ResearchGate

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360222602

Kurdistan under the Impact of Religio-Political Confrontations of Ancient Empires (From the Median Empire to the Advent of Islam)

Article · December 2021

DOI: 10.15640/rhps.v9n2a1

CITATION
1

READS
334

1 author:



Sabah Mofidi
University of Amsterdam
36 PUBLICATIONS **67** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

All content following this page was uploaded by Sabah Mofidi on 27 April 2022.

The user has requested enhancement of the downloaded file.

Review of History and Political Science
December 2021, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 1-13
ISSN: 2333-5718 (Print), 2333-5726 (Online)
Copyright © The Author(s). 2015. All Rights Reserved.
Published by American Research Institute for Policy Development
DOI: 10.15640/rhps.v9n2a1
URL: https://doi.org/10.15640/rhps.v9n2a1

Kurdistan under the Impact of Religio-Political Confrontations of Ancient Empires (From the Median Empire to the Advent of Islam)

Sabah Mofidi[1]

Abstract:

During the Median Empire (8th-6th century BCE), the present-day Greater Kurdistan including most of old Mesopotamia, the Zagros Mountains and surrounding areas was the main part of the empire's territory. This was the stage for interactions between many civilizations and empires, which later became known as Kurdistan. After the demise of the Median Empire, old Kurdistan was gradually transformed by the battles between invaders in the area as well as exposure to various religions. The land was subjugated by empires through armed contest and occupation, which continued until the Islamic period. Smaller indigenous societies faced with these conflicts tried to maintain their identity and frequently for medalliances with neighbouring empires. The Sassanids and Romans not only inflicted severe damage on local terrain but also introduced their religions of Zoroastrianism and Christianity, respectively, which led to the phenomenon of state religion and brought significant socio-cultural change. This present article uses historical sources to examine the religio-political confrontations between ancient empires and explore how these brought about socio-political changes in Kurdistan in the period from the end of the Median Empire until the coming of Islam. Unlike mainstream Iranian, Turkish and Arab studies, which are influenced by the dominant political discourses of ethno-nationalists in the region, this study will look at the political history of the Middle East from the perspective of Kurdistan.

Key words: Median Empire, Old Kurdistan, Sassanid, Roman, Zoroastrianism, Christianity

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) for providing an unrivalled atmosphere of support and peace in which to do my research and write this article.

1. Introduction:

Throughout time there have been many religio-political conflicts in the Middle East especially in Kurdistan and the surrounding territories. During its history this region, which includes Zagros and parts of old Mesopotamia, has been the birthplace of major religions and civilizations and an arena for many conflicts. This situation continues to this day, albeit in different forms. Indeed, confrontations nowadays are contested between diverse religions, ethnic groups, nations, nationalisms and states in their attempts to rewrite political history to fit in with their favored interpretations. To avoid being swayed by underlying assumptions, the best way to study current conflicts is within the context of the region's history.

History is often conveniently employed by ethno-nationalists to recreate historical continuity and use socio-historical cleavages and political conflicts to define themselves. This means that (selectively) reconstructed historical accounts can influence modern politics. Like the pre-modern rulers, current nationalists and politicians, whether religious or secular, use religion but under the modern concepts of nation and nationalism. Indeed, this function, which is as old as politics itself, originated with a political God in primitive societies (see: Mofidi, 2015).In other words, to understand the current political situation in Kurdistan and ethno-politics in the Middle East we need to begin with a historical exploration of the impact of religio-political confrontations between the ancient empires and the effects of religion used as a political tool. The aim here is to research the ancient region of old Kurdistan, the ancestral land of the Kurds, and explore the historical socio-political background of this area of confrontation, conflict and convergence.

[1] Postdoctoral research fellow at University of Amsterdam (UvA), ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4574-3073

The main questions this article hopes to answer are: how did religio-political confrontations between ancient empires affect old Kurdistan, and how was continuity in indigenous politics achieved? It is assumed that the non-indigenous empires after the Medes used religion as a political tool to extend their influence in the area, while the small indigenous governments survived through deference to the various empires. In this regard, how historical contexts are interpreted is very relevant. In recent times, different readings of political history have influenced the political problems in the Middle East and contemporary politics related to the Kurds. To gain a greater understanding of the Kurdish issue, this paper offers a new and in-depth interpretation of ancient confrontations in the area and links this to current issues.

This article demonstrates the historicity of the political function of religion in the land through an exploration of the powers of ancient warring empires in the area, and clarifies their religio-political impact on ancient Kurdistan. Indeed, it looks at the effects of religious conflict and the politics of ancient empires within the context of the localized political situation. In other words, the emphasis is not on the ancient empires themselves, but on the Kurdistan region as a locus for converging religions and political powers through history until the present day.

Historiographically, the power of religion in societies, including among the Kurds' ancestors, provided rulers with an opportunity to dominate. There were societies within which religion predominantly served politics and vice versa. In this regard, Max Weber (1965) mentions the political God and "ancient local God of politics" and shows some of the aspects of the political function of religion in ancient communities. Religion was also used for political motivational purposes in warfare. A historical example of reinforcing morale can be found in Xenophon's speech to prepare the Greek army for their expedition via Kurdistan (Xenophon, 1949: 107). The use of religious rituals and prayers to mentally prepare troops for battle and to motivate peoples with religious symbols such as flags, banners and sacred books continued throughout the medieval period in both the Christian and Islamic worlds and is still seen in modern times (see: Murphey, 1999: 155-156).

It should be noted that historical writing son the Middle Eastare often influenced by politics and the attempts to forcibly create nation-states. In this regard, most authors tend to look at history from the vision of the present states in the region. States with a dominant ethno-nationalistic view interpret the history of subjugated lands to support their politics and create a political history that fits. In this kind of history-making, the peoples of the dominated ethno-nations or stateless nations, such as the Kurds, have not received fair coverage. This has made it problematic to study the history of peoples and non-dominant regions hitherto ignored by mainstream studies. Indeed, the absence of an independent Kurdish state during the modern period means it is difficult to preserve Kurdish history. This highlights the necessity of encouraging and supporting the independent historical study of non-dominant societies as well as evaluating differing historical views as one of the possible ways of addressing this issue.

The problems described above restricting research on a history-based topic about Kurdistan, combined with the applied lack of opportunities for researchers, make it hard to build a Kurdish political history. I hope to redress the balance of mainstream histories by focusing on the lands of the Kurds' ancestors. For the purpose of investigating the research questions of this paper, I review the political history using a mixed historical-descriptive method. The historical methodology is employed to report how and why events occurred, and the descriptive method expresses the phenomena. Data are collected from sources such as the historical books of Greek and Islamic writers and modern historians who have worked on the ancient period. This allows me to study how different political powers and rulers use religion in practice, and to understand how religion was utilized to prepare and mobilize societies against their enemies and extend influence in the region. The sources on ancient history were reviewed, compared and cross-referenced to check facts.

By making Kurdistan the central point of analysis, an alternative historico-analytical view is offered as a contribution to analysis of modern Middle Eastern politics. With this new focus the political history of the Kurdish region is studied and read from a new angle. In what follows, this paper first offers an overview of the history of the Kurds and Kurdistan, secondly an examination of the religio-political confrontations after the Median Empire until the arrival of Muslims, and finally it discusses the impact of the conflicts on the old Kurdistan and on modern politics in contemporary Kurdistan.

2. The Kurds and Kurdistan: a historical, political and religious overview

The Kurds descend from ancient ethnic groups who lived in Mesopotamia, the Zagros mountain range and the regions around them and, today, still mostly live in the lands of their ancestors. Since medieval times this vast mountainous zone has been known as 'Kurdistan/Kurdewarî', which literally means 'land of Kurds/where the Kurds have lived'.

