeavored designing and implementing his relations with the Kurd tribes and heads. Thus, he paid a greater deal of attention in his relationships with Kurds to political objectives and took advantage of religion for achieving his political goals.

As it was mentioned, Safavids had been f aced a lot of difficulties in their centralization policies in the border regions. Thus, because a sort of autonomous attitude was seen in the regions and parts apart and away from the main center of the political power and the type of the local governments obeying the central government depended on the importance of the local families and tribes, the Safavid's political system had to make a lot of expenses for exerting power and expanding its bureaucracy and centralizing the political power in these regions (Sefat Gol, ibid.: 69-70) and this cost was the very acceptance of the local governments such as the governor houses of the Kurd tribes but Shah Ismail refrained from doing so and the Ottomans, unlike him, approved it. Due to the same reason, the strict and inflexible policy of the Safavid government towards the Kurds and the dissidence resulting thereof eventually provided the Ottomans with an appropriate opportunity to attract a large fraction of Kurd tribes in the brink of Chaldoran war by intensifying the existent discrepancies. Of course, tribes like Ardalan, Siah Mansour, Pazuki, Chegeni (Mirza Sami'a, 1990, 21), Zanganeh and Kalhor continued their obedience to Iran's government.

Although the policy exercised by the other Safavid kings, especially Shah Abbas I (1575-1617), in respect to the Kurd tribes was changed and Kurds accounted for a large part of his army in practice and, finally, Shah Ismail's successor adopted more realistic perspectives towards the position and situation of border tribes, including Kurds and authenticated the four caliphate territories, i.e. Georgia, Lorestan, Saudi Arabia and Kurdistan, in their political structure and did not attempt essential suppression of them (Sefat Gol, ibid.: 70), this wise policy was confronted by useful and effective policies of the ottoman government in Kurdistan. So, each of the two governments tried offering privileges and presenting the Kurd heads and elders with fiefs to make use of them as an instrument against its rival; of course, this policy caused the Kurds to take the highest advantage and expand their circle of influence more than before (Dowall, 1992: 14). It is worth mentioning that Shah Ismail I's successors chose the way of compromise in terms of religious policy in advertising and generalizing Shiism. For instance,

efforts were made to absorb border cities' governors who were most often not the followers of Shiism, like Georgia or Kurdistan, to Shiism by the use of various methods, especially by marriage or by giving them some privileges. For example, encouragement of Ardalan Kurd commanders to acceptance of Shiism by marriage to the women in Safavid's royal court since Shah Abbas I era played a considerable share in the solidification of the parties' relations (Reharbern, 1979: 143).

In sum, Shah Ismail I's policies in respect to Kurds can be enumerated as below:

1) In a relatively short period of time, closeness to Kurd commanders via marriage and granting of some privileges to them
2) Suppression of the mutinies by the various Kurd tribes and heads, including chieftains of Mentesh Kurd, Sarem Kurd Izadi and Mahmoudi Kurd tribe
3) Overthrowing of the local Kurd governor houses according to his overall centralization policy with an attention to his distrust in Kurds after their mutinies
4) Forcing the migration of some Kurd tribes, including the urged migration of Gharamanlou Kurd tribe to the northeast (Khorasan) for fighting the Uzbeks (Mohammad Amin, 2006: 34); also, with the goal of reducing the population and military power of the Kurds in the country's northwest

Sultan Salim I's Policy in Respect to Kurds:

With its years of experience in governing the numerous ethnic minorities and adoption of an approach based on expediency in confrontation with them, the Ottoman government was more sophisticated in comparison to the newly emerged Safavid government in this regard. Quite unlike Shah Ismail who practiced a policy away from any sort of far-sightedness in respect to Kurds, they took advantage of their prior experiences and adopted a single and reasonable approach towards the Kurd tribes. Ottoman sultans, especially Sultan Salim I (1497-1506) perceived the distinct and strategic position of the Kurds very well and used their power as a barrier between himself and Safavids and turned them into a permanent threat to them (Arfa'a, 2004: 124). In fact, in lieu of repeated clashes and dispatching of army for guarding his eastern borders, Sultan Salim took advantage of the dissident Kurd forces in Safavid government with the lowest cost for striking Safavids. He also followed this same policy in the northeastern borders of Iran by stimulating Uzbeks for attacking Iran (Fereidun Baig, 1896, 1: 347-348).

