



Uzun Hasan's Wives Founder of Ak Koyunlu state(1425-1477)

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ABSTRACT

At the age of thirty, Uzun Hasan took over Amed (Diyarbakir), the capital city of Ak Koyunlu state and became the unrivaled ruler. He married his first wife at the age of fifteen; soon after, he married his second and third wives. His first wife was a Turcoman, the second was a Kurd and the third was a Christian. Each of the wives acted in accordance with the personalities, potentials, personal skills and the wills they possessed. The Turcoman queen or Seljuk Shah could not stand to lead a life away from the Ak Koyunlu palace; thus she established a broad network of relations with the Ak Koyunlu dignitaries and military leaders and also was an influential figure among the Ak Koyunlu members. She was so skillful that she could easily gather Ak Koyunlu family around herself. After her husband died, her role became even greater. Hasan's Kurdish wife kept a low profile. Most of her decisions and wills were expressed by her son Ughurlu Mohammed. In fact Mohammed's personality overshadowed his mother's personality since she was not allowed to work within the palace. As for Hasan's third wife, Dspina, the Christian, it is obvious that she married Hasan to protect Trabzon Empire ruled by her father. Then she started to influence Uzun Hasan to work against the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, she played an active role in building relations between Hasan and the West, particularly the Venetian Republic.

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Introduction

Women played a significant role in political life and have actively cooperated and worked with men, especially the women working in the palace.

It is well known that Uzun Hasan, the founder of the Ak Koyunlu state, was one of the few brilliant rulers of the 15th century. He had a strong personality and made appropriate momentous decisions. Yet, the women in the palace, have also worked alongside with him to serve their own goals as long as they did not run counter to the general policy line of Hasan.

The three wives represented the largest percentage of Diyarbakir population where Ak Koyunlu state developed and became a vast and powerful state with its borders reaching Khurasan in the east and extending to the Euphrates in the west. Hence, we find it significant to explore how the women acted in line with Uzun Hasan and what kind of strategies they employed to work with him and for themselves.

This study is intended to explore the activities of Hasan's wives both in his lifetime and after his death. As we have already mentioned, Hasan's first wife was a Turcoman, his second was Kurdish and his third was a Christian belonging to Trabzon Empire family. Unlike the third, the first two wives were Muslims.

Importantly, the wives' identities impacted their activities and relations. This fact would help us to perceive the political framework within which they could act.

The fact that Seljuk Shah shared the same ethnic and religious identity with Uzun Hasan gave her more ground to act more freely in the palace. The other two wives would be forced to do more to strike a balance in their relations.

Probably, analyzing the women's roles relative to Hasan and Ak Koyunlu rulers would inform us considerably on the incentives behind the major events occurring during the Ak

Koyunlu rule which were marked more or less by women characters.

Thus, the present study will introduce Uzun Hasan and his life, his wives' personalities with main focus on the roles they played in the political life Ak Koyunlu state.

The study relies primarily on sources available on Ak Koyunlu and its contemporaries which do not cover the women exclusively but the researcher put them together from scattered multiple sources.

Uzun Hasan's life and personality

His life

Uzun Hasan, the founder of Ak Koyunlu state, is the son of Ali Beg son of Osman Beg. His grandfather, Osman Beg, known as Zalo Siyah, managed to gather the Ak Koyunlu tribe in a political union based in Diyarbakir following the Tamerlane campaigns in the area (particularly Diyarbakir) at the end of the 14th century (1335-1404) (Tehrānī 1977,1/32,35. Minorsky 1351,A.163-164). His name means Hasan the tall since he was a tall man. Both historians working at the Ak Koyunlu palace, Abubakir Tehrani and Fazlullah RuzbahānAsfahani have called him Sahibqran(1977,1/7. 1382, 22,93). However, the Italian travellers and ambassadors have mentioned him as Usun Kasano or Asam bi while Mamluki historian named him Hasan Bag or Hasan Beg (Barbaro N.D, 38,123. Zeno N.D, 5.Ibn Ája 1986 ,114.AI- saxawî, N.D,1/112).

