

Challenges of last governor (Vali) of Poshtkouh (Eilam) in Confronting Reza Khan

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Abstract: Turmoil, social restlessness, lack of internal and local safety in post-constitution movement, the weakness of the Qajar, the unstable situation inside the country, the conspiracies of England, general need of the society to safety and stability, personal ambitions and several other factors led to the rise of Reza Khan in the political arena of Iran, there were scattered power centers and each one of them ruled independent from central government in its governing zones. Gholamreza Khan as the last governor of Poshtkouh was one of those local power centers. The goal of present paper is to describe the policies and strategies of Poshtkouh governor in confronting Reza Khan. Did Poshtkouh governor able to earn the trust of Reza Khan to remain in his title of being the governor of Poshtkouh? Gholamreza Khan, like his ancestors, had founded its ruling based on distrust. As he heard the news of proceeds of Reza Khan's troops to Poshtkouh, he retreated to his properties in Iraq and let his ancestral territory to fall in the hands of the central government. When the last governor of Poshtkouh failed in earning Reza Khan's trust, he changed his position and encouraged and motivated the tribes and leaders of clans to rebel against Reza Khan and ultimately, in 1929 a rebel emerges against Reza Khan in Poshtkouh.

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1. Introduction

During the Qajar dynasty, the governors of Poshtkouh were brave border keepers and during their dominance over Poshtkouh territory, they fought against Ottoman invaders who crossed the borders to lute the properties of habitants persistently and defeated them hard several times. Despite weakness and lack of enthusiasm of Qajar government, the governors stayed loyal and always showed humbleness and subordination to the Qajar kings. Governors used to maintain local military forces (gunmen) in their territory, and during Hosseingholi Khan's government, those gunmen were known as "servants" (Amaleh). In addition, in critical times, they would mobilize the habitants to guard the area. In spite of wisdom, brevity and loyalty of governors in protecting Poshtkouh borders, they did not have brilliant records in social affairs and good conducts with the serfs. The poor and distressed people of Poshtkouh made collective migration to Iraq many times to escape from the cruelty and unjust behaviors of the governors. In times, the governors would levy heavy taxes to people under different excuses and in any event, the governor owned the soul and property of people.

As Reza Khan ascended to power and by the shifts of the government towards tribes and large clans, a new chapter was opened in the relationship of government and Poshtkouh zone that was not pleasant for the traditional rulers of that zone. The main concern of this paper is to show the dual

policies of the last governor of Poshtkouh against Reza Khan.

Governors of Poshtkouh and Central Government

The tribes of Lor and Kurd in north and west of Lorestan lived in tribal way of life to the mid 12th century. Davoudi, Abbasi, Mohammad Kumari, Jangrui...were among the tribes of Small Lor. Those tribes had no particular organization to mid 12th century. In 1381, Hessameddin Soheli Nami was named as the ruler of Small Lor and Khuzestan by the Saljuqid. After the death of Hessameddin, Shojaeddin Khorshid became the independent ruler of the entire Small Lor. After Shojaeddin Khorshid, a dynasty of his predecessors ruled Small Lor and the last governor of that dynasty (Atabakan of Lorestan) known as Verdi khan was executed by Shah Abbas Safavi and that dynasty was extinct. (Zaki Beyk, 2002: 205). Shah Abbas Safavid assigned Hossein Beyg of Silvizi clan, the nephew of Shahverdi Khan to rule Small Lor. and after him, his descents, Shahverdi Khan, Manouchehr Khan, Hossein Khan Sani, Alimardan Khan...ruled Small Lor. Fathali Shah released Pishkouh from influence of Hassan Khan the governor and the power and influence territory of the governors was limited to Poshtkouh. According to Lord Kerzen in separation of Pishkouh from Poshtkouh, "Small Lor or the Minor Lorestan is a region between Dezful in south and Kermanshah in north, between Dez Water in east and the Ottoman frontiers. In west, it is divided into two territories: Pishkouh and Poshtkouh and Zagros Mountains that is called Kabir Kouh in between. Up to Qajar Clan,

no political differences were between the two zones. Agha Mohammad Khan separated Pishkoun from Lorestan governor and from that time, he contended itself to Poshtkoun government. From that point, the Eili File that included the entire Small Lorestan was limited to Poshtkoun in public opinion and the Fili was a name given to all individuals and population that inhabited that area and the Fili and their families consist of 210,000 people and Fili means rebel.” (Kerzen, 230/2).

Limiting the territory of governors to Poshtkoun, due to the mountainous geographic condition of the zone caused more authority to governors versus central government.

Gholamreza Khan

The era of Gholamreza Khan's governing (the last governor of Poshtkoun) was important from two perspectives; one in terms of taking Poshtkoun out of the political isolation of Hossein Gholi Khan era and arrival of Gholamreza Khan in the political sects of constitutional movements; followed by, the second era, of emergence of Reza Khan in the political power of Iran and confrontation of Gholamreza Khan with the political challenge of Reza Khan's centralization policy.