Exactly opposite to Shah Ismail's policies towards Kurds, Sultan Salim wanted the Kurd governor houses remain in the hands of their then commanders. He had conceived that the aforesaid commanders would cordially shake the hands of every power guaranteeing the persistence of their governorship so granted their wish based on his correct understanding of the Kurds' situation (Zaki Baig, ibid., 1:127). In line with this and a little after Shah Ismail's suppression of the Kurd commanders and replacing them with Qizilbash commanders, when "Idris Bitlisi was permitted to get presented before Jalal Sultan and asked him to grant Kurdistan commanders their hereditary states out of gracefulness and benevolence" (Bitlisi, ibid., 528), the Ottoman sultan accepted their request and sought keeping them satisfied. By exercising a purposive policy towards Kurds and using excuses he had been provided by Shah Ismail and Qizilbash commanders and taking maximal advantage of Kurds and Ottomans' religious commonalities, Sultan Salim could acquire a vast array of benefits for his own government. The overall approach of Ottoman government towards Kurds was accepting of

their feudal system and their local governments and granting privileges to Kurd chieftains. Ottomans elevated the expediency to the extent that they even authenticated the tradition of paying tribute for Kurdish dwelling regions that had become obsolete in the rest of their government territory (Shaw, 1992, 1:153) thereby to also legitimize Kurds' independence and finally bring these powerful tribes under their subordination by giving them numerous privileges. The thing that assisted ottomans more than anything else in achieving their goals was the tension resulting from Shah Ismail's approach towards the Kurds (insistence on the elimination of their governor houses) and the Kurd commanders' approach towards the Safavid government (obedience in exchange for their keeping of their governor houses). Although religious discrepancies provided ottomans with the required excuse, Shah Ismail's behavior in imprisoning the Kurd heads who had gone to him for proving their allegiance to him and consecutive wars with the other Kurd leaders and replacing them with Qizilbash commanders as well as the religious violence of Qizilbash heads in Diyarbakir and the other Kurdish dwelling regions caused the facilitation of ottoman government's policies for attracting the Kurd commanders and arousing them against Safavid government.

Based on historical evidence, the objectives of Sultan Salim in getting close to Kurds can be enumerated as follow:

1) Prevention of Safavid government's threats by the assistance of border Kurd tribes and creation of a barrier and hindrance in his eastern borders
2) Development of ottoman territory in his eastern borders by the aid of the Kurds, especially conquering of Mesopotamia and arriving at international Persian Gulf waters
3) Enjoyment of Kurds' military power in future wars, especially against Iran
4) Instigation of constant fights between Kurd tribes and Safavid government by emphasizing on their religious differences

The Role of Idris Bitlisi in Kurds' Relations with Safavid and Ottoman Governments:

