Faylis, Kurds and Lurs:

Ambiguity on the frontier of Iran and Iraq

An overview of the literature

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Let me begin by thanking Akram Hawas for inviting me to this conference and insisting that I come although I told him I have never done any special research on the Fayli. What I am going to tell today is what I have found in the existing scholarly literature, with perhaps an occasional observation or anecdote remembered from my days of research and travels in the region.

I shall briefly question the assumption behind the title of today's conference: is it true that the Faylis are Kurds? In what sense are they Kurdish, and are all Faylis equally Kurdish? If they are Kurdish now, have they always been Kurdish, or have there been other possible identities? Since when have they been known as Fayli? What distinguishes Faylis from other Kurds (or Lurs, or Iranians)? Is the participation by some Faylis in the Kurdish movement proof of their Kurdishness? But then what if other Faylis decide that class or religious sect is more important than nationality and join communist or Islamist movements? Does that make them less Kurdish? Has disappointment in the attitude of the Kurdish parties (KDP and PUK) had an impact on how most Fayli define their identities? Is being Fayli an ethnic, a linguistic, a religious, a regional, or a political identity?

Looking back at the beginnings of my own interest in the Kurds, the first Kurd whom I remember meeting may have been a Fayli. This was in the summer of 1967, and I had just arrived in Baghdad on a bus from Kermanshah that carried many families who appeared to be moving to Iraq, carrying huge amounts of bedding and other household goods that caused us to be stopped at customs for many hours. After a few hours' sleep in a rooftop hostel, I sat in front watching the early morning bustle and bustle and wondering how to start exploring this great city, when I was accosted by a man who told me he was a Kurd. 'My relatives', he said, 'are in the North, in the mountains and fighting against the government.' He took me around to friends of his, also Kurds, small businessmen trading in car parts and other hardware. I do not remember which part of the city this was – I saw much of Baghdad that year but did not have a mental map of it yet. In retrospect I have often wondered if this man had been a Fayli, and how much difference there was between Faylis and the other Kurds of the city. Because of what he said of relatives fighting the government, I assumed that he was originally from

Kurdistan and a Sunni. But soon I discovered that there were also a few Fayli and other Shi`is active in the KDP in those years.

In 1974-75, when I carried out research in the 'liberated areas' of Iraqi Kurdistan, I met several other Faylis, notably Habib Muhammad Karim, who was then the KDP's secretary general, and his sister-in-law, Zakiya Isma`il Haqqi, an Iraqi judge who had founded and led the Kurdish Women's Union. I found them both very different from the other Kurds I met, but that was perhaps because they were typical members of the urban elite and had the habitus that comes with that background. Their first language appeared to be Arabic and they were clearly most comfortable using that language, but they had learned Sorani, which they used when the situation demanded. Zakiya was Iraq's first female judge, and I had the impression that she felt first and foremost an Iraqi. The Kurdish Women's Union that she led was, I believed at the time, modelled on the Iraqi Women's Union and brought an Iraqi type of top-down women's empowerment and organising to Kurdistan, where only a small elite was receptive to these new ideas and practices. After the collapse of Mulla Mustafa Barzani's movements in March 1975, Habib Karim and Zakiya Isma`il Haqqi, if I remember correctly, accepted the amnesty offered by the regime, and they have played no role in the Kurdish movement since. Zakiya much later played a role in politics and human rights advocacy again though as an Independent and not in the ranks of one of the Kurdish parties.

I found out later that Habib Muhammad Karim was the brother of Ja`far Karim, a medical doctor in Baghdad, who had in 1945 been one of the founders of the party Rizgarî (the chief predecessor of the Iraqi KDP) and a member of the KDP's first political bureau in 1946.[1] Ja`far was considered to be left-leaning; he represented the pro-communist tendency in the party. His brother Habib, who was made secretary general in 1964, after Barzani had succeeded in removing Ibrahim Ahmad and his faction from the party, was considered as non-ideological.[2] It has been claimed that most politically minded Fayli, especially those of Baghdad, were wary of the Arab nationalist parties, which were dominated by Sunni Arabs, and as a discriminated minority tended to be leftists and joined either the Communist Party or the left wing of the KDP. Of the Fayli who joined the Communist Party, Aziz al-Hajj was the best known.[3] He later wrote a book on the Kurdish question from which one gathers that he did not identify as a Kurd himself and associated the Kurdish question exclusively with the Kurds of Kurdistan proper.[4]

[1] Kutschera 1979: 151, 193

[2] Kutschera 1979: 270; Vanly 1970: 231.

