

Localization of Garrisons in Tabaristan during Early Islamic Era

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Abstract

After semi-independent Local governments come to power in South coast of Caspian Sea, Northern states of Iran became the scene of political dispute and conflict between local and governors of Abbasid and Umayyad. Providing political security of the region and establishing suitable condition for economic development was led to construct the multi-purpose garrisons in geographical spread of Tabaristan. The garrisons which are known as Maslaheh, Sakhloo and Zinestan in historical and geographical texts, were constructed in Tabaristan by Abul-Abbas Toussi- governor of Tabaristan- in Abbasid' Caliphate. Their controlled geographical territory started in three area of plain, forest and mountain in Tamisheh which was located in the Eastern borderline of Tabaristan and ended to Chaloos in the West of this state. A number of fin garrisons Tabaristan are varying of 31,45, and 50 in local histories as well as geographical texts and 31 of them are identified. In this article attempted that by the means of historical and geographical sources has recognized the reasons of distribution as well as multidimensional functions of garrisons.

Keywords: Ispahbuds of Tabaristan, Garrisons, Abbasids Caliphate, Geographical distribution, Localization.

Introduction

The presence of semi-independent Local governments as Ispahbuds of Tabaristan, Dabuyids (Ale-Dabooyeh), Qarinvands, Bavandids (Āl-i Bavand) in second half of Sasanians' reign (from Khusraw Anoshirvan To Yazdgerd III) to early and middle Islamic centuries and their results as well as socio-political changes, made the position of Tabaristan state (Mazandaran) distinguished in historical studies of Iran (Hakimian. 1368:1-6). declining Sasanian dynasty and adverting new religion of Islam in Arabian Peninsula as well as Arabs conquered Sassanid's controlled regions, made Tabaristan a safe and secure place for Sassanid's kings and princes more than before. Since half-independent governments as Ispahbuds were in the region, Arabs continuous attacks and conquering most of the western and central parts of Iran was a serious alarm for Tabaristan governors. So, important fortifications were constructed in mountainous parts and strategic points to secure government and people of the region, their life and property as well as protect political territories especially Southern territories of Alborz Chain Mountains.

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After relative unstable Umayyad conquest and forced taxes in Jurjan (Gorgan) and Tabaristan, finally Tabaristan was unified under the control of new governors during Abbasid caliphate and the conquest of plain regions (Tabari.1375:1978-2116); as pedigreed Sassanid governments as Qarinvands and Bavandids were independent in mountainous region and fought against Arab newcomers.

Abbasid coming to power resulted in many massacres in the region in its mountainous parts. These harsh action made political and social atmosphere in Tabaristan to turmoil and chaos. So, many garrisons were built by Arabs and Iranian forces' aid who mostly were from Khorasan, in more than forty cities and strategic points during the short period of two-year Abul-Abbas Toussi's governing (Madelung,1381:174). Quelling local turmoil's and controlling local governor's rebelling who were living in mountains, was the purpose of building such a places (Mahjoori,1381:87). He appointed army forces proportional to each garrison that led to a unified order in Tabaristan.

According to Tarikh-I Tabaristan by IbnIsfandiyar, these garrisons were 45 in number which were started from Tamisheh in the most eastern part of Tabaristan and ended to Chaloozin its most western part (IbnIsfandiyar, 1366:178-81). Its South-eastern borderline ended to Qumesstate as well as Southern part of AlborzChain Mountains to Rayystate and its South-western and western part to Daylamid region. Reliable local histories as "Tarikh-iTabaristan" by IbnIsfandiyar (written in 613H.), "Tarikhe-iRuyan" by Awliyaallah Amuli (written in 1348) as well as "Tarikh-i Tabaristan, va Ruyanva Mazandaran" indicated these garrisons and their system of managing. Besides these sources, there are geographers' texts of early and medieval centuries in which were elaborated names, geographical locations as well as distances between cities and also some garrisons.

