

A Politically Active Merchant family in 19th Century Ottoman Iraq: The Khudairizades

19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Irak'ında Aktif Bir Tüccar Ailesi: Hudeyriyadeler

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Abstract: As the Ottoman Empire financially and politically weakened, many local landlords or ayans enjoyed broad political autonomy in the eighteenth century. Ottoman centralization efforts in the nineteenth century, which reached their peak with the Tanzimat reforms, aimed to transfer the power from periphery to center. Only few studies focus on the relations between center and periphery, namely the Sublime Porte and local notables, and the declining influence of local notables in this new era. This paper examines the evolution of the Khudairizadehs, a merchant family in the provinces of Baghdad and Basra during the second half of nineteenth century as a case study in light of this Ottoman centralization policy and presents how this center-periphery relationship affected the Khudairizadehs. The article shows that the relationship between Khudairizadehs and the center helped to elevate the regional status of the family as their position in the region was acknowledged by the Ottomans.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Iraq, trade networks, center-periphery relations

Öz: Osmanlı Devleti'nin iktisadi ve siyasi olarak zayıflaması birçok ayanın onsekizinci yüzyılda güçlenerek daha özerk hareket edebilmesini sağladı. Osmanlı Devleti'nin Tanzimat reformları ile zirvesine ulaşan ondokuzuncu yüzyıldaki merkezileşme çabaları siyasi gücü taşradan merkeze taşımayı hedefliyordu. Kısıtlı sayıda çalışma bu merkez ile taşra veya padişah ile ayanlar arasındaki münasebeti ve ayanların aşamalı olarak azalan siyasi etkisini incelemektedir. Bu makale Osmanlı merkezileşmesinin merkez-taşra münasebetlerine etkisini ondokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Bağdad ve Basra eyaletlerinde aktif olan tüccar Hudeyriyade ailesi üzerindeki etkisi örneği ile incelemektedir. Makale merkez ile Hudeyriyade ailesi arasında gelişen münasebetin Hudeyriyade ailesinin resmi olarak muhatap alınması ile bölgedeki itibarının artmasına sebep olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Irak, ticaret, merkez-çevre ilişkileri

1. Introduction

It is a well-known and often-repeated fact that as of the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman central administration tried more vehemently to infiltrate the land of the Ottoman Empire. With that being noted, there is very little written on the kind of change undergone in the relationship between the center and its periphery, in more clear terms, the local populations and the central authority and the limits of the loss of influence of local eminent persons. Furthermore, works covering the 18th century, called the "Age of Notables," as well as the era following the Tanzimat (reformation) -- during which Ottoman centralization was intensified -- are limited to the Anatolian and Balkan lands, and it has often been conceived that every area of the Ottoman Empire experienced this period in the same fashion.

In this regard, it appears as though the Arab lands have been intensely overlooked during both eras. This paper, which starts off on this premise, will examine the dimensions of Muslim merchants in the region through an influential Muslim family in Ottoman Iraq, the Khudairizade family, in addition to examining which fields they concentrated on and it will also focus on the increasing influence of such families on politics and their political effectiveness.

2. The Conjuncture of the Era and the Emergence of the Khudairi Family

The Khudairizade family, which was one of the influential merchant families of the Iraq region, were from Baghdad. With that being noted, a large portion of the family was in Baghdad while another portion resided in Basra. While their original occupation was trade, they did in fact – and perhaps because of their involvement in trade – own a large amount of land in Iraq.¹ Members of this family owned various fields in both Baghdad and Basra.² The considerable income that the Khudairizade family had earned in the fields of trade and agriculture, had led to them becoming one of the leading and influential families in the Baghdad-Basra region.³ The Khudairi's influence within the region and his reputable position had paved the way for members of the family to become proprietors and members in the saniyya lands (arazi-i seniyye) commission. Furthermore, leading members of the family, such as Abdulqadir, Yasin, Qasim and Abduljabbar were rewarded on numerous occasions by the state for public services, which they had provided.⁴ This had then led to the preservation and consolidation of the local esteem of this family, whose main source of sustenance was trade.

The oldest document, which can be accessed pertaining to the commercial activities of the Khudairi family, dates back to the beginning of the 1800s. While it is a known fact that this family was involved in trade in the Mamluk era, there is no information on what the family occupied itself with in earlier periods or how it was able to set itself apart from other Iraqi merchants.⁵ The emergence of the Khudairi family as an influential group in trade and politics coincides with 1880s. It is possible to speak of two factors that can shed light on the timing of their ascension. The first and most important factor pertains to fact that with the Tanzimat era, the Iraq region gained stability in the political, financial and agricultural domains. The first half of the 19th century saw that a chaotic structure was in effect in Iraq and as such trade came to a full stop. One of the various factors that contributed to this was plague outbreaks, which began in 18th century and periodically took the Iraq region under its wrap. Emerging particularly in the beginning of the 1800s, these plague outbreaks caused destruction among a

¹ Abbas Azzavi, *Tarihü 'l-Irak Beyne 'l-İhtilaleyn*, V.8, Baghdad: Sharika at-Tijara, 1956, p.93.