[3] Murad 1992: 131, 228n7. Aziz al-Hajj broke away from the ICP in 1967 to found the Iraqi Communist Party – Central Command and prepared for a guerrilla starting from the marshes of southern Iraq. In 1969 he was arrested in Baghdad and under threat of torture gave up the names of comrades and publicly recanted.

[4] The book may have been another product of his surrender to the Ba`th regime; it was written after the defeat of Barzani's 1974-75 uprising, which al-Hajj analyses as counter-revolutionary. (I only have access to the French translation: El Hajj 1977). Nowhere in the book does he mention the Fayli and the specific problems they faced in those years.

The Karim family were the most prominent Faylis in the KDP but, given the fact that Baghdad was a major centre of the party's early activities, and again in the years 1970-74, it is not unlikely that other Faylis were involved.[5] The KDP also took up issues specifically concerning the Faylis – recognition of citizenship and repeal of expulsion to Iran (in the years 1969-71 tens of thousands were expelled) – as issues of the entire Kurdish movement.

The earliest sign of Kurdish concern with the situation of the Faylis that I have found in the literature dates from 1958. Within days after Abdul Karim Qassem overthrew the monarchy, Ibrahim Ahmad approached him with the Kurdish demand for administrative autonomy. This was rejected but the Provisional Constitution of July 27 mentioned Arabs and Kurds as partners in the Iraqi homeland and spoke of their national rights. Three weeks later, Ibrahim Ahmad and other KDP leaders visited acting Minister of the Interior Aref to congratulate him on the Constitution and present him with three other Kurdish requests, one of which was for the summary grant of Iraqi nationality to the Baghdad Faylis, '*whom the Kurds claimed as their own*.'[6] Aref rejected this request like the other ones, but promised to speed up the processing of individual naturalisation procedures. Qassem, whose own mother was said to be Fayli, was reported to have issued papers of citizenship to thousands of Fayli late in 1959.[7]

What sort of identity is 'Fayli'?

In the literature of the mid-twentieth century one can find serious authors claiming that the Fayli are Kurds (though perhaps a slightly deviant category of Kurds, hence 'Fayli Kurds') and other serious authors insisting that the Fayli are not Kurds but rather one of a number of types of Lurs (hence 'Fayli Lurs', a term used in several entries in the authoritative *Encyclopaedia of Islam*).[8] The distinction between Kurd and Lur is primarily linguistic but also has geographical and political dimensions. The *Sharafnameh*, the late sixteenth-century history of Kurdish emirates and chiefdoms, includes the chiefdoms of Greater and Lesser Luristan (Lur-i Buzurg and Lur-i Kuchik) in its discussion but also suggests they are somewhat different from the emirates of Kurdistan proper. Kurdistan and Luristan have since then remained distinct regions with different political histories, and whereas modern Kurdish

[5] Vanly mentions another Fayli who joined the KDP's Central Committee in 1964: M. Yadullah, 'a Fayli from Baghdad who would be responsible for the organisation of the party in the Arab part of Iraq.' Vanly 1970: 231. A list of names of Faylis who have been active in the Kurdish movement – in the KDP as well as the PUK – in more recent times is given in the paper 'Faylee Kurds Role in the i-racki (sic!) Kurdish National Movement', online at http://www.kurdipedia.org/default.aspx?lng=8&q=20160319224437130828.

[6] Dann 1969: 136-7. The other two requests concerned the licensing of a KDP party newspaper, and official recognition of Nowruz as a national holiday. A KDP bulletin on this unfruitful meeting is reproduced in Babakhan 1994: 172.

[7] Dann 1969: 137n3. On Qassem's mother: Dann 1969: 21.