The origin of the Kurds is not exactly certain. Nevertheless, according to the theories of different scholars, the ancestors of the Kurds include the Sumerians, Gutians, Kassites, Lulubians, Hittites, Horrians-Mitannians or Subaris/subar/subartu, Urartians, Cossaeans, Ellipians, Nairis, Mannaeans, Medes, Chardoch and Uxii tribes who historically lived in old Kurdistan (cf.al-Khalil, 2011: 104; Rawlinson, 2019; Diakonoff, 1966; Gershevitch, 1985: 36-74, 441 & 486; Minorsky, 1986; White, 2000: 14; Yarshater, 1983: 496-7 & 752; Zaki, 1931, v. 1: 64 & v. 2).

After some primary civilizations, such as the Mitannian state (15th–14th century BCE) made up of several tribes, the Medes made a more advanced civilization and united various tribes under a Median federation (8th-6th century BCE). This unity gradually led to the emergence of the Kurds and a stateless Kurdish nation (al-Khalil, 2011: 104). Contemporary Kurdish nationalists attribute the Kurdish national myths, for example Newroz (1)and Kawe(2)to the Medes who created the Median Empire (8th-6th century BCE) (3).They describe the Median period as the 'golden age' of the Kurds (see: Gunes, 2012: 77 & 96; Gunter, 2011: 3; Ocalan, 2018: 1079; Zaki, 1931: 288). Although these nationalists emphasize the Median Empire as being the first important political powerin their ancestry, according to some sources the Sassanid dynasty (224-651 CE) also emerged from Kurdistan and had Kurdish ancestors(see: note 12).From the collapse of the Median Empire to the early20th century, apart from indirect rule under various invading and occupying empires, there were periods when several independent or autonomous indigenous kingdoms and principalities directly governed different parts of the area(4).

The historical lands of the Kurds' ancestorsand proto-Kurds were mostly within the Great Median Empire including large/lowerMedia and small/upperMedia (Azerbaijan today) (see: Diakonoff, 1966; Gershevitch, 1985: 36; Rawlinson, 2019; Zaki 1931, v.2). According to Sharafadin Bitlisi in "the Sharafnama"(1597), Kurdistan covered a triangular area where the three vertices touched the Hormuz sea/the Gulf, Ararat Mountains (Caucasus) and Mediterranean Sea. The known existence of the Medes' sea-power and Median ships as mentioned by historians (see: Appian, 1912: 15; Diakonoff, 1966; Herodotus, 1976: 330; Rawlinson, 2019),as well as the presence in ancient periods of Kurds (especially pastoral/Shiwankara Kurds) in the area close to the Gulf, that some sources have attributed to the Sasanians (see: al-Dinawari, 1960: 27),and the continuing presence of a group of Kurds (the Lurs) near the Gulf, support Bitlisi's claim.

The borders of the Kurds' land shifted over time and for many reasons but especially following invasion by other peoples, assimilation and demographic changes. Although the exact boundaries are still not clear, Greater Kurdistan is now a strategic region in the Middle East located between four countries: the western provinces of Iran(5), south-eastern provinces of Turkey the northern provinces of Iraq and the northern provinces of Syria (See: Bruinessen, 1992: 11-12). It should be noted that there was a fifth border with what was known in the Soviet Union as the Autonomous Republic of Kurdistan or "Red Kurdistan", accorded to the Kurds by Lenin. However, this arrangement was annulled by Stalin and all the Kurds from "Red Kurdistan", were dispersed between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, where they were assimilated (Nebez, 2004: 53).

The Kurdish lands and inhabitants have been directly and indirectly mentioned in historic documents from ancient times including in Sumerian, Greek, Jewish, Aramaic and Christian, Islamic, Kurdish, Turkish and Persian sources. For example, the country of the Medes is referred to in the Old Testament (quoted by: Nebez, 2004:15). The word Guti, a Sumerian word for the Kurds, is found in Sumerian documents and the ancestors of Kurds as well as the terms Medes, Media, Carduchi people and Carduene/Korduene are mentioned in Greek texts such as the History of Herodotus and Xenophon's Anabasis. An important part of Anabasis is about Kurdistan (6).Xenophon's views on the 'Charduchi people' who were associated with Medes and other groups in ancient Kurdistan under the Median Empire is the very first vision of the Kurds (McDowall, 1992: 10-11). In fact, gradually the word 'Kurd' replaced other words and applied to all other ancestor groups in the land. Inother ancient languages, the Kurds were called the Guti, Kuti, Korti, Kardo and Kardan, Kortiyoy, Kardosoy, Kardok and Kardokh/Charduch. They were generally known by the current name 'Kurd' in Islamic-Arabic sources, for example works by historians such as Dinawari (9th century), Tabari,Ibn Wahshiyya and Bayhaqi. Ibn Wahshiyya (10th century) mentions the agricultural knowledge of Kurds (Mofidi, 2019). Thus, the proto-Kurdswere not only ranchers but also farmers.

From around mid-medieval times to the beginning of 20th century and the emergence of the quasi-modern states(7)in the Middle East that prevented the formation of a Kurdish state, Kurdistan and the Kurds were directly mentioned by their current terminology and recognized as equal in status with other lands and nations. Arab geographers mentioned the land as 'Country/land of the Kurds' ("Bilad al-Akrad").On a map in the Turkish dictionary ("Diwan Lughat al-Türk")of a Turk called Mahmoud Kashghari written in 1073, which was printed in 1940 in Ankara, there is a large area into which he has written in Arabic "Ardal-Kurd" (Vanly, 1992: 143; Nebez, 2004: 56).

During the Seljukstate (1037-1194), the word 'Kurdistan' was officially used (White, 2000: 15; Zaki, 1931:

9-11). Thus, since the eleventh century, 'Kurdistan' as a certain land has been mentioned in most documents and writings.

The Italian Marco Polo (1254 – 1324), was the first European to use the word Kurdistan. During his travels, he met Kurds and wrote about them and their land (Marco, 1930:29, 39 & 56). In his book named "Nuzhat al-Qulub" (Excursion of the Heart), written in 1339/40, Hamdollah Mustawfi, a Persian historian, talks about the land. On one of the oldest European maps drawn up in Rome in 1561 and signed by "A. Lafreri", Kurdistan is mentioned by name (Nebez, 2004: 56).In 1597 Sharafadin Bitlisi, a Kurd, wrote his Kurdistan history called "the Sharafnama." During the Ottoman Empire, it was clearly designated on maps, for example a map of 1893 (8).E. A. Wallis Budge in his preface and introduction to Thomas Marga's (9) "The Book of Governors" in 1893, based on the text mentions: "Armenia, Kurdistan, Babylonia, Persia, Arabia, and China."Additionally, John Stewart (1928) and Aubrey R. Vince (1937) in their books, respectively "Nestorian Missionary Enterprise" and "The Nestorian Churches", mention the missionary activities and churches in Kurdistan.

During the ancient period, Mesopotamia and Zagros were the birthplaces of various ancient religions and civilizations. Many ancient empires evolved from these areas. The Assyrian Empire and the great empire of Medes are examples (Cline and Graham, 2011: 11 & 52; Gershevitch, 1985: 212; Rawlinson, 2019). For a long period, until the end of the Median Empire, Kurdistan was a centre of different religions, whether indigenous or imported. The influence of imported religions was rarely induced by force. Naturalism (nature-worship), Polytheism and Mithraism, belief in Angels (Cult of the Angels), Ezidi/Izidi, Zoroastrianism and some Abrahamic religions like Judaism developed or grew in this important place of ancient civilization. It can be said that during the Median Empire most probably polytheism was the dominant religion(see: Barkeyand Fuller, 1998: 67; Gershevitch, 1985: 139-41, 416 & 696; Rawlinson, 2019; Yarshater, 1983: 501; Zaki, 1931: 277) which probably affected the Empire's politics, as an indigenous political power. Then with the decline of the Median Empire and the emergence of divers empires, Kurdistan became the location of confrontations between superpowers which used different religions politically.

