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# The Rise and Decline of the Paduspanians of Ruyan in Relation to the Zaydi Movement of Northern Iran

1. Seyyed Aliakbar. Hosseiny<sup>1</sup>: Department of History, No.C. Islamic Azad University, Nour, Iran
2. Ramazan. Seyghal<sup>2</sup>: Department of History, No.C. Islamic Azad University, Nour, Iran
3. Abdollah. Rajaei Litkahi<sup>3</sup>: Department of History, Bab.C. Islamic Azad University, Babol, Iran

\*corresponding author's email: [Ramazan.seyghal@iau.ir](mailto:Ramazan.seyghal@iau.ir)

## ABSTRACT

The Paduspanians were a dynastic lineage whose rulers belonged to families claiming descent from the Sasanian Empire. This dynasty was established in 643 CE by Gil Gavbara and his son Paduspan I in the province of Ruyan, and its rule continued until 1597 CE. In 864 CE, the people of Ruyan and their Paduspanian ruler, Abdullah ibn Wanda Omid, who had become deeply dissatisfied with the oppression imposed by the representatives of the Tahirid governors of the Abbasid Caliphate, namely Muhammad ibn Abdallah al-Tahiri and Muhammad ibn Aws, sought assistance at the suggestion of Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Kiya Dabiri from Hasan ibn Zayd, who himself had migrated to the city of Ray due to pressure from the Abbasid administration. The outcome of this request was the uprising and establishment of the Zaydi state in northern Iran in the same year, a polity that endured until 928 CE. The present study addresses the question of how the relations between the Paduspanian dynasty and the Zaydi movement were formed and developed. Based on the hypothesis that the Paduspanians played a significant and constructive role in this relationship, the study aims to examine the early interactions between these two political entities. Employing a descriptive-analytical method and relying on library-based data collection, this research analyzes and interprets the nature of these relations. The findings demonstrate that the Paduspanians played an initial and substantial role in the establishment and continuation of the Zaydi movement.

**Keywords:** *Ruyan, Paduspanians, Northern Zaydism, Hasan ibn Zayd*

## Introduction

Throughout history, relations among governments have usually been defined on the basis of the preservation of their interests. These interests may be political, social, or economic. The Paduspanian and Zaydi dynasties were not exempt from this principle, and their relations were influenced by these factors, sometimes taking the form of interaction and at other times hostility.

Therefore, considering Hasan ibn Zayd's ideological intention in his uprising, as well as the Paduspanian ruler's quest for redress against the representatives of the Abbasid caliph's government, the grounds were prepared for both parties to pursue the restoration of justice: on the one hand, the Zaydi polity was formed, and on the other, the Paduspanian dynasty preserved its continuity. The point of origin in the relationship between these two dynasties



was the beginning of Hasan ibn Zayd's uprising with the support of the people and their Paduspanian ruler. This relationship continued almost until the end of this period of Zaydi rule, since the Zaydis, like the Paduspanians, ruled for a considerable period in the northern region of Iran, namely Tabaristan and Gilan. However, the present study focuses on the first period of Zaydi rule in northern Iran, adjacent to the province of Ruyan. Thus, this research seeks to examine this period from its beginning, that is, the second half of the ninth century CE, to the first half of the tenth century CE, when this dynasty came to an end, and to critically analyze the relations of each Zaydi ruler with the Paduspanians. This includes the reigns of the rulers of that dynasty in sequence: Hasan ibn Zayd as al-Da'i al-Kabir, Muhammad ibn Zayd, al-Nasir al-Kabir, and then al-Da'i al-Saghir. Their contemporary Paduspanian rulers were Abdullah ibn Wanda-Umid, Afridun ibn Qarin, Paduspan III, Shahriyar II, Hrusandan, and Shahriyar III.