[8] The entries 'Alī Mardān Khān' (by L. Lockhart), 'Īlāt' (A.K.S. Lambton), 'Kermānshāh' (A.K.S. Lambton).

nationalism can point to a long history of proto-national movements, there never was a Lur nationalism.

The 1971 US Government *Area Handbook for Iraq* mentions the Fayli in the chapter on ethnic groups, not among the Kurds but in the section 'Persians and Lurs,' noting that these are often lumped together because of their common Shi`ism and because most Lurs live in Iran. The *Handbook* notes that '*Kurdish nationalists have sometimes claimed the Iraqi and Iranian Lurs as "Fayliya" Kurds, but the Lurs do not seem to have accepted this designation and regard themselves as a separate people*.'[9]

It is worth noting, however, that the Handbook insists that in Iraq, Iranians and Lurs are in fact quite different communities. 'The Lurs are a tribal people, and their role in Iraq is substantially different from that of ethnic Persians,' it notes. On the Fayli's numbers and geographical distribution the *Handbook* has this to say:

> 'Lurs alone may constitute from 0.5 to 1 percent of all Iraqis; Persians may be somewhat larger group – from 1.5 percent to 2 percent.' 'Most Lurs are concentrated in east Iraq, south of the Kurdish highlands, chiefly in and around Mandali, but there are others in towns and villages on the Tigris river and the Gharraf Canal (south from Kut), and a number are to be found in Baghdad and Basra. In Iraq they are often village and town laborers, and many of them act as heavy porters in the larger cities.'[10]

The Handbook's observation that most Fayli did not identify themselves as Kurds in 1971 (the information may have been copied from older versions of official documents, however) seems to be contradicted by the fact that the Baghdad neighbourhood where many of the Fayli lived was named Aqd al-Akrad, 'Neighbourhood of the Kurds.' It was not only Kurdish nationalists who considered the Fayli as Kurds. So did several foreign observers, for instance the British historian S.H. Longrigg, who writes in his political history of Iraq in the first half of the twentieth century on the Lur:

> 'These hardy natives of the southern Zagros, and subjects of their hereditary Wali, were familiar in Baghdad and Basra as porters of heavy loads, which occupation they monopolized. They were resident also as traders and craftsmen in the middle-Tigris and Gharraf regions, *known there as Fayliya Kurds*; and they dominated the border towns of Mandali and Badra and the villages near by. Of all this the last half-century has changed nothing…'[11]

Of the original homeland of the Fayli he writes:

> 'North of `Arabistan and almost equally independent of the Qajar dynasty lay Luristan, the province of the Lurs, who are racially and dialectically distinct from the Persians. It fell into two areas, the Greater and the Lesser. *The Pusht-i Kuh, western*

[9] Smith et al. 1971: 63.
[10] Smith et al. 1971: 63.
[11] Longrigg 1953: 10.

> *zone of the latter and home of the Fayliya Kurds*, formed its boundary with Basra and Baghdad wilayas. It had remained for three centuries under a single line of Walis. The obligations of the government were confined to a small tribute to the central Government,/ its powers unlimited within Pusht-i Kuh, its influence considerable in eastern `Iraq. Ghulam Ridha Khan, fourteenth of his line, was respected for his pomp and his religious observances, but hated for his morbid avarice."[12]

There is more than a little hint here that what made the Fayli distinctive, and yet similar to the Kurds, was the fact of their having long lived under an autonomous chieftain of their own, the Vali of Pusht-i Kuh. This is an aspect that we shall find recurring when we get to the earlier historical sources. In its earliest usage, the name Fayli appears to be associated with this dynasty of Valis, who in the seventeenth and eighteenth century ruled all of Lesser Luristan, which was also referred to as 'Luristan-i Fayli.'[13] In the nineteenth-century, when the Wali's government was reduced to Pusht-i Kūh, the tribes of this region appear to be considered as the Fayli proper, although the name Fayli is more loosely applied to the tribes of other parts of Luristan (Pīsh-i Kuh and Bālā Gavīra) too.