Thus, the political function of religion has a long history in Kurdistan. History shows how it has continually been, and continues to be, used. After the Median Empire, with the appearance of large empires, especially the Roman and Sassanid Empires with different religions, these powers tried to distribute small states and principalities between themselves, and attach some parts of old Kurdistan to their territories. In this regard, the influence of their religion in the area helped them. Religion was like a bridge linking some of the region's kingdoms to the empires; however, politically the bridge began to sway. Though there were other religions, gradually Kurdistan became the place of confrontation between Zoroastrianism from eastern and southern sides and Christianity from western and northern sides. When they became state religions, the religio-political conflicts worsened.

3. Old Kurdistan after the Median Empire:

3.1 Kurdistan between the Greeks and Achaemenids

The politico-administrative tradition of 'king of kings' clearly shows the existence of many kingdoms in the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia and Zagros. Accordingly, during the Median period, Pars territory was one part of the Median Empire and a kingdom under the high authority of Medes; during the Achaemenid dynasty, the Median territory remained as a kingdom and important satrapy where often the Satraps of Media were Median like Arbak and Atropates. There were also some Median revolts against the Achaemenids like that of Gaumata magus, who occupied the Achamenid throne for a short period, and the Third Frawartish who declared himself as the king of Media in Ecbatana/Hagmatana: both were killed by Darius I in 521-2 BCE (See: Diakonoff, 1966: 521 & 533; Rawlinson, 2019).From that time, Median territory with its kingdoms remained until the coming of Islam.

After the fall of the Median Empire, from the late 6th century BCEits main territory, old Kurdistan, became a disputed region as it formed a natural frontier between rival empires. It was the route of attack forwhen empires confronted each other. The landwas at first located between the Achaemenid and Greco-Macedonian powers, and was on the way of Achaemenid Darius' march into Greece and Europe. It then became the battlefield between Greco-Macedonians and Achaemenids so that in the battle of Gaugamelanear Arbela (modern Hewlêr/Erbil) in 331 BCE Alexander defeated the army of Dariush III and pursued it across the Zagros Mountains to capture Ecbatana/Hamadan and the then main capital, Persepolis (Gershevitch, 1985: 338, 422, 434 & 447; Ward, 2009: 22-3; Yarshater, 1983: 508).

After the Achaemenids, some Median Satraps, like the Atropates in upper Media, gave their allegiance to Alexander. After Alexander, for a short period before the dominance of Seleucus, Antigonus, another of Alexander's generals, had appointed a Mede as Satrap of Media: Orontobates, with a Macedonian general as garrison commander under him (Gershevitch, 1985: 495; Champion,2014: 70). Then, in 311-302 BCE, Seleucus I fought against the Median satrap Nicanor to consolidate his authority (Yarshater, 1983: 236). In the time of the Seleucids, nevertheless, the Median satrapies were preserved and there were various important satrapies in Media, while some other autonomous states like Edessa (Ruha then Urfa) and Corduene developed. Indeed the Seleucid power in the region was personal not institutional. The satrapies were under a viceroy with Ecbatana as the headquarters, while the capital of the empire was Antioch. Then when the Parthian dynasty gradually grew, Kurdistan became the battlefield of the Seleucids and Parthians until the occupation of the greater part of Media by the Parthians. Next, the Romans ended the Seleucid reign and some regions of the land like Corduene were controlled by the Romans. They expanded their Empire towards the Parthians, and locations in Kurdistan like Nisibis, Diyarbakir, Silvan, Mardin, Khabur, Arbela and Carrhae were in the path of the march of Roman and Parthian (then Sassanid) empires to their battlefield (See: ibid., 3- 15, 31-47, 715 & 819-21).

Along with the above-mentioned political changes, gradually Kurdistan also became a pivotal point between various cultures and religions; Zoroastrianism vs. Hellenism, Zoroastrianism vs. Roman polytheistic religion, and Zoroastrianism vs. Christianity. But until the 4th century and the growth of the political influence of religion and tension between the Sassanid dynasty and the Romans, the Median tradition of religious tolerance continued. As mentioned, the religious leanings of the ancestors of Kurds until the Median Empire were mostly towards polytheism and Mithraism, although there were Abrahamic and Jewish minorities in the land at that time, so that in the Old Testament reference is made to the country of the Medes (Nebez, 2004: 14; Stewart, 1928).The emergence of Zoroaster almost coincided with the Medes so that his propagation was not as successful in Media, especially because of the non-acceptance of Zoroastrianism by the Moghs/Magis, Median priests. Afterwards the Achaemenid Emperor Darius I (521-486 BCE) adopted Zoroastrianism, and the influence of this religion spread into Kurdistan (al-Khalil, 2011: 112; Diakonoff, 1966; Gershevitch, 1985: 416 & 684; Zaki, 1931: 277).

As the centre of his religious view, Darius I strongly promoted Zoroastrianism. For him and subsequent Achaemenid leaders the emperor was chosen by Ahura-Mazda (Cline and Graham, 2011: 96-7; Gershevitch, 1985: 217). Achaemenids used religion to consolidate their empire and in their wars. Religious support permeated imperial relations with peripheries. The influence of Zoroastrianism helped them to maintain their dominance in core Median territory/Kurdistan. They also invoked the help oftheir God, Ahura Mazda, in their wars. Nevertheless, the Achaemenids did not fight to develop their religion, Zorosterianism, even though it was the religion of kings. Indeed, like the Medes they accepted a multicultural society with diversity and religious toleration (Eisenstadt, 1969; Gershevitch, 1985: 412).

With the invasion of Alexander, Zoroastrianism declined. Alexander's offensive was not religious, but with his coming, Hellenism entered Mesopotamia and Kurdistan and under the Seleucid dynasty the growth of Zoroastrianism stopped. The two cultures met each other, but there was no severe conflict because of their similarities, especially in polytheism and the fact that the powers did not fight for religion. Besides, despite some possible cultural fracas, there was no specific political conflict since the whole land of the Kurds' ancestors was under the influence of the Seleucids. They continued the Median and Achaemenian' policy of religious tolerance.

3.2 Kurdistan; between Parthians and Romans

In the war between the Parthian-Sasanian and Roman empires, some areas of old Kurdistan became a battlefield (Zaki, 1931: 238).This lasted for about 700 years. From the 2nd to the 1st century BCE, the land and its small kingdoms/states was placed between the two super powers, Parthians on the East and South and Romans on the North and West. The small powers in the region like Corduene, Adiabene and so on fell under the political influence of the two empires. Both the Parthians and Romans "screened their border with a patchwork of protecting client-kingdoms"(Moffett, 1992: 12). Osrhoene/Osroene (Edessa)was one of the small buffer states along the turbulent border that separated them (Ibid, 46-7). The Battle of Carrhae/Harran near Edessa/Urfa in present-day Northern Kurdistan (hereafter Bakûr) in 53 BCEled to the division of the region, and subsequently old Kurdistan for the first time was divided – between the Roman Republic and the Parthian Empire – so that the autonomous kingdoms of Osrhoene and Corduene were Roman dependencies.

In the Parthian/Arsacid Empire which had a political system with many autonomous states, the kings of Media and Armenia were the most important. During the Parthian period the autonomous kingdoms in Kurdistan or Median territory like lower Media, Atropatene, Adiabene, etc. continued under their own rule.