² One of the important names of the family, Abdulrazzaq owned vineyards in Horasan, Baghdad Province while Abdulqadir owned land of 5000-600 Lira in value in Sanjak of Ammara, which was part of the Basra Province. The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office (BOA), ŞD 2155-5; BOA, ŞD 2160-33, BOA, BEO 42-3102, p.3.

³ BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 49-111; BOA, DH.MKT 875-66; Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Bathists, and Free Officers*, Princeton: Princeton University, 1978, p.44-45.

⁴ Abdulqadir, Yasin, Qasim and Abduljabbar al Khudairi were awarded different ranks at different times. Abdulqadir al Khudairi was awarded the *mir-i miran* rank for his "excellence in service" in 1890, in addition to a *Rumeli Beylerbeyi* rank in 1895, and various other badges of Ottoman and Majidi honor at different times. BOA, DH.MKT 1741-61; BOA, DH.MKT 1749-8; BOA, İ.DH 1186-92813; BOA, İ.TAL 283-1320.ca.81; BOA, DH.MKT 187-6; BOA, DH.MKT 2606-81; BOA, İ.TAL 276-39; BOA, DH.MKT 855-11; BOA, DH.MKT 394-18. In addition to this, in 1903, Abduljabbar was granted a Saniye badge of honor, while in 1904, Yasin al Khudairi was granted the *rütbe-i evveli sınıf-ı evveli* badge of honor. BOA, İ.TAL 305-1321.ra.125; BOA, DH.MKT 875-66.

⁵ Mehdi Jawad Habib al-Bustani, *Bağdad'daki Kölemen Hakimiyetinin Tesisi ve Kaldırılması ile Ali Rıza Paşa'nın Valiliği (1749-1842)*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Istanbul University, 1979, p.105.



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large portion of the population, affecting trade and agriculture life in the region.⁶ Another reason for the devastated state of the Iraqi land in the beginning of the 19th century was the fact that various wars that were taking place during this time. In the beginning of the 1800s, the Wahhabi attacks, which intensified against Iraq negatively, affected trade in Iraq greatly.⁷ Furthermore, the wars taking place between the Ottomans and the Persians at the Iraqi border as well as territorial disputes had caused areas to be vacated, leading to a great number of deaths in southern Iraq.

It is also possible to list tribal warfare among the factors that negatively influenced Iraq at the time. For tribal attacks had led to a large percentage of the population leaving the rural areas, causing agricultural production – which was the lifeline of trade activities – to decline. The inter-tribe warfare in the region had made conducting safe trade activities almost impossible at this time. Trade was only possible under the protection of the tribal shaikhs.⁸ As such, the effectiveness of trade activities in Iraq only became possible with the Tanzimat era and the accompanying efforts to make Iraq a second Egypt, as well as access being provided to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers at the end of the 1830s. The year 1869, with the opening of the Suez Canal, was surely a turning point in terms of trade in the region, integrating with Europe and gaining easier access to the European market. As such, as of the second half of the 19th century, when agricultural land regained its utility and security in terms of trade, and was once again established, along with an increase in transportation opportunities, there was a rise in the development of trade activities in the region.⁹ The appearance of the trade activities of the Khudairizade family and the rise of the family in local politics followed a course parallel to the general development taking place in the Iraq region.

Another reason for the rise of the Khudairi family as an influential group in the region is the method in which the centralization politics that took place during the era of Abdulhamid II emerged. The reign of Abdulhamid II was a time in which the efforts to centralize in the Arab provinces was implemented through the local notables, in a way that would encompass the tribal leaders. During this time, the direct penetration of the provinces by the state was conducted through local notables as opposed to centrally appointed staff. It is known that during the era of Abdulhamid II, the Arab elites got into contact directly with Yıldız Palace, by way of Arab consultants of the sultan such as Izzet al Abid, Selim and Nejb Melhame brothers and Abu al Huda al Sayyadi. In addition to this, local elites would frequently be summoned to Istanbul by Abdulhamid II and rewarded, consolidating their ties with the central authority. Furthermore, when there was a problem that occurred between civilian or military authorities at this time, it generally resulted with the duties of the staff appointed by the center being terminated.¹⁰ Such a centralization tendency became another reason for the Khudairi family, who are considered to be among the esteemed families of the region, to have increased their financial power and become an influential force at the time.

⁶ Tom Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981, p.5–6.

⁷ For detailed information on the attacks of the Wahhabis in the region, see Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq*, p.54–55; Zekeriya Kurşun, *Necid ve Ahsa'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti: Vehhabi Hareketi ve Suud Devleti'nin Ortaya Çıkışı*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1998, p.33–37.

