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The Ka'b Emirate during the reign of Sheikh Salman bin Sultan and his successors (1737–1792)

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Abstract

This research presents a historical and analytical study of the Ka'b Emirate during the rule of Sheikh Salman bin Sultan Al-Ka'bi and his successors between 1737 and 1792, a pivotal period in the history of Arab tribes in the Arabian Gulf region, particularly in the Arabistan region (currently Khuzestan). The study highlights the emergence of the Emirate, the political and military challenges it faced, its policies in confronting Ottoman and Persian influence, and the complex relationships it established with neighboring tribes. The research focuses on Sheikh Salman bin Sultan as a leader of wisdom and political acumen who managed to expand the Emirate's sphere of influence, fortify its borders, and strengthen its relative independence despite external pressures. It also addresses the internal policies of the Emirate, including its governance system, tribal alliances, and resource management. Additionally, the study examines the role played by Sheikh Salman's successors in preserving his political and military legacy and how they confronted the shifting balance of power in the region. Through analyzing historical sources, the research concludes that during this period, the Ka'b Emirate represented a unique model of an Arab political entity that managed to assert itself in a highly turbulent regional environment.

Keywords: Ka'b Emirate, Sheikh Salman bin Sultan, Arabistan (Khuzestan), Ottoman-Persian Rivalry, Shatt Al-Arab, 18th-Century Gulf Politics, Tribal Governance, British-Persian Relations

1. Introduction

Arab local powers have received little attention in the Arabian Gulf and the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, despite the fact that this region witnessed significant events that contributed to the emergence of these powers on the political stage and played an important role in the course of events, particularly the Emirate established by the Banu Ka'b in the Ahwaz region (the Ka'b Emirate) and their attempts to benefit from the collapse of Persian control over the region after the assassination of Nader Shah. The Ka'b Emirate represents one of the prominent political entities that emerged in the Arabian Gulf region during the eighteenth century, a period marked by significant political and economic transformations. Arab tribes, including the Ka'b tribe, played a central role in shaping the features of that era, whether through their internal conflicts or their complex relations with regional and international powers such as the Ottoman state and the Persian state, as well as the emerging European powers in the region [1]. In this context, the reign of Sheikh Salman bin Sultan Al-Ka'bi (1737–1792)

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stands out as a decisive period in the history of the Ka'b Emirate, as this era witnessed an expansion of political and military influence and relative stability that enabled the Emirate to assert its presence within the regional balance of power. The period of Sheikh Salman's rule and that of his successors was also characterized by remarkable developments in governance and administration methods and by tangible interaction with surrounding geopolitical changes. This research aims to shed light on various aspects of the Ka'b Emirate's history during this period by studying the circumstances accompanying its emergence, analyzing the nature of Sheikh Salman bin Sultan's rule, and reviewing the policies adopted by him and his successors in managing the Emirate and enhancing its status [2]. The study also seeks to provide an analytical reading of the most significant events, alliances, and conflicts that influenced the fate of the Emirate, drawing upon the available historical sources.

The Roots of the Ka'b Emirate

Ahwaz (Arabistan) is located southeast of Iraq and northeast of the Arab world. It is considered a natural extension of the Mesopotamian plains, almost entirely connected to them geographically, economically, and demographically. The region serves as a barrier between the Arab world and the non-Arab part of Asia [3].

The area is bounded between latitudes 30° and 33° north and longitudes 48° and 51° east. To the west, it is bordered by the Karun River up to the city of Muhammerah; to the east by the Hindiyan River and the Bakhtiari hills, part of the Zagros Mountains; to the north by the Zagros range; and to the south by the Shatt al-Arab and the Arabian Gulf [4].

Ahwaz holds a strategic and commercial significance due to its location on the Arabian Gulf and its control of the northern shores, which made it a key player in trade because of its position and its rich natural resources, especially oil. Its military importance is equally notable, as it lies within the land bridge connecting the three continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa. Additionally, it forms a natural defensive line with the Bakhtiari and Kurdish mountains between Iraq and Iran.

Numerous rivers flow through Arabistan, some of which have dried up over time while others still exist and play a significant role in the region's life. The most famous is the Karun River, known by the Arabs as the Dijail River, and the Ahwaz River, which originates from the Bakhtiari Mountains and flows into the Shatt al-Arab near Muhammerah, with the city of Ahwaz situated midway along it. Another important river is the Minaw River, also called the Dubais River, which was dug during the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan (may God be pleased with him) upon the suggestion of Abdullah ibn Amer, the governor of Basra. It was excavated by a man named Dubais, hence the name. This river is one of the important branches of the Karun River east of Ahwaz city. A branch of the Ka'b tribe lives along its banks, known as Ka'b al-Minaw or Ka'b Dubais [5].