Research Background and Methodology

There are valuable studies on military architecture of Iran which is impossible to elaborate in this paper. Though, what are related to military architecture in geographical field of Tabaristan, is a few researches which will be indicated in archeological studies and history of architecture section. "Fortifications of Ismail is in Chain Mountains of Alborz" by Manuchehr Sotudeh (Sotudeh:1345) is one of the initial works on the subject of the study. The author has done a monographic research of forts in southern parts of Alborz by Archaeological survey and elaborated their architectural and archeological features. Other study is titled "Archaeological fortifications in Mazandaran: from Soorkhani to Jar-i kulbad" by Samansurteji (surteji:1381). The author has excavated in historical forts same as Sotudeh but in Northern part of Alborz chain mountains.

In historical aspect, local historiographers' researches- as Ardeshir Barzegar-are important, too. Helocalized present locations and compared them with written sources in his book, "History of Tabaristan"(Barzegar:1380). Ismail Mahjoori also considered this point and his work is not so different from Barzegar's. Besides, ZeynAl-Abedin Dargahi (1380) and Hassan Yusefi (1382) researches should be taken in to consideration in localizing the Chamanou and Paydasht garrisons. They elaborated probable localization of them by the means of raising question on the right locations of the garrisons. Though, the writers of this paper examined method and feature of the localized parts on the basis of the similarity of their old names as well as in comparison with their present location. For instance, the garrisons of Meshkinvan, which was one of the Abbasid governors' garrisons on the outskirts of Chamanou (Jamnou), now is a village - with a few changes- named Meskinben. Another utilized sources in localization of some garrisons is invoking to texts belong to contemporary native historiographers of Mazandaran as Ardeshir Barzegar, Mahjoori and Mostafa Ahmadzadeh (Ahmadzadeh:1373).

However, expecting archeological studies on historic fortifications- but not garrisons- as well as historical monographic researches on military garrisons, there is no comprehensive research on all of them.

This paper also considers only the historical aspect of garrisons. Considering collapse of all garrisons and lack of architecture remains, the most important purpose of this paper is localization, procedure of spatial distribution and function of garrisons.

The method of research is historical analysis approach as well as surveying historical texts emphasized on local histories and utilizing geographical documents in the early and medieval centuries. Also, a contemporary study on garrisons is considered. Since, limited researches has done on military and defensive organization of Mazandaran during early Islamic era as well as manner of its mutual relations with economic and governmental organization, it is hopeful that the present research will be a beginning point in order for archeological researches in field method due to reconstruction of political-economic and social organization of Mazandaran in early Islamic era.

Survey of Garrisons in Geographical and Historical Documents

In historical studies, written sources have played an important role in realizing social changes of human history, always. In archeological researches, especially in Islamic and historic era- utilizing written sources, as historical texts, documents, travel-letters, are utilitarian tools to an archeologist for his detailed and documented analyses. To consider that Mongols and Amir Timur's destroyed all Abbasid built garrisons as well as the lack of ability to find their right location, it would be important more than before to search mentioned locations in accordance with historical texts and reliable documents.

During history, military garrisons besides other defensive constructions- as forts, defensive walls, caravanserai- played an important role in establishing social safety and security. Some of the garrisons have been considered by historiographers and geographers, since they were known by the name of cities in which they are located. It is unmistakable that many geographical texts of early and middle centuries of Islam had mentioned these constructions. For instance, author of "Alaaq-al Nafisih" wrote about Tamis (Tamishih):

"..This city has an enormous gate and residents of Tabaristan cannot travel to Gorgan or return to Tabaristan unless passes this gate and there was constructed a wall between Gorgan and Tabaristan which is made of bricks and extended from mountain to shore. Khosraw Anoshirvan is its founder who constructed this wall as an obstruction to prevent Turks pillage of Tabaristan" (Ibn-i Rustih. 1365: 176-177). Also, He wrote on general features of Tamishih:

"Tamishih is a crowded city and also there is a main mosque and a commander controls its army with an assigned ration" (ibid:177). Some geographers -as Yaqut al-Hamawi- besides naming garrisons, has mentioned their geographical situation as well as their distance to neighbor cities. For instance, Yaqoot wrote about Mehravan (present Neka):

"Mehravan is located on the plain part of Tabaristan and is a distance of 40 acres from Sari. There is a minbar which a commander and one thousand armed men guard it." (Hamawi, 1995:233).