⁸ Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq*, p.7–8, BOA, İ.MVL 494–22368, p.2.

⁹ For efforts on trying to transform Iraq into a second Egypt and reform efforts in Iraq, see: Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890–1908*, London: Routledge, 2006, p.24–49.

¹⁰ Burcu Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum (1908–1914)*, İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2015, p.25–27.



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3. The Financial and Political Activities of the Khudairizades

The most important source of income for the Khudairi family came from trade activities. A large portion of the family members was occupied with trade both within and outside the Iraqi region. In terms of both imports and exports, a large portion of the Iraqi market was under the grip of foreign companies in the 19th century Iraqi trade. The remainder of the slices of pie remained with Jews in imports, while exports were divided among Jews, Christians and Muslims.¹¹ Accordingly, it is possible to say that the Khudairi family was mostly occupied with inter-provincial exports and trade.

The area in which the family was most influential in terms of trade was cereal trade. At that time, cereal trade was preferred by local merchants due to the very high profit margin provided by the sector. For when, at the time, the leading merchant would store large amounts of cereals, other merchants would abstain from pushing their goods forth into the market in order to set prices in the market and this would then turn the cereals trade in a profitable sector. And in the 19th century, this trade too was mostly in the hands of foreign companies. The Khudairi family was among the few merchant families who controlled what was remaining in the sector.¹² The cereal sector was formed by a small group of people who owned a great amount of land who would then present their goods to a small group of merchants. As such, even though the Khudairi families' piece of the pie was small, the profit that they made was quite sizable.¹³ The Khudairizades would obtain the agricultural stocks such as wheat, rice and corn from the headquarters¹⁴ in Ammara that were part of the Emlak-i Seniyye (Saniyya lands) and conducted trade in various regions of the empire as well as within the region of Iraq.¹⁵ The cereal trade was conducted through the following members of the family: Qasım, Abduljabbar and Abdulwahhab. The Khudairis would transfer the cereals they obtained from Ammara into the Muntefik Sanjak or the Province of Baghdad via the Tigris River.¹⁶ During this time, the bulk of the trade between Baghdad and Basra took place by way of cereals. The cereal needed by Kuwait, which was part of the Province of Basra, was in part provided by the Khudairi family via Baghdad.¹⁷ The Khudairis would similarly send cereals to Sulaymaniya and Kirkuk in the Mosul Province.¹⁸ The Khudairi family is known for also having provided foodstuffs for the Province of Hejaz. The Hejaz Province, which was of great significance as a religious center for Muslims just as Mecca and Medina, was dependent on outside provisions for cereal supplies. And the Khudairi family would transfer wheat, barley and rice via Jeddah to the region, which experienced a surge in population during the pilgrimage season.¹⁹



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¹¹ Mohammad Salman Hasan, *Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Modern Iraq: 1869–1939*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Oxford St. Antony's College, 1958, p.237–259.

¹² Hasan, *Foreign Trade in*, p.224.

¹³ Hasan, *Foreign Trade in*, p.247.

¹⁴ The region was comprised of many large and small scale *muqataas*. These were included in the *Emlak-ı Seniyye* particularly during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, and following the re-establishment of constitution in 1908, they were gradually assigned to the Public Treasury. For information on this topic, see: Albertine Jwaideh, "The Saniyya Lands of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in Iraq", *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, (ed. George Makdisi), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965, p.326–336, For a list of *muqataas* assigned to the Public Treasury after being the possession of the *Emlak-ı Seniyye*, see: Arzu Terzi, *Hazine-i Hassa Nezareti*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000, p142–152.

¹⁵ BOA, ŞD 2190–11, p.1, DH.MKT 885–71.

¹⁶ BOA, DH.MKT 1399–51.

¹⁷ BOA, DH.MKT 2887–87; BOA, DHEO 538–60.

¹⁸ BOA, BEO 3554–266515, p. 3–4; BOA, DH.MKT 2821–74; BOA, DH.MKT 2823–92; BOA, DH.MKT 2832–20; The National Archives (TNA), FO 424–218.

¹⁹ BOA, DH.MKT 2685–37, p.1–3.

Another field in which the Khudairi family conducted trade activities was date exports. The fact that date prices were very low in Iraq lead to merchants engaged in date trade to earning high rates of profit, and because a large portion of date trade was taking place in Basra, the income provided by the sector was further catapulted. In date trade, too, just as in cereals, the sector was under the control of foreign companies. That being said, the Khudairi family, which was among the few Muslim families in the date trade circle, was able to nab a small share of the date pie. While the slice of the pie they had remained small, the Khudairi family was able to become a notable family in the sector due to the level of income the trade was able to provide for them.²⁰