The population belongs to ancient Arab tribes in terms of their Arab identity, as Arabs have inhabited Ahwaz since ancient times. Kerzin confirms this fact, stating that "the majority of its inhabitants are pure Arabs," as continuous migrations have occurred for a long time from both sides of the Tigris River and the Arabian Gulf. This migration was reinforced after the Islamic conquest, with Arabs settling on the banks of the Shatt al-Arab and the Karun River, relying primarily on agriculture. Socially, every clan in the region has origins linked to Iraq [6].

Among the most important Arab tribes in Ahwaz are the Ka'b tribes, who migrated from Iraq and settled in the lower reaches of the Karun River's estuary. This tribe played a major role in the political development of Ahwaz, as the Ka'b Emirate was one of the most important emirates established in Ahwaz.

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The Arabs established their first state in the region after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate, which was the Banu Asad state, with the city of present-day Ahwaz as its capital. In the early sixteenth century, both the Safavid state in Persia and the Ottoman Empire recognized the independence of an Arab state in Ahwaz, namely the Musha'sha' Emirate, which later transferred rule to the Banu Ka'b.

At the end of the sixteenth century, Afrasiyab Pasha, the governor of Basra (1596–1624), granted the Ka'b tribe authority to govern and settle in Qabban, which he took from the Safavid vassal Baktash Agha Afshar, as a reward to Banu Ka'b for the services they had rendered him. Due to the special relationship between the Afrasiyab family and Banu Ka'b, the tribe strengthened its position in Arabistan. In 1629, Shah Abbas the Great (1587–1629) ordered Qoli Khan, the governor of Shiraz, to move toward Basra to occupy it, aiming to eliminate Basra's growing commercial influence that threatened Bandar Abbas [7].

Afrasiyab Pasha's successor, Ali Pasha Afrasiyab, who took office in 1623, had to confront this threat alone, especially since the Safavid state occupied Baghdad (1623–1638), making it difficult for the Ottoman Empire to assist him, as it was preoccupied with internal problems. Under these challenging circumstances, the Ka'b tribe, led by their sheikh Badr bin Uthman, steadfastly defended the city despite rumors that the Pasha was about to flee. The firm stance of Banu Ka'b, combined with the swift withdrawal of the Persian campaign following the death of Shah Abbas, led to the failure of the invasion. As a reward for his loyalty, the Ka'b sheikh was granted ownership of the islands located at the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab. The end of Afrasiyab family rule in 1668 and the return of direct Ottoman rule over Basra did not affect the status of the Ka'b Emirate [8][9].

The Banu Ka'b took advantage of the turmoil in Persia and the rebellions that followed Nader Shah's rise to the throne to extend their influence to Dorraq (Al-Falahiyah), which caught the attention of Nader Shah. He sent an army to besiege Qabban, but the campaign failed to achieve a decisive outcome due to the Ka'b tribe's skillful maneuvering. This campaign marked the beginning of the Ka'b leaders' adeptness in offering nominal allegiance to both the Ottoman and Persian powers while practically remaining independent of either of the two great states.

The Emirate during the Reign of Sheikh Salman (1737–1767)

The rise of the tribe is closely linked to the era of its sheikh, Salman bin Sultan (1737–1767), who managed to expand at the expense of the Persian state by taking advantage of the unstable conditions in Persia following the assassination of Nader Shah in 1747[10]. The power of the Ka'b tribe rapidly increased in Ahwaz, beginning to extend northward and eastward toward the Jarahi River in the Bakhtiari region. They began to pressure the Afshar rulers, who governed from their base in Dorraq on behalf of the Persian government, but whose power had weakened. This allowed the Ka'b to deliver a significant defeat to the Afshar, resulting in their expulsion and the seizure of their center, Dorraq, between 1732 and 1740, making it, alongside Qabban, a headquarters for the Emirate. After consolidating his influence on the eastern side of the Shatt al-Arab, Sheikh Salman turned westward and began expanding at the expense of the Basra province, capturing some islands in the Shatt al-Arab, then crossing to the western bank to seize the Dawasir area and several villages. This enabled the Ka'b to control navigation in the waters of the Shatt al-Arab [11].