The Ak Koyunlu historians have not specified his birthdate; Ghaffari claims that he was born in 1425 (1343,253), Abubakir Tehrani, who was Hasan Uzun's personal historian did not give a date for his birth; rather he indicates that in the battles fought between Alexander of Karayousif Karakoyunlu Hasan's grandfather in Diyarbakir, Hasan's father decides to fight Alexander, who was returning from Constantinople, and sends his son, who was 11 years old, back to Diyarbakir (1977, 1/114,126-129). Going back 11 years earlier, we would find that

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the date given by Ghaffari is near correct (Al-‘Azzāwī 1936, 3/254. Hints 1377, 32.Minorsky1384, B190). In addition, Tehrani has attempted to focus on Hasan’s early age role in the political affairs anticipating his involvement in the political conflicts of Ak Koynlu. At the beginning, he worked under his father’s orders.

During the conflicts among Osman Karayuluk’s sons over who to take over the Ak Koynlu tribe, Hamza Beg, Hasan’s uncle, seized the opportunity and captured Amed (Diyarbakir). Then Ali beg, entrusts his son with several missions including giving Kharput citadel to the Egyptian Sultan in exchange for his brothers’ release from prison.

After his father passed away in 1438, Hasan and his elder brother made great efforts to take over the tribe. When his uncle Hamza died in 1444, Jihangir became the most powerful figure of the tribe as he was Hamza’s son-in-law. In 1451, Jihangir sent Hasan Uzun with an armed force to curb his uncle, sheikh Hasan’s rebellion. The battle ended with sheikh Hasan’s death and Uzun’s victory.

Then, Uzun Hasan started launching offensives on the Kurdish rulers in Diyarbakir on his own. These offensives ended in the settlement of Ak Koynlu supremacy in his favor following dismissal of his brother Jihangir from Diyarbakir (Tehrānī 1977,1/140-141, 157, 161, 168, 171, 175, 178, 183, 196. Hints 1377 32-33).

This marked the passage of an outstanding political stage in Uzun Hasan’s early life with his consolidation of power in Diyarbakir as an unrivalled ruler and the strongest Ak Koynlu figure (Dā’irat al-M’ārIf 1991, 1/387). This also encouraged him to attack the neighboring entities, particularly the Kurdish principalities, which he defeated successfully.

As Jihanshah of Kara Koynlu headed towards Khurasan in 1467 following the demise of Shahrookh, Uzun Hasan seized this opportunity to consolidate its position further. Jihanshah perceived this threat from Uzun Hasan on the Kara Koynlu state and sent several armies led by prominent military leaders to defeat Hasan, none of which was successful (Tehrānī 1977, 1/214, 263, 281.Qāḏī ahmad Tatawy 1378, 77, 132. 2/347, Hasan Rumlu 1384, 1/263, 281).

In 1467, Jihanshah visited Hasan to make peace with him and dispel his fears of any Kara Koynlu threat, after sending most of his army leaders back home. Hasan found this an opportunity to clear his brother and end his Kara Koynlu state, which marked the second stage of his political and military life. This move, however, made him the unrivalled sultan of a vast and enormous territory the boundaries of which started from the Euphrates in the west to Jaijoon coasts and with the northern parts bordering the Ottomans and Georgia and the southern parts reaching Oman islands (Tehrānī 1977, 2/347. Faḏl Allāh 1382, 34-35).

During the ten years of Hasan as the Ak Koynlu ruler, he brought peace and stability to his domain and united the all the Ak Koynlu tribal factions under one leadership. He also established many scientific and religious institutions with a major focus on administrative organizations (Al –Qazuynī 1314,358. Dā’irat al-M’ārIf 1991, 1/387).

Furthermore, he established firm and constant diplomatic relations with the West and the Republic of Venice. Yet, he made sporadic attacks on the Georgian state and fought a wide scale and fierce battle with Sultan Muhammad Fatih the Ottoman. However, his relations with the Mamluks were anything but undiplomatic (Minorsky 1933, C 5/213-223).

Returning from his last battle with the Georgians in the autumn of 1477, Hasan fell ill. When arriving in Tabriz, his

health deteriorated until he departed life on the eve of January 6th, 1478 when he was only 54 years old. He was buried inside the Nasriyya religious schoolyard in Tabriz.

