



Can 'Zazai Tribe' Mean Anything About The Origin Of Zaza People? (Zazai Aşireti Zazaların Kökeni Hakkında Bir Şeyler Söyleyebilir Mi?)

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to review bibliography and investigate relevant information about Zazai tribe and Zaza people in order to explore possible connection between them. Findings about Zazas and Zazai Pastun tribe indicate that these two groups have strong connection which is more than having phonological similar names. Moreover, religious, cultural, historical resemblances point out that these two groups share some mutual characteristics. Indeed, it is strongly possible that these two groups have originated from same ancestors or same areas (i.e. greater Khorasan or Northern Iran).

Keywords : Zazas, Zaza People, The Origin Of The Zazas, Zazai Peshtun Tribe And Zaza Peshtun.

Özet

Zazai aşiretiyle Zaza halkı arasında ses benzerliği dışında ilişki bulunup bulunmadığı sorusunu cevaplamaya çalışan bu çalışmada Zazai aşiretiyle Zaza halkı arasında dilbilimsel, dinsel, kültürel ve yaşam biçimi açısından dikkat çekici benzerliklerin bulunduğu tespit edilmiştir. Zazaca'nın en yakın olduğu dillerden biri olan Partça bazı kelimelerin hem Zazaca'da hem Peştunca'da bulunması, Peştun aşiretlerinden sadece Zazai aşiretiyle soy birliği olan Turi aşiretinin Şii olması, Zazai Attan dansıyla Alevi semahlarının benzer figürleri

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içermesi, Zazai aşiretinin yaşadığı bölgelerin Zazaların yaşadığı coğrafya gibi dağlık alanlar olması, Zazai aşiretinin ataları arasında Zaza-Goran gruplar arasında bulunan Kakai adında atanın olması, Zazai aşiretinin içinde bulunduğu Karlan grubunun sonradan Peştunlaştığına ilişkin rivayetler Zazai aşiretiyle Zaza/Goran halkının ortak bir coğrafya yada ortak bir soydan gelmiş olabileceği varsayımını güçlendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Zazalar, Zazaların Kökeni, Zazaki, Zazai Aşireti, Peştun Zaza.

1. Introduction

Origin of Zaza people has long been discussed by linguists, political scientists, politicians, activists and even ordinary people, which has not settled yet. Researches and studies on early history and origin of the Zaza people have mostly based on linguistic researches.² These researches have highlighted that Zaza people have strong link to Parthian people³ as well as some extinct or existing other northern Iranian groups. Whereas exploring Zazai Pashtun tribe, which inhabit the north eastern edge of Iranian language group, induce excitement among Zaza people, no research has dealt with possible connection between Zazai tribe and Zazai people so far. Indeed it is necessary to investigate whether there is any link between Zazai tribe and Zazai people.

Origins and early history of Zaza people is controversial, as it originates from inadequate data and political controversy on this issue. Especially, competing nationalisms which have systematically denied separate Zaza group hinder studies on this issue to some extent.⁴ Moreover, arguments of competing theories on the origin of Zaza people are not been deeply analyzed and discussed academically.

It is obvious that researches on Zazai tribe should assist researchers who investigate origin of the Zaza people. Especially, similarities between Zaza people and Zazai tribe are likely to support linguistic findings and bring out new questions about migration of the Zaza people. Therefore it is worth investigating any connection between Zazai tribe and Zaza people in order to explore origins

2 Windfuhr Gernot, Introduction to the Iranian Languages, Iranian Languages Ed. Gernot Windfuhr, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 19

3 Farrokh, K. Shadows in the desert: ancient Persia at war. New York, 2007, Osprey Publishing, p. 170, Parthian People whose homeland was in Greater Khorasan (Southern Central Asia, Iranian Khorasan and Afghanistan) were the founder of the Parthian Empire, (247 BC – 224 AD) which ruled current Iran, Iraq, Eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the southern part of Central Asia, Afghanistan. More information for ancient Parthia, Rawlinson George, Parthia London, 2007.

4 Bozbuga Rasim, Türkiye'nin Bir Rengi Zazalar, Türkiye Gunlugu Dergisi, Winter 2013, v. 113. P. 57-78

of Zaza people. Especially it must be answered whether connection of Zazai people and Zazai tribe is only phonological similarities or more than this. If the more reliable connection will be explored, it will contribute knowledge about origin of Zaza people substantially.