While Sheikh Salman retained Qabban as a coastal base, he worked on developing Dorraq from a small village into a prosperous, fortified city. He also established another center southwest of it on the Jarahi River, which he named Al-Falahiyah. In the city of Al-Sabila on

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the Karun River, located north of a waterway linking it to Qabban, Sheikh Salman constructed a dam to increase the cultivated area in the region. Amid the surrounding chaos, the Ka'b succeeded in establishing themselves as a fundamental force for security and stability. One contemporary historian of the Emirate commented, "The region flourished under Sheikh Salman to an extent not previously reached [12][13][14].

The Ka'b Emirate of Arabistan experienced a prosperous decade from 1747 to 1757, maintaining harmony with its neighbors: the Pasha of Baghdad, the governor of Basra, the Al-Kathir Arab tribe around Tustar north of Ahwaz, Disbul on the eastern Karun River, and the Musha'sha' whose authority centered in Al-Hawizeh. During this period, the Ka'b refused to pay taxes to either the Ottoman or Persian authorities, justifying their stance by accusing each side of extorting them [15].

However, the increasing power of the Ka'b sheikh and the rising status of the Emirate whose authority extended over navigable rivers and which enjoyed growing prosperity provoked Karim Khan Zand, who in 1757 led a campaign aimed at subjugating the Ka'b. He advanced with a large army, managing to occupy and destroy the city of Dorraq. Sheikh Salman, realizing his inability to confront Karim Khan's forces, chose to withdraw to the islands located in the Shatt al-Arab [16]. He moved from island to island before crossing to the western bank. Karim Khan was unable to pursue him due to a lack of ships and the difficult geography of the area, eventually forcing Karim Khan to withdraw without achieving any significant results.

Karim Khan's campaign marked an important turning point in the history of the Ka'b Emirate, which had previously been primarily a land-based power rather than a naval one. Sheikh Salman, recognizing the importance of naval power to counter Karim Khan's raids and to intensify pressure on Ottoman Basra, strengthened his fleet by building and well-arming numerous boats, transforming it into an effective force capable of operating in the marshlands of Arabistan and the Shatt al-Arab.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire perceived the growth and prosperity of the Ka'b tribe in the plains of Arabistan as a threat to the Basra outlet at the Shatt al-Arab. Between 1761 and 1762, and in coordination with the British resident Alexander Douglas, the Ottomans prepared a military campaign against the Ka'b, especially after assigning the governor of Baghdad to Ali Pasha, the Basra administrator, to collect taxes from them, even by force. Due to Ali Pasha's inability to carry out this task given Basra's limited naval capabilities, he sought assistance from the British ship Swallow.

Sheikh Salman bin Sultan of the Ka'b realized his inability to confront both powers simultaneously and withdrew toward Dorraq. From there, he sent gifts to the Basra administrator, who found himself compelled to withdraw and lift the siege. The subsequent campaign against the Ka'b was more focused and intense, involving not only Ottoman forces and British ships but also the forces of Karim Khan. Nevertheless, the lack of coordination and effective cooperation among the attacking parties led to the failure of the campaign.

This failed attempt prompted the Ottoman Empire to seek incorporating the Ka'b within its political orbit by collecting taxes from its sheikh as a symbol of submission and allegiance to state authority. However, the Ka'b's skillful evasions and Sheikh Salman's astuteness in avoiding compliance to preserve the independence and sovereignty of his emirate led the Ottomans to attempt coordination with the British agent in Basra to attack and subjugate the Ka'b [17].

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At the end of 1763, Ali Pasha, the governor of Baghdad (1763–1764), found in the British a reliable ally, especially since British interests in the region conflicted with the rise of the Ka'b, which had become a threat to the security of navigation on the Shatt al-Arab. This was his opportunity to enlist British ships to eliminate the Ka'b. Indeed, Ali Pasha's forces moved from Basra, supported by the East India Company ships Swallow and Tatar. The company's ships engaged with the small vessels of the Ka'b, but the British-Ottoman campaign failed to achieve its objectives as the Ka'b ships managed to retreat inland among the rivers and creeks. Additionally, Ali Pasha's forces were unable to advance toward the Ka'b capital, forcing the Pasha to negotiate an unstable truce with Sheikh Salman.