Hasan had seven sons from his three wives, five of whom were still alive by the time he was passing away. They were: Zaynal, killed in the war between Hasan and Sultan Muhammad Fatih the Ottoman, Ughrlu Mohammad, killed after his rebellion to elicit more power as well as the other sons who were named Khalil, Jacob, Messiah, Joseph and Maksood (Jozafa et al 1381, 111, 157. Gaffarī 1343,221.Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/805,807. Wale esfahanī 1379, 721).

His Personality

Uzun Hasan is regarded as the greatest and most powerful ruler of Ak Koynlu dynasty. The world historians and ambassadors of the day have each written about him from their own perspectives, but they have all tended to consider him as a great politician of the 15th century AD who managed to transfer his tribe Ak Koynlu from a nomadic tribe to a vast, enormous and influential political entity. From a very early age, Hasan showed political, military and diplomatic skills; his personality was marked by justice, consideration to people’s affairs, quickness to act when opportunities arise, and decisiveness (Faḏl Allāh 1382, 33. Al – Ghayathī 1975, 391. Al –Qazuynī 1314, 358 Dā’irat al-M’ārIf 1991, 1/387). He was a man who quickly perceived danger; when he failed to capture Hasankayf castle, he resorted to a different means do it. For example, in 1461, he promised the castle to his cousins if they capture it and annihilate King Khalaf. His plan was successful, however (Tehrānī 1977, 2/367,393-394. Ibn Taghrī Bardī 1972, 16/273). Hasan acted most diplomatically with the Mamluk state in Egypt. He would frequently send ambassadors and appeased them as he needed their assistance in face of the Ottomans which he thought were more dangerous. Although he persistently sought a sea border with the Venetian Republic, he managed to protect his state from its borders (Ibn Āja 1986, 114-125.Minorsky 1933, C5/220-221).

After he killed Jihanshah and conquered the Kara Koynlu, he wanted to avoid confronting Abusaeed of Meeranshah of Tamerlane, so he proposed to grant him Iraq and retain Azerbaijan for himself. Abusaeed rejected the proposal claiming that Azerbaijan belonged to his father already. The two armies confronted in 1468 and Abusaeed was defeated thereby a yet larger territories fell to Hasan Uzun’s zone of influence. A historian such as Al-Gyathi believes that no ruler was in possession of such vast territoris ever since Alexander, Ardasher and the Chosroes (Ghayathī 1975, 383-384).

Joseph Barbaro, the Venetian ambassador lived in Hasan’s palace and in 1474 writes that Hasan would sit at a higher balcon with his boduguards, officials and dignitaries surrounding him (Jozafa et al 1381, 69-72, 158). Moreover, Contarini, Barbaro’s company, characterizes Hasan as the ruler who drank a lot while eating his meals, was pleased to invite us very often, and would always call singers and musicians to sing and play the kind of music he would choose. He was an energetic, highly polished tall man with a look tinged with a Tartar complexion and features. He would shake while drinking, thus behaving like a 70 year-old man. He was a humble yet fierce and formidable when he got angry albeit a kind and merciful ruler (Jozafa et al 1381, 155).

The oriental historians have demonstrated Hasan’s justice, intelligence, wisdom and valiance, particularly Abubakir Tehrani who has commended him a lot (Tehrānī 1977,1/5-9. Minorsky 1351,A.182). However, Ibn Ajah, the Memluk delegate to Hasan’s palace, mentions that “Hasan was

accompanied by many international and regional scholars and businessmen and when I visits him, he stood up to welcome me and seated me by himself, then asked me Memluk state and its officials and also about Henriette (Ibn Ája 1986,115-116).

Zunu, the Venetian ambassador gives the following account of Uzun Hasan: " He was a brave man who believed in freedom for others; the Turkmen dignitaries listened to him and obeyed him, even the most influential of them who had the right to enter his tent, would find hard to speak in his presence; only the Prince would speak and what he says should be accepted without the slightest reservation; an atmosphere of silence would prevail the tent as if you were in a holy shrine" (Jozafa et al 1381, 220. Hints 1377, 81). The freedom mentioned in this account denotes the visits made by Hasan's wife Spena and the other details refer to order observed in the palace.

During the period of his reign, Hasan sought to reduce taxes and lift Tamgha tax but the princes did not allow him to do so. In terms of dealing with with people's complaints, he set forth a legal chart that satisfied all his people across the country he ruled (Ghayathî 1975, 291-292. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/805. Al-'Azzawi 1936, 3/252).