Qazvini mentioned one of these garrisons in "Asar al-Beladva Akhbar al-Ebad" which was located in Deza or Kuza region. He explained the location:

"There is a fort in Tabaristan, wonders of the world, so high and excellent. Clouds couldn't touch its climax and it whispers to stars. It is so lofty, stable and secure that even sharp mind is unable to release from its strength walls" (Qazvini, 1373: 306).

There are also above mentioned subjects in other Islamic geographers' texts; though what is important on these texts is repeating subjects and information in them. Ibn-i-Faqih, in 4th H., is one of the few geographers who paid particular attention to garrisons and their numbers. He wrote:

“There are thirty-one Maslaheh [garrisons] from the beginning part of territory in Tabaristan to Daylam's. There are two-hundreds to one thousand [armed] men in each Maslaheh”(Ibn-i-Faqih,1349:149).

Besides geographical texts in which described on cities of Tabaristan, local histories also gave a detailed description on garrisons. Tarikh-i Tabaristan is one of the reliable and documented historical books of Tabaristan, in fact main sources of history of Tabaristan. Ibn-i-Isfandiar named these garrisons in one chapter of his books very detailed. Assigned commander in the garrisons, their numbers of military forces as well as their estimated geographical location are other information which had been mentioned in Ibn-i-Isfandiar's book. For instance, Toranjih garrison which were managed under the commanding of Muslim Ibn-i Khalid and one thousand and five hundreds military forces who were from Soqd, Samarqand, Nisa and Bavard (Ibn-i-Isfandiar, 1366:180). Through context of the histories it is concluded that establishing evolution of military and defensive garrisons in geographical spread of Tabaristan should be depended on the complicated political and economic mechanism and also their continuation would be related to Abbasid governors' policies.

The role of military garrisons in political and economic changes of Tabaristan

Beginning of Khusraw Anoshirvan's reign that led to reforms in governmental and administrative system (Shipman,1384:91-94), important cities were founded in Tabaristan and also considered in early Islamic era. Fall of Yazdgerdand the decline of Sassanians as well as conquest of different parts of Iran by Arabs began a new session in social life of Iran (ZarrinKoob. 1363.799). In Tabaristan, local dynasty as Qarinvands, Bavandids, Dabuyids and Baduspanids- who had their own territory in the region- could rule almost two hundred years by the means of diplomacy and sometimes short time conflicts; as Tabaristan was independent from central government of Baqdad until Mansour's -second Abbasid Caliphate (Hakimian,1368:16). Political and military might on cities was increased twofold by -first Abbasid commander- Abu Khozaib's controlling on plain regions of Tabaristan as well as deployment of military forces.

A brief look at chronograph of Tabaristan in early Islamic era, it could be observed unstable and unsecure atmosphere in the region. Historic events in Abbasid governors era enforced the fortification of political territories; events as: conquest of Tabaristan by Abu Khozaib- first Abbasid governor (140H.)- (Ibn-i Isfandiyar,1366:244), Maziar Ibn-i Qarin rebelling and his war with Abd-allah Ibn-i Taher in 224H (Tabari,1375:5905/13), conquest of Tabaristan by Yaqubul-Leus-i-Saffari after war with Hassan Ibn-i-Zeid in 260H (Tarikh-i Sistan,1366:223), Alavids uprising under the leadership of Hassan Ibn-i-Zeid (Ibn-i Asir,1371:289-299/17), Saddam (Saram)-judge and leader of uprising in Chaloos, Kelar, Natel and Kujur- was defeated by the representative of Harun in 181.H. which resulted in Refraction and destruction of mentioned cities (Azamisangsari,1354.19) and many other events. Since, it was taken to action to construct and revolute the military garrisons in plain, forest and mountainous zones to establish relative political security in the region during this era. It should be mentioned that also in late Sassanid era, local government had utilized the same military strategy by the means of constructing forts, defensive walls as well as gates of the cities. Local history sources indicated role of Residents of Sakhlu (Garrison) in political events in the region specially in its scene of conflict and public uprising between local government and who were supported by Abbasid caliphate. These could be mentioned, war between Hassan Ibn-I Zeyd Alavi and Solayman-I Ibn-i Abdallah Taher in Chamnu (Qaemshahr) (Amuli,1348.91;Marashi,1345.132); Etemad-alsaltaneh,1373:200; Rabino,1365:199).