Amid increasing continuous pressures on the Ka'b, Sheikh Salman realized that presenting gifts to both the Ottoman and Persian sides was a means to spare the Emirate from aggression by either party. The Ottomans and Persians accepted these gifts as evidence of loyalty, which the Ka'b understood, thereby using this strategy to avoid attempts by both empires to impose control. At the same time, the Emirate continued to strengthen its naval power. By 1765, the Ka'b fleet consisted of seventy dunks and ten ghalafas, and with these ships, Sheikh Salman's forces became trained in both land and naval warfare.

In 1765, Ottoman, British, and Persian interests agreed to undertake a military campaign against the Ka'b Emirate, assigning Karim Khan to attack from the northeast while Ottoman ground forces advanced from the west and south. Karim Khan's forces were to be supplied with provisions and ships, and the company's vessels were to support the military operations.

Karim Khan's forces moved in March 1765 to execute their part of the plan, advancing to the Karun River where they camped while awaiting Ottoman reinforcements. However, the delay in these supplies prompted Karim Khan to attack Al-Haffar and push further inland. Despite this, his campaign failed to achieve its objective of eliminating the Ka'b Emirate. Consequently, Karim Khan withdrew in May of the same year, returning home after causing destruction in the villages of Arabistan. Nevertheless, Sheikh Salman bin Sultan corresponded with Karim Khan, offering gifts and tribute, and sent his son as a hostage, seeking to sow discord among the allies and divert their direct threat from his tribe.

Karim Khan's withdrawal did not end Ottoman attempts to attack the Ka'b. The Basra administrator mobilized his local forces along with reinforcements from Baghdad, amassing an estimated 4,500 men supported by a naval force including the British ship Fanny. The attacking force advanced as far as the northern edges of Mahrazi Island.

These developments did not undermine the Ka'b's confidence. On the contrary, Sheikh Salman took the initiative. At the outset of hostilities, the Ka'b fleet surprised the Ottoman ships, capturing three vessels. The following morning, Ka'b ghalafas sailed quietly along the river, passing the Ottoman fleet as it attempted to organize, raiding nearby villages around Basra and seizing a large number of boats.

The Ottoman attempt ultimately failed due to the Ka'b's skillful defense of their Emirate. Nevertheless, Sheikh Salman decided to halt the clashes in order to support Mir Mahna, the leader of Bandar Righ, who was under attack by Persian and British forces [18].

2. Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative historical approach aimed at analyzing the political and military developments of the Ka'b Emirate during the period of 1737–1792. The research relies primarily on descriptive and analytical methods, combining both primary and secondary historical sources. The primary sources include archival documents, official Ottoman and

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British correspondence, travel accounts, and contemporary Arab chronicles. These documents were accessed through historical gazetteers, translated memoirs, and repositories such as the Lorimer Gazetteer and the writings of British political agents in the Persian Gulf.

Secondary sources, such as scholarly books, journal articles, dissertations, and published research papers, were used to provide context, interpret primary data, and examine differing historiographical perspectives. Emphasis was placed on cross-referencing accounts to ensure accuracy and objectivity in representing events.

The methodology involves three core stages:

- a) Source collection and categorization by period and relevance;
- b) Analytical evaluation of leadership, military strategies, and regional diplomacy practiced by Sheikh Salman and his successors;
- c) Synthesis of findings to construct a coherent narrative that reflects the political resilience and strategic role of the Ka'b Emirate.

By employing a critical and comparative reading of texts, the study aims to reconstruct the historical reality of the Ka'b Emirate and its influence in 18th-century Gulf politics.

3. Results and Discussion

Ka'b-British Relations

The British paid little attention to the reactions of Sheikh Salman, leader of the Ka'b, against their continual interference alongside his adversaries. Therefore, once Sheikh Salman felt secure from Ottoman and Persian threats, he directed his efforts against British interests in the region, especially as he realized that the British presence was a major obstacle to his expansionist ambitions at the expense of Ottoman and Persian territories [19].

On July 18, 1765, six ghalafas attacked the British two-masted ship Sally, which had arrived at the Shatt al-Arab on its way to Basra from Madras, and seized it. The following morning, while the Ka'b men were sailing the captured ship toward Qabban, they encountered the British resident's yacht in Bushire, accompanied by the three-masted ship Fort William, and managed to capture the yacht. The Fort William attempted to escape to the Gulf but ran aground in shallow waters near the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab.