Gholamreza Khan has mentioned Pishkoun as a part of his territory and authority. there have been a few years since the Seyfi, Malkhatvi and Baghsaei lands that are parts of the sacred soil of Iran and used to be victims of invasion and destruction by the Ottoman government. and finally Javad Khan the colonel with three to four thousands horsemen and gunmen in 1908 in order to force the soldiers of Ottoman out of the region. Their troop had two canons. they defeated the soldiers of the Ottoman government

During his ruling as governor, Gholamreza Khan faced the rebel of his eldest son, Amanollah Khan. “Saremolsaltaneh the third, also known as Amanollah Khan rebelled against his father in 1902 and Gholamreza Khan, the senior general was forced to find shelter in Ivan. Later, the father and son settled their disagreements and Gholamreza Khan earned his former authorities in Poshtkoun.” (Bamdad 2008: 170).

As it has been stated, the period of Gholamreza Khan was the time that Poshtkoun came away from political isolation. During the Constitution movement in Iran, Gholamreza Khan who had no knowledge of the nature of Constitution took different sides. (Torkaman, 1991: 427).

On objection of the governor to constitution, Valizadeh Moajezi writes that the governor of Poshtkoun was not in good term with the constitutionalists and disliked the constitutionalists very much. When he heard that the Constitutionalists

Association of Khorramabad had initiated vast activities, he caused many troubles for them through his minister, Vezir Mir Seyed Mohammadkhan Ashrafolashayer and destroyed their motivations and enthusiasm (Valizadeh Moajezi, 2001:458).

Gholamreza Khan was in favor of “King-centered” tradition in country affairs and as it is written in the diary of Ali Akbar Khan Sanjabi, “People like Poshtkoun Governor respected the concept of Shah and royal government in Iran out of good intension and believed serving king as their duties.” (Sanjabi, 2001: 538).

The ruling time of Gholamreza Khan coincided the ruling of Mozafareddin Shah, Mohammad Ali Shah, Ahmad Shah and the beginning of Reza Khan. He mostly acted as a conservative and was concerned of not putting his interests in risk. After the victory of the constitutionalists, establishment of Constitution system in the Capital and overthrowing Mohammad Ali Shah from power, Poshtkoun's governor too, despite his conservative political attitude waited for subsequent events and as Reza Khan's emergence to power and shift in the policies of the central government towards local rulers, Gholamreza Khan made a political turn and established the “Committee of Ghiam Saadat (Prosperity Rebel) to back constitution, along with Sheikh Khazal and some of the chiefs of Bakhtiar tribes. The goal of the members of the committee was to support constitution and bringing back Ahmad Shah Qajar to thrown. Nonetheless, the committee practically did nothing.

In terms of running local affairs and the good conduct of the governor in handling the peasants, unfortunately, Gholamreza Khan did not show better records than his father and during that time too, the migrations became larger and people of Poshtkoun still lived in poverty and distress (Center of Documents and National Library 240004610).

To legitimate their government, the governors claimed to be followers of Imam Ali among their Shiite people and peasants as much as based on the family tree available today, the governors introduces themselves as descendents of Hazrat Abolfazl Alabbas (Khital, 1997:145).

On the defeats of the Ottoman soldiers by Gholamreza Khan, Ali Razmara writes: “In 1820, like previous years, the Ottoman dispatched army divisions made of two battalions and an artillery to Mehran to collect the products of peasants. However, Gholamrezakhan the governor sent a group of gunmen and local people, led by Seyed Javad, his uncle, to destroy the troop and preventing the Ottomans. As a result, a harsh and bloody

confrontation took place and all Ottoman soldiers were either killed or captured and the border trespassing events came to an end. From that date on, a group of gunmen were assigned by the governor in Mehran- Changuleh- Dehloran, the invasion paths of the Ottoman and up to the International War where the borders of the two countries were set by delegates of four countries, due to on time and serious actions, no trespassing and invasion took place in the Iranian borders and when the Baghsaei (Bakhsai) borders were restricted, the drinking waters of Changuleh- which are now parts of Iraq- were transferred to Gholamreza Khan, the governor as his property.” (Razmara, 1941: 107).

During the Great War, the Iranian government was occupied by Russia and Britain despite its declaring neutrality; however, Poshtkouh was kept safe from turmoil and war news in those years and none of the countries at war stepped into Poshtkouh.