The subordination of the kingdoms to the empires was often sustained by tradition, and the rulers of the kingdoms often struck their own coins and made their own independent policies. They had the rights of "allies". The Parthians and Romans frequently fought over the kingdoms in old Kurdistan between 113 and 217 CE so that some of them like Edessa, Nisibis, Malatiya, Van, Khabur, Sinjar/Şingal and Adiabene/Arbela fluctuated between them, being taken and recaptured by the two empires. For example, in the early second century they fell under the rule of the Roman Emperor, Trajan (Moffett, 1992: 11; Ward, 2009: 28-30; Yarshater, 1983: 55, 88-95& 701-728).

In Kurdistan at the time of the Parthian-Roman confrontation, therefore, the various kingdoms like Media, Adiabene, Edesa and so on were either supporters or opponents of one of the empires or against both of them. For instance, in 33 BCE the Median king struck an alliance with the Roman General Mark Antony in Armenia, against both Octavian and the Parthians, though they were not eventually successful. By contrast, afterwards the autonomous kingdom of Adiabene, under the rule of a Jewish family (Izates and Monobazus), helped the Parthian empire at a time of disorder and supported it in the 1st century CE. Consequently, because of his fidelity Izates was endowed with the land of Nisibis. Thus, the political nature of the kingdom was probably affected by the religious conflict and enmity between the Jews and the Romans (Yarshater, 1983:65-83, 728 & 911-12). Nevertheless, the rulers of some kingdoms, especially that of Adiabene and Kirkuk in the 220s, helped the Sasanians defeat the Parthians and gain power (ibid., 118). Unlike the previous confrontation, this was probably affected by ethnic conflict between the Parthians and the Medians, since the Sasanians were more related to the ancestors of Kurds.

Along with the above-mentioned political changes, after the defeat of the Seleucids gradually, during the Parthian period, Zoroastrianism revived. Although the Parthians would not fight for religion, and like the Medes, Achaemenes and Seleucids before them, they also accepted diversity and religious freedom, Zoroastrianism as the religion of kings and the majority of the people developed. The latent function of Zoroastrianism as a religion acted like an umbrella and was more in touch with the many ethnic groups and lands all over the region, favouring the Parthians and paving the way for them, as followers of the religion, to extend their influence. Thus, they used the influence of religion to connect with most areas of old Kurdistan to make the inroad oftheir empire easier. Then, they reinforced Zoroastrianism in the region. From the second century BCE under the aegis of the Parthians, this religion was extended further into Kurdistan from Luristan and Hewraman to Amed where there are still some remnants of Zoroastrian temples built in that period, such as Anahita temple in Kangawar (built in 253-224 BCE).Strengthening Zoroastrianism helped them to preserve their political influence and dominance for a long time. Nevertheless, at the end of the Parthian era when the empire was strongly allied with the Zoroastrian magi and temple, Christianity began to spread – first in Edessa located in the western part of the empire; an area fiercely disputed with the Roman Empire (Eisenstadt, 1969; Gershevitch, 1985: 412; Pirnia, 2004).

Christianity grew gradually in Mesopotamia and environs. Many of the Kurds' ancestors, especially in present-day Bakûr, were Christians. This is confirmed by old Aramaic sources, among them the memoirs of Mar Mari (died in 226 CE) who was a monk in Urfa (Nebez, 2004: 14). Thus, cities like Arbela/Hewlêr, Edusa, Nusaibin and Amed all became important centers of Christianity. This led to conflict between Zoroastrianism and Christianity so that in the second to fourth centuries, especially in Hewlêr (10),there were many Christian martyrs (Moffett, 1992; Stewart, 1928:4-5 &23).In the region, three of the vassal states blatantly followed the traditions of early Asian Christianity; Osrhoene, Adiabene (both in Kurdistan), and Armenia. Osrhoene and Armenia later, in the third and early fourth centuries, became two small Christian kingdoms. The capital of Osrhoenewas Edessa which, with the early establishment of Christianity and the first Council of the Church in 198, became the center of organized Asian Christianity. It was the first Christian kingdom. During the first three centuries Osrhoene was intermittently affiliated with the Parthian-Sasanianor Roman Empires. Adiabene (11)was another kingdom, its capital Arbela also becoming a center for Christian missionaries (Moffett, 1992: 12 & 57; Johnson, 1995; Yarshater, 1983: lii, 139, 496 & 925; Barnes, 1985).

3.3 Kurdistan under the Religio-Political Conflicts of the Sasanian and Roman Empires: Towards annexation by the Islamic Empire

In the early decades of third century the Parthian Empire was crushed by the Sassanid dynasty. Their ethno-religious outlook helped the Sasanians to rise to power and then expand by interconnecting the domains of their empire's realm. Apart from the previously mentioned support from some kingdoms in old Kurdistan, they relied on and resorted to the covert power of religion to seize power. The organized growth of a Zoroastrian temple in an open religious space, without interference from the Parthian kings, gradually paved the way for the priests to impose a religious uniformity with the support of the Sasanian rulers who were connected with the temple.

This alliance and the backing of the priests, in return, helped the Sasanians overcome the Parthians when they had become weak, and then subsume their empire within their own (Yarshater, 1983: xxxiv, 118, 139).

The Sasanians first established themselves in the lower part of Kurdistan and gradually extended their dominion towards regions such as Pars (12).From the 230s they launched a campaign towards upper Media and against Roman Mesopotamia, provoking some revolts against them in Kurdistan(al-Khalil, 2011: 75; Yarshater, 1983: 519). Thus, the new Sassanid Empire and the Romans approached each other in the upper reaches of Kurdistan where frequent battles and conquest of territory started between them.

Zoroastrianism, which had revived in the Parthian period, reached its peak in the Sassanid era (Gershevitch, 1985). Unlike in the Parthian period, there was often no religious freedom and tolerance. Zoroastrian temples were more organized under the Sasanians and Zoroastrianism became a state religion, firmer and more rigid (Yarshater, 1983: xlvii, 134, 735). It was indeed employed as a means of political expansion. For King Ardashir I (reign: 224-240) religion was "the foundation of kingship and kingship protected religion." He "proclaimed Zoroastrianism as the official imperial religion" (Cline and Graham, 2011: 308). Conversely, Christianity gradually grew in the Roman Empire. After the conversion, by becoming the official religion Christianity provided a powerful and much-needed political and ideological boost to the Roman Empire (ibid., 296).Constantine stopped the persecution of Christians and intended to impose Christianity on pagans within the Roman realm, forbidding their customary rites and suppressing cult-centers and temples. He created an official hierarchy to cooperate with bishops. Christianity also affected foreign policy. As a global faith, the religion targeted those outside the fold to draw them inside. In the interests of protecting Christians everywhere and realizing the divine duty of converting pagans, Constantine shaped his policy towards the Sassanids (Barnes, 1985).

With these changes in the Roman Empire, its enemy, the Sassanid Empire, turned anti-Christian. Indeed for some time, Christianity had been partially used as a weapon by the two empires. Each had tried to use Christians in the realm of the other. Especially before Constantine, the Sassanid Shah, Shapur II, appealed to the Roman's Christian subjects in 312 and 324 (Barnes, 1985). But after that the situation changed. Christianity had spread throughout the region and strongly affected political issues. It was no longer just a tool used by politics, but a state religion that influenced politics. The expansion of Christianity in upper Mesopotamia and also in the Sassanid realm led to a reaction from the Zoroastrians and religious hostility from the Magi, the priests of Zoroaster (see: Lightfoot, 1982:229-232). It led to a new religious politics being introduced by the Sassanids. They created a unity between religion and politics/empire and eventually ended about 300 years' toleration of Christianity in the region (Moffett, 1992: 137).