The studies conducted in this regard have been very limited, and the relationship has been addressed only indirectly in the sources. Here, several research works with the aforementioned characteristic are mentioned. The article by Ramezani, Janahmadi, and Shabani, entitled "An Analysis of the Grounds and Factors of the Social-Political Acceptance of Alid Sayyids in Tabaristan," published in 2018, discusses the close relations between the isphahbads and the people with the Sayyids of Ruyan, in such a way that the Sayyids neither knew nor found any place better than Ruyan (1). The article "A Study and Analysis of the Components of the Legitimation of Hasan ibn Zayd al-Alawi's Government," published in 2017 by Panahi, Chelongar, and Montazerolghaem, refers to the individual and personal characteristics of Hasan ibn Zayd, who, because of his anti-Abbasid policy and justice-oriented approach, attracted the people around him (2). The article "Hasan ibn Zayd ibn Muhammad," written by Ala al-Din Azari in the *Encyclopedia of the World of Islam* in 2009, narrates the life of Hasan ibn Zayd on the basis of earlier sources and briefly refers to the manner in which this uprising was formed (3). Seyyed Ali Mousavinejad, in the article "Zaydism in Northern Iran in the Eighth Century Based on a Newly Found Manuscript," published in 2008, explains the periods of Zaydism, and in its first section discusses Zaydi Shiism in northern Iran and various regions, with a brief reference to Ruyan as well (4). In another article, entitled "Zaydism from Emergence to Establishment," published in 2005, Seyyed Ali Mousavinejad examines the formation of Zaydi sects and makes a general reference to the Zaydis of Tabaristan (5). The article "A Note on the Alid Movement in Tabaristan," published in 1985, identifies and recalls sources contemporary with this uprising, such as al-Tabari and others; however, it does not provide detailed information on this subject (6). Sajjadi, in the article "Historical Grounds for the Emergence of Zaydism in the Northern Provinces of Iran: Political and Social Behaviors of Hasan ibn Zayd," as the title indicates, discusses the historical grounds for the emergence of Zaydism (7).

Therefore, this study deals with the family of the Sayyids, namely the lineage of Hasan ibn Zayd, and is not concerned with the period of rule of the Zaydi imams in later centuries or with the Zaydism of the Buyids or the Daylamites.

## Ruyan

The word Ruyan was recorded in early writings in different forms. In *Hudud al-'Alam min al-Mashriq ila al-Maghrib*, it appears in the forms "Ruyanij" and "al-Ruyan," and in the geography attributed to Moses of Chorene it appears as "Ravan." In other Islamic historical sources, it was also recorded as "Ruyin" and "Ruyinj" (8).

At the beginning, Ruyan was considered separate from Tabaristan and was regarded as a distinct and independent province, without political, governmental, economic, social, cultural, or linguistic dependence on it. In climatic and geographical terms, Ruyan resembled and continued the territory of Tabaristan, but in governmental

and political terms it was separate and independent from Tabaristan, because it had an independent government known as the Paduspanians. If ancient Tabaristan is divided into two parts by drawing a line from the seashore to the vicinity of the city of Ray near the Haraz River, the western section would be Ruyan, including the territories of Kojur, Natel, Paydasht, Klar, Saidabad, and Chalus, which encompassed the plain and mountainous areas of Nowshahr, Chalus, and Nur (9).

From the beginning of the Paduspanian dynasty around 660 CE, the territory of Ruyan extended from Chalus in the west to Sisangan and the Manehir River in the plain area, and from Kelardasht, Ruyan-Kojur, and the mountains of Nur to the Haraz River. During the era of the Alids of Tabaristan, it expanded westward toward Gilan, and in 1194 CE its western boundary reached the vicinity of Langarud and Rudsar. Around 1242 CE, it was limited to Namak Abrud, and in these years its name changed to Rustamdar. Its boundaries were sometimes very extensive and sometimes so limited that it was considered part of Daylam proper (9). It always showed special devotion to the Sayyids, particularly in the eighth and ninth centuries CE, when it developed an inclination toward Shiism (10).