Before dealing with character, role and position of Idris Bitlisi amongst Kurd tribes, it is necessary to firstly, even shortly, point to the stance and geographical position of his hometown. It is stated in Venisean's itinerary that "there is a city in the vicinity of Babol that is called Bitlis which is a very important and key passageway of the following cities: Akhlat, Arjin, Van, Ardal, Jizar, Perkerry, Kasan and Van is a very important city and castle" (Venisean itinerary, 1971, 439). About the scientific and cultural position of this city, Sharaf Khan states that "Bitlis is the birthplace of many great men like Master Abd Al-Rahim Bitlisi who has written a detailed explication on Matāle'e and Master Mohammad Barghalami who was accepted by the jurisprudents and exceled the scholars and scientists in jurisprudence, Hadith and syntax and Exegete Master of the way Sheikh Ammar Yaser who was a follower of Sohrewardi as well as Master Hesam Al-Din Bitlisi who was a theosophist and Sufi disciple of Sheikh Ammar Yaser and authored an interpretation in mysticism and Idris Bitlisi, son of Master Hesam Al-Din (Bitlisi, ibid., 447-448), as well, was born in this city and fostered by his father who was himself an active scholar and a perfect theosophist in Bitlis. After finishing schooling in his birthplace, he started a journey to Azerbaijan to benefit from Shafe'ei scholars and began studying religious sciences before judge Isa (Musavi, no date, 11: under the name Bitlisi).

Idris Bitlisi gradually became known by every elite and general public individual in various sciences in such a way that it can be stated he was a scientist of his time and had some

knowledge of various techniques (Nafisi, no date, 1: 253). In fact, he was one of the Kurd elders and prominent figures and he was a genius person of his time in science and literature and enjoyed a large deal of religious and political influence amongst the Kurds (Mazhar, no date, 4). Before the advent of Safavid government, Idris was amongst the elite secretaries in the royal court of Aq Quyunlou Ya'aqub Baik (1462-1475) and he was admired by the ottoman king for the congratulation letter he sent in 1469) on behalf of Sultan Ya'aqub to Sultan Bayazid's royal court (1465-1497) in Rome (Homer Pourgestal, 1989, 2: 862). After the downfall of Aq Quyunlous and emergence of Safavid Government, he migrated to ottoman territories considering the religious discrepancies he had with Safavids and because Shah Ismail's power was increasing in the country. Sultan Bayazid II, as well, welcomed him warmly and commissioned him to the authoring of Ottomans' history (Espenaghchi, no date, 64).

Idris Bitlisi points to his disagreement with Shah Ismail in the following poem:

"You know me by my fathers who have been generation after generation your servants/my grandfather served yours on the way to Quds"

"My father is also a student of the second forefather of the king/and he acquired the apparent sciences from him and his interior became illuminated also by it"

"My specific way of serving Shah Haidar, as well, was transformed to the relationship between milk and sugar out of my courtesy"

"It is an accident that, in Forqan AYAT, the name Ismail has been collocated by my name" (Bitlisi, ibid., 450)

After joining ottomans' royal court, Bitlisi started authoring ottomans' history by the order of Sultan Bayazid and was busy doing so till the end of his life but the authoring of Salim Nameh by the order of the Ottoman Sultan Salim was left uncompleted for his demise and his son, abolfazl, finished it. The results of his decades of scientific effort are valuable books the most important of which are: ottomans' history, Hasht Behesht and Salim Nameh. His religious works are: Monazerat Al-Sawm wa Al-Eyd, annotations to Baizavi interpretation, interpretation and translation of Arba'ein Hadith, explication of Asrar Al-Sawm Min Sharh Asrar Al-Ebad, Haqq Al-Mobin fi Sharh Haqq Al-Yaqin and some others (Bitlisi, 2009, 12-15).

Idris Bitlisi played a role in joining the Kurd tribes to Ottoman government in the verge of Chaldoran war. Since Kurd commanders were zealously looking for preservation of their governorships, they started fighting against the dominance of Qizilbash commanders and, because they found themselves incapable of confrontation, they sought assistance of ottoman sultan and hoped in his promises. At this time, Idris Bitlisi was especially respected by the ottoman Sultan Salim for his special position and situation amongst the Kurds. The author of Sharaf Nameh has the following words in confirming this idea: "because Amir Sharaf could not conquer Bitlis and drive out Qizilbash tribe after several days, he, along with Idris, and by his devising of a solution and belief in the royal court of the Ottoman government, resorted to him upon getting aware of the intentions of the world-conquering Sultan Salim Khan for occupying Iran's territory" (Bitlisi, 1986: 537). Therefore, Sultan Salim, considering that Idris Bitlisi has sufficient information of Kurdish dwelling regions and is well acquainted and familiar with Baiks and chieftains therein, commissioned him from Amasiyeh to the establishing of order in those regions and assigned him to the writing of letters required for inviting the Kurd commanders (Homer Pourgestal, ibid., 2: 861). Idris, as well, could attract many of Kurd commanders who were not happy with Shah Ismail's policies to ottoman