Another indication that self-identification as Fayli is not primarily based on the dialect spoken can be found in Oskar Mann's observations on the dialects spoken in Luristan. Mann, who carried out linguistic field research in the region in the early twentieth century, makes a strict distinction between Lurī dialects such as Fayli and the various forms of Kurdish. He noted that several of the tribes of Pīsh-i Kūh spoke Lakī dialects, which are related to Southern Kurdish, but nonetheless considered themselves also as Fayli.[14] As a population group, the Fayli thus included large numbers who did not speak Fayli but another language. To complicate things even further, it appears that at least some of these people called the dialect they were speaking also Fayli. In a recent overview of the dialects of Kermanshah, Habib Borjian notes that the term Fayli is used both for the southern Kurdish dialect spoken in southwestern Kermanshah and for the proper Fayli dialect of Luri, spoken in Pusht-i Kuh.[15]

The origins of the name Fayli are unclear. British travellers in the nineteenth century heard some unfriendly explanations, which do not seem to make much sense: 'The word Feili means *a rebel*, while the word Lur is commonly applied as a synonym for a boor by the modern Persians…'[16] Modern local scholars give no etymology of the name but claim that it is associated with the relatively independent status of the Valis of Luristan: 'Feyli owes its name to the Little Lor governors (wāli) *in the Qajar period*, who administered Poštkuh of

[12] Longrigg 1953: 13-14.
[13] Minorsky, 'Luristān;' Lambton, 'Kermanshah.'
[14] Mann 1910: XXII.
[15] Borjian, 'Kermanshah.' This is not unusual. Linguists consider Gurani and Kurdish as distinct languages. The Guran, to whom Gurani owes its name, presumably spoke this language at some time in the past, but nowadays most of them speak a variety of Kermanshahi Kurdish (Kirmashani). They refer to their language, however, as Gurani, although it is very different from what linguists call Gurani.
[16] Curzon 1892, vol. II, 274.

Lorestān…'[17] In fact, the name appears to be mentioned a few times before the Qajar period, but then also in connection with the Valis of Luristan.[18]

Citizenship and expulsion from Iraq

In Iraq, the Fayli's association with Luristan has stamped them as essential aliens (although arguably the westernmost slice of Pusht-i Kuh, where the nomadic Fayli had their winter quarters and later settled, lies in Iraq). Controversies over their citizenship status as well as discrimination they encountered as Shi`ites and non-Arabs have contributed to shaping their identity. In Iraq, they stand out as different from their neighbours, whereas in Iran they appear much less distinctive. Deportations to Iran of numerous Fayli without Iraqi citizenship papers (along with other Iranians), around 1970 and again in even larger numbers around 1980 marked the entire Fayli community and became perhaps the primary definition of what it means to be a Fayli in Iraq.

Deportations of Faylis and the response of the KDP and later the PUK are mentioned in passing in many books and articles on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds.[19] The deportations are studied in greater detail by Babakhan (1994, 2002), Munir (1992), Eskandar (2006) and Jafar (2008). The last three also provide interesting but somewhat different discussions of the citizenship issue.

Munir claims that in the late Ottoman period, Faylis residing in Iraq declined taking Ottoman citizenship in order to avoid conscription into the army. Under the British mandate and the early years of Independent Iraq, movement across the boundary between Iran and Iraq became more strictly regulated, and the Fayli were faced with the choice between Iranian and Iraqi nationality. Many of those who had long resided in Iraq opted for Iranian citizenship because their relatives and members of their tribes were predominantly Iranian, and possibly also because they were Shi`ites and Iraq was dominated by Arab Sunnis. By mid-century, when they had become aware of the desirability of Iraqi citizenship, this was no longer an option the government was willing to offer them.[20]

Eskander gives a more extensive account and emphasizes that most Fayli did in fact have Iraqi citizenship, which however proved no guarantee against expulsion. The possibly 200,000 Faylis who were expelled to Iran in 1980 and the following years included many who had citizenship besides others who had permanent residence status. A decree of the Bat`th Revolutionary Council (decree No. 666, dated 7 April 1980) deprived Iraqis of foreign