Hasan's position toward women is unmistakable; he did not seek women. It is noted that Alexander of Kara Yousef was killed because of women; he used to chase his step-mother but one night his wife in collaboration with a group and Shah Qubad son of Alexander murdered him asleep. Hasan has stated in this respect: " Alexander has done bad things with women, finally he fell into the pit he dug for others" (Tehrānī 1977, 1/144,161-163).

Uzun Hasan's wives and their personalities

The Wives

As mentioned earlier, Hasan married his first wife at the age of fifteen when he and his brother, Jihangir were engaged in a conflict with their uncle, Hamza in the town of Ruha. There, Hasan married a woman who, one year later, gave birth to a son. Since Ruha was the birthplace of Ibrahim Khalil (Abraham the Prophet), they named him Khalil. The woman was Seljuk Shah Begm and the marriage took place in 1440 AD. Thus, Khalil must have been borne in 1441. Notably, eight months after Khalil was borne, Hasan had another son from another wife of his whom they named Ughrlu Mohammed whose mother was Devlet Shah of Aghel's daughter (Tehrānī 1977, 1/162-163. Faḍl Allāh 1382, 96. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/807). Although Seljuk shah's son was born sooner and so he is a little older than Ughrlu, it is still not known which of the two wives Hasan married earlier!

In this connection, Contarini, the Venetian Ambassador and several other historians believe that Hasan's first wife was Kurdish and her son was Ughrlu Mohammed (Jozafa et al 1381, 197. Hasan Rumlu 1384,2/867. Al -Qazuynī 1314, 221. Minorsky 1933 C 5/222).

Any investigation of Hasan's Kurdish wife must also consider Devlet Shah of Aghel's relations with Hasan's father, Ali Beg. Undoubtedly, Devlet Shah was an outstanding figure of the first half of the 15th century in Diyarbakir. Following the murder of Osman Beg, Ali Beg's father, Ali Beg frequently turned to the Aghil of the Devlet Shah with its castles and they actually cooperated with him. This firm tie could have been the result of the marriage between Uzun Hasan and Devlet Shah of Aghel's Kurdish daughter. Additionally, it is believed that Ali Beg was still alive then but they were forced to live in Aghil being sacked by Hasan's uncle, Hamza (Tehrānī 1977, 1/99, 102, 162).

It is worth mentioning here that both Devlet Shah of Aghel and Ali Beg, father of Uzun Hasan were on friendly terms with the Memluk rulers (Unknown author 1986, 67, 69. Alsadafi 2002, 339. Al -Maqrīzī 1997, 345, 394).

Given the fact that Seljuk Shah was an ethnic Turkoman and Devlet Shah of Aghel's daughter was an ethnic Kurd accounts for Hasan's strong ties with the native population of Diyarbakir who were Kurdish, Turkoman and Christians. Seljuk Shah represented the Turkomans and Devlet Shah of Aghel's daughter represented her father and Hasan's relations.

Seljuk Shah was an influential Ak Koyunlu personality who sided with her husband in all his battles. Thus she witnessed all the battles and wars Hasan fought from the time he was 15 until his demise. Given the fact that the Ak Koyunlu tribal composition was Turkoman, Seljuk Shah had the greater chance to connect with the tribal members and play a significant role in the events (Tehrānī 1977, 1/245, 2/468, 524. Hints 1377 ,157. Minorsky 1384, B189).

Conversely, Ughrlu Mohammed's mother spent more time next to her son; there is little information as to whether she was with Uzun Hasan in Amed or with her son. Even when Hasan moved to Tabriz, it seems she did not accompany him. Be this true or not, she was not allowed to make frequent appearances in the palace because of her Kurdish identity. In contrast, Seljuk shah became a strong military leader because of her ethnic affinity to Hasan (Tehrānī 1977, 2/458,481,510,514).