government out of his continuous policies and efforts. After long negotiations with discontented Kurd commanders, he presented their request to "Jalal Sultan that Kurdistan commanders would like the king of the world to grant them their hereditary states out of his graciousness and benevolence" (Bitlisi, 1986: 528). According to Kurd commanders' request for retaking their territories from Qizilbash commanders, he played an important role in joining Kurd commanders and the ottoman Sultan Salim. Thus, "in the brink of Chaldoran war, the Kurd commanders predominantly joined Sultan Salim for the fact that Hakim Idris Bitlisi had promised them on behalf of Sultan his assistance and the return of their lost states" (Mardukh, ibid., 2:2). Of course, Kurd commanders were divided into three groups in the verge of Chaldoran war. Some stayed loyal to Shah Ismail and fought alongside with him in Chaloran war like the commander of Chashmgazak tribe (Yasemi, ibid.: 204); some others chose neutrality, including Zanganeh and Ardalan tribes' commanders in such a manner that Ardalan tribe's head announced impartiality and did not submit to any party and waited for the result of war (Ardalan, 2009: 45). But, as it was mentioned, the majority of Kurd tribes entered the battlefield in favor of ottomans with the role-playing of Idris Bitlisi. Of course, Kurds were subjugated by ottomans' power a short while after Chaldoran war because Sultan Salim sent the Kurd commanders who had not yet joined him some letters of conquest to terrify them and started liquidating with the aforementioned commanders immediately after the war and, parallel to this, presented gifts and graciousness to the group of Kurd commanders who had assisted and supported him or even announced neutrality during Chaldoran war and punished the group of the Kurd commanders who had cooperated with Safavid government in the war in such a way that he even murdered some of them who expressed their regret and joined him. The commander of Chashmgazak tribe was amongst the murdered commanders (Yasemi, ibid., 204). By terrifying the commanders supporting Safavid dynasty, Sultan Salim showed it to the Kurd commanders that they should keep away from Safavid government if they want to keep their interests and safeguard their governor houses. Simultaneously, Idris Bitlisi, as well, caused the onset of mutiny in every corner of the Kurdish dwelling regions after Chaldoran war by the order of the ottoman sultan and through making a lot of efforts and intensifying the religious and political discrepancies existent in the relationships between Kurds and Safavids. Following this pervasive revolt, ottomans could take vast states of Diyarbakir and the other adjacent Kurdish dwelling regions out of Safavid government's subordination in the light of victory in Chaldoran battle and by the help of the Kurds' military force as well as by taking advantage of Idris Bitlisi's influence and position. Since then, Kurd tribes were separated from Iran and continuously caused a lot of troubles to Safavid Government in the western borders. About his missions after Chaldoran war, Idris says: "after conquering of Tabriz and defeat of Safavid in Chaldoran and Shah Ismail's escape from the war's slaughter zone, I, carrying the letter of Azerbaijan's conquest and a sum of money equal to one thousand red golden coins from Sultan Salim, went to Kurd commanders (Bitlisi, no date, 104-105 (a)).