Ibn i- Isfandiyyar wrote on this event:

“Nearby there, Soleyman reached Sari with an ready army and Hassan Ibn-iZeyd sent message to MohammadIbn-I Ibrahim and Hamzih that he would brought army of Amul and Mamatir (present Babol), all reached Chamnu and Soleyman had prepared a military camp in Lijim, in Tamaski plain(one of the Abbasid constructed garrisons) both army began to war....(Ibn-i Isfandiyya,1366.234)”

In another section, Ibne i- Isfandiyyar mentioned that Salem Furqanih- an Arab commander- was killed in 168.H by Vandadomid- son of Vandadhormozed Qaren- in Asram region (ibid,183-184). It should be mentioned that Asram also has been registered- as one of the Abbasid garrisons- by the names of Ahram, Uralfarar , HeyheyKian that used to be managed by Vaqedal-Furqani and three hundred men as well (ibid,178). By considering severe military atmosphere that engulfed the social space of Tabaristan in early Islamic era as well as political conflict, rebels and quiet, it could be observed the vital and important roles of these garrisons in establishing law and order as well as social and political security of the regions under the control of Abbasid caliphate.

Garrisons distribution and function

According to old geographical texts, cities of Tabaristan were located in plain and mountainous zones. Hudud al-alam mentioned cities of Tabaristan and their geographical location, products as well as general features:

“Tabaristan is a vast [region] from Daylaman region. Its territory is from Chaloos to Tamisheh and there is prosperous abundant and rich with many business and also their food is a kind of bread which is made of rice and fish, roof of their houses are made of red pottery. Because of heavy rains, it seems there is no summer and winter” (1362:144).

Ibn-iKhurdadbeh presented the same division of cities in this state and believe that cities as Sari (present Sari), Amul and Chaloos were plain cities, also Ruyan and Kelar were mountainous cities(Ibn-i Khurdadbeh,1371.119).

Even though impervious nature of the region in one side and natural and environmental obstacles as chain mountains of Alborz, Mazandaran Sea and denseness of forest in other side made residents of the region fell secure, but to prevent the penetration of invaders and probable danger from Haptalian and Turks in North-eastern border, it is planned to build defensive walls in Gorgan and Tamisheh(Ibn-i Rusteh,1365:176-177). Besides these actions, to build many forts in strategic point around the state as passages and main gates of the cities was led to make strength of cities in Tabaristan. Constructing military garrisons in Abbasid era was another protecting action. Among 45 garrisons which are mentioned in Tarikh-iTabaristan, 31 of them are localized. Names and present location of garrisons are mentioned in table number one (table 1). These garrisons were distributed in three geographical locations: plain, forest and mountain. 17 garrisons in plain, 10 in forest and 4 of them were located in mountain region (map1). It is inferred by taking a look at the map that the located garrisons in Sari, Amul and Kujur are further dense than other parts; as there had been four to five garrisons about any of these three cities. This is for that these cities were capital in Ispahbuds of Tabaristan and Abbasid governors and dense of garrisons in them appears logical for more guarding (Lestrangle,1377:395). On the other hand, Ruyan region- with its capital Kujur was of special military and defensive important for its specific political situation and neighboring mountainous region of Daylaman as well as ejecting off probable danger (Ibn-iFaqih,1349.150).