At the age of thirty four, Uzun Hasan, married his third wife named Kura Katrina, daughter of Kalo Johannes, emperor of Trabzon who was known more in her Greek name Dspina (Jozafa et al 1381, 290, 420-424). This third marriage was political more than anything else. Notably, Hasan had had a long-standing tradition of political marriages ever since he became a power to be calculated with in the region after taking over Diyarbakir. For example, when in 1459 Jihanshah pulled Sheikh Junaid Safavid out of Diyarbakir, Hasan married her sister off to him and made him an ally. This relation developed further until he married Martha, Dspina's daughter to Sheikh Haydar, Shah Ismael the Safavid (Jozafa et al 1381, 257. Budāq munshī 1378, 109. Hints 1377, 38-39).

Obviously, Hasan continually utilized political marriages to serve his political interests, yet the relation with the emperor of Trabzon was not established first by Hasan, rather, it was his grandfather, Osman Beg who first had married one of the daughters of Alexis the 4th, the emperor of Trabzon (Hints 1377, 40-41).

In 1457, the emperor of Trabzon sent a delegate to the capital of Ak Koyunlu seeking Hasan's support and cooperation in the face of the Ottomans. In fact the 3,000 gold coins which the Trabzon emperor would annually grant the Ottoman Sultan Muhammed Fatih II did not satisfy the latter once and for all; rather the reason he refrained from any offensive on Trabzon was to retain forces to conquer the Albanians and the Hungarians who had united their forces to combat the Ottomans. In the light of these realities, Hasan realized that Trabzon needed external help for which they turned to him.

The Trabzon emperor had a daughter named Kura Katrina, known then as the most beautiful among her imperial family and heard of widely across Iran and Ak Koyunlu territories. No sooner had the Trabzon delegate started its negotiations than Uzun Hasan asked for her hands following a solemn pledge to register all Anatolian Kapadokia in her name as well as repulsing any attacks by the Ottomans on Trabzon. Being unable to resist the Ottoman assault, the Trabzon delegate unwillingly accepted Uzun Hasan's proposal provided that Dspina should

remain Christian all her life. Finally, they signed an agreement in 1458 stipulating for daughter to be sent to Diyarbakir in the following year (Jozafa et al 1381, 290, 420. Tehrānī 1977, 2/382. Tahrī 1384, 107).

In this manner, Hasan married several women from different areas of his territory and its neighboring areas; one Turkoman from Ak Koyunlu tribe, one Kurdish from the Aghil, and the other a Christian from Trabzon.

The first wife, Seljuk Shah was seen more frequently with Hasan than the other two wives. She also made more appearances in Tabriz after the defeat of Kara Koyunlu; even when Hasan was dying, she is the only one to have mentioned as present by him. There has been no mention of the other two wives. Hence, she was in Tabriz and her son, Khalil was in Shiraz. Seljuk Shah's roles were clearer after her husband's death and have been more highlighted by the researchers. Yet, when Khalil took the reins of power in Tabriz, he dismissed her mother to Diyarbakir. The point is that she did not stay there for long; after six months she came back to Tabriz with Jacob. The question here is: Could the woman not stand living outside the capital Tabriz?!

The point is that during Jacob's reign she was an influential figure in the palace, but even during Uzun Hasan's period of rule, she was similarly powerful but was overshadowed by Hasan's strong personality (Tehrānī 1977, 1/161-162. Faḍl Allāh 1382, 96, 102. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/777).

As for Jacob and Khalil, they are obviously Seljuk Shah's sons, but it is unknown whether Zainal, who was killed in the battle between Uzun Hasan and Sultan Mohammed Fatih in 1472, was her son or not. Even Messiah, who chose to live in Tabriz after his father's death is unknown to be from which wife! This may be due to the fact that during Jacob's reign, Seljuk Shah was more attached to Joseph and cared less for Messiah. However, in 1489 when a plague broke out in the area, they left Tabriz for Karabagh fort, Seljuk Shah and her son Joseph both died (Faḍl Allāh 1382, 405-408. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/799-780).

As far as Devlet Shah's daughter is concerned there is little information obtained about her. All that is known is that she headed for the Memluk state following her son's rebellion and the events ensuing this rebellion were the most crucial and impactful for the Ak Koyunlu ruler (Ibn Āja 1986, 170. Ibn ayas 1960, 4/458. Al-saxawī, N.D, 10/283). Hence, had she stayed with Hasan during the rebellion, she would hardly have had the chance to move to Cairo. However, her son's company was more comfortable for her than the palace where Seljuk Shah had the most power and influence. After this event, there is neither information nor confirmation as to whether she and her son went from Cairo to the Ottoman territories or not.