At last, the rise of Reza Khan and his centralization policies tightened the chain around Gholamreza Khan particularly with the claim that Reza Khan the governor “was standing in the back of Khazal with an equipped troop.” (Reza Shah the Great 1976:11). Reza Shah had once travelled to Poshtkouh before emerging to power. That trip was in time of Gholamreza Khan Aboughaddareh’s government and in his first trip to Poshtkouh, he (Reza Shah) was known as Captain Reza Khan Savadkouhi and had been sent to mission by Salaraldoleh, the Qajar prince to ask for the hand of the daughter of Gholamreza Khan, the governor of Poshtkouh for Salaraldoleh. In “The Book of Lorestan” in Sayahan’s Travel Account, it is quoted from Ezzelmolk Ardalan on the trips of Reza Shah to Lorestan that to strengthen his power, Salaraldoleh decided to marry the daughter of Poshtkouh’s governor and for that purpose, he sent Captain Reza Khan Savadkouhi to ask her hand by offering a jewel-stone ornamented sword. There is no accounts on marriage arrangements but the fact is that at last, Salaraldoleh did marry Gholamreza Khan’s daughter (Arya, 1997:148)

In 1924, Reza Khan’s troops arrived Poshtkouh and the governor left Poshtkouh with a number of his forces and seek shelter in Iraq territory (Zarbatieh City).

The monuments and buildings that are left from governors’ time in Eilam, including the building (Ghaleh Vali [Governor’s Castle]) in the center of Eilam city and other castles around the city show that to make his and his family’s name eternal, Gholamreza Khan imitated the great kings of ancient Iran and ordered to engrave the political history of his ancestors on a rock in 520cm length and 810 cm

width on the entrance of Eilam to Mehran Road and that manuscript is now famous as “Takht Khan” engraved rock.

A brief history of Reza Khan

In July 1914, Ahmad Shah who had reached the legal age is crowned. One month later in August 1914, the First World War (The Great War) breaks in the world. The Iranian government announces its neutrality; however, Iran becomes the arena of fights and wars of great European states. Following those invasions, parts of south and north of Iran were occupied by English and Russian forces. Several popular uprisings emerged to fight against invaders and occupiers. Mirza Kuchak Khan in north Iran raise the flag of resistance and in south Iran, the forces of Chief Ali Delvari, the Dashtestani and the Tangestani stepped into battle to weaken the pillars of Qajar dictatorship; however, they failed in establishing a national unity and integrity, and a governmental authority (Abrahamian, 1998:101).

The provinces were practically out of control of central government and insecurity was governing the country. In August 1918, Vossoughdoleh was assigned to form his cabinet. He signed a treaty with Sir Percy Cocks the Britain’s minister in Tehran that put Iran under practical guardianship of England (1919). The news of that treaty led to serious internal and external reactions and the contents of the treaty practically were not realized. The government of England who found their puppets unable to execute the provisions of treaty 1919 plotted a coup in Iran and on February 22, 1921, the coup succeeded. The principal actor in the plot was no one than Reza Khan Mirpanj. The failure of treaty 1919 and the danger of communism influence in Iran, followed by the victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia (1917) endangered the interests of England. Therefore, England was urged to change its policies in Iran.

Britain sacrificed the small dependent local powers for Reza Khan and instead directed their investments on him.

Reza Khan was first appointed as the Minister of War, followed by becoming prime minister. He tried to provide grounds to establish a political centrality and put an end to the feudalism in Iran, improve safety and overthrow the fading Qajar dynasty. The actions which were adopted in this approach included putting an end to the Jungle Rebels with the dramatic act of showing the head of Mirza Kuchak Khan in Tehran (Fall 1921). Surpassing the rebel of Colonel Mohammad Taghi Khan Pesian in Khorasan and the most important than all, surpassing the rebel of Esmaeil Agha Kurd known as Semitqo (Semko) in Azarbaijan, overthrowing Sheikh Khazal and the ruling of Valian (the governors) in Poshtkouh Zone.

The Committee of Sa'adat Rebel

The policy of Reza Shah against tribes included military operations and full subordination of them. Reza Khan believed that there will be no peace and security as long as tribal rebels and turmoil continued. Reza Shah planned to modernize the traditional society of Iran fast and soon even if it required using force.

Sheikh Khazal, the governor of Khuzestan was one of the symbols of feudalism. In a political settlement and compromise, Sheikh Khazal put himself under protection of English government in 1914 and his mission was to protect and guard South Oilfields plants for Britain (Houshang Mahdavi, 1996: 382).

Sheikh Khazal who realized that confronting Reza Khan was inevitable and had lost all hopes of enjoying the protection provided by England was distressed to maintain his position. He was seeking allies that like him had their interests in risk. A tertiary alliance was established by Gholamreza Khan, the governor of Poshtkouh, a group of Bakhtiari chiefs and Sheikh Khazal, named "Committee of Sa'adat Rebel". The goal of the Rebel Committee was to return Ahmad Shah to the country and expel Reza Khan.