Constructed garrisons were located in forest and mountainous zones in southern borders and it is appeared that they played the same role as territorial garrisons.

Locating garrisons in forest region with their denseness of plant covering was the reason for lack of view expansion and controlling the around area which made their military function doubtful. It is

appeared that the pattern of the garrisons distribution has been formed on the basis of territorial and connective aspects; in such a manner that it could be reconstructed the southern territories of Tabaristan by linking and connecting them. In fact, dominant pattern in spatial distribution of garrisons could be divided on the basis of internal and external territories. These locations were made external territory of Tabaristan Pathishkharzhar (Mazandaran mountainous region) in mountainous and forest region.

This area has been bordered on Qumesin South-eastern part, Rayy in South and Daylaman region in western parts. In opposition, plain regions have been internal territories of Tabaristan during Abbasid caliphate. Moreover, studies military centers were connected by different ways. So, establishing the security of connected network could be considered as another main function of garrisons. Even though, there has been remained any architectural spaces, but mentioned assumptions is reinforced by considering nature and function of garrisons in same period of time as well as their limited space in comparison with other defensive constructions as forts. Military forces who guarding different geographical location, were almost thirty thousands and came from Great khorasan (Nisa, Abivard, Toos, Kharazm, Samarqand, Soqd), Tabaristan, Damascus, Jazira and Sham in Syria.

Here, a question would be raised on illogical numbers of some garrisons which are mentioned before. For example, Kaju (Kujur) garrisons where under the command of OmarIbe-iAala and six thousands military forces, were responsible for protecting Ruyanregion (Ibn-I Isfandiyar, 1360:180). Since during history, garrisons had more limited physical capacity and dimension in comparison with other defensive constructions, the capacity of admitting and settlement of six thousands in Kajugarrisons is unbelievable- according to our information on architectural structure of garrisons-and if so, Kujurregion should had have marginal areas.

These buildings had economic and defensive functions; as at determined time of year they were intended for collecting annual taxes(*ibid*,74-75, Qodamat –Ibn-i Jafar,1370:144). Furthermore, besides receiving and sending taxes to Baqdad, garrisons were the place for collecting the spoils of war and turmoil. military power and ruling Abbasid caliphate which was reverberated in garrisons were its reasons.

The fragmentation of residents of Sakhlu in Tabaristan was related to Mongols' bloodshed attack when the name of Tabaristan converted to Mazandaran. Amir Timur attacks made a new stage of garrisons destruction (Barthlod,1358:241-242). Also, political factors which resulted in collapse of these constructions. Natural factors as erosion and humidity played important roles in destroying of garrisons.

Conclusion

Conveying power has been one of the distinguished features of Islamic architecture and indicates its initial forms in military and defensive architecture, always. Garrisons in Tabaristan during Islamic era are clear examples in this case. These places played an important role in establishing the control of Abbasid caliphate in Tabaristan region by their political, economic and military multifunctional. The garrisons were distributed in three geographical zones of plain, forest and mountain. They extended from Tamisheh in East of Tabaristan to Chaloos in western territory. After the conquest of Tabaristan by Abbasid governors and their initial establishment which led to control the plain region, they constructed some more garrisons in this area in comparison with other geographical zones. It seems that Abbasids took this action to establish his authority and more denseness of garrisons in plain area was the reason for this fact. Though, they took action to construct garrisons in mountainous and forest regions after establishing relative peace in plain zones and determining Amul as capital of Tabaristan.

Authors of this paper believe that the process of constructing the garrisons was not happened during 140-143H. And historical texts mentioned contradictory duration. More detailed attention to Abbasid governors' colander in Tabaristan, is indicated that Abu Khozaib's governing era –first

Abbasid governor- in 144H. And Abukhazimeh–second Abbasid governor- has been in 140H.; as Abu al-Abbas Tousi–third Abbasid governor- has been ruled in Tabaristan. So, how could be accepted that the garrisons were being built during two years, from 142H. To 144H. Tabaristan was the scene of conflict between Arabs- specially Abbasids- and local government as Ispahbuds, Qarinvandids and Bavandids during early Islamic centuries always. It faced three oppositions fronts: in the East by the centralization of sari, central regions by the centralization of Amul and in Ruyan mountainous regions- by Kujur.