### The Paduspanians

The Baduspanians, whose name appears in various orthographic forms such as Paduspanians, Padusbanian, Fadusfanians, and Fadhusfanians, were an Iranian ruling family that, according to historians, ruled from the seventh century to the sixteenth century CE in the mountainous province of Ruyan, which was later also called Rustamdar. They were a dynasty of rulers south of the Caspian Sea who at times governed all of Mazandaran and Gilan (11). Their ancestor Gil was among the descendants of Jamasp or Zhamasp, the Sasanian figure (12).

Their family genealogy has been stated as follows: "Paduspan ibn Gil Gavbara ibn Gilanshah ibn Firuz ibn Narsi ibn Jamasp ibn Firuz ibn Hormuz ibn Yazdegerd ibn Bahram Gur ibn Yazdegerd ibn al-Athim ibn Bahram ibn Shapur ibn Shapur Dhu al-Aktaf ibn Hormuz ibn Narsi ibn Bahram ibn Bahramian ibn Bahram ibn Hormuz ibn Shapur ibn Ardashir, of the Sasanian kings" (13).

The rule of this dynasty began in 643 CE. At the beginning, they held the title of ispahbad, and most of the time the nobles of Daylam and the rulers of Gilan followed them. Regarding their rule, it may be said that although the seashore and the plain of Ruyan were at times occupied by Arab amirs, Alid da'is, and the amirs of Khorasan, the mountainous regions up to the borders of Daylam remained continuously under their control until 1597 CE (14).

They had three periods of rule: first, the ispahbads; second, the ustandars; and third, the kings. The first of them was Paduspan I, son of Gil Gavbara. The rulers contemporary with the uprising of Hasan ibn Zayd were Abdullah ibn Wanda-Umid during the caliphate of al-Musta'in, and then Afridun ibn Qarin. Hasan ibn Zayd could not have succeeded in the uprising alone, and even with the support of the people, success would have been difficult; rather, alongside these two factors, it was also necessary for the Paduspanian rulers to accompany him (14). Quoting Dinawari, Awliya Amuli, Ibn Isfandiyar, Frye, and Marashi, it has been stated that "although oppression, injustice, racial prejudice, and the tax extraction of the caliph's agents were factors that caused the popular uprising, the formation of the popular uprising in Ruyan cannot be considered without taking into account the cultural prestige of the ispahbads of Tabaristan among the masses" (1).

In this way, the descendants of Paduspan continued to exist in different parts of Ruyan in the form of a local government until the reign of Shah Ismail Safavid (15).

Zaydism consisted of a large number of committed Shiites who, under the influence of and by reference to the actions and sayings of Zayd ibn Ali, separated from the general body of the Shiite community in several respects,

including the necessity of the imam's uprising to command right and forbid wrong, the legitimacy of war and proper struggle against an oppressive and tyrannical government, and the permissibility of the imamate of the less excellent over the more excellent. Following this separation, in addition to the formation of new sects from within the Zaydi branch, other uprisings also occurred during the continuation of Umayyad rule. Later, in a sense, they also prepared the ground for the Abbasid government. This preparation for the Abbasids was designed and implemented by the Zaydi or Alid imams, particularly under the influence of the Zaydi sect. In general, however, Shiism at the beginning of the eighth century CE was divided into two branches: the Rafida, a group that did not accept Ali ibn Zayd and his ideas in many religious matters, and the Zaydis, who did not accept dissimulation and were always engaged in struggle. They were initially contemporaneous with the Umayyads and later became a basis for the Abbasids (2). The Zaydi Alids are rooted in the figure of Zayd ibn Ali ibn Husayn, who was martyred during the reign of Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik of the Umayyads. Therefore, during that period many Sayyids regarded him as their model and imam. Later, a considerable group of Shiites also followed them and became known as Zaydi Shiites. Through various uprisings, some of which ended in defeat and some in victory, different states were formed across the Islamic world (5).