Religion was gradually used in favor of politics by both the Romans and Sassanids as the preferred tool against each other. Thus, a combination of robust political systems and zealous religious ideologies drove them to universalism. As tensions continued, the new religious factor affected political relations between them and the conflict became inflamed. Constantine and his successors tried either to win over the Sasanians or influence their realm. For Romans, religion was a motivating factor and propaganda weapon. It helped to justify their universal plans and extend their eastern boundaries towards the Sassanids under the aegis of a Holy War against the infidels (Cline and Graham, 2011: 294-7& 322; Zouberi, 2017). From the time of Constantine, bishops with sacred texts and a church tent accompanied the army(Zouberi, 2017).In this regard, Christianity connected peripheral states and groups directly to the central Roman/Byzantine sphere of influence. Roman emperors acted as the defenders and protectors of Christianity. After gaining power, Constantinein 324/325sent a letter to Shapur II asking him to consider the rights of Christians in the Sassanid realm (Barnes, 1985; Smith, 2016: 20; Stewart, 1928: 17).Indeed, as Martini (2015) mentions, Constantine's strategies against the Sasanians were on behalf of the Christians within the Sassanid realm. As a new phenomenon of the time, the expansive state temples and churches lay behind the political claims of both empires. Conversion itself was a means of unification and expansion for the religious and political leaders (Cline and Graham, 2011: 295& 311).

Christians in the Sassanid Empire thus fell under suspicion of conspiring with enemies of the Sassanids. This was contrary to how things had been before the Roman Empire became Christian. There were both religious and political motives for the anti-Christian measures of the Sassanids, though they tolerated the Christians who were against the Romans and supported them within the Roman territory. The Sasanians, therefore, tried to convert or separate them from the Roman Empire by reinforcing Christological controversies and supporting religious dissidents in the Roman Empire like Nestorians (Yarshater, 1983:929-44 &499). When there was tension and war broke out between the Roman and Sassanid Empires, the Sasanians persecuted Christians (Aubrey, 1937: 64-5).

For instance, although the Zoroastrian clergy had to compete with many other religions, in the Sassanid period "Political reasons, more than religious intolerance, caused the first great persecution of the Christians under Shapur II[reign: 307-79]"(Eisenstadt, 1969: 51).In addition, Khasraw/Khosrow I tried to convert the Christians of the Sassanid realm. He even commanded their high clerics to deny Christ and to accept Zoroastrianism (Zouberi, 2017). By contrast, the Romans tried to protect Christians and convert Zoroastrians. They destroyed fire temples when they invaded Sassanid territory (Aubrey, 1937: 67).

Through religious conversion, the two empires reinforced their political influence. Thus, according to Yar shater (1983), the Byzantine Empire protected "Christians in the Vassal kingdoms and city states"(p. lii) that this p rotection affected the political loyalty of these kingdoms and states as buffer zones. Apart from the diplomatic an d military alliance of some states and principalities, the small Christian kingdoms in Kurdistan and Armenia remai ned loyal to Rome, since political circumstances were influenced by their religious outlook. In contrast, under the i nfluence of Zoroastrian clergy, Sassanids increased their religious activities in the region so that religion played an important role in rivalries and divisions (see: Lightfoot, 1982:191-8).

So, based on the existence of global faiths and the expansion of the empires' realms towards each other, religious controversies, and supporting their fellow believers and enemy's religious dissidents, the missionary activity in the region and relations with political power centers, on the one hand, and the strategic importance of the region for both empires on the other, it can be said that some parts of old Kurdistan were the first places targeted for religio-political influence and were constantly under threat of war, since they were almost entirely Christian areas (see: Stewart, 1928: 24), and consequently the Roman's 'regional sphere of influence' in Martini's words(2015), and conjunctional areas between the two empires. Christians had sympathy for the Roman Empire and often stood on its side. There were pro-Constantine missionaries in the Sassanid region like Aphrahat (270-345), a bishop in Mar Mati monastery near the modern city of Mosul. He expected that Constantine would invade Sassanid territory and liberate the Christians, and had hoped for a Roman victory (see: Barnes, 1985). Another example is the story of Mar Ma'in, a former general in Shapur's army who became Christian. He was imprisoned and tortured, then through Constantine's intervention he was released and started to establish monasteries in northern Mesopotamia, especially in the Şingal/Sinjar area (Smith, 2016: 157).

Most of the kingdoms in old Kurdistan were under Sassanid political influence which had many states and kingdoms in its administrative organization, such as the kingdoms of Adiabene, Aturpatakan/Atropatene (known as Small/upper Media), and Large/lower Media. Some of the kingdoms in the land remained autonomous, like Adiabene, some of them were semi-autonomous, and others just had their kings appointed from among the Sassanid's family. Some states that were invaded by both parties kept changing hands until the end of both empires' influence in the land (Yarshater, 1983:124-139, 151-168, 701-5 & 730).

During the third-fourth centuries Sassanians attacked the borders of Rome and some disputed regions between them, especially the present-day Bakûr including the territory of Corduene, and other areas and cities of northern Mesopotamia like Amed (Diyarbakir), Hassankeyf, Mardin, Edessa/Urfa, Carrhae, Jazira, Nisibis, Singara and so on. They were the sites of the growth of Christianity and under the influence of Rome,whichhad often been contested by the two empires (See:Farrokh, 2011: 18; Lightfoot, 1982: 7-10 & 202; Yarshater, 1983: lii). After the battle of Edessa in 260 and other confrontations extending until 296, peace was negotiated between the two empires in Nisibis when northern Mesopotamia was annexed by the Romans (Ward, 2009: 32). It was indeed the second time the old Kurdistan was divided.

As already mentioned, with the growth of Christianity some kingdoms in Kurdistan and Armenia which were Zoroastrian accepted Christianity in the third and early fourth centuries. This occurred through the influence of Christianity on society as the people's religion, on one hand, and as a result of the political conflict of their rulers with the Sassanids, on the other. The Roman Empire made use of the situation with the Christians in order to have more influence in Mesopotamia against the Sassanids. These religious changes in the region thus affected the political sphere and the relations between the two empires that had evolved since the beginning of the fourth century (al-Khalil, 2011: 75).By making Christianity a political factor, Constantine injected a religious aspect into the frontier dispute. It was Constantine's intention to make a religious crusade to the Sassanid's Mesopotamia, but his death in 337 put paid to his plans. Then, in the same year Shapur II, who had become aware of the internal problems of the Roman Empire arising from Christianity, attacked Roman Mesopotamia and besieged Nisibis. Shapur's persecution and massacre of Christians intensified, especially in Adiabene and Karka/Kirkuk (Barnes, 1985; Smith, 2016: 30 & 166; Ward, 2009: 32-3). Conflict in Mesopotamia again erupted and continued: the tensions between the Romans and Sassanids over the frontier between them deepened.

Some parts of old Kurdistan, therefore, became the converging point between two religions and their political supporters. With the advent of a Christian empire in the north and a Zoroastrian empire to the south, their religio-political conflicts and confrontations severely affected the areas. For instance, depending on the political stance of the prevailing empire, the followers of each religion were under pressure to be religiously converted, "knowing that conversion to one's religion will be followed by political submission" (Zouberi, 2017).On the one hand, the Zoroastrians, who were seen as infidel, and their temples were under attackby the Romans. On the other, the Christians, as religious enemies, were violated by the Sassanids and suffered by paying double tax, for example in Adiabene between 339-379 during the reign of Shapur II (Smith, 2016: 5; Stewart, 1928: 18; Yarshater, 1980: 139). Nevertheless, the political and missionary activities of both sides increased in the region. As an example, Marutha, a bishop who as a Roman ambassador visited Yazdegerd I in the early part of the 5thcentury, transferred a collection of the bones of Christian martyrs from the Sassanid realm to Maypherqat (today Farqîn/Silvan) in the Roman's domain and with the support of the emperor built a sacred place in which to deposit them. Accordingly it was then known as Martyropolis, the 'city of martyrs' (Fowden, 1999: 55; Smith, 2016:12). Thus, they used religious concepts and symbols to reinforce the religious sentiments of the people and the status of the Romans in the region. The growth of Christianity continued so that Nisibis and Arbela were two of the six Christian metropolises with monasteries and clergy schools in under Sasanian jurisdiction in the 5th-6thcenturies (Aubrey, 1937: 57-58; Yarshater, 1983: 932).Throughout the centuries, there was religious confrontation and rivalry between Zoroastrian priests and Christian bishops, both of whom had political support, trying to impose their own religion on the people of Northern Mesopotamia. Moreover, both empires used the religious divisions for their own ends, for example Sassanids used the cleavage between Monophysites/Nestorians and Chalcedonians against the Romans. Khosrow II, on capturing Edessa in 609/10, declared that the Christians could remain in the city if they became Nestorians, otherwise they would be killed (Zouberi, 2017).

