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


1 Gazi Üniversitesi Siyaset Bilimi Doktora Öğrencisi
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. These researches have highlighted that Zaza people have strong link to Parthian people 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 Zaza people so far. Indeed it is necessary to investigate whether there is any link between Zazai tribe and Zaza 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. 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

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 Maiden 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 Caliphs. 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 Khoguani, 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-

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⁵ ZaZai AnD PaKtiA https://www.facebook.com/151816458211686/photos/a.173738209352844.42813.151816458211686/20113086613578/?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


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


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.\footnote{Mackenzie, D. N.. The Origins of Kurdish. In Transactions of the Philological Society, 1961, p. 86} Moreover many of researchers argue that Dimili is derived from Daylam or Daylami words.\footnote{Van Bruinessen, Martin. “Aslini inkar eden haramzadedir!’The Debate on the Ethnic Identity of the Kurdish Alevi,” Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East (Leiden/New York/ Cologne, 1997, p.17} Windfuhr, expert of the Iranian languages and Iranian historian, and Kaveh Farrokh\footnote{Windfuhr, G., The Iranian languages Ed. G. Windfuhr. Dialectology And Topics NY, 2009: Routledge, p. 19} 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 Daylamits were subsequent ruler and resident of the approximately same areas in which Parthians 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.\footnote{Farrokh, K. Shadows in the desert: ancient Persia at war. New York, 2007,Osprey Publishing, p. 170} 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 century.\footnote{Madelung, W. (1995). [Available online at: Deylamites. Ansiklopedia Iranica: http://www.iranica.com/articles/deylamites, retrieved on 27 August, 2014} Many researchers indicate that Zaza and Guran speakers were already in Zazgros region and they were pushed westwards to the Anatolia.\footnote{Minorsky V., Tarihi, v. Minorsky TH. Bois, D.N. Mac Kenzie Kürtlere ve Kürdistan, Translated from English:Kamuran Firatli, Doz, Yayımlan, Istanbul 2004, p. 51} Kryenbroek highlighted Kurdish migration which pushed Goran-Zaza speaker to North .\footnote{McDowall, D., A Modern History of the Kurds, 2007 NY: Tauris&Co, p. 10} 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-
Zaza speaking areas. 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 sources.

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:Guni.

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. Similarly, whereas almost all Pashtun tribes are Sunni except only Turi Pashtun tribe, 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. Moreover, it is believed that Attan dance would be originated

23 Bruinessen Martin van, When Haji Bektaš Still Bore the Name of Sultan Sahak: Notes on the Ahl-i Haq of the Guran district, available online at: http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m. vanbruinessen/publications/Bruinessen Haji Bektaš Sultan Sahak.pdf retrieved on 27 August 20014
from Khorasan region\textsuperscript{26} 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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. Gurus and Gurids, which originated from Gor/Gur region, ruled vast areas from the current East part of Iran to Bangladesh in 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{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 Pesthun tribe in long term.

Legends about Khorasani Origin of Zazas among Zaza people have interpreted to prove Kurdishness\textsuperscript{30} or Turkishness\textsuperscript{31} 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.

\section*{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

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\texttt{youtube.com/watch?v=3hA7EKMPV2U} retrieved on 27 August 20014
\textsuperscript{27} Clements Frank Conflict in Afghanistan: A Historical Encyclopedia, ABC-CLIO, 2003, p. 132
\textsuperscript{29} Shabani Reza, Iranian History at a Glance, Alhoda UK, 2000, p. 171
\textsuperscript{31} Şener Cemal, Alevilerin Etnik Kimligi: Aleviler Kürt Müt Türk Mü, İstanbul, 2002
\end{flushleft}
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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www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Bruinessen_Aslini_inkar_eden_haramzadedir.pdf retrieved on 27 August 20014


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


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