In addition to cereals and dates, it is known that one of the leading figures of the family, Yasin al Khudairi had won the tender for the liquorice taxes which grew in the provinces of Baghdad and Basra: however it is unknown whether or not he actually engaged in the trade of this.²¹ In the second quarter of the 19th Century, liquorice was an important export item for Baghdad and Basra. Liquorice, which was used in the processing of chewing and cigarette tobacco, in addition to the production of candies and beer and similar alcoholic beverages, was high in demand from England and other countries from Europe as well as America.²² A large portion of the liquorice produced in Iraq was exported to America by the McAndenius and Forbes Company.²³ With that being noted, this company's exports did not cause a hindrance for local merchants as they too could engage in liquorice trade.²⁴ Liquorice trade was not limited to international exports alone: it was also presented for national consumption. It also made its way into Ottoman Provinces like Aleppo via Mosul.²⁵ In addition to these products, one of the important members of the Khudairi family, Abdulqadir Khudairi was known for conducting trade with Iran; however, it could not be determined what products he transferred on this route.²⁶

While the trade life of the Khudairis focused, generally speaking, on the export of agricultural produce that was cultivated in the area and their distribution in Ottoman lands, the names of certain family members were mentioned in the 1890s in conjunction with illegal arms sale to tribes and other illegal activities. The last quarter of the 19th century saw arms smuggling gaining popularity in the Gulf of Basra. Illegal weapons transport began in the 1890s and gained momentum in 1899 after an agreement signed between Kuwait and the Great Britain. Illegal weapons brought to the Ottoman shores by English and French merchants, were transferred to Kuwait and Muhammara and from there moved forward to inland Iran and Arabia.²⁷ And the customers of the illegal weapons were the tribes that were continually at war

²⁰ A great portion of the date trade from Basra to Europe was done through companies such as Gray Mackenzie & Co, Lynch Brothers, Hatz and Sons, Asfar and Co., in addition to being in the hands of companies which held a monopoly over the commercial trade transportation sector in the region. For more information on date trade, see: Hasan, *Foreign Trade in*, p.237–240.

²¹ BOA, DH.MKT 2605–66. Liquorice, which was grown between the provinces of Baghdad and Basra was mostly exported by the McAndenius and Forbes Company. BOA, BEO 3995–299576, p.1. The exports of this company did not present a hindrance to the local merchants, with local merchants being able export liquorice by paying taxes. BOA, DH.TMIK.M 225–50, p.9–10; BOA, BEO 3055–229107, p.4. However, liquorice trade occurred not just in the way of exports abroad, but to Aleppo by way of Mosul. BOA, DH.ŞFR 338–73.

²² Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, Ankara: Savaş Yayınları, 1982, p.111–115.

²³ BOA, BEO 3995–299576, p. 1.

²⁴ BOA, DH.TMIK.M 225–50, p. 9–10; BEO 3055–229107, p. 4.

²⁵ DH.ŞFR 338–73.

²⁶ BOA, BEO 1818–136343; BOA, İ.TAL 273–78.

²⁷ For detailed information on weapons smuggling in the Gulf of Basra, see: Zekeriya Kurşun, *Katar'da Osmanlılar*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2004, p.170–174.



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with each other.²⁸ In the year 1893, the Abdulqadir and Qasım Khudairi brothers, in line with the occurrences of the region at the time, were driven out of Ammara on charges of causing conflict between tribes and taking advantage of this conflict and selling illegal weapons. They were consequently forced to live in Baghdad.²⁹ This strengthens the likelihood that the family was involved in weapon smuggling in Baghdad.

Weapons smuggling was not the only illegal activity the Khudairi family's name was mentioned alongside. The family members' names were also mentioned in conjunction with meddling with the muqataa auctions and forming monopolies in the field of cereals. The Sanjak of Ammara, where the Khudairis obtained cereals for trade, was formed of muqataas in large and small-scale production, which were under the control of the Bani Lam and Albu Muhammed tribes. While a portion of these muqataas had always been under public administration, the other portion was tied to the Ministry of the Sultan's Treasury (Hazine-i Hassa Nezareti). These fertile fields, which were almost all irrigated by rivers and opened channels, were divided up into large pieces and given over in tenants in auction style sales for a period of three to five years. The fact that the tribes' main source of income was the agriculture in these muqataas, had turned these auctions into issues of contention among the various tribes.³⁰ This inter-tribal struggle would lead to various civil servants, as well as certain leading local families, such as the Khudairi family, trying to gain a profit from the auctions through intervening with them.³¹ The Khudairi family too had turned inter-tribal conflicts and attacks in the Ammara Sanjak into an industry and source of income. In the beginning of the 1890s, the Khudairi family had manipulated the tenants of the muqataas in Ammara and supported tribal sheikh of Albu Muhammad against the other tribes. The Basra Governor of the time, Hafız Pasha had recognized what was happening and had deported Abdulqadir and Qasım al Khudairi from Ammara in 1892, sending them to Baghdad temporarily.³² Upon multiple requests to the Babiali from Abdulqadir al Khudairi to return to Ammara on account of losing his trade activities, the Khudairis were finally granted permission to return in 1893.³³