2. Zazai Pashtun Tribe

Zazai Pashtun tribe, also called as Jaji or Zazi, primarily reside in eastern part of the Afghanistan and neighboring territories of Pakistan. In Afghanistan they are found in Aryoub Zazai district in Paktia province and Maidan Zazai district in Khost provinces. Moreover, they have a big population in Kabul city and Baghlan province of Afghanistan as well. Zazis (Zazai Tribe) also reside in the Kurram Agency of North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan.⁵

According to a legend all Pashtun tribes are son of one father, Qais Abdul Rashid whose surnames is Pathan or Pashtun and known as Khaled Baba.⁶ Qais converted to Islam and married with daughter of Khalid bin Walid, brilliant commander of Prophet Muhammad and the first two Caliphates. After marriage he had 4 son, Karrān or Karlān (a legendary ancestor of Zazai tribe), Sarban, Batan, Ghurghusht, which were ancestors of different tribes.⁷ According to some sources Karlan is not son of the Qais and he was adopted by Grandson of Sarban.⁸ The Zazai Tribe in tribal line have descended from Khoguan, son of Kakai but their Pashtun origin is doubtful.⁹ According to the folktales, brothers of Zazai tribe are Kharboni, Turi (shia), Mando Zai.¹⁰

3. Origins And Early History Of The Zaza

There is not enough information about early history of the Zaza people but linguistic proofs reveal that Zaza people originated from Northern Iran.¹¹ Scho-

5 ZaZai AnD PaKtla https://www.facebook.com/151816458211686/photos/a.173738209352844.42813.151816458211686/201130866613578/?type=1&relevant_count=1, retrieved on 27 August 20014, According to my local informants, Zazais are originally live in Pakistan Kurram valley, In Khost province (Maidan Zazai) and Aryoub Zazai in Paktia Province. Moreover some Zazai people also live reside Kabul and Baghlan area. However those people mostly have migrated from original Zazai lands in last century.

6 Glatzer Bernt, Political Organization of Pashtun Nomads and States, Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan (RLE Iran D) Richard Tapper, Taylor & Francis. p. 220

7 Sabitov Zh.M. The Russian Journal of Genetic Genealogy: Vol 2, №1, 2011, The origin of the Pashtuns (Pathans)

8 Noelle Christine, State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1826-1863), Routledge 2012, p. 160

9 Rose H. A., Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North West Frontier Province, Volume I, Assian Educational Services, 1813, p. 537

10 Ancestor Database, <http://www.khyber.org/tribes/web/ppl/9/b/c2da3423839716139063011d3b9.shtml>, retrieved on 27 August 20014

11 Bozbuga Rasim, Turkiye'nin Bir Rengi Zazalar, Turkiye Gunlugu Dergisi, Winter 2013, v. 113. P. 57-78

lars emphasize two northern Iranian groups, Daylamites and Parthians, in order to determine origin of the Zazas. Linguist Mackenzie indicates that Zazas are known to have originally come from Daylam region on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.¹² Moreover many of researchers argue that Dimili is derived from Daylam or Daylami words.¹³ Windfuhr¹⁴, expert of the Iranian languages and Iranian historian, and Kaveh Farrokh¹⁵ stated that Zaza people have a strong connection to the Parthian people. On the other hand theories on these two groups do not contradict each other significantly, because Daylamites were subsequent ruler and resident of the approximately same areas in which Partians lived and ruled.

People of the Daylam (Daylamities) had already lived in south of the Elbruz Mountains area, closer to Kazvin and Tehran, just beginning of the Sassanid Empire. Since they were known as skillful warriors, Abbasids and Sasanids recruited huge number of Daylamities to their armies. Consequently, after Muslim conquest, Daylamite dynasties controlled majority area of the contemporary Iran and Iraq. During the Daylamites expansion, possibly Zaza and other Daylamites groups migrated to the west.¹⁶ Muslim historians and geographers also mentioned Zaza related tribes in these centuries. For example, Muslim geographer Ya'qubi states that Debabila/Dimili/Dumbili tribe was roaming western edge of Kurdish tribe at 9th century¹⁷.