These factors which made the region more strategic led to construct a large number of garrisons. Collapse of garrisons is divided to two stages: first stage is destructive attack of Mongols as well as many other cities in Tabaristan and second stage is final destroying of garrisons by Amir Timur and unified conquest of Mazandaran.

Table 1: Localization of Garrisons in Tabaristan According to Their Present Geographical Location

Number	Name of Garrison	Localization of Garrisons	Geographical location
1	Tamisheh (Tamis, Banasran)	As a borderline between Tabaristan and Gorgan in Sassanid reign, 7km. from south-west of the present Kurdkoytown in Sarkalateh village	forest
2	Namiyeh (Namneh, Samneh, Samteh, Marest, Barest)	West of Amrooyan and Panjhizar region, probably Galughah town	plain
3	Lamrask (Abadan)	Lamrask village in East of Behshahr	plain
4	Mehravan (Mehraban)	Probably East of Neka (NadafKheyli village)	plain
5	Damadan (Dejval, Dejban, Dadan, Dezvan)	Panjhizar region of Behshahr- probably Zirvan village in West of Behshahr	plain
6	Kusan (Tusan)	Kusan village in South of Behshahr	forest
7	Baadani (Maadan, Durab)	Probably Durab village in East of Neka	plain
8	Asram (Ahram, Uralfarar, Heyhey Kian)	Asram village in East of Sari	plain
9	Khoramabad (KhoramDej)	North of Sari	plain
10	Sari	Town of Sari	plain
11	Koola	BalaKoola and PaenKoola villages 6km. from South of Sari	forest
12	Deza (Veza, Kooza)	Present Kiza village in the region Dodangheh of Sari, upper part of Miana and Pachi towns villages	mountainous
13	Arateh (Aratah, Arata)	West of Sari, Suburbs of Afrakati village	plain
14	Chamnu (Jamnoo, Jamnoon, Jamnan, Jamso, Jaamnoo, Aliabad, Shahi)	Suburbs of Jamnan village 2.5km. from Qaemshahr	plain
15	Meshkinvan (Meshkinben, Meskinben)	Moche ben village in South of Qaemshahr, Savadkooh region	forest
16	Balamian (Blamisal, Salian)	Lafur region of Savadkooh	forest
17	Yazdanabad (Hormuzabad, Izadabad)	Lafur region of Savadkooh, Karmuzd village	forest
18	Jilaman (Heliman, Gilanan)	Goliran Lafur village in Savadkooh region	forest
19	Toranjeh (trijeh, Tarchi, Tajir, AbulhassanKola, Turanjir)	AbulhassanKola village in Central part of Babol	forest
20	Matsaki	Village of Tamesk in Amul region	plain
21	Mileh (Meleh)	Mileh village in East of Amul	plain
22	Amol	Amol	Plain
23	Halafan (Halavan, Halapan)	North east of Camistan in Noor town	forest
24	Jilanabad (GilanAbad)	Gilaneh village, next to the river of Alisherud in Noor	Plain
25	Taberan (Tayeran)	Taliran village in Amul region	Plain
26	Natel (Nateleh, Nartel, Matel)	South of Soldeh village 8km. from South of Noor	forest
27	Paydasht (Sharestanehmarz)	Ahoodasht village	plain
28	Kujur (Kaje, Kache, Kujur., Kajuyeh)	3km. far from the new city of Kujur	mountainous
29	Saeedabad (Jurishjerd, Jorishgerd)	suburb of Marzanabad of Chaloos	mountainous
30	Kelar (Kelarudan)	Kelardasht	mountainous
31	Chaloos (Shaloos, Saloos, Jaloos, Sheles)	Chaloos	plain



Figure1: Distribution of Historical garrisons in Tabaristan

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