[17] Borjian, citing Ismaïl Kamandâr Fattah, *Les dialectes kurdes méridionaux: étude linguistique et dialectologique*, Acta Iranica 37, Liège, 2000, 70-74.
[18] Examples in Lambton, 'Kermanshah' and 'Īlāt'; Minorsky, 'Lur.'
[19] Vanly 1978: 255; Kutschera 1979: 279; Sluglett 1986: 196; al-Khalil 1989: 19; Middle East Watcch 1990: 71; MacDowall 1996: 332, 360.
[20] Munir 1992: 129-30.

origin of their citizenship if they were considered 'disloyal to the homeland, the nation and (…) the revolution,' and ordered their expulsion.[21]

The direct reason for this decree was an incident six days earlier in which a hand grenade was thrown at a groupof high officials, led by Tariq Aziz, who were visiting Mustansiriyya University in Baghdad. A Shi`i opposition group, the Islamic Action Organization, was said to be behind this attack, and the man who threw the grenade was allegedly a Fayli.[22] The deportations concerned a wide range of people of Iranian descent in Baghdad and other major cities as well as residents of the frontier districts.

Eskander perceives behind this measure a well-established anti-Iranian, anti Shi`i resentment and suspicion that has been part and parcel of Sunni Arab nationalism since Sati` al-Husri. This founding father had coined the term *shu`ūbī* to refer to people who were believed to be destined by their backgrounds to oppose Arabism. In practice, it was especially Shi`is and Iranians (besides, of course, the Jews) who were considered as *shu`ūbī*, not other minorities such as the Turkmen.[23] The roots of the anti-Shi`i, anti-Iranian attitude may however lie in an earlier phase of history, as Karen M. Kern shows in her study of late Ottoman policies preventing conversion to Shi`ism and marriages between Ottoman and Iranian citizens.[24] These policies were in turn a response to the massive conversion of Arab tribes in southern Iraq to Shi`ism, mainly in the nineteenth century. On this process of conversion, she follows the seminal study by Yitzhak Nakash, who argues that most of Iraq's Shi`ites are very recent converts. His study limits itself to the Arab Shi`ites, and pays no attention to the Iranian-speaking tribal groups (including Fayli) of the Iraqi-Iranian borderlands.[25]

Luristan and the Fayli in historical sources

The *Sharafnama*, as is well-known, discusses the dynasties ruling Lur-i Buzurg and Lur-i Kuchik in its first chapter, but does not mention Fayli as an ethnic or tribal name. The last of the line of rulers of Lur-i Kuchik (the Atabeks) mentioned in the *Sharafnama*, Shāh-wardī Khān, was executed by Shāh Abbās (in the final years of the 16th century). In his place, Shah Abbas granted recognition to Husayn Khan, who belonged to a different branch of the same family and whose descendants (whom we earlier encountered as the Valis of Luristan) were to rule Lesser Luristan almost independently for the next three centuries. It is this dynasty with which the name Fayli came to be most closely associated. Minorsky writes that their

[21] Eskander 2006: 190-1; more extensively discussed in Jafar 2008.
[22] Babakhan 2002: 193, citing the anti-Jewish, anti-Iranian tract by Fāḍil Barrāk, *Al-madāris al-yāhūdiyya wal-īrāniyya fi'l-`Irāq*, Baghdad 1984.
[23] Eskandar 2006: 197-9. Al-Barrāk's book, mentioned in the previous note, is the most explicit expression of the Ba`th leadership's paranoid revulsion of Jews and Iranians.
[24] Kern 2011.
[25] Nakash 1994.

territory came to be known as Luristan-i Fayli, but does not refer to any concrete source, so that we do not known when the name Fayli first appears.[26]

Minorsky's encyclopaedia articles, Longrigg's classical study of Iraq in Ottoman times, and Charmoy's learned introduction to his translation of the Sharafnama discuss the various Persian, Arabic and Ottoman histories that contain some information on developments in Lesser Luristān.[27] I shall restrict myself here to a few sources with which I am myself familiar.