Contrary to Devlet Shah's daughter, there is more information available about Hasan's Christian wife, Dspina who, in 1458, had brought with her a large number of Greek virgins and nobility to accompany and stay with her for good. She had also brought along a great number of monks and nuns to enable her to perform her religious rites in the appropriate way (Jozafa et al 1381, 421. Hints 1377, 42).

Before the Trabzon Empire fell to the Ottoman Sultan Mohammed Fatih in 1461, Dspina persistently tried to encourage and cherish Hasan's hostility towards the Ottomans. This influence of Dspina became particularly prominent when Hasan moved to Tabriz and Dspina maintained the relations of Ak Koyunlu with the Venetian Republic and played effective roles against the Ottoman state. Dspina was keen on living

among the Christians, therefore some time before she passed away, she decided to live in Kharput by worshipping.

Dspina had three daughters and one son, named Maksood who sympathized with Ughrlu in his rebellion. Strikingly, before he became thirteen years old, his father delivered Baghdad to his possession after Hasan's victory over Jihanshah Kara Koyunlu. Finally, Maksood was murdered by Khalil, his stepbrother following their father's death. It is mention worthy that one of Dspina's daughters later became Shah Ismael's mother, who founded the Safavid dynasty.

A Venetian merchant visits Dspina's grave in Amed (Diyarbakir) in 1507 and mentions that the grave was located a church arch and built with plain bricks without being ornamented by gold or silver (Jozafa et al 1381, 290-291, 420-421, 384, Tehrānī 1977, 2/537-538. Awzun çarshlī 1369, 2/52).

3-2; The Wives' Personalities

Each wife's personality is reflected in her own working environment since each one's intentions determine their personalities per se. As Seljuk Shah was Turkoman, she was assigned more roles in the palace while the Kurdish wife's working environment is not clear and for which there is a severe lack of information. Yet, it can be ascertained that her attempts to gain power were all through her son Ughrlu Mohammed.

As for Dspina, the Greek Christian wife, all her character and personality can be discerned through her relations with the Republic of Venice as she strove for one and solitary aim which was to ward off Ottoman threats to the Christian world.

Seljuk Shah, being a native Turk, enjoyed a dominant and controlling status. Moreover, all her deeds testify to her strong character and personality. Even when Uzun Hasan was still ruling the state, her orders were strictly carried out across the state including Ulus princes. She also served as an advisor to the state in the administration of the state affairs.

One thing we should not miss here is the fact that Uzun Hasan's mother, Sara Khatoun also served as a guide for Seljuk Shah and played an important role in Ak Koyunlu's political life.

Hence, we realize that when Amed (Diyarbakir) was their capital, Seljuk Shah had a strong presence in the palace. Even after Hasan's death, she practiced a prudent policy and sent after her son Khalil to assume power without any conflict or trouble (Faḍl Allāh 1382, 96, 405. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/881. Gaffarī 1343, 253). This move shows that she made the right decision at the right time.

Seljuk Shah had strong relations with the military leaders of Ak Koyunlu too, including Sulaiman Beg Bizhan and Baynder Beg. She could not stand living out of the palace which is why she dismissed Khalil to Diyarbakir to keep him off her own affairs. It is said that when she returned to Tabriz with Jacob, the Ak Koyunlu family members would regularly cluster around her for advice and consultation. When she died, however, the regular meetings were discontinued and the unity of the Ak Koyunlu family was disrupted (Faḍl Allāh 1382, 102, 140-141, 182, 192. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/812-813. Al-qaremanī 1282, 338). Despite all these, Seljuk Shah was the kind of women that was concerned with religion and mysticism, like Uzun Hasan; she is reported to have followed the mystic orders and was fervently attached to the religious scholars. She was involved in charity activities and regularly helped the needy and the underprivileged (Al-‘Azzāwī 1939, 275, Hints 1377, 145).