On the other hand, a vast tract of old Kurdistan that had become a battlefield was destroyed because of the frequent invasion of both empires (Cline and Graham, 2011: 297).Erzrum to Amed/Diyarbakir and Nusibin, Myafarqin, Jzira to Sharazur and Ardalan were alternatively in the hands of one of them (13). Some areas were burned and razed and people displaced. For example, in a war in 502 the victorious Sassanids exiled the people of Amed and Myafarq into an area between Arabia-Ahwaz and Fars. In the wars of the early 7th century when the Romans defeated the Sassanids, they plundered and destroyed many sites, especially the famous fire temple of Adur Gushnasp/Azar Gushaspin about 623 (al-Dinawari, 1960: 66; Zaki, 1931:120-21).Thus, Roman or Sassanid, they attacked frequently to bolster their influence and dominance, and occasionally the power base changed. The situation lasted until the coming of Islam (al-Khalil, 2011: 76).

These two-sided religio-political confrontations ended with the invasion of Muslim Arabs. During the progress of Islam in the 7thcentury, Kurdistan/main Median territory became a war zone between the Zoroastrian Sassanid, Christian Roman and new Islamic Arab Empires (see: Moffett, 1992: 335; Aubrey, 1937: 68-9). It suffered under skirmishes between Arabs and Sassanids on the one hand, and the Romans, on the other. The Muslim Arab's war was at first a religious war for the sake of Islam. They defeated the two Empires under the name of Islam and Holy War. With the Arabs' invasion, both Zoroastrian and Christian culture were almost removed from the land. Most of the Zoroastrians and Christians were converted, some of them were displaced and their religious places of worship were destroyed. An ancient Kurdish poem (called Hurmizgan) attributed to the 7th century, found in Southern Kurdistan (Başûr),shows how the invasion eradicated the Zoroastrian religion and culture(see: Mofidi, 2019).The historical sources such as *The History of Tabari*(10th century) confirm this violent behaviour of Muslim Arabs towards the Kurds (see: al-Tabari, 1970, V. 4: 186-7). Thus, the land of the Kurds' ancestors was almost completely annexed to the Islamic empire.

4. Discussion: The impact of historical religio-political confrontations on Kurdistan

Old Kurdistan, as a broad historio-strategic region, has been the birthplace of and received diverse religions and civilizations. The Median and Sassanid Empires were the civilizational and political peaks, while the epoch of large indigenous powers diminished after the ancient period. However, this research shows a historical continuity and survival of indigenous political powers during the ancient period at the time of other empires, although smaller in size. During the Median Empire there was a tradition of multicultural and religious tolerance, though the politics of the Medes were probably influenced by the indigenous polytheism as the dominant religion. After the collapse of the Median Empire, Kurdistan as a conjunction area gradually became the battleground for confrontations between big and often non-indigenous political powers and various religions. These religio-political conflicts had a profound effect on the land and its inhabitants, politically and socio-culturally.

The war between two of the empires, using the land of Kurds' ancestors as their battlefield, occasionally destroyed some regions. The study shows that agreement between the empires at the end of war was never maintained, and their conflict continued in Kurdistan. Their rivalry and fighting endured in some regions, which became conjunction and buffer zones. There was no clear border between the empires. Small indigenous governments were politically forced to have dependency on one or other of them and some areas of Kurdistan were never a permanent part of them for long. The land's politico-strategic situation was a manipulative factor.

Moreover, old Kurdistan was the intersection of Zoroastrianism vs. Median polytheism, Zoroastrianism vs. Hellenism, Zoroastrianism vs. Christianity and then Islam vs. Zoroastrianism and Christianity. Religious changes in Kurdistan itself and within the empires affected the socio-political milieu in the region. Religion had political function for the super-empires. Apart from the internal latent function of religion that helped the empires interconnect their different divisions, they used religious sentiments to rally the support of their people and armies for invasion of each other's territories. On the other hand, with the advent of the state religion phenomenon the impact of religio-political confrontations of empires changed. The existence of fellow believers paved the way for them to interfere through the influence of religion: they saw conversion as an important political means. They put pressure on followers of another religion, converted them and destroyed their religious sites to extend their realms.

When religion transformed and became part of the political arena, Kurdistan was further damaged. In the way that since the coming of Islam, and in the contemporary period, Islam has been used to dominate Kurdistan, in the ancient era Zoroastrianism and Christianity were similarly employed: the super powers used religion to influence old Kurdistan. Religion affected the homage and loyalty of the small indigenous powers to the empires. Thus, some parts of the land were frequently swept between the super powers and were damaged more than the warring parties themselves. Apart from partition of the land, many places were often razed, which led to significant socio-cultural changes. Cultural sites were destroyed, traditions changed, and people were displaced. Such a situation has indeed been repeated, reproduced and continued throughout the history of Kurdistan, and still continues: in the war between Arabs, Sassanids and Romans, then between the Ottoman and Safavid empires and now in the state and nationalistic confrontations of the modern period.

Therefore, the empires by force, gaining the allegiance of small indigenous governments, and using religion, especially converting people, extended their realms and affected the socio-political structure of old Kurdistan. Nevertheless, their rules were often not implemented in the land. By contrast, through deference and having political and religious homage with the empires, the smaller indigenous governments continued their rule, though over time some of them were removed and others emerged.

The historical situation displayed above has affected modern politics in different ways. Indeed, the contemporary states and nations in the Middle East through partial interpretations of political history, have tried to narrate the historical continuity of events in favour of themselves and reinforce their preferred views. There have often been attempts to highlight the ancestors of currently dominant ethno-nations, and to attribute ancient civilizations and historical powers and religions to them, so that as their heirs they can create historical legitimacy and political identity. Consequently, the old political history of the Middle East has been introduced more as the history of the newly created states; Iran, Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Within these histories the role of ancestors of dominated ethno-nations have been intentionally neglected or screened by selective general titles of states in favour of the dominant ethno-nations. By different means, they have reproduced and transferred the old religio-political confrontations of the empires to the modern age to cover and disguise the current role of others.

Nevertheless, against the mainstream studies influenced by current states, the ancestors of Kurds have had an important role in the political history of the region, including that of the Islamic period –which the author will try to examine in another article, about the impact of the religio-political confrontations of Islamic empires on Kurdistan. In reaction tothe dominant ethno-nations the leadership of Kurdish movements have emphasized on preserving Kurdish history. For example, Ghazi Muhammad, president of Kurdistan Republic in 1946 had understood the importance of the issue. He instructed the Imams to emphasize on the ancient Kurdish civilization in Friday sermons (Vali, 2011: 106). Therefore, the retrospective imperial attitude of dominant ethno-nations to neglect and deny the stateless nations, their history, historical role and rights, on the one hand, and the reaction of dominated ethno-nations, on the other, has led to long-term conflicts between them in the Middle East. Thus, the historical socio-political situation has had an impact on modern politics and the contemporary political situation in the region.