Evliya Çelebi

One of my favourite authors is the mid-seventeenth-century Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi, whose Travels (*Seyahatname*) often provides interesting observations on local conditions that he encountered. In 1655 or 1656, Evliya travelled from Baghdad to Shahrizur and Erbil, passing through territories controlled by the Lur ruler (*Lur hākimi*), Husayn Khan. This is presumably the famous founder of the dynasty of Valis of Luristan. However, Evliya here and there appears to confuse Ardalan and Luristan, and he calls Sine the chief residence of the Lur ruler. He also mentions a second Lur ruler, Sulayman Khan, whose relation with Husayn Khan remains obscure.

Although the names of the settlements and castles that he passed cannot all be identified, and much of the information he gives may be due to hearsay rather than personal observations, it appears from his notes that Husayn Khan's control of land and people stretched well into what is now Iraqi territory.[28] Evliya speaks of Luristan as a self-governing region that is neither part of the Ottoman Empire nor of the Safavid state. At the time of the two major Ottoman campaigns to conquer Iraq, under Sultan Sulayman in 1525 and again under Sultan Murad IV in 1638, the Lur rulers had surrendered towns they controlled to the Ottomans, who had later handed them back to them in exchange of promises of loyalty. The population of these towns was heterogeneous, and Evliya distinguished Sunni Kurds (in Qizilja and in Kurdistan proper) and Luristani Kurds (*Ekrād-i Luristān*, in Nuqūd and Zālm `Alī). The latter are distinguished from Iranians in general (`Ajam), a variety of whom also lived in Nuqūd. It is tempting to see in Evliya's *Ekrād-i Luristān* a reference to the people later known as Fayli.

Mehmed Hurşîd Paşa

It is another *Seyahatname*, written almost two centuries later, that not only explicitly mentions the name Fayli but gives quite detailed information on the Fayli along the Persian-Ottoman border. Its author Mehmed Hurşîd Paşa, was a member of the Russian-Ottoman-Persian boundary commission that took four years (1848-1852) surveying the entire length of

[26] The most convenient summary of this history is Minorsky, 'Lur.' Lambton's articles 'Kermanshah' and 'Īlāt' are also helpful.
[27] Minorsky, 'Lur,' 'Lur-i Kūčik,' 'Luristān;' Longrigg 1925; Charmoy 1868.
[28] Places mentioned as under Lur control: Hawār (or, in Kurdish, Kīkhū Kermān), Bāshiqa, Nuqūd, Narīmān, Qizilja, Zālm `Ālī. See Evliya Çelebi 2001: 301-2.

this boundary.[29] In the region between Baghdad and the Persian border, Hurşîd mentions two large tribal groups, the Arab Bani Lam and the Fayli (erroneously written Fîlî in the modern Turkish transcription). He calls the Fayli Persian subjects (*Īrān'a ṭābi`*), lists the tribes of Pusht-i Kūh and Pīsh-i Kūh, estimates their total number to be 50,000, and adds that all of these Fayli tribes are Kurds (*kāffesi Ekrād*) and speak Persian. They have, he adds, many scholars and poets who are literate in Persian 'and their own language, Gurani.' The overwhelming majority of them are Shi`i, and small minorities are 'Nusayri or Ali-Ilahi' (i.e., Ahl-i Haqq). [30]

The names of the Fayli tribes listed by Hurşîd are:
a) in Pusht-i Kūh: Kirda, Riza-wand, Mahakî, Chārkheston, Dinâr-wand, Shād-khūn
b) in Pīsh-i Kūh: Kāka-wand, Bîtiya-wand, Mü'min-āwand, Bîtirna-wand, Jawārī
c) in Dilfān: Sīla-Sīla
d) Amāla (non-nomadic farmers and peasants)
e) Ḥulaylānī tribes: Osmān-āwand), Jalāl-āwand, Dājiya-wand, Bālā-wand, Sūra-marī
f) Bājalān tribes: Dāliya-wand, Sag-wand
g) Bīrān-āwand tribes: Aliyya-wand, Dūshiyya-wand.[31]

The towns of Badra, Zurbatiya and Mandali have a mixed population, mostly Sunni but with a large Shi`i minority (and, in Mandali, some 'Ali Ilahi'). Fayli tribesmen from Pusht-i Kūh, Iranian subjects, have bought much land here, which they cultivate.[32]