As far as Devlet Shah's daughter, there is not much information about her as about her son Ughrlu Mohammed who was an intrepid and smart man, especially at the battlefield. Yet, despite the fact that Devlet Shah was a leading personality both within Diyarbakir province and outside its borders, her daughter

was not assigned any tangible role in the events occurring in Diyarbakir and Tabriz throughout the Ak Koyunlu era (Tehrānī 1977, 1/136,163. Ibn Taghrī Bardī 1972, 15/224. Al-badlīsī 2002, 349). The reasons can be attributed to her Kurdish identity first, and her son's strong character overshadowed that of hers.

Another factor for this reality can be the fact that the palace officials were hostile to the Kurdish principalities; Hasan himself led a number of military campaigns against them and sustained them severe losses particularly after he took Tabriz. Moreover, while Hasan's father and Devlet Shah's relations were friendly, Isa Beg, Devlet Shah's were by no means friendly with Hasan (Tehrānī 1977, 1/268,271,281, 2/542).

Returning to Dspina, she was a powerful figure in the palace not because she had strong ties with the Ak Koyunlu officials or its military leaders, rather due to the solid political pact according to which she had been married to Hasan. Hence, she only worked on her husband directly although after her husband's death her role diminished considerably. Since her marriage was political in nature, she was always keeping an eye on Trabzon. In short, she offered all her beauty and charm to the protection of her homeland, Trabzon.

In 1471, Dspina's nephew, Catrino was appointed ambassador to Uzun Hasan's palace at a time when the latter had Diyarbakir province only, an event which marked an important stage in the Ak Koyunlu state relations with Venice. Here, Dspina, as a supporter of her nephew and as someone who was hostile to the Ottomans and had strong ties with the west, continued to pressurize Hasan so hard that led him finally to declare war against the Ottomans. Dspina's diplomatic efforts left Hasan put many diplomatic affairs into the hands of Dspina. Besides, Dspina remained a pious woman to the last moment of her life; she was fervently adhering to Christianity and is reported not to have become behindhand with her presence in the Last Supper ceremonies (Jozafa et al 1381, 226-230. Hints 1377,40-43).

The Women's political roles from tribal unity to Ak Koyunlu State

Generally, women played an active role among the Turkish tribes; they had to shoulder a lot of responsibilities. What is obvious among the Ak Koyunlu population is that men did not marginalize women. For example, before Hasan went to Tabriz and declare Ak Koyunlu State, he was a power to be calculated with in Diyarbakir but at the same time Sara Khatoun's (Hasan's mother) fingerprints on some significant events in Hasan's life, are conspicuous. Moreover, when Hasan made his political appearance in 1454 onward and then took Diyarbakir from his brother Jihangir, her mother interfered and reconciled the two brothers. She also brokered an agreement between the two brothers stipulating that Diyarbakir should go to Hasan's possession and Mardin to Jihangir (Tehrānī 1977, 1/256-257. Ibn Taghrī Bardī 1972, 7/485. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 1/542).

The Women's political roles before the rise of Ak Koyunlu

In fact, the major political event in which one of Hasan's wives took part was the conflict between Ak Koyunlu State and the Ottoman State over Trabzon. This woman was Dspina, who was in continuous contact with the Venetian Republic, Georgia and Uzun Hasan himself; she also would write letters to her uncle to inform him about the political developments. She also always stood by her husband Hasan to redress the balance with the Ottoman state.

Undoubtedly, Hasan's marriage to Dspina impacted the political events of the region. No sooner had the wedding ceremonies ended in Diyarbakir in 1458 than Hasan was drawn

to striking world political conflicts between the East and the West as the result of Ak Koyunlu- Trabzon treaty (Hints 1377, 43).

Under the effect of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and to deter the Ottoman threats, Pope Callixtus III sent a Franciscan monk named Ludvigo Bologna to Trabzon and Georgia who also visited Uzun Hasan in 1459 in Diyarbakir. Dspina, in her turn, started to encourage Hasan to assist Trabzon people against the Ottoman and fight them. These relations were brought to so high a level that all Europe, particularly, was shocked by Ak Koyunlu delegate visit to Europe. Obviously, the heaviest load of the tripartite alliance of Trabzon- Georgia- Ak Koyunlu was on the latter as it was militarily stronger the other two. Yet, it was not to compete with the Ottomans.