Allegations about Abdulqadir and Qasım continued after they returned to Ammara. Abdulqadir al Khudairi was in a delegation which was sent to resolve a conflict taking place between tribes regarding a muqataa issue in January 1901; however, it was urged that he had given the muqataa to the Sheikh of Bani Lam tribe, Gazban in exchange for a bribe.³⁴ Similarly, Qasım al Khudairi, in May of 1904, was sent to control conflicts that had broken out between tribes because of muqataa auctions and could not be quashed.³⁵ Even though Qasım al Khudairi was part of the delegation that had been sent to Ammara to control the conflict, it was urged that the real problem between the two tribes was the support of Gazban, the Shaikh of Bani Lam tribe by Abdulqadir, Qasım and Abduljabbar al Khudairi and it was requested that

²⁸ Tribes in Baghdad and Basra would continually fight within and against one another due to intra-tribal reasons such as land problems; they would also attack ships engaged in transport of goods over the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. For detailed information on the tribal attacks in the Basra and Baghdad region, see: Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, p.86–99; Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum (1908–1914)*, p.347–448.

²⁹ BOA, DH.TMIK.M 173–35, p.36; BOA, ŞD 2190–17, p.4; BOA, ŞD 2190–17, p.1; BOA, BEO 2452–183877.

³⁰ Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum (1908–1914)*, p.290–296.

³¹ As such, the Ammara Sanjak was referred to as the “the bribery stock market” (*irtikab borsası*). Süleyman Beyoğlu, *İki Devir Bir İnsan: Ahmet Faik Günday ve Hatıraları*, İstanbul: Bengi Yayınları, 2011, p.88.

³² BOA, BEO 42–3102, p.1, 4; BOA, Y.PRK.UM 25–3; BOA, DH.TMIK.M 173–35, p.36; BOA, ŞD 2190–17, p.4; BOA, ŞD 2190–17, p.1; BOA, BEO 2452–183877.

³³ BOA, BEO 42–3102, p.2–3; BOA, DH.MKT 2045–108; BOA, DH.MKT 95–4, p.1; BOA, DH.MKT 95–4; BOA, DH.MKT 2063–2.

³⁴ BOA, BEO 1594–119532, p.5; BOA, BEO 1599–119914, p.1; BOA, DH.MKT 2483–90.

³⁵ BOA, DH.TMIK.M 173–35, p.8; BOA, DH.TMIK.M 174–45, p.13.



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they be sent back to Baghdad again.³⁶ Even so, there was no need seen to take legal action against the Khudairi family again,³⁷ but it is possible to say that if we keep in mind that Kasim and Abdulqadir took part in the 10 favorings at the Ammara Sanjak, that the allegations about this duo most likely hold true and that they supported one of the tribes – namely the Albu Muhammed or Beni Lam – for gains.

Another allegation about the Khudairi family took place in 1905 when it was said that Yasin al Khudairi took over the monopoly of grains in Baghdad and transferred the goods outside of the province. Among the accusations is that this move by Yasin led to a stocking up of grains in Baghdad; however, the governor of the time, Abdulwahab Pasha did not feel the need for an investigation and the complaints were glossed over.³⁸

In addition to their commercial activities, following the re-establishment of Constitution in 1908, the Khudairizade family became involved in the transportation sector. In reality, Iraqi merchants including the Khudairis had attempted to run ships on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in 1887-88; however, this attempt had not been successful. Approximately 20 years later, in the year 1909, upon the project to merge the İdare-i Nehriyye and the British Lynch Company, thereby founding a new company, many in the area had raised their objections with the merchants of Baghdad and Basra, who were headed by the Khudairis, being among the most vocal in their opposition to the idea. Beginning with Abdulqadir, Yasin, Abdulwahhab, Abdurrazzak, and Isa al Khudairi, they had sent multiple telegraphs to newspapers in Istanbul which criticized the project. Furthermore, under the leadership of Abdulqadir, a group of merchants had occupied the telegraph center, attempting to communicate directly with the Minister of Internal Affairs. Even a protest was organized under the leadership of Abdulqadir al Khudairi. During this period, the main request of the local merchants, leading by the Khudairi family, in the case of a company being established on the rivers of Tigris and Euphrates, was that this company should be set up by local investors. Upon the harsh backlash coming from the Iraqi region, in January of 1910, the Lynch proposal was withdrawn and a few months later, Abdulaadir al Khudairi and a few other merchants won the privilege of operating steamboats on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Following their strong reaction, the Khudairi family had gained a respectable place in the commercial goods transportation industry, in addition to the esteem they already held in Baghdad-Basra trade. This had helped them to transport their commercial goods with more ease and with lower costs, in addition to allowing them to become partners in the profit made from commercial goods transportation after breaking the monopoly held by the Lynch Company.³⁹

This financial power which rested in the trade and land possession of the Khudairis, allowed them to be considered among the influential and respected families of Basra and Baghdad. Particularly in the Arab Provinces, during the era of Abdulhamid II which exerted efforts to facilitate relations between the center (Yıldız) and the periphery (provinces) through notables, we can see that various members of this family found state jobs or worked in

³⁶ BOA, DH.TMIK.M 174–45, p.36.