Finally, after the weakness of Safavid forces as a result of Chaldoran defeat and with the efforts and policy of Idris Bitlisi and military support of Kurd and Ottoman commanders and in a coordinated collaboration in numerous fights and escapes, Diyarbakir and some of the other adjacent Kurdish dwelling regions and north of Mesopotamia exited the subordination of Safavid government and went under the flag of ottoman empire (La Mouche, 1938, 92). The

sure thing is that the guidance and advice and excitations of Idris Bitlisi had a large effect on Kurd tribes' joining of the ottoman government in such a manner that it can be stated that a large part of Kurdish dwelling territories were clasped by the ottomans as a result of Qizilibashs' mistreatment and Idris Bitlisi's policy (Zaki Baig, ibid., 127-133). After Chaldoran conquest and occupation of Diyarbakir, he was installed by Sultan Salim to the governorship of the region. The ottoman Sultan gave him full autonomy in establishing order and organization in Kurdish dwelling territories (Bitlisi, 2009, 12). It was right after this that he divided Diyarbakir into nineteen parts or pins to facilitate the administration of the affairs. Such a type of formation that was the result of Idris Bitlisi's policy and wisdom was exactly in consistency with the local conditions because the Kurds' territory with its warrior people could not be administrated in any other way. After organizing the affairs, he gave the Kurd commanders flag and drum to the name of Sultan Salim that became the formal emblem of the governor houses since that time (Zaki Baig, ibid., 135-136). The aforesaid hereditary governor halls were administrated in compliance to the pattern specified by the ottoman government (Kendall, 1994, 52).

Sultan Salim greatly trusted and confided Idris Bitlisi in accomplishment of the assigned affairs in such a way that he sent him a great many of the governmental commands related to Diyarbakir in the form of blank papers stamped by the king's seal. As Idris Bitlisi himself puts it, he had been so successful in executing Sultan Salim's wants that the Kurdish dwelling regions separated from Safavid were strongholds between Iran and Ottoman Empire even until ten years after enthronement of Shah Tahmasb (1509-1563) (Bitlisi, no date, 106(b)). Espenaghchi, as well, has the following words regarding the role of Idris Bitlisi in divergence of some Kurd tribes from Safavid government: "one, rather the most substantial, of Sultan Salim's stimulators against Shah Ismail was this person … [he] caused twenty-five tribes, with Kurds' power, that were subordinates of Iran to turn their faces away from Iran's government and join Ottomans" (Espenaghchi, ibid., 64-65). Although the separation of Diyarbakir and Kurd tribes residing it from Safavids and their joining to ottomans should be known a result of Chaldoran defeat, the perpetual preservation of that region was not feasible for the ottoman government without the cooperation of Kurd tribes that had turned away from Safavids. Thus, by Idris Bitlisi's making of unrelenting efforts and constant stimulations and ottomans' opportunism, Kurd leaders succeeded in endorsing a contract with the ottoman sultan. The contents of the contract are as outlined below:

1) Kurd commanders can administrate their hereditary governor houses like before but they do not have the right to establish independent governments.
2) Kurd commanders, with their equipment and in an independent camp, should dash towards helping the ottoman government upon its entering of a war with the other powers in the region.
3) Each of the Kurd commanders should make a payment every year under the title of gift to the ottomans' treasury house (Mardukh, ibid., 2: 2-4).

Although these commitments were signed between Kurd commanders and the ottoman Sultan Salim, the ottomans gradually placed the omission of Kurd governor houses atop of their agendas and, finally and in a gradual process, accomplished their policy of eliminating Kurd governor houses in a perfect manner in the first half of the 19th century (Zaki Baig, 1999, 134). Amongst the persisting outcomes of the aforementioned treaty was the authentication of

the Ottoman Empire's occupation and governance over Diyarbakir and the other Kurdish dwelling places occupied after Chaldoran. Furthermore, disintegration of twenty five powerful Kurd tribes from Iran and their integration with ottomans with the least cost for the ottoman government and long-term tensions and uproars in Iran's western borders during long centuries can be pointed out amongst the other detrimental consequences of this contract for the Iranians.