In the district of Khāniqīn, Hurşîd notes the presence of several branches of the Bājalān tribe among the population, which consists of a Kurdish majority and a significant Arab minority. Among both groups, Shafi`i Sunni Muslims are predominant but there are also Shi`is.[33] Hurşîd does not consider the Kurds here as Faylis. Elsewhere he notes that the centres of Fayli population do not reach to the Iranian province of Kermanshah; their last centre is a place called Dih-i Bālā.[34]

George N. Curzon and other British travellers

The richest store of information on the Fayli tribes before the birth of independent Iraq is to be found in the reports of foreign travellers, most of whom were British military or political officers. British interest in the region always was strategic and related to possible overland routes to India and other security matters. The travellers reported in detail about routes, rivers, political conditions, tribes and chieftains. C.J. Edmonds, who was one of the last of

[29] On the background of this boundary commission and on its findings, see the important study by Sabri Ateş (2013), Chapter 3.
[30] Hurşîd Paşa 1997: 65-9. This is a transliteration of the original Ottoman version that was published in Istanbul in 1277/1860.
[31] Hurşîd Paşa 1997: 66-8.
[32] Hurşid Paşa 1997: 71. 80-1.
[33] Hurşîd Paşa 1997: 88-91.
[34] Hurşîd Paşa 1997: 114. Curzon, discussed below, notes that Deh Bala in Pusht-i Kūh is the summer quarter of the Vali. A detailed description is to be found in Adamec 1989: 203-4.

this genre of travellers, gives a list of the most important of his predecessors.[35] Major Rawlinson, who commanded a regiment of Guran on a march through Pusht-i Kūh in 1836, was the first to provide detailed information on Fayli tribes.[36] Later travellers included George N. Curzon, the later Viceroy of India, whose two-volume work on Persia, based on his own travels and those of other British officers and officials, was the most authoritative compilation of British knowledge on the country. He gives a summary of the political history of the region that remains interesting to read.

Writing on the various nomadic groups in Iran, Curzon begins by classifying them on linguistic and cultural grounds into four groups, the Turki, Arab, Baluch and a large group of tribes speaking Iranian languages, sometimes subsumed under the name of Leks but more commonly spoken of as Kurds and Lurs. All nomadic groups contain a large settled population, although among Kurds and Lurs this is still a minority. The tribes have been largely subjected by the central government, and '[t]he only chieftains with any shadow of real power now left in Persia are the Khan of Kuchan, the Amir of Kain, and the Vali of Pusht-i Kuh.'[37]

'In the widest sense, Luristan is limted by the plains of the Tigris and the frontier mountains on the west to the borders of Isfahan and Fars on the east, and from the districts of Hamadan and Kermanshah on the north to the plains of Arabistan on the south. *The principal tribes are the Feili, Bakhtiari, Kuhgelu, and Mamasenni.* All of these are Lurs, although some may disown the name. *In the restricted sense, Luristan is the province inhabited in the main by the Feili Lurs, known as Lur-i Kuchik.* It is divided by the Ab-i Diz or Dizful river, from Lur-i Buzurg, peopled by the Bakhtiari.[38]

The Vali's ancestors previously ruled all of Luristan, but Agha Muhammad Shah, the founder of the Qajar dynasty, succeeded in bringing the region of Pīsh-i Kūh under direct rule in the late eighteenth century, and it has since been administered, as the province of Luristan, by a centrally appointed governor based at Khurramabad, (…) and the Vali of Luristan has since been forced to content himself with Pusht-i Kuh. *Hence the Feili name, formerly applied to all of Lur-i Kuchik, has become restricted in popular usage to the Pusht-i Kuh, where the Feilis proper constitute the bulk of the population.*[39]

The Vali in Curzon's day was Husayn Quli Khan, who like his followers led a nomadic existence. '[His] summer quarters were in the secluded valley of Dehbala; his winter domicile is in Huseinieh, at the foot of the Pusht-i Kuh, just within the Turkish border. (…) He trades with Baghdad by way of Kut. It is upon Turkish territory that he makes his raids, constant disputes occurring about the occupation by the Lurs of Ottoman soil; and his sworn and inveterate enemies are the Beni Lam Arabs, who are Turkish subjects. He is probably the best