³⁷ BOA, BEO 1594–119532, p.5; BOA, BEO 1599–119914, p.1; BOA, DH.MKT 2483–90. In the year 1901, Abdulqadir al Khudairi was a member of the delegation sent to Ammara and was consequently awarded for the help he provided therein. BOA, DH.MKT 855–11; BOA, DH.MKT 2606–81; BOA, İ.TAL 276–39.

³⁸ BOA, BEO 2578–193342, p.1; BOA, DH.MKT 962–36, p.1, BOA, BEO 2578–193342, p.3.

³⁹ For more information on Iraqi merchants' efforts to take part in the Baghdad-Basra transportation and their entry into the goods transportation after the Lynch affair, see: Burcu Kurt, *Osmanlı Irak'ında İngiliz Nüfuzuna Tepkiler: Dicle ve Fırat'ta Seyr-i Sefain İmtiyazı Teşebbüsü (1909–1913)*, İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2009; İlhan Ekinci, *Fırat ve Dicle'de Osmanlı – İngiliz Rekabeti: Hamidiye Vapur İdaresi*, Ankara: Asil Asil Yayın Dağıtım, 2007, p.113–122.



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organizations which facilitated and implemented relations between the state and local people. Qasım and Abdulqadir al Khudairi had been elected into the Administrative Council of Baghdad Province (meclis-i idare).⁴⁰ And in the beginning of the 1900s, Abdulqadir had left his membership at this council to another Khudairizade, Isa, after having served for many years at this post.⁴¹ Furthermore, Abdulqadir had served as mutasarrıf of the Ammara and Karbala Sanjaks in addition to taking on the same role in Iraq during the time of Hasan Refik Bey as governor of Baghdad.⁴² Abdulqadir el Khudairi's son, Muhammed Salih Efendi had for long years served at the Accounts Office of Basra Province (muhassebe kalemi) office.⁴³

In addition to their trade activities and land ownership, the Khudairi family took on various governmental roles, contributing to the political influence in the Baghdad-Basra axis. As the families' financial, and thus political, power increased in the Iraq region, various names within the family became politically active and became partisan in various events that determined the regional balance of power. In truth, it is possible to say that the Khudairis, particularly after the 1890s, stood with or against important names that were involved in local disputes.

In an attempt to gain or protect their regional interests, the Khudairi family would, from time to time, engage in unsubstantiated complaints before the Babiali/Yıldız, asking for the provincial officials in Baghdad and Basra to be changed. One example of this is the complaint filed by Abdulqadir and Abdurrazzaq el-Khudairi against the Baghdad Naqibu'l-Ashraf of the time, Süleyman Efendi. The Khudairis claimed that Süleyman Efendi had seized the greater portion of produce in the fields they had under "hums," and furthermore claimed in 1889, that he had placed the treasury property under his name and that he was even involved in crimes of aggression.⁴⁴

Another example is from 1898, wherein there was a dispute between Abdulqadir al Khudairi and the Defterdar (provincial director of finance), Vahib Bey. The factor underlying this dispute was the involvement of the Khudairis in muqataa auctions, cooperating with the governors. Vahip Bey had determined that the Khudairis, starting with Abdulqadir, had been manipulating the tenders and had informed the central administration about this. According to the Defterdar, the Governor of Baghdad, Hasan Refik Bey, was using the Khudairizade family to contact tribes and as such they were gaining unlawful profits through muqataa auctions.⁴⁵ Upon learning of this, Abdulqadir el Khudairi, who was known for his close relations with the governor of Baghdad and was a member of the provincial administrative council (meclis-i idare) at the same time, had initiated state-level attempts to have Vahip Bey removed from his post.⁴⁶

In 1912, another conflict took place, this time between Qasım and Abduljabbar al Khudairi and the Governor of Basra at the time, Hasan Rıza Pasha, which resulted in the governor resigning from his post. Qasım al Khudairi maintained close relations with Sayyid Talib, the son of Naqibu'l-Ashraf of Basra, who was the most influential name in the province at the time. To this end, Qasım and his brother Abduljabbar would pay bribes to judicial, civil and military civil servants in the province and align Sayyid Talib to their own stance and thus

⁴⁰ BOA, Y.PRK.UM 17-70; BOA, DH.MKT 875-66.

⁴¹ BOA, DH.MKT 2483-90.

⁴² BOA, DH.MKT 1545-22; BOA, DH.MKT 394-18; BOA, İ.TAL 94-1313.L.138.

⁴³ BOA, DH.SAİD.d 60, p.447.