The Trabzon king asked Hasan, through his ambassador, to seek an Ottoman relinquishment of the 3000 gold coins that he had to give the Ottoman State. And it was due to their relation with Hasan that the Ottomans re-imposed taxes which they had dropped. Hence, Hasan immediately sent his ambassador to Istanbul in 1451 led by his nephew Murad Beg not only to seek an exemption from taxes of Trabzon, but also themselves from the task of harnessing horses and making carpets and coffee for them, a task which Sultan Yildirim Bayazid had assigned with the Ak Koyunlu and was suspended for sixty years. They also asked the Ottomans to disclaim Kapadochia which Hasan had received from Trabzon king as token for her wife (Tehrānī 1977, 2/382, 386. Awzun çarshlī 1369, 54. Hints 1377, 49).

Dspina's behind-the-scene role must be evaluated, since informed all about the Ottoman moves and persistently influenced her husband. Uzun Hasan, nevertheless, worked in two directions; first he made a military rapprochement to Trabzon and second used send envoys to the Ottomans. First, when his envoy returned with no satisfactory answer, he occupied the farthest western border point in 1458. As a result of this move, the Ottoman ruler fled and consequently Sultan Mohammed started a military campaign on the three parties: the Ak Koyunlu state, Trabzon and Gorgia which ended in the expulsion of Ak Koyunlu governor. The Ak Koyunlu army showed some sporadic resistance and killed 200 Ottoman troops, but there was no use. Even though Hasan was victorious in one more minor battle, he sent an envoy to the Ottoman Sultan led by Sheikh Hasan Kurd and his mother to make peace with him. This move came late as the Ottoman army was already heading for Trabzon. In 1461, due to ferocious Ottoman assaults, the Trabzon emperor surrendered to them. The Ottoman Sultan annexed Trabzon to his empire and sent Dspina's uncle (David) as well as his four sons to jail in Istanbul. When the Sultan discovered the letters exchanged between, he found out how strong were the relations between them and killed David and his sons in jail in Istanbul (Tehrānī 1977, 2/386, 391, 392. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 1/588-593, 2/613. Awzun çarshlī 1369, 57. Hints 1377, 174-175).

The Women's Political Roles after the Rise of Ak Koyunlu State

In fact, Seljuk Shah's actual role started after the rise of the Ak Koyunlu state. After 1468, the Ak Koyunlu borders expanded considerably; then Hasan moved his capital city from Diyarbakir to Tabriz to assume the heir of all former states. He also asked all Ak Koyunlu tribes and clans living in eastern Anatolia to move to the new capital and offered them a lot of land (Dā'irāt al-M'ārīf 1991, 1/386).

This period offered a new opportunity to each of Hasan's Turkoman and Christian wives to work in different directions.

First we must be aware that both of his sons, Khalil and Ughrlu Mohammed contributed to the annihilation of Qara Koynlu pockets; but if we compare their military and political activities, we see that Ughrlu Mohammed was more active and valiant whose father himself admitted that his courageous son had swept Hasan Ali of Jihan Shah (Nevai 1381, 558.). Yet, when Uzun Hasan gave out the areas to his sons in 1470, he sent off Ughrlu Mohammed to Isfahan and Khalil to Fars (Tehrānī 1977, 2/551). It is not clear why he made this decision to grant Khalil a very strategic and wealthy while Ughrlu was granted a dry and unproductive area. This was surprising to the Iranians who testified to Ughrlu's success and bravery in all the battles he had fought.

The Venetian ambassador to Ak Koynlu state indicate that Isfahan then was a disadvantaged and one of the least populated towns in Iran while Shiraz was twice as large as Isfahan and was witnessing a great commercial revival. So, there was a clear division between the two towns which led to the first time prejudice towards Khalil at the expense of Ughrlu Mohammed, the first being born from a Turkoman mother and the second from a Kurdish mother who was not allowed access to the palace. This indicates how strong was Seljuk Shah's influence on Uzun Hasan which also led to a different way of thinking by Ughrlu to the effect that Seljuk Shah was conspiring against him (Jozafa et al 1381, 85, 88, 91 147, 250, 254. Tehrānī 1977, 1/245,265. 2/394,458, 468, 510, 524, 551.tahrī 1384, 110-111). After the fall of Trabzon to Sultan Mohammed Fatih, the tripartite alliance was annulled but Hasan further strengthened his