Many researchers indicate that Zaza and Guran speakers were already in Zazgos region and they were pushed westwards to the Anatolia.¹⁸ Kreyenbroek highlighted Kurdish migration which pushed Goran-Zaza speaker to North.¹⁹ French academician Lecoq acknowledged that northern migration of the Kurdish tribes whose original homeland approximately on the North of Fars and on the West of Esfahan, or maybe the very region of Esfahan diminished Gorani-

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- 12 Mackenzie, D. N.. The Origins of Kurdish. In Transactions of the Philological Society, 1961, p. 86
 - 13 Van Bruinessen, Martin. "Aslini inkar eden haramzadedir!" The Debate on the Ethnic Identity of the Kurdish Alevis." *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East* (Leiden/New York/Cologne, 1997, p.17
 - 14 Windfuhr, G., *The Iranian languages* Ed. G. Windfuhr. Dialectology And Topics NY, 2009: Routledge, p. 19
 - 15 Farrokh, K. *Shadows in the desert: ancient Persia at war*. New York, 2007, Osprey Publishing, p. 170
 - 16 Madelung, W. (1995). [Available online at: *Deylamites*. *Ansiklopedia Iranica*: <http://www.iranica.com/articles/deylamites>, retrieved on 27 August, 2014
 - 17 Minorsky V., *Tarih, v. Minorsky TH. Bois, D.N. Mac Kenzie Kürtler ve Kürdistan*, Translated from English: Kamuran Fıratlı, Doz, Yayınları, İstanbul 2004, p. 51
 - 18 McDowall, D., *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 2007 NY: Tauris& Co, p. 10
 - 19 Kreyenbroek, P. G., *On the Kurdish Language*, Ed. P. G. Kreyenbroek, & S. Sperl, *The Kurds: a contemporary overview*, New York, 2000: Taylor&Francis Group, p. 54

Zaza speaking areas.²⁰ Moreover, Kurdish scholar Izady affirmed that continuous northwest flow of Kurdish tribes from the south Iran basing on early Islamic, Roman, Greek, Armenian and Syriac sources²¹

In sum, linguistic and historical proofs indicate that ancestors of Zaza people, who originally lived in northern part of Iran, settled in Zagros Mountain before or just after the Islamic conquest. Gradually Kurdish nomadic tribe, who migrated from south-west Iran to north, pushed Zaza people north and Zaza people settled their current lands eventually.

4. Possible Connections Of Zazai Tribe And Zaza People

It must be underlined that there are linguistic, religious, cultural, and geographical similarities can be observed Zazai tribe and Zaza people. Moreover, historical facts also support possible Zazai tribe and Zaza people connection.

Linguistically, whereas there is a huge geographical distance between them, language of Zazai tribe, Pashto, has similarities with Zaza language because of they are in same language family. Especially essential resemblances observed in some Zazaki and Pashto words which are mostly shared with Parthian language. For examples; three: Pashto-Dre, Zazaki –here; heart: Pashto-zrha, Zazaki: Zire; fire-aur, Zazaki-Adir, Pregnant: Pashto-worla, Zazaki -Awira, blood: Pashto- vine, Zazaki:Guni²².

On the other hand, religious similarities exist between Zazai tribe and Zazas. It is well known fact that contrary to their neighbors, most of the Gorani speaking people and close to the half of the Zaza people are Alevi or Ahl-e Haq.²³ Similarly, whereas almost all Pashtun tribes are Sunni except only Turi Pashtun tribe,²⁴ which has a same genealogical line with Zazais, affiliate to Shia sect. Moreover, some figures of Zazai Pashtun Attan dance also resemble Alevi samahs in some ways.²⁵ Moreover, it is believed that Attan dance would be originated

20 Lecoq Par Pierre, The place of Kurdish among the Iranian Languages, World Congress of Kurdish Studies, Irbil, 6-9 September 2006. [Available online at: http://www.institutkurde.org/en/conferences/kurdish_studies_irbil_2006/Pierre+LECOQ.html], retrieved on 28 June 2014

21 Izady, M. R., The Kurds: Concise Handbook. Washington DC: Tasylor&Francis Inc, 1992, p. 89-92

22 Zazaki words mainly from; Paul Ludwig, The Pozition of Zazaki the West Iranian Languages. 1998 <http://www.kavehfarrokh.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/zazakipositionof.pdf> Pashto words from <http://thepashto.com/index.php> retrieved on 27 August 20014.