The period of Zaydism in northern Iran can be divided into four stages. The first period extended from 864 to 928 CE. The second period extended from 970 CE to the beginning of the thirteenth century CE, and was mostly limited to the region of Howsam, or present-day Rudsar, where Zaydi imams emerged and sometimes possessed political power. It was during this second period that Zaydi imams from among the survivors, descendants, and relatives of Zaydi rulers in the regions and localities of Ruyan and Tabaristan invited the people to their cause. The third period extended from the beginning of the thirteenth century CE to the mid-fourteenth century CE, when the Zaydi Kiyas ruled in western Tabaristan and eastern Gilan. The fourth period extended from 1358 CE to the end of the sixteenth century CE, centered on the same Kiyas of Lahijan, who gradually disappeared from northern Iran by the late sixteenth century (4).

### **Relations with the Zaydi Da'is**

Hasan ibn Zayd, known as al-Da'i al-Kabir, established his government in 864 CE. In that year, Ispahbad Abdullah ibn Wanda-Umid died, and according to one account, Faridun ibn Qarin, the grandson of Paduspan II, came to power; he too died shortly afterward, and affairs passed into the hands of the son of Paduspan (7).

Hasan ibn Zayd, who ruled from 864 to 884 CE, was contemporary with three Paduspanian rulers. In 864 CE, he was associated with Abdullah ibn Wanda-Umid, and from that year until 886 CE he maintained cooperation and interaction with Afridun ibn Qarin; their relationship was favorable (14). At the very beginning, Muhammad ibn Aws opposed him, launched a military expedition on the caliph's order, and confronted him in the region of Amol, preventing him from entering the city. In this battle, Muhammad Khayyam, son of Wanda-Umid, first attacked alone but was defeated; however, with the assistance of the da'i, they ultimately achieved victory (16).

Muhammad ibn Aws was one of the Tahirid representatives who oppressed the people in Ruyan, and this became the pretext for the ruler and people of Ruyan to seek redress from Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Kiya Dabiri, who introduced Hasan ibn Zayd to them (17).

In fact, when the uprising of Yahya ibn Umar was suppressed by Muhammad ibn Abdallah al-Tahiri, the caliph, in recognition of this service, granted him certain possessions, including estates in Tabaristan. When Muhammad

ibn Abdallah entered this region, he seized a forest and meadow from which the people obtained their firewood, and this caused conflicts between him and the local Paduspanian rulers of the region (6).

In 886 CE, when Paduspan III became ruler, and considering this ruler's support, as well as the support of ten thousand people from Amol for Hasan ibn Zayd, Hasan was able to confront Muflih, the representative of the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tazz, who had been commissioned to kill him. Thus, during the period of Afridun, Ya'qub Layth Saffari also launched a campaign against Sari in 873 CE and defeated the representative of the da'i Hasan (14).

At first, al-Da'i al-Kabir fought against two rulers: Sulayman ibn Abdullah Tahir, the ruler of Sari, and Malik al-Jibal, the ruler of the Jibal of Sharwin, the Bavandid ispahbad. In his campaign, together with Paduspan, he captured Sari, and a major massacre occurred. In the continuation of the war, however, he was defeated, and those two rulers advanced as far as Amol, Natel, and Lavij. But the da'i again gathered forces and, with the help of Paduspan, launched a surprise attack against them in Lavij and defeated them. Over time, and as a result of events such as the death of the caliph al-Mu'tazz and the defeat of the Tahirids by Ya'qub Layth, conditions emerged in which Paduspan Afridun mediated peace between the da'i and Ispahbad Qarin (18). However, these victories and defeats of the da'i weighed heavily on the ruler Afridun, because during the occupation of Lavij and Natel by Sulayman and Ispahbad Qarin, approximately thirty of his nobles, including the ispahbad son of Shahriyar, were killed (19).

Sangsari states in his research: "Afridun the Paduspanian, who ruled from 864 to 886 CE, was contemporary for part of his rule with al-Musta'in, al-Mu'tazz, and al-Muhtadi, and for part of it with al-Mu'tamid, the Abbasid caliph" (14).

