



The importance of Dargazin in the Ottoman Attacks on Western Iran (907-1143 AH)

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Abstract

The rivalries between the Ottoman and Safavid empires significantly influenced many events within both governments for an extended period. The Ottoman government aimed to expand its empire through both Europe and Asia, focusing on one region at a time. It characterized its military campaigns in the Western regions as part of the propagation of Islam. However, when these campaigns extended to the Eastern territories, which comprised predominantly Islamic lands, this rationale lost its validity. Consequently, alternative justifications were sought to justify the continuation of military actions in the East. Given the established facts, the Ottomans attacked the Islamic lands, which required consensus within Ottoman society and across other Islamic territories. Solidarity among Arab states, particularly Mecca and Medina, marked the beginning of a new era for the Ottoman Empire.

The empire was no longer just a border state but had become an Islamic caliphate. The Ottoman sultans viewed themselves not only as defenders of the borders but also as protectors of the entire Islamic world. The political advantages of this form of governance became evident during the reign of Selim's successors. As a result, Sunni tendencies gained strength as a government policy at the beginning of the 16th century. The Ottomans also regarded the East as a threat. Until then, the support of the Sunnis had become crucial in both foreign policy and Ottoman invasions. The revolt of Patrona Khalil, who accused Sultan Ahmed III and his minister Ibrahim Pasha of surrendering Sunni territory to the infidels, complemented the Ottomans' defeat against Nadir Shah, which ultimately led to a crisis for the Ottoman sultan and his prime minister.

Therefore, the goal of the Ottoman government in attacking Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula was to support and protect the Islamic world. However, in the attack on Iran, which was now under a Shiite government, there may have been additional reasons beyond the previous ones. One of these reasons was their view that Shia Islam is outside of Islam, and they considered themselves supporters of the Sunnis, who constitute a large population in Iran. Among the Sunnis in Iran, those from the Dargazin region were the most well-known group in the west of the country, and reports of their opposition were widely circulated.

In this regard, the presence of Ottoman forces several times in the Sunni area of Dargazin has strengthened the hypothesis that the people of this city were aligned with



the Ottomans. This hypothesis has been proposed because Dargazin is one of the few Sunni areas in central Iran, where the residents remained dissatisfied with the new government after the Safavid dynasty came to power. Additionally, the attacks by Ottoman Sultan Suleiman in the years 940 and 941, followed by the presence of some ambassadors, and finally the attacks by Ottoman forces on Dargazin at the end of Safavid rule, have further emphasized the importance of this issue. These attacks are believed to have provided support for the Sunni residents of this area.

Due to its religious and Islamic nature, the Ottoman government was inevitably a religious government with ideological policies. In this regard, its early rulers gained a special position among Muslims by defining two primary functions for their emirate: "Islamic Jihad" and "bordering the Islamic territory." With the beginning of the golden period of Ottoman rule and the presence of powerful rulers such as Sultan Selim and his son Suleiman, this approach gained more attention and reached its peak with the conquest of Egypt, Mecca, and Medina. After that, the Ottoman rulers were referred to as "Khadim al-Haramain Sharif" and "Khilafah" and were recognized as defenders of Sunnis. Soon, Sunni tendencies became a government policy. Consequently, Iranian Sunnis were supported by the Ottomans as opponents of the Safavid government, leading to a reciprocal relationship formed between them, with the common point of opposition to the Shia Safavid government. This situation caused the Sunnis of Kurdistan and Dargazin not only to show no resistance against Ottoman attacks but also to join them, sometimes even being considered a key factor in persuading the Ottomans to attack the western borders. For this reason, the attacks by Ottoman forces on these areas were often successful and ensured the establishment and continuation of their rule over them for a long time, such that Dargazin was only in the hands of the Safavid rulers on a few occasions. The ambassadors sent to the Safavid court in Isfahan would gather information about their situation and considered the residents of this area as their reserve forces. Thus, while the attacks were carried out by the Ottoman forces, their leaders and guides were the Sunnis from these areas, who killed and looted in Dargazin.

However, the alliance between the Sunnis in Dargazin and the Kurds in the western regions with the Ottomans, considered a political alliance to confront the Safavid government, was very fragile and depended on the extent to which each group benefited from the existing situation. The Sunnis and Kurds operated within a framework of specific political relations, which were based on the unique power structure in these areas. In this type of political structure, the most important goal of each group was to maintain its existence and preserve a balance with the other groups. In this context, if the central power or any other competing power helped achieve these goals, they could become allies and partners.

For this reason, when Shah Ismail II came to power and showed signs of his inclination towards the Sunnis, they joined him and even initiated movements against the Ottomans. The ranks of the Ottoman troops separated and joined Ashraf Afghan, which led to the defeat of the Ottoman forces. In such a situation, political interests determined orientations, and religion was not considered a decisive factor; even when it was important, it played a more secondary role.



Therefore, although the initial Ottoman attacks to the east and their alliance with the Sunni people of Dargazin and the Kurds opposing the Safavids had religious roots, and the Ottoman rulers waited for a long time for the approval of domestic religious institutions to attack Iran, over time the Ottoman attacks became increasingly politically motivated. The later Ottoman attacks resulted in destruction, murder, and looting in Dargazin, and ultimately, with the Afghan incursions, this duality became more apparent. With the Sunnis in this region joining the Afghans, the Ottoman government quickly lost its position and credibility in Dargazin and Hamadan, leading to their permanent removal from these areas.

Keywords: Safavids, Ottomans, Hamedan, Dargazin, Sunnis.

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