The Ka'b's skill was demonstrated in capturing Fort William while it was stranded by the receding tide, which caused it to tilt at an angle that made its cannons unusable. At that moment, Ka'b sailors attacked and seized the ship.

Following this incident, the British resident, Ring, wrote to Sheikh Salman protesting and demanding an explanation for his actions and the immediate return of the captured ships. When Sheikh Salman refused, asserting his capability to confront the British who aided his enemies the Persians and Ottomans Ring turned to the Basra administrator seeking assistance in negotiating with Sheikh Salman to recover the seized ships or receive compensation in case of failure, arguing that the ships had been taken near Basra and that protecting English trade there was the duty of the administrator.

After a series of negotiations, a form of agreement was reached under which the captain and officers of the captured ships were released after three weeks, followed shortly thereafter by the remaining sailors. This was succeeded by unproductive communications regarding the ships themselves and their cargo, which lasted for about nine months. During the negotiations, coordination occurred between the British agent and the Basra administrator, supported by the Pasha of Baghdad, to undertake a military operation aimed at subjugating the Ka'b, recovering the company's ships, and obtaining the approval and support of the Bombay

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government. In his report, the British agent highlighted the risks facing the company's trade, stating that it would be extremely difficult for any commercial ship to continue navigating the Shatt al-Arab unless Sheikh Salman's force was destroyed. He recommended dispatching a naval force to attack the Ka'b, requesting ratification of the agreement made with the Basra administrator, supported by the British naval power, to conduct land operations against the Ka'b.

Given the gravity of the situation, the Bombay government approved the agent's measures and ratified the agreement concluded with the Basra administrator, while simultaneously preparing a naval campaign to be sent urgently to subdue the Ka'b.

The campaign forces, which arrived at the Shatt al-Arab on March 10, 1766, consisted of four large European-built ships and three smaller Asian-built vessels, accompanied by a land force of approximately 500 infantry and artillery soldiers, along with large quantities of ammunition and equipment. The campaign was led by Captain Baillie, commander of the cruiser Swallow.

Upon the naval force's arrival in the waters of the Shatt al-Arab, the agent Ring briefly disregarded the agreement made with the Basra administrator and attempted to resolve the issue directly with Sheikh Salman. Following instructions from the Bombay government, he presented several demands:

- a. The surrender of the English ships seized by the Ka'b.
- b. The delivery of the ships' cargo and compensation for losses.
- c. That the Ka'b bear all expenses of the campaign.
- d. A commitment not to attack the campaign's ships.

The Bombay government's instructions stipulated that if Sheikh Salman agreed to these demands, the agent was to enter into a commitment on their behalf, pledging non-interference in any disputes between the Ka'b and their neighbors. Upon reaching an agreement, the agent was entrusted with informing the Basra administrator of this arrangement.

It appears that the agent's attempts to act independently of the Basra administrator stemmed from the belief that these instructions would not be well received by the Basra authorities, who viewed the company's ships as a reliable ally against the Ka'b given Basra's limited capabilities.

Sheikh Salman did not yield to British threats and mocked them, stating, "He is not one of those who are frightened by threats and intimidation." Accordingly, the British commander, supported by the administrator's forces, began preparations to sail and destroy the Ka'b vessels at the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab and impose a siege on Qabban. During the advance of the attacking force, Karim Khan Zand expressed his desire to contribute to the campaign against the Ka'b, leading a force of 20,000 men, in exchange for British naval support in his campaign against Mir Mahna in Bandar Righ. However, the Bombay government rejected these proposals, unwilling to engage in an uncertain venture, and prohibited the British agent from using the campaign or the ships sent to the Shatt al-Arab for any purpose other than destroying the Ka'b

The attackers planned to besiege Qabban with the fleet's ships and prevent the Ka'b ghalafas from escaping while the Basra administrator attacked the site. However, Sheikh Salman skillfully managed to evade the siege with his ships and reached the fortified location of Duruq, surrounded by marshes. From Duruq, Ka'b fighters launched guerrilla warfare against the attacking forces, causing severe confusion in the attackers' camp.

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Over time, the besieging forces experienced extreme tension and fatigue due to high heat and humidity, along with the ongoing guerrilla attacks by the Ka'b men. This compelled the British agent to request the new Ottoman governor of Baghdad, Omar Pasha, to expedite sending reinforcements and supplies to the campaign forces. Fearing the British authorities might transfer their agency outside Basra, Omar Pasha complied with the agent's requests and prepared a force of 1,500 men to send to the operational site. Simultaneously, the Basra administrator contributed 1,000 tomans to the British command as part of the campaign expenses.