It has to be pointed out that Idris Bitlisi was also a companion of Sultan Salim I during the conquering of Egypt (Bitlisi, ibid., 448) and he eventually died after his countless and important services to ottoman Turks in Zai Hajjeh (1505) in Istanbul in Ayyub neighborhood at the side of a mosque that had been constructed by his wife Zainab Khatun (Bitlisi, 2009, 12). After him, his son, Abolfazl, found influence in ottomans' royal court and finished some of his father's authorships like Salim Nameh that had been left uncompleted with his death (Homer Pour Gestal, ibid., 2:865). Most of ottoman historians recall Idris Bitlisi as an insightful and sharp-sighted politician and know his progress a result of the general effect of Chaldoran conquest, on the one hand, and an outcome of his being from Bitlis and resultantly having political experiences and knowledge about the situations and statuses for his employment in administrative works in Aq Quyunlou's system, on the other hand (Hasani, ibid., 37-38).

CONCLUSION:

Political distress and absence of a central powerful government in the country before the establishment of Safavid government caused the eccentricity and separatism of various tribes and clans in the country, including the Kurds. The Kurd commanders who craved for preserving the relative independence of their governor houses encountered such a newly emerged government as Safavids. They, on the one hand, were not willing to lose their independence and Shah Ismail, on the other hand, as well, was not at all willing to accept local governments in his political borders. Thus, the conflict spontaneously caused the emergence of tension and hostility amongst the parties. At the same time and beyond the borders, the ottoman sultan Salim who had taken the place of his father adopted an approach different from that of his forerunners in respect to eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire. Having a correct understanding of the Kurds' strategic situation and for creating a barrier in his common borders with Iran, he, taking advantage of the tensions between Shah Ismail and Kurd commanders and making maximal use of the Kurds and Ottomans' religious commonalities, tried gaining the highest possible sustainable political interests for the Ottoman government. Therefore, assisted by Idris Bitlisi who was a thinker and influential person amongst the Kurds and had a past record of working in Aq Quyunlous' royal court and also opposed the Safavids, he, in the verge of the destiny-making Chaldoran war, succeeded in winning the company of dissident Kurds and finishing the war in his own favor. To stabilize his conquered territories in Diyarbakir and the other occupied Kurdish dwelling places, Ottoman sultan, aided by the considerable efforts of Idris Bitlisi, could sign a contract with Kurd commanders based on which they had to help the ottoman sultan whenever he entered a war and, in return, the ottomans authenticated the hereditary governor halls of the Kurd commanders. This was exactly what Shah Ismail Safavi refrained from accepting.

It is definite that Shah Ismail I, the founder of Safavid government, with exercising of a series of policies devoid of any far-sightedness in respect to Kurd tribes and commanders and

Qizilbash heads with the exhibition of a series of extremist behaviors towards the Kurds caused the force that had to be spent on the guarding of Iran's borders to be unwantedly attracted to the ottomans. Although the eastern side of Kurdish dwelling place, including the historical Kurdistan (Ardalan) and Kurd tribes residing these regions were always kept safe in the political structure of Safavids, Diyarbakir and some Kurdish dwelling regions situated in the north of Mesopotamia and numerous Kurd tribes exited Iran's subordination and joined the ottomans. It is worth mentioning that, besides Shah Ismail's way of treating Kurd commanders, two other factors also played roles in dissident Kurd tribes' joining the ottomans: one was the Kurd commanders' insistence on the preservation of their governor houses and the other was Idris Bitlisi's role in encouraging and inciting Kurd commanders. The result of the present study underlines that the essential factor in such a historical disintegration can be sought in the conflict and opposition that came about in the confrontation of Shah Ismail I's approach towards the Kurds that emphasized on the elimination of their governor houses with Kurds' approach towards the preservation of their hereditary governor houses; hence the religious strictness of the Safavid founder should be only taken into account as an excuse in the creation of such a diversion. This phenomenon left devastative and everlasting effects on the relations between Iran and ottomans, on the one hand, and between Iran's central government and Kurds, on the other hand.

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