Until emergence of Reza Khan, England used to follow the policy of strengthening and supporting local chiefs and leaders to build a stronghold against penetration of the Soviet Bolshevism; however, as Reza Khan strengthened his power and took side against local authorities in aiming at political centralization, England deserted her friends to stand alone before the new power and merely watched their being sacrificed by Reza Khan. Simultaneously by sending troops to Khuzestan, Reza Khan dispatched forces to Poshtkouh. After the arrival of Reza Khan's troop to Khuzestan, Sheikh Khazal who did not see the strength to resist, he was transferred to Tehran and was placed in Shemiranat under surveillance. Sa'adat Committee; too, never found an opportunity to help Sheikh Khazal and ultimately, he was killed by the order of Reza Shah in 1936.

The camp he sent to Poshtkouh proceeded to Mansourabad (Mehran); however, one day before arrival of army; that is, on January 3, 1925, Gholamreza Khan, the governor, left Poshtkouh with his gunmen and migrated to his private properties in Baghshahi (Moradi Moghaddam, 2006: 150).

After capturing Khuzestan, Reza Khan went as a pilgrim to the holy Shrines in Iraq. In Iraq, he sent a message to the Governor that the latter would receive pardon if he would come to Reza Khan. The governor who was fearful from Reza Khan sent his

son (Esfandiar Khan) accompanied with Seyed Abdolhossein Reshnvadi to Reza Khan.

After returning to Tehran, Sardar Sepah (Reza Khan) sent Sardar Ashraf, the attorney of Lorestan and Abolfath Mirza from court to the governor and ordered him to return to Poshtkouh. Gholam Reza Khan; too, sent a letter to Sardar Sepah and declared his loyalty and innocence. Reza Khan, too, sent an order for the government of Poshtkouh with an ornamented sword to the governor and he returned to Poshtkouh to continue his job. (Valizadeh Moajezi 2001: 176). The governor has been in his office to 1928 and during this time, he has been serving the government of Reza Khan in collecting taxes, disarming tribes...in Poshtkouh. In the beginning of 1928, Reza Shah changes his decision on Poshtkouh and he plans to take over the territory of governor. (Katouzian, 2000: 371)

Upon agreement of Reza Shah on uprooting the chain and dynasty of governors, brigadier general Koupal was assigned to capture Poshtkouh from Amir Ahmadi, the commander of West Battalion. As the governor heard the news of military arrival to Poshtkouh, he migrated to Iraq territory. As general Koupal was stationed in Ghaleh Vali, the ruling time of Poshtkouh's governors was finished.

After capturing Poshtkouh, the governor received pardon letter to go to Tehran; however, Gholamreza Khan who had no trust to the central governor, like his ancestors, refrained to do so. After making some failed attempts to win Reza Khan's trust, tried in secret to motivate Poshtkouh tribes and clans to rebel against central government. Gholamreza Khan, the governor, made attempts behind the curtain but was not apt to attract any suspicious and cautiously encouraged his sons to force tribes to rebel. Aligholi Khan (governor's son) who was the governor of Kurd Region maintained his communication with his father. They tried to have the support of tribes but they couldn't resist the central government forces. And their ruling period came to an end.

Conclusion:

Poshtkouh governors played role in the Iranian history for two centuries. The rise of Reza Khan and the policy of centralizing the scattered centers of power challenged the traditional ruling of Poshtkouh governors. Gholamreza Khan tried to build trust in order not to let Reza Khan's forces arrive to Poshtkouh. On the other hand, Reza Khan sent his troops to Poshtkouh and ultimately the governor made no efforts to fight back and left Poshtkouh to Iraq accompanied with his family and servants. Then through negotiations and mediation of Gholamreza Khan and correspondences, and declaring loyalty to Reza Khan, the governor returns

to Poshtkouh once again and serves in the new government. Nonetheless, the governor who had ruled Poshtkouh for many years with absolute power realized that there was no place for his authoritarian ruling and Reza Khan had already dismantled all authority pillars of the clan and tribe powers and was planning to direct the country from traditional society into a modern country. At the end, the last the forces of Reza Khan captured Poshtkouh and the last governor of Poshtkouh immigrated to Iraq forever. Although in an unsuccessful attempt, the governor of Poshtkouh tried to prove his innocence that traditional policy proved futile and the governor changed his strategy in secret and without trying to raise suspicion incited the chiefs of the tribes and clans to rebel. As the grounds of rebels which is described in details in another paper, were present, a rebel was formed in Poshtkouh in 1929 that made Reza Khan's forces busy for one month and was ultimately surpassed by General Ali Razmara.

After the failure of rebels, the foundations of central government were stabilized in Poshtkouh and following that, in 1932, the name of Poshtkouh was changed into Eilam. From that date on, a new chapter was opened in the political, social, economic and cultural life of Eilam and the chain of the governors vanished from Eilam forever, as the name Poshtkouh faded with it.

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