The British did not wait for the arrival of Ottoman reinforcements. On May 17, British forces began crossing the Jarahi River but refrained from attacking the fortress, recognizing the strength of its defenders. In early June, the British attacked some small Ka'b vessels at an advanced Ka'b entrenchment but were forced to withdraw due to fierce resistance. They repeated their attempt on August 23, which also ended in failure, with four soldiers killed and seven wounded. During this time, Sheikh Salman burned the captured ships Sally and Fort William in retaliation against the British and in an effort to weaken the attacking force that sought to reclaim those ships, as well as a reaction to the British stance opposing his emirate.

The arrival of Ottoman reinforcements, consisting of twelve ghalafas, did not intimidate Sheikh Salman nor weaken the resolve of his fighters. On September 14, 1766, the Ka'b fleet launched a night raid on the Ottoman camp, located less than two miles from the Ka'b fortress, burning nine ghalafas including the flagship. On September 23, the British attempted a desperate assault to capture the fortress, but the intense artillery fire from Ka'b and the enthusiastic counterattack by its men, supported by infantry forces, resulted in a complete defeat for the British. They lost their commander, three officers, and eighteen soldiers, with approximately fifty wounded.

This defeat had a profound impact, prompting the British agent to order the withdrawal of British forces from Dorouq. The ship Success was assigned to secure the retreat of the land forces, while a small artillery detachment remained to support the Ottoman troops. It was also decided to reposition the fleet to secure navigation in the Shatt al-Arab.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Salman skillfully won over Karim Khan Zand by offering gifts valued at 2,000 tomans. On October 17, 1766, a special envoy from Karim Khan arrived at the camp of the Baghdad Pasha, requesting him and the British agent to cease military operations against Ka'b, considering them his subjects. Consequently, the governor of Basra saw no reason to remain in the area given the repeated defeats and the desire to avoid conflict with Persia, so he decided to withdraw from Dorouq on November 1.

Thus, the Ottoman-British campaign ended in complete failure, unable to subdue Ka'b. The British forces suffered heavy losses in men and resources, and the siege imposed on Ka'b from 1766 to 1768 did not achieve its intended goals. During this period, Ka'b forces constructed numerous military positions on both sides of the Shatt al-Arab, which the Ottomans and British were unable to prevent.

Finally, the English East India Company's men were forced to lift the siege and threatened the Pasha of Baghdad to withdraw protection of Basra by pulling back their fleet stationed in the Shatt al-Arab, as the Pasha had not compensated the Company for losses incurred during the 1766 campaign against Ka'b. Recognizing the importance of the British presence in the Shatt al-Arab to protect Basra from Ka'b's attacks, which would have left it vulnerable if the fleet withdrew, the Pasha agreed to pay the campaign expenses, starting a monthly payment of 1,000 tomans.

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The Emirate under the Successors of Sheikh Salman

The death of Sheikh Salman in 1768, whom Kerzen described as "a powerful figure whose fame exceeded the borders of his country, possessing the qualities of a successful statesman," marked the beginning of the decline of the Ka'b Emirate. This decline was further exacerbated by the destruction inflicted on agricultural lands and irrigation projects in Arabistan due to military operations carried out by the English, Persians, and Ottomans. The emirate also suffered continuous extortion from its stronger neighbors. Moreover, the successors of Sheikh Salman in the leadership of Ka'b did not possess the same military and political capabilities as Sheikh Salman.

Despite this, the Ka'b navy continued to be a force to be reckoned with in the Arabian Gulf, and British authorities frequently advised their representatives in the Gulf to avoid involvement with Ka'b in any form.

During the reign of Sheikh Ghanim (1768–1769), there was a degree of rapprochement with the Ottomans. Sheikh Ghanim, who succeeded his uncle Sheikh Salman, provided support to the Basra Mutasallim (governor) in suppressing the Al-Muntafiq tribes.

Sheikh Barakat bin Uthman (1770–1782) maintained Ka'b's independence and prosperity, although the emirate did not regain the rise and strength it had experienced under its powerful leader Sheikh Salman.