Notes:

1- The first day of spring (21 March) is the first day of the Kurdish year: the anniversary of the establishment of the Median state that saw the start of Kurdish history used by Kurds in Greater Kurdistan.
2- KaweyAsinger (KawayiHesinkar), the Blacksmith, was a legendary hero and leader of the Median uprising and Savior of the Medes from the hand of the Assiryan King Dehak.
3- With regards to the Medes and their empire, see: Gershevitch, 1985; Diakonoff, 1966; Rawlinson, 2019; and Tuplin, 2004.
4- For example, in ancient Kurdistan, the Median territory can be mentioned as one of the Satrapies in the Achaemenid period (6th-4th century BCE), Carduchis (5th century BCE) as independent people according to Xenophon, upper and lower Median territories as Satrapies in the time of Alexander the Great and during the Seleucid period, then Media Atropatene in upper Media as an independent kingdom (4th-1th century BCE), Corduene state (2th-1th century BCE), Sassanid Empire (3-7th century), and Gauran/Goran government under Goatanza (in the 6th century from Kirmaşan to Tewrêz/Tabriz). Then in the Islamic period from the 10th century, the Kurdish governments emerged again and in the 17-19th centuries there were many Kurdish principalities, of which Ardalan (removed in 1865) and Pusht-iKuh (removed in 1929) were the last Kurdish governments in modern Kurdistan (see: Zaki, 1931: 41-60, 106 & 120; Gershevitch, 1985: 397 & 495; Diakonoff, 1966: 540-553).
5- The creation of a unitary Persianized country called "Iran" is new and related to the contemporary age. Also, in historical texts the word "Iran" did not exist. In old languages of the region, especially in old Kurdish, there was "Eran" (derived from Er/Aer/Ary/Awir/Atir/Agir namely fire): still the Kurds call the country "Eran" instead of "Iran" (as the Persians do) (Nebez, 2003: 46). Indeed, the word was first used in some Zoroastrian folklore, ancient myths and legends. It was probably used by Zoroastrians as 'the lands of fire'. Based on the legends, the whole earth was divided into three parts: the western lands, the north and the east (Turan and China), and the central clime (Eran plateau). Accordingly, some divisions such as 'Eran and Turan' and 'Eran and Aneran' were mentioned in the same way as Asian/Non-Asian, European/non-European etc. today. In other words, the earth was divided into Eran and Aneran (non-Eran). In these legends the king of Eran, as the central part of Earth, was the king of the world; king of 'Eran and Aneran', the title taken by the Sasanians after Shapur I (See: Yarshater, 1983: 364-373 & 411). The Sasanians used the word 'Eran' since they were also the descendants of ancestral groups of Kurds. Thus, on the one hand, Eran was a religious concept to show the land of fire worshippers. On the other, Eran was the geographical concept for a broad land on the Eran Plateau and under the influence of the Sassanid Empire. Indeed, the plateauof Eran or Eranshar/Eranshahr (in Kurdish, Shar has two meanings, one of them is 'city' and another is 'land/region', as used by classical poets such as Nali.So there are two possibilities; (1) Eran was a city or (2) it was a large land, the second definition being the one most often used by scholars) was as a continent like Europe and the lands of the Roman Empire, incorporating many kingdoms. So, the Sassanids' kings, from their founder Ardashir I, called themselves 'the king of kings,' During history, there have been many peoples, various empires and states encompassed by the name of different dynasties and founders on the land. The contemporary Fars/Persian nationalists have used myths and legends to assimilate and create such a country while, contrary to what they say, there has been no common factor between the different peoples on the broad legendary land.
6- For example, in the book a chapter entitled "Book III; The march to Kurdestan" and some other parts including pages 97-147 relate to Kurdistan (See: Xenophon, 1949). It should be noted that Xenophon and ten thousand Greek soldiers helped Cyrus the younger (Cyrus III) (407-401 BCE), not Cyrus II (Reign 559-530 BCE), the founder of the Achaemenids (See: Gershevitch, 1985: 349-97 & 684).
7- Since the states in the Middle East do not incorporate some of the criteria of Modern States, they are called by the author 'quasi-modern states' (For more details about that See: Mofidi and Rahmani, 2018).
8- Record No. 894 in 2006 in the public library of Southern Kurdistan/Başûr
9- Thomas was a 9th century priest in a Kurdish region, Marga, who in his book mentions other Kurdish priests in Kurdistan before his period.
10- The Christians have remained in Kurdistan up to now. Marco Polo in the 14th century also mentioned some of the Kurds who were Christians (see: Marco, 1930: 29).
11- The land of the Kurds between upper and lower *Zê*/Zab and from Hewlêr to Wirmê/Orumiyeh.
12- Evidence shows that the Sasanian dynasty is more related to Kurds than Fars/Persians, though it is likely that other ethnic groups also took part in their administration. The Sasanians are attributed to Fars probably because of their place of origin in the lower region of Kurdistan near the Pars, the former territory of the Achaemenids. Also, some scholars assert that the founder of the Sassanids wanted to re-establish a vast empire like that of the Achaemenids, although he had no clear knowledge about them as there had been a time gap of about 6 centuries in between (see: Yarshater, 1983: 120).

There are some known reasons for the relationship between the Sasanians and the Kurds: first, according to Dinawari who was a 9th century Kurd who knew the Kurds and their ancestors and had written a book about their genealogy, 'Sasan went to the mountain (al-jabal) with the pastoral Kurds then Sassanids became known as "the Kurdish Sasan" and "Sasan the Shepherd"' (see: al-Dinawari, 1960: 27). At the time the Kurds were mostly pastoralists who lived in the Zagros mountains, therefore Kurdistan was also known in Arabic as 'mountains' (al-jibal). Sasan was probably one of the Kurds who went to the mountains with them. Even when talking about Sasanians, Dinawari mentions some Kurdish words. Second, as has been mentioned in the text, the kingdoms in Kurdistan helped the Sasanians to reach power (Yarshater, 1983: 118). Third, their language is closer to Kurdish (see footnote 4 about Eran) and some elements of it still make sense and can be

understood by groups of Kurds especially Hewrami and Faili in Rojhelat (Kirmaşan, Luristan, Ilam) and also Başûr. The poem of Hurmizgan/Hormuzgan attributed to the 7th century, that describes the invasion of Arabs and the removal of Zoroastrian religion and culture, is almost the same as the current Kurdish Hewrami dialect (see: Mofidi, 2019). Moreover, it is said that Faili is related to Phalawi/Phahlavi or Palawi/Pahlavi, an ancient (middle Kurdish) language. Fourth, the region of their growth was in lower Kurdistan, Luristan, where Sasan went with the Kurds to the mountains, and it is near Stakhr/Istakhr, where the Sasanians established their first capital, and where in the eras that followed the pastoral/Shwankara Kurds also lived (Ibnu'L-Balkhi, 2006: 164 & 168). Later, they established their center of government in the area and environs. Ctesiphon was their second, and became main, capital. It was in the plains of Mesopotamia near Baghdad, which is a Kurdish word, and until today the boundary of Kurdistan is nearby (see: Nebez, 2004: 24). According to legend and the genealogy of the language, the Kurds had been in the area (see: Mofidi, 2019; HamaRash, 2013). Also, the Sassanids' summer capital was Kirmaşan, where there is still much evidence of their heritage. Fifth, some Kurdish dynasties in the next epoch, after the coming of Islam, such as the Ardalan dynasty, traced their lineage to the Sasanians. MasturaKurdistani/Ardalan (1805-1848) attributed the lineage of the Ardalans and their ancestor, Baba Ardalan, to ArdashirPapakan/I. Baba Ardalanhad returned from Sham/Damascus to rule Kurdistan in the early Islamic period (see: Kurdistani, 1946: 5-6). Though some others like Bitlisi in Sharafnama (1597) ascribe the Ardalans to the Marwanids, a 10-11th century Kurdish dynasty in Amed. After the Marwanids, in the late Mongol period Ardalans overcame Sharazour including Sine/Sanandaj. There is the possibility also that some Shwankara Kurds and ancestors of the Ardalan dynasty had gone to Sham in the late Sassanid period, and after the collapse of the Sasanians they returned to Kurdistan where some of them established the Ardalan dynasty in Sine and others in the 11th century established the Shwankara government in Luristan (about Shwankara Kurds see: Boyle, 1968: 304; Zaki, 1931, v.2).