⁴⁴ BOA, ŞD 2155-5; BOA, ŞD 2160-339.

⁴⁵ BOA, Y.PRK.ML 20-48, p.1.

⁴⁶ BOA, Y.PRK.ML 18-51.



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prevent any type of opposition movement that threatened their own policies in the region. Furthermore, Qasım was configured as the inciter of a series of murders in the region. Upon realizing that Hasan Rıza Pasha, who had just been assigned a new post, became aware of what was happening, Qasım and Abduljabbar el-Khudairi kicked off a smear campaign against the new governor. Many telegraphs, which were prepared by the Khudairis and featured allegations about the Basra governor, were sent to the Babiali. This attempt by Qasım el-Khudairi would bear fruit as the governor would resign on July 24, 1912 during the [Tripolitanian](#) War, citing that he would be more beneficial in the army. He was replaced by a name that as appointed as lieutenant governor, was close to both the Khudairi family and Sayyid Talib.⁴⁷

The Khudairi family also made attempts at having the governors who they saw as being close to themselves reassigned to their posts after they had resigned or were let go in the period that followed the re-establishment of the Constitution. The first of such names was Nazım Pasha, who, in 1911 had to resign from the post of governorship of Baghdad for various reasons. Nazım Pasha, who came from a military background, had been suggested for the position of Minister of War by Kamil Pasha following the re-establishment of the Constitution; however, due to an objection from the members of the Committee of Union and Progress, this appointment never took place.⁴⁸ During the 31 March Incident, Nazım Pasha stood against the Haraket Ordusu (Operation Army) and had been reassigned to Baghdad in December of 1909 in order to be driven out of Istanbul.⁴⁹ Upon the dismissal of Nazım Pasha, who was known for his stance against the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), from his post in March of 1911,⁵⁰ Abdulqadir, Abdurrazzaq and Yasin al Khudairi exerted serious efforts to have the governor reassigned to his post. The most important motivation behind this effort was due to the fact that during the governorship of Nazım Pasha in Baghdad, Abdulqadir el-Khudairi had been granted extensive privileges regarding cereals trade and the family had created a monopoly in this domain.⁵¹ The Khudairis, who sent many telegraphs in favor of the governor to the Babiali, had wished to get into direct contact with the Interior Minister and had occupied the Baghdad telegraph center for this purpose. Abdulqadir and Abdurrazzaq had even organized a large-scale gathering in the province in order to ensure that Nazım Pasha remained in his post. Upon convincing by the Khudairis, the markets and bazaars in the city had been closed and trade had almost come to a standstill in order to ensure that Nazım Pasha would return. While Nazım Pasha's duty as governor had been terminated, a case had been opened against Abdulqadir el-Khudairi for mobilizing the masses and using force against the central administration, in addition to occupying the telegraphing center.⁵²

Another attempt by the Khudairi family took place in 1913 when the governor of Baghdad at the time, Zeki Pasha resigned. Mehmet Zeki Pasha, who had held the title of the 4th Army Field Marshal (4. Ordu Müşiri) between 1894-1907 and was one of the founders of the

⁴⁷ For more detailed information on the Khudairi–Hasan Rıza Pasha case, see: Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum (1908–1914)*, p.119–125.

⁴⁸ Nevzat Arunç, “Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Dönem Irak Politikasına Bir Örnek: Nazım Paşa'nın Bağdad Valiliği”, *Belleten*, LXXIV/ 271, (2010), p.835.

⁴⁹ Nazım Pasha, whose attendants he took to Baghdad were mostly comprised of Committee of Union and Progress members, was in contact with the Saviour Officers (*Halaskaran-ı Zabitan*) and the Freedom and Accord Party. Süleyman Nazif, *Yıkılan Müesseseler*, İstanbul: İlhami Fevzi Matbaası, 1927, p.11–12, 21.

⁵⁰ For the reasoning for Nazım Pasha's dismissal from the post of governor of Baghdad, see: Arunç, “Nazım Paşa'nın Bağdad Valiliği”, p.854–857.

⁵¹ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, p.314.

⁵² BOA, DH.MTV 32–21, p. 35–36, 22, 24, 28, 30; BOA, BEO 3881–291049, p.6.