At the beginning of the 1770s, the Ka'b Emirate was severely affected by the plague. In 1772, this epidemic swept through the region, causing great suffering. Wilson described this plague as "the most terrible epidemic in the history of the country in modern times." It began in Baghdad in April 1772, quickly spreading to Basra and along the northern coast of the Arabian Gulf. Before it suddenly ceased in the summer of 1773, it had claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. British sources estimated the death toll in Baghdad alone at a quarter of a million. In a report by Henry Moore, the agent of the English East India Company, submitted to the Bombay government upon his return to Basra in January 1774, it was stated that the plague caused approximately 200,000 deaths in Basra and about two million in the surrounding areas.

Notably, the Ka'b Emirate was among the first powers to overcome the effects of the plague and rapidly restore its activity. In the summer of 1773, Ka'b fighters attacked Basra, exploiting the city's weakened state due to the plague. The Ka'bi forces managed to destroy some Ottoman ships anchored in the port, and Ka'b ships imposed a blockade on the Shatt al-Arab. The tribute paid by the Mutasallim of Basra to Sheikh Barakat to secure his favor did not prevent Ka'b ships, in April 1774, from attempting to capture the Ottoman warship Fayd al-Islam. However, they failed to return it to Durq due to the sudden arrival of the English East India Company ship Revenge, armed with 28 cannons, which rushed to aid the Ottoman vessel and prevented the Ka'b sailors from seizing it. Despite this, pressure from the Ka'b forces on Basra continued. In January 1775, Sheikh Barakat bin Uthman sent a force of raiders in small boats to threaten Basra in retaliation for the Mutasallim's imprisonment of some Ka'b members who were engaged in trade in Basra [20].

The year 1775 marked a significant development in the history of the Ka'b Emirate when Karim Khan enlisted Ka'b forces to participate in the siege of Basra. Ka'b contributed fourteen ships to the attack on the city. The Ka'b decision to assist was motivated by a desire to benefit from the conflict between the two powers, which posed a threat and caused instability affecting the emirate's growth and prosperity. These powers frequently opposed Ka'b's expansionist ambitions, so this clash presented an opportunity for Ka'b to alleviate Persian pressure by

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cooperating with them and providing support to their forces while passing through Ka'b territory. Moreover, at this stage, Persian authorities were keen to establish good relations with the Ka'b Emirate due to its strategic geographic location, to strengthen their offensive against Basra and to maintain this presence after successfully entering Basra at the end of 1774.

Simultaneously, the Ka'b Emirate benefited from the siege and occupation of Basra (1774–1779) by easing pressures from the Mutasallim of Basra and his ongoing demands for tribute as a symbol of subordination a status the successive Ka'b leaders sought to deny both the Ottomans and the Persians. Nonetheless, the fundamental significance of Sheikh Barakat's alliance with Karim Khan lay in Persia's recognition of Ka'b's strength and sovereignty over Arabistan, which it had failed to subjugate despite the campaigns led by its rulers against Ka'b.

The alliance did not grant Ka'b any role within Basra during the years of its occupation; however, this did not prevent Ka'b from being a participant in the alliance politics and coalitions that emerged on the eastern coast following the death of Karim Khan Zand in 1779. The Ka'bi forces took part in the Nasour alliance with the Harim and Bandar Riq in the attack on Bushehr in June 1779[21].

By the end of the eighteenth century, Ka'b's activities had diminished, and it appears that their efforts were primarily directed toward economic activities. The Ka'bi focused on their farms and lands in Durq, Ban, and Hendian, which characterized the era of Sheikh Ghadban bin Muhammad (1782–1792), who succeeded Sheikh Barakat. He succeeded in consolidating the emirate's sovereignty in Arabistan and maintaining its power and independence amid the chaos that engulfed Persia during the decline and fall of the Zand dynasty.

4. Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, it is clear that the Ka'b Emirate during the reign of Sheikh Salman bin Sultan and his successors (1737–1792) played a pivotal role in the political and social landscape of the Arabian Gulf region, especially amid regional challenges and increasing foreign interventions. The Ka'b leadership during this period demonstrated considerable flexibility and wisdom in dealing with competing powers, enabling it to consolidate its influence and strengthen its position among neighboring tribes and states. Furthermore, the succession of governance among Sheikh Salman's heirs confirmed the continuity of the Ka'b political project despite the conflicts and pressures faced by the emirate. Hence, studying this period is essential for a deeper understanding of the roots of political and social transformations in the Gulf and for highlighting the role of local actors in shaping their history independently of foreign domination.

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