[35] Edmonds 1922: 339-40.
[36] Rawlinson 1839.
[37] Curzon 1892, II: 269-70. Kain and Kuchan are both in Khurasan, in northeastern Iran.
[38] Curzon 1892, II: 273.
[39] Curzon 1892, II: 275.

living representative of the old style of Border chieftain, and is said to be able to call out 30,000 fighting men.'[40]

On the religion of the Fayli, Curzon notes that most of them are Shi`i Muslims but not very strict in their adherence to the formal obligations ('they entertain very little respect either for the Prophet or the Koran'), and are attached to local cults: 'they have *pirs* or holy men of their own, whose tombs are regarded as sacred places, and the chief of whom, Baba Buzurg (…) is buried in their country.' Smaller numbers are Ali Ilahi, i.e. Ahl-i Haqq.[41]

The German linguist Oskar Mann was the first to carry out detailed linguistic investigations among communities speaking Kurdish and Luri dialects. He strictly distinguishes between Laki dialects (belonging to the Kurdish family) and Fayli (belonging to the Luri group) that are spoken in the same region and collected samples of both. He made the interesting observation, noted above, that several of the tribes in Pīsh-i Kūh spoke Laki rather than Fayli dialects but yet considered themselves as Fayli for political reasons.[42] Fayli can be a linguistic designation, but the politics of belonging may override linguistic difference.

The information collected by all nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century British travellers, consisting of published as well as secret archival material, was compiled by the General Staff of British India into the *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*, an encyclopaedia of names of places and tribes. This *Gazetteer*, which was never published in its original form, was edited, with the addition of some later material from various sources, by Ludwig W. Adamec as a handbook in four huge volumes. The third volume contains a lengthy entry on the Fayli tribes and is an extremely useful resource for identifying place names etc.[43]

Conclusion

My conclusion is necessarily very preliminary. Lesser Luristan (Lur-i Kūchik) was known as a distinct political entity similar to Kurdish emirates but with a higher degree of independence well before the *Sharafnama* was compiled. The name Fayli came into use somewhat later as a common name for the tribes of Lur-i Kūchik, whose paramount leader was the Vali. When the Qajars brought part of Lur-i Kūchik under direct control and only Pusht-i Kūh remained under the Vali's rule, the name Fayli came to refer most specifically to the tribes of Pusht-i Kūh, while it continued to be used more loosely to those of Pīsh-i Kūh and even parts of Kermanshah as well. Most of the Fayli tribes spoke the Fayli dialect of Luri, but there were tribes in Luristan that spoke other dialects (Laki, and possibly even other dialects) and also considered themselves as Fayli.

The Fayli tribes were largely nomadic or semi-nomadic in the nineteenth century and spent the winters on the edge of the Tigris plain, i.e. in Ottoman territory. They traded with the

[40] Curzon 1892, II: 280.
[41] Curzon 1892, II: 282.
[42] Mann 1910.
[43] 'Faili', in Adamec 1989: 230-4.

main cities on the Tigris. Some Fayli bought land around villages such as Badra, Zurbatiya and Mandali and settled there, joining an already mixed population of various origins. Others became workers of traders in the big cities: Kut, Baghdad, Basra.

The social history of the Fayli communities of these cities, their gradual emancipation and integration in the economic and political life of Iraq in the twentieth century still waits to be written. There are a few relevant observations in Hanna Batatu's celebrated study of elite politics, and some tantalising observations on education in Khalil Osman's study of sectarianism. Osman writes: 'In the mid-1940s, the Shi`ite Fayli community founded the Fayli School (al-Madrasah al-Fayliyyah), which started off as an elementary school but soon evolved into a secondary school and opened an evening school in 1946. [It] adopted the Ministry of Education curriculum, which was taught in Arabic.'[44] No doubt more can be found in British archives and perhaps in published or unpublished memoirs. For the more recent period, oral history interviews will yield valuable information.

[44] Osman 2010: 186.

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