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Hamidiye Cavalry, retired after the establishment of the Second Constitution.⁵³ Despite his retirement, Zeki Pasha held the post of the governorship of Baghdad and 4th Army Inspectorship during the cabinet of Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha. Due to a disagreement he had with the Babiali over the scope of his authority, he had submitted his resignation three times in February, March and May respectively.⁵⁴ Following the rumours that Djemal Pasha would be appointed as governor of Baghdad as opposed to Zeki Pasha, almost the entirety of the Khudairi family mobilized before the Babiali insisting that the governor remain in his post.⁵⁵ Telegraphs signed by Abdulqadir, Abdurrahman, Yasin, Abdurrazzaq, Ali Saib and Isa in particular had been sent to Babiali; however, to no avail, as Zeki Pasha's resignation was accepted.⁵⁶

In these two events, the most noteworthy aspect is that both men whom the family insisted should remain in their posts, were opponents of the CUP. Following the re-establishment of Constitution in 1908, the rigid centralization policies implemented by the CUP in Arab provinces was met with a reaction from the local notables and eminent members of society, which had in turn led to the emergence of dissident movements on Arab lands.⁵⁷ The demand by the Khudairis that the anti-CUP governors remain in power, and the concern that they experienced over Zeki Pasha's resignation and the assigning of Djemal Pasha from the CUP triumvirate as the governor of Baghdad, holds significance in reflecting their stance in the political debates that took place around the centralization policies of Second Constitutional Era.

4. Conclusion

The Khudairizades were a merchant family who, as a result of the revival of trade activities in the Iraq region due to an implementation of political stability and security in the second half of the 19th Century, became visible and gained prominence within a short period of time. The activities of the Khudairizade family gives us various clues about the trade ties of Muslim merchants in the region, as well the limitations on their influence. The example of the Khudairi family shows a tendency of the Iraq region towards foreign markets during the time in question; however, it also highlights that this tendency was not provided for Muslim merchants in a fashion that was parallel to what was implemented by the state. For the Khudairizade family, which was Muslim, had only been able to become experts in the agricultural products produced in the region and inter-provincial trade and transportation. The Khudairi family did not have a trade network that extended to foreign state representatives or merchants belonging to foreign citizens. While no detailed information can be obtained on the business partners of the Khudairis, members of the family appeared in the agricultural market. While they conducted business together as family, they also functioned as lone merchants in

⁵³ İbrahim Yılmazçelik, "Dersim Sancağının Kurulmasından Sonra Karşılaşılan Güçlükler ve Dersim Sancağı ile İlgili Bu Dönemde Yazılan Raporlar (1875–1918)", *OTAM*, 28 (2010), 189; BOA, DH.MTV 33–2—43, p.2–3.

⁵⁴ BOA, DH.MTV 33–2—43, p.2–3, 6–7, 18.

⁵⁵ BOA, DH.MTV 33–2—43, p.19–21, 27–35, 42–43.

⁵⁶ BOA, DH.MTV 33–2—43, p.9. The concerns of the Khudairis proved correct, upon the dismissal of Mehmet Zeki Pasha, the governor of Basra, Hüseyin Celal Bey, who had espoused the centralization notions of the Committee of Union and Progress, was assigned as the Governor of Baghdad. It was even thought Celal Bey should temporarily be assigned to the post of governorship of Baghdad, when Ferid Bey, the Basra army commander, and Bedi Nuri Bey, *mutasarrıf* of Muntafik had been killed upon the order of Sayyid Talib, who was known for his close relations with Qasım el-Khudairi. For more information on the activities of Celal Bey in Basra, see: Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum (1908–1914)*, p.222–223, 303–325, 393–405.

⁵⁷ For more detailed information on this, see: Kurt, *Osmanlı Basra'sında Devlet ve Toplum (1908–1914)*, p.146–251.



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certain sectors. It has not been determined whether there were other families which the Khudairis established commercial partnerships with.

Despite the fact that the Khudairis had connections abroad, because they were involved in the trade of the most important production materials of the region, they gained a notable income from their trade. This paved the way for the family to become a formidable landowner in the region, most likely due to the Land Law of 1858. Their landowner status is important in terms of demonstrating the relation between trade and land possession in the region. While not a great deal of information can be obtained from early era records, the family most likely acquired land in the region through the money which it gained from trade. The documents available to this end demonstrate that the Khudairizade family generally acquired land, which would grow the produce they would later sell.

The Khudairis, which had become both a landowner and a merchant family, became one of the leading influential families in the region during the reign of Abdulhamid II. This led the Khudairi family to serve as an intermediary between the center (Babiali/Yıldız) and the local people, wherein they were assigned to various administrative tasks. These duties, while changing the dynamics of the relationship between the Khudairi family and local administrators, placed the family as a local political actor. In the beginning of the 20th century, the Khudairi family communicated with the government regarding important matters, which concerned the region –with the Lynch affair and the Nazım and Zeki Pashas removal from duty being the most obvious examples – and thus seized political and social power. These connections push forth the Khudairis as an important example in terms of demonstrating the relationship between trade activities and land ownership with politics.

The adventure of the Khudairizade family is also important in terms of demonstrating the continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the Monarchy Era in Iraq. For the esteemed status of the Khudairi family, which was built on land ownership and trade, soared to prominence during the late era of the Ottoman Empire and continued following the fall of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the monarchy era. Furthermore, the Khudairi family physically partook in the monarchy era, with many members from among them being elected as deputies in the Iraqi Parliament.⁵⁸



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⁵⁸ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, p. 59, 278, 313-315.

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