23 Bruinessen Martin van, When Haji Bektash Still Bore the Name of Sultan Sahak: Notes on the Ahl-i Haqq of the Guran district, available online at: http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Bruinessen_Haji_Bektash_Soltan_Sahak.pdf retrieved on 27 August 20014

24 Matinuddin Kamal, The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997, Oxford University Press, 1999, Table II.

25 Some Zazai Attan Dance Samples, Afghan Zazai Attan Dance 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_CMmeGV-dI, retrieved on 27 August 20014 Paktya Zazai Attan, <http://www>

from Khorasan region²⁶ from which most of Alevi Zazas argued that their ancestors originated.

Geographical characteristics of the Zazai tribe and Zaza people inhabited territories resemble each other considerably although this aspect alone by itself does not mean anything. Zaza inhabited areas mostly mountainous and hilly areas in Turkey. Almost the same types of areas are inhabited by Zazai tribes in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, their life style is also similar to Zaza people; mainly goat herding, small scale farming and being skillful warrior.²⁷

Historical findings also support possible Zazai tribe and Zaza people connection. At first the name of one legendary descent of the Zazai tribe, Kakai, is also the name of the one Zaza-Guran speaking people in Iraq.²⁸ Additionally, the former name the Zaza populated Solhan district, Boglan, is very close the Zazai inhabited Baglan in Afghanistan phonologically. Moreover, close synonym of Zaza-Guran people, Gur area, is found in western Afghanistan. Guris and Gurids, which originated from Gor/Gur region, ruled vast areas from the current East part of Iran to Bangladesh in 10th and 11th centuries.²⁹ On the other hand, as mentioned above Zazais lineage in Pashtun tribal system is not accepted as an original Pastun. Therefore, it could be possible that Zazai tribe which could separate from Zaza-Goran group could migrated eastern Pastun area and became Peshun tribe in long term.

Legends about Khorasani Origin of Zazas among Zaza people have interpreted to prove Kurdishness³⁰ or Turkishness³¹ of the Zaza people. However, strong connection between Zaza language and Partian language whose homeland was in Khorasan was neglected long times. Moreover, Zazai tribe inhabited territories and Gur region are located in Afghanistan which is part of greater Khorasan also. Historical and linguistic facts reveal that a legend about Khorasani Origin of Zazas is possibly not only legend but also historical fact.

5. Results And Discussions

In sum, findings, which are highlighted above, about Zazas and Zazai Pastun tribe indicate that these two groups might have connections which are more

[youtube.com/watch?v=3hA7EKMPV2U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hA7EKMPV2U) retrieved on 27 August 20014

26 Baily John, *The Changing Roles of Dance in Afghan Society*, Ed. Kamal Salhi, Music, Culture and Identity in the Muslim World: Performance, Politics and Piety, Routledge 2014, p. 105

27 Clements Frank *Conflict in Afghanistan: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2003, p. 132

28 Leezenberg, Michiel. "Between assimilation and deportation: the Shabak and the Kakais in northern Iraq." *STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS* (1997): 155-174.

29 Shabani Reza, *Iranian History at a Glance*, Alhoda UK, 2000, p. 171

30 Bayrak Mehmet, *Alevilik ve Kürtler*(İnceleme - Araştırma - Belgeler), Ankara, 1997, *Dersim-Horasan Hattı nereye düşer?* <http://www.mezopotamya.gen.tr/roportaj/dersim-horasan-hatti-nereye-duser-h1631.html> retrieved on 25 November 20014

31 Şener Cemal, *Alevilerin Etnik Kimliği: Aleviler Kürt Mü Türk Mü*, İstanbul, 2002

than having phonological similar names. Moreover, religious, cultural, historical resemblances also point out that these two groups share some mutual characteristics. As a result we can argue that these two groups might have originated from same ancestors or same areas (Khorasan or Northern Iran). Moreover findings, point out that possible partition of Zazai tribe from Zaza-Goran people might have occurred one or two century after Muslim conquest because of their religious similarities.

However, it must be underlined that findings are not enough to prove common origin of Zazas and Zazai tribe. Indeed, especially more linguistic and anthropological researches on this issue need to be conducted so that we can provide more reliable information, which can ensure better understanding of origin of Zazas and Zazai tribe. Moreover, deep historical researches on Zazai tribe and Zaza people need to fill knowledge gap about early history of the Zaza people.

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