Hasan ibn Zayd ibn Muhammad al-Akshaf ibn Abu Muhammad Ismail Halib al-Hijara ibn Abu Muhammad Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib, known as al-Da'i al-Kabir, who ruled from 864 to 884 CE, is not well known before his entry into Tabaristan, that is, Ruyan. It has been said, however, that he was born in Medina, and from his age and date of death it may be inferred that he was born in 834 CE. He was also among the Sayyids who, as a result of Abbasid pursuit and persecution, resided in the city of Ray. It is even possible that he was among the companions of Yahya ibn Umar and, after Yahya's death, migrated to these regions of Iran, namely Ray. His paternal lineage reached Imam Ali, and his maternal lineage reached Imam Zayn al-Abidin (7). Another source states: "He was among the descendants of Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba, through whom the Zaydi government of Tabaristan was formed independently from the Abbasid caliphate from 864 to 928 CE. In his wars, he was defeated three times: first by Sulayman al-Tahiri in 865 CE, when he lost Amol and fled to the mountainous regions; and the third time in 873 CE by Ya'qub Saffar, after which he again fled to Daylam" (3).

Abu al-Husayn ruled for ten months in the absence of Muhammad ibn Zayd (19). The only case that shows the relationship between the people and the da'i Abu al-Husayn during this period was that, as the heir apparent of Hasan ibn Zayd, he held all the Zaydi property and treasuries, which he distributed among the people. The people of that land also showed devotion to him and followed him, but Muhammad ibn Zayd came from Gorgan to depose him and introduced himself as the Zaydi da'i.

Muhammad ibn Zayd, who ruled from 898 to 914 CE, was the ruler of Gorgan during Hasan ibn Zayd's lifetime; upon Hasan's death, he reached Mazandaran, that is, Amol, and introduced himself as his successor (19). At this time, the ruler of Ruyan was Shahriyar ibn Paduspan III, who allied with Muhammad ibn Harun, the envoy of Ismail ibn Ahmad the Samanid, and entered into hostility with Muhammad ibn Zayd. They defeated him at Chalus in 890 CE, at the beginning of the year following the death of al-Da'i al-Kabir, and he remained in hiding in Gilan. After approximately sixteen years of rule, he was killed in a battle near Gorgan against Muhammad ibn Harun (18).

Al-Nasir al-Kabir, also known as al-Nasir li al-Haqq al-Utrush, ruled from 914 to 917 CE and was one of the most influential religious figures among the Zaydi leaders in Tabaristan (20). Around 902 CE, however, because of the rebellion and separation of Muhammad ibn Harun from the Samanids, Ispahbad Shahriyar went to the aid of Ahmad the Samanid, and the result of the war was the defeat of Muhammad ibn Harun (19). After being defeated in the war of 900 CE, al-Nasir went to Gilan for a time, then returned and fought in Ruyan against Ispahbad Shahriyar and Ispahbad Malik al-Jibal for approximately forty days. He defeated them, and with their defeat the Samanids also returned to Amol. However, it was not long before they defeated him again, and al-Nasir al-Kabir returned once more to Gilan. During the period of Muhammad Sa'luk, another Samanid representative in Tabaristan, another war occurred, and al-Nasir li al-Haqq, with the help of the Daylamites and the people of Ruyan, prevailed and became ruler in Amol, establishing friendly relations with the rulers of Sharwin and Ruyan (18). During this period, Shahriyar II of Ruyan was in conflict with al-Nasir al-Kabir on the side of Muhammad ibn Sa'luk and had even killed the Zaydi representative Aqiqi (14).

