



BELBĀS

BELBĀS, a former Kurdish tribal confederacy of northwestern Iran and northeastern Iraq. According to C. J. Edmonds, it consisted of the tribes Mangūr, Māmaš, Pīrān, Senn, and Rām̄k (*Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, London, 1957, p. 220). According to C. J. Rich, there was an additional tribe by the name of Kabāʿez. Although it comprised only some 200 persons in 1820, it was the tribe of the Belbās ruling family (*Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan*, London, 1820, I, p. 152). According to F. B. Charmoy, the Belbās were divided into as many as ten tribes (notes to *Cheref-Nāmeḥ ou fastes de la nation kourde*, St. Petersburg, I, 1875, p. 347). The Belbās occupied a mountainous region straddling the Lāwen river, which forms the upper waters of the Zāb river (Edmonds, p. 220).

There is scant information on the early history of the Belbās. Charmoy describes them as an offshoot of the Rūzegī tribe (op. cit., I, p. 347). According to one of Edmonds' informants, the Senn and Rām̄k tribes provided Nāder Shah (r. 1148-60/1736-47) with his most dashing cavalry (op. cit., p. 145 n. 1). In recent centuries, the Belbās have excelled as raiders, and R. Ker Porter classified them among "those of the most notorious fame in the arts and achievements of rapine" in Kurdistan (*Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, etc.*, London, 1821-22, II, p. 469). On one or two occasions, they even pillaged Marāḡa and threatened Tabrīz (A. Amanat, ed., *Cities and Trade: Consul Abbott on the Economy and Society of Iran, 1847-1866*, London, 1983, pp. 230-31). In spring 1818, 'Abbās Mīrzā, the governor-general of Azarbaijan, launched a punitive expedition against the Belbās with the help of Moḡammad Pasha, the



amir of Ravāndūz, and Aḥmad Khan Moqaddam, the *beglarbeg* of Marāḡa and Tabrīz. During this campaign, some 6,000 families of Māmaš, together with their cattle, were rounded up and forced to settle down on a stretch of open ground near Lake Urmia (Ker Porter, pp. 469-70; J. B. Fraser, *Travels in Koordistan, Mesopotamia, etc.*, London, 1840, I, pp. 101-02). No fewer than forty of their leaders were taken in chains to Ravāndūz, where most of them were executed after an unsuccessful attempt to escape (Fraser, p. 102). Other Belbās leaders were allegedly slaughtered at a banquet given by Aḥmad Khan Moqaddam in Marāḡa (Amanat, p. 230).

When Fraser visited Kurdistan in October, 1834, he noted that the Belbās had become “much broken” (p. 63) and had “fallen greatly into decay” (p. 101). The lowland part of the confederacy, consisting mostly of the Māmaš, Mangūr, and Pīrān, had been reduced to fewer than 2,000 families. However, a “considerable number” of Belbās were still fully nomadic, “unapproachable in their wild haunts,” and “a terror to all their more peaceable neighbours” (*ibid.*, pp. 102-03).

Both the Māmaš and the Mangūr participated in the rebellion of the Sufi shaikh ‘Obayd-Allāh of the Naqšbandī order in 1880, when that Kurdish leader attempted to set up an autonomous Kurdish state and invaded Iran for the purpose of annexing Iranian Kurdistan (H. Arfa, *The Kurds*, London, 1966, p. 24). Starting in late December, 1914, these two tribes participated in a second invasion of Iran, this time by Turkish forces and Kurdish irregulars. The Turks and their Kurdish allies occupied Tabrīz in early January, 1915, but had to abandon the city later that month. The rout continued until May 25, 1915, when the Russians occupied Urmia, forcing the Māmaš and the Mangūr to flee into the surrounding hills (Arfa, p. 27; W. Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*, London, 1963, p. 9).

In summer 1921, the Māmaš, the Mangūr, and the Pīrān joined the Šakkāk leader, Esmā‘īl Āqā Sīmko (Semītqū), in his rebellion against the Iranian government (Arfa, p. 59). In 1926, the Mangūr participated in a large-scale tribal uprising whipped up by Sardār Rašīd, a prominent tribal leader from the Ravānsar region, to help Abu’l-Faḥ Mīrzā Sālār-al-Dawla, Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah’s brother, try to overthrow the Pahlavi regime (Arfa, p. 64). Finally, many of the leaders of the Māmaš, Mangūr, and Pīrān lent their support to the formation of the Mahābād Republic in 1325 Š./1946 (Eagleton, pp. 62, 76, 91, 92, 108, 118-20). However, in the course of a squabble between the Māmaš and the [Bārzānī](#), who had also become involved in the Kurdish struggle for



independence in northwestern Iran, eleven of the Māmaš *āqās* were slain in February, 1947 (Eagleton, pp. 118-20).

Today, the Māmaš live along the Iraqi border, south of Ošnavīya. Their number has been estimated at 950 families by the authors of *Īrān-šahr* (Tehran, 1342 Š./1963, I, p. 122) and at 1,500 families by M. Mardūk (*Tārīk-eMardūk*) Tehran, 1358 Š./1979, I, p. 111). They are divided into two sections: Amīr(-e) ‘Ašāyerī and Qāderī (*Īrān-šahr* I, p. 122).

The Pīrān live along the Iraqi border just below the Māmaš and west of Mahābād. Their number has been estimated at 750 families by the authors of *Īrān-šahr* (I, p. 122) and at 600 families by Mardūk (I, p. 84).

The Mangūr live immediately to the south of Mahābād. Their number has been estimated at 1,500 families by both the authors of *Īrān-šahr* (I, p. 122) and Mardūk (I, p. 113). They are divided into the following sections: Amān, Šam‘, Zīn, Zarrīn, Keder, and Morowwat (*Īrān-šahr* I, p. 122).

Some of the Belbās have also settled down in northeastern Iraq. The Mangūr Zūdī occupy twenty-six villages west of the Žarāwa river; the Mangūr-e Rota “Naked Mangūrs” occupy four villages on the east bank of the Žarāwa near its mouth; the Māmaš-e Reška “Black Māmaš” occupy four villages on the Žarāwa above the Mangūr-e Rota; Pīrān occupy a dozen villages in the district of Bitwen; the Senn and the Rāmk occupy five villages each in the district of Bitwen (Edmonds, pp. 220-21).

Even during its heyday, the Belbās tribal confederacy was loosely organized. Ker Porter observed that the Belbās lived in “independent clans” that often raided one another (II, p. 470).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text. See also Kayhān, *Joġrāfiā* II, p. 176.

B. Nikitine, *Les Kurdes*, Paris, 1956, pp. 36 n. 1, 100, 108 n. 1, 124, 164-65, 188,



192.

Idem, "Bilbās," in *EI*² I, pp. 1217-18.

Search terms:

□□□□ belbas belbaas