



BANĪ ARDALĀN

BANĪ ARDALĀN, a Kurdish tribe of northwestern Iran, now dispersed in Sanandaj (Senna) and surrounding villages. V. Minorsky believed that the name Ardalān was derived from a Turkish rank (*Taḍkerat al-molūk*, p. 113 n.). The ruling family of this tribe claimed descent from Saladin (Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn) (B. Nikitine, *Les Kurdes*, Paris, 1956, p. 167). Other tribal legends made them originate in Sasanian or early 'Abbasid times (V. Minorsky, "Senna," in *EI*¹ IV, p. 227). According to Šaraf-al-Dīn, the earliest known leader of the tribe, Bābā Ardalān, was a descendant of Aḥmad b. Marwān, who ruled in Dīārbakr. He settled down among the Gūrāns in Kurdistan and toward the end of the Mongol period took over the Šahr-e Zūr region, where he established himself as an absolute ruler (Šaraf al-Dīn Khan Bedlīsī, *Šaraf-nāma*, tr. F. B. Charmoy, St. Petersburg, 1868-75, II, pp. 106-07). When he visited Sanandaj in 1820, C. J. Rich was told that the Ardalāns were from the Māmū'ī clan of the Gūrān tribe (*Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan*, London, 1836, II, p. 214).

It is not known when the Ardalāns established themselves in Sanandaj, but it was probably in the 14th century. Using that town as their capital, they ruled over a large Kurdish principality, the area of which corresponded roughly to that of the present-day *šahrestān* (sub-province) of Sanandaj. This region included several Kurdish tribes, besides the Ardalāns' own tribe, the Banī Ardalān, namely the Jāfs, the Kalhors, the Mandamīs and the Shaikh Esmā'īlīs (Rich, *Narrative*, p. 217). The Ardalān state was completely independent until it was incorporated into Safavid Iran as a semiautonomous frontier province by the name of Ardalān. At that time the khans of the tribe were given the title of



wālī, or amir of the marches, by the Iranian government (Nikitine, *Les Kurdes*, pp. 167-70). Nearly all the *wālīs* of Ardalān from then on were Ardalāns. The only exceptions were *wālīs* who were imposed upon the province by the Iranian government when the latter was trying to impose its will upon a recalcitrant khan.

During the Safavid period, the Ardalāns were deeply involved in the struggles between the Iranian and Ottoman empires and, whenever it suited them, they shifted their allegiance to the Ottoman government (Minorsky, “Senna,” p. 227). Among the amirs of note who served Shah Ṭahmāsb I (r. 1524-76) was one Ṭīmūr Khan Ardalān, whom Eskandar Monšī identified as “governor of Ḥasanābād and Palangān,” both of which were districts of Ardalān (*Eskandar Beg*, tr. Savory, p. 227). Another leader of the tribe, Khan Aḥmad Khan, was raised at the court of Shah ‘Abbās I (r. 1588-1629) and then was sent by him to Sanandaj in 1615 to take over the governorship of that province from his ailing father (*ibid.*, pp. 1081, 1144).

Sobḥānverdī Khan, the Ardalān *wālī* at the beginning and at the end of Nāder Shah’s rule (1736-47), was a particularly successful and popular leader. But, in 1155/1742-43, he was temporarily replaced by his son Aḥmad Khan, who had accompanied Nāder on his conquest of India (1738-39). Aḥmad Khan was made governor of a region stretching all the way from Hamadān to the confines of Mosul. However, he almost immediately ran afoul of the Afšār ruler by distributing among his own famished people stores of wheat which were intended for the Iranian army. He was forced to flee for his life, ending up in Istanbul, where he was warmly received (Nikitine, “Les valis d’Ardelan,” *RMM* 49, 1922, pp. 88-89; J. R. Perry, *Karīm Khan Zand*, Chicago, 1979, p. 25).

Another distinguished Ardalān *wālī* was Ḳosrow Khan Bozorgī (r. Moḥarram, 1168-1203/1754-88-89). He was a staunch supporter of Karīm Khan Zand (r. 1750-79). In April, 1777, he was defeated in a clash with Ottoman forces, but later that year he participated in a victorious campaign against the Turks launched by Karīm Khan (Perry, *Karīm Khan Zand*, pp. 184-85, 190-91; Šādeq Ešfahānī, *Tārīk-egītigošā*, Tehran, 1317 Š./1938-39, pp. 282, 293-95). During the period of anarchy which followed the death of Karīm Khan, Ḳosrow Khan defeated two of the pretenders to the throne, first Allāhqolī Khan Zangena at the Gardana-ye Bagān pass, near Sanandaj, and then Ja‘far Khan Zand at Bahār, near Hamadān. He conquered a vast area, which included Malāyer and Golpāyegān, and, when he realized that Āqā Moḥammad Khan Qājār (r. 1203-12/1789-99) was the strongest contender for the crown, he threw his



support behind him. In the 1760s, Ƙosrow Khan began the construction of a large palace, which he called Ƙosrovīya, in Sanandaj (Nikitine, “Les valis,” pp. 191-94).

The last important Ardalān *wālī* was Amān-Allāh Khan Bozorgī (r. 1214-40/1799-80-1824-25). During his long, productive rule, he purchased land, stimulated agricultural production, planted gardens, built fortifications and entertained on a lavish, regal scale, which greatly impressed his foreign visitors (see J. Malcolm, *Sketches of Persia*, London, 1845, pp. 283-87; J. Macdonald Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire*, London, 1813, pp. 144-45; R. K. Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, etc.*, London, 1822, II, pp. 566-68; Rich, *Narrative*, pp. 206-20). Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah (r. 1797-1834) valued his services so highly that he arranged for one of his daughters to marry one of the khan’s sons (Nikitine, “Les valis,” p. 96). On the other hand, Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (r. 1848-96) was determined to undermine the power and influence of the Ardalāns. He first interfered in the affairs of the province in 1851 (see E. I. Chirikov, *PutevoĤġġī zhurnal*, St. Petersburg, 1875, pp. 323-35, 524-27). Then, in 1284/1867-68, he terminated Ardalān’s special status as a semi-autonomous frontier province (which it shared with Arabistan [Ķūzestān] and the Pošt-e Kūh) and named his own uncle, Farhād Mīrzā Moʿtamad-al-Dawla, as *ḥākem* (governor) of what had become simply the province of Kurdistan, thus putting an end to the Ardalān dynasty (Nikitine, “Les valis,” pp. 101-03).

In the 1860s, the number of Banī Ardalāns was estimated at 5,000 families or approximately 25,000 individuals (F. B. Charmoy’s notes to *Šaraf-nāma* I, p. 43). By now, they have become too scattered to permit a reliable estimate.

In 1941 the Banī Ardalāns participated in the first Kurdish revolt in Iran during World War II (H. Arfa, *The Kurds*, London, 1966, p. 68). However, they were not involved in the establishment of the Kurdish Republic at Mahābād in 1946, and the territory of that short-lived secessionist state did not include Sanandaj (see W. Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, London, 1963, p. 127).



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