Hasan ibn Qasim, known as al-Da'i al-Saghir, ruled from 917 to 928 CE. This da'i's relationship with Ispahbad Sharwin and Shahriyar III was marked by both cordiality and hostility. At first, in the war between him and Muhammad Sa'luk, the Paduspanian ruler and the Bavandid ispahbad, together with his brother Abu al-Qasim Ja'far, son of al-Nasir li al-Haqq, did not side with him. However, after his victory, these two rulers entered his service. Yet the da'i was not sincere toward them in this regard and regarded them as the source of the troubles and seditions of Ruyan and Amol. Therefore, he planned to kill them, but they became aware of the plot, fled from that situation, and survived (14).

After he was removed from power, he remained silent for a time. With the help of Makan ibn Kaki, he returned to power and became ruler of Amol, but before long he was killed by Mardavij ibn Ziyar in 928 CE. In this way, the Zaydi dynasty centered in Amol collapsed. After him, the efforts of the Sayyids in Mazandaran and Ruyan to establish Shiite rule were unsuccessful, because the people of Mazandaran and Ruyan no longer believed in them as they had in the past. They believed that the leading Sayyids had abandoned the social conduct, morals, behavior, and customs of their predecessors (14). From 928 CE onward, after the killing of al-Da'i al-Saghir, the Zaydis of northern Iran were no longer able to establish a government in the former manner, which had simultaneously extended across parts of Tabaristan, Gilan, and Daylam. Gradually, their sphere of influence became more restricted to the western regions of Tabaristan and eastern Gilan. For centuries, they maintained influence in these regions under the name of the descendants of al-Nasir al-Kabir, a current that became known as the Nasiriyya school (4).

## Discussion and Conclusion

The Zaydi government in northern Iran was established by Hasan ibn Zayd in 864 CE and collapsed in 928 CE, when al-Da'i al-Saghir was killed by Mardavij Ziyar. This chronological period coincided with the first phase of Paduspanian rule, namely the period of the ispahbads, which lasted from 643 to 945 CE. Although this dynasty continued to rule for a long time in later periods, this study has examined their relations with contemporary Paduspanian rulers on the basis of the reigns of the Zaydi rulers. The personality of the Sayyids in northern Iran created a powerful attraction for the people, leading them to accompany and support the establishment of Hasan ibn Zayd's government. The first type of interactive relationship emerged during this period between the rulers of the two dynasties, to the extent that many members of the Paduspanians were killed in the wars. During the rule of

other imams, such as Muhammad ibn Zayd, al-Nasir al-Kabir, and al-Da'i al-Saghir, the relations of Paduspanian rulers such as Abdullah ibn Wanda-Umid, Paduspan III, Shahriyar II, Hrusandan ibn Tida, and finally Shahriyar III were always accompanied by both interaction and confrontation. Whenever governments such as the Zaydis were unable to preserve their interests in the political and economic spheres, the Paduspanians distanced themselves from them and turned toward stronger and more centralized governments such as the Samanids, because the preservation of interests, power, and the welfare of their people was important. Perhaps they remained indifferent to powers such as the Zaydis and the Bavandids as long as such powers did not create disturbance and hardship for them. Researchers have stated that over time, especially during the period of the Zaydi imams in the final centuries of Zaydi rule, namely the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries CE, the people's beliefs regarding the Sayyids were no longer as they had been in the past, because the conduct and way of life of the Sayyids no longer resembled those of their predecessors. This point may indicate that the Sayyids of the Zaydi period provided a suitable basis for interactive relations between the people and Paduspanian rulers on the one hand, and the Zaydi rulers on the other. Thus, with the establishment and continuation of the Zaydi government, the legitimacy and prestige of local dynasties such as the Paduspanians were also preserved. This itself constituted a reason for the governmental coexistence of these ruling families in northern Iran. Moreover, before and after this period, the province of Ruyan, because of the prestige of the Sayyids and its difficult accessibility, served as a suitable refuge for them; it had long been regarded with special attention, and mutual respect had been maintained.

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### **Authors' Contributions**

All authors equally contributed to this study.

### **Declaration of Interest**

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

### **Transparency of Data**

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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