13- For the conflict and dissensions between two empires of Rome and Parthian-Sassanid see: Chris S. Lightfoot, 1982; Cline and Graham, 2011; Zaki, 1931, v.1: 118-121.

References:

Al- Tabari, A. J. M. J. (1970), *History of the Prophets and Kings* (*Tarikh al-Rusulwa al-Muluk*), reviewed by: Muhammad Abul Fadil Ibrahim, V. 4, Cairo; Dar al-Maarif.

Al-Dinawari, A. H. A. D. (1960).*al-Akhbar al-Tiwal*, investigation: Abdel-Moneim Amer, reviewed by: Jamal Al-Din Al-Shayal, Cairo: Arab Books Revival House, First Edition.

Al-Khalil, A. M. (2011). *The history of Kurd in Islamic Civilization*, translated into Kurdish by Zirar Ali, Sulaimaniyeh; Paywand.

Appian (Appianus) (1912). *Appian's Roman History I*, with an English translation by Horace White, V I, London: Wiliam Heinemann Ltd.

Aubrey R. V. (1937). *The Nestorian Churches*, London: Independent Press.

Barkey, H. J. and Fuller G. E. (1998). *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, USA; ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD.

Barnes, T. D. (1985). "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 75, pp. 126-136.

Bitlisi, P. S. (2005). *The Sharafnama or the History of Kurdish Nation, 1597*, English Translation and commentaries by M. R. Izady, California; Mazda Publisher.

Boyle, J. A. (ed.) (1968), *The Saljuq and Mongol Period*,The Cambridge History Of Iran, in seven volume, volume 4, UK; Cambridge University Press.

Bruinessen, M. V. (1992). *Agha, Shaikh and State, The Social and Political structures of Kurdistan*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books.

Champion, J. (2014). Antigonus the One-Eyed; Greatest of the Successors, Great Britain: Pen & Sword Military.

Vanly, I. C. (1992). "The Kurds in Syria and Lebanon". In *The Kurds; A Contemporary Overview*, Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (eds.), London; Routledge, pp. 143-170.

Cline, E. H. and Graham M. W. (2011). *Ancient Empires; From Mesopotamia to the Rise of Islam*, Cambridge University Press.

Diakonoff, I. M. (1966). *The History of Media*, published in 1956, translated into Persian by Karim Keshavarz, Tehran; Book Translation and Publishing Company.

Eisenstadt, S. N. (1969). *The Political System of Empires*, New York, The Free Press.

Farrokh, K. (2011). *Iran at War 1500-1988*, UK; Osprey publishing.

Fowden, E. K. (1999). *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*, London: University of California Press.

Gershevitch, I. (ed.) (1985). *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*,The Cambridge History of Iran, in seven volume, volume 2, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Gunes, C. (2012). *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey; From Protest to Resistance*, New York; Routledge.

Gunter, M. M. (2011). *The Kurds Ascending; the Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey*, second edition, New York; Palgrave Macmilan.

HamaRash, S. (2013). *Who Are the Kurds?The History of Kurds and the Origin of their Language from the Dawn of Civilization to the Tenth Century A.D*, first edition, London.

Herodotus (1976). *The History of Herodotus*, translated by Isaac Littlebury, two volumes, third edition, New York; AMS Press.

Ibnu'L-Balkhi (2006), *The Farsnama*, edited by G. Le Strange and R. A. Nicholson, Tehran; Asatir publication.

Johnson, P. (1995). *A History of Christianity*, UK: Prentice Hall.

Kurdistani, M. M. (1946). *The History of Ardalan*, reviewed by: Nasir Azadpour, Sine: Bahrami Publication.

Lightfoot, C. S. (1982), *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire with Special Reference to the Reign of Constantius II*, Doctoral thesis, University of Oxford.

Marco P. (1930). *The Travels of Marco Polo*, revised from Marsden's translation and edited with introduction by Manuel Komroff, New York: Horace Liveright.

Martini, R. L. (2015). **"**Constantine's Strategies on Behalf of the Christians of Persia,**"** available at: http://www.eboracum.org/constantines-strategies-on-behalf-of-the-christians-of-persia/ (accessible at 8/10/2020).

McDowall, D. (1992). "The Kurdish Question: A Historical Review". In *The Kurds; A Contemporary Overview*, Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (eds.), London; Routledge, pp. 10-32.

Minorsky, V. (1986). "Kurds, Kurdistan," in C. E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, B. Lewis and C. Pellat (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol V, Leiden: Brill, pp. 438-86.

Moffett, S. H. (1992). *A History of Christianity in Asia*, Volume I; Beginning to 1500.

Mofidi, S. (2015). *The Political function of religion in contemporary India (Hinduism and Islam)*, New Delhi: Swastik Publications.

Mofidi, S. (2019). "An Introduction to the Religious History of Kurdistan", *KCCRC Journal*, N. 43, pp. 36-62.

Mofidi, S. and Rahmani S. (2018). "ISIS and Modernity; Studying the Effect of Middle-eastern quasi-modern States", *Research Letter of Political Science*, Journal of Iranian Political Sciences Association, V. 13, N. 2, pp. 157-186.

Murphey, R. (1999). *Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700*, UK; UCL Press.

Nebez, J. (2004). *The Kurds; History and Culture*, Translated into English by: Hanne Kuchler, London: WKA Publications.

Ocalan, A. (2018). *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization*, Publication of works and thoughts of Abdullah Ocalan, 5 volumes, third edition.

Pirnia, M. K. (2004). *A study into the classification of styles in Iranian architecture*, Tehran: Me'mar publications.

Rawlinson, G. (2019).*Ancient Media: Political and Cultural History of the Median Tribes*, E-Artnow.

Smith, K. (2016). *Constantine and the captive Christians of Persia: martyrdom and religious identity in Late Antiquity*, University of California Press.

Stewart, J. (1928). *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church on Fire*, T. & T. Clark.

Thomas, M. (1893).*The Book of Governors*, edited by E.A. Wallis Budge, London: KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER & Co., Ltd.

Tuplin, C. (2004). "Medes in Media, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia: Empire, Hegemony, Domination or Illusion?" *Ancient West and East*, V. 3, issue 2, pp. 223-251.

Vali, A. (2011). *Kurds and the State in Iran; the Making of Kurdish Identity*, London: I.B.Tauris& Co Ltd.

Ward, S. R. (2009). *Immortal; A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces*, Washington D.C; Georgetown University Press.

Weber, M. (1965). *The Sociology of Religion*, London: Tr. E. Fischoff, Methuen & Co Ltd.

White P. J. (2000). *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers? The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey*, Zed Books.

Xenophon (1949). *The Persian Expedition*, translated by Rex Warner, The Penguin Books, First published.

Yarshater, E. (ed.) (1983). *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*,The Cambridge History of Iran, in seven volume, volume 3, Cambridge University Press.

Zaki, M. A. (1931). *Kurd and Kurdistan*, 3 volumes, Baghdad; Dar al-Salam publication.

Zouberi, J. (2017). "The role of religion in the foreign affairs of Sasanian Iran and the Later Roman Empire (330-630 A.D.)," *HISTORIA I ŚWIAT*, n. 6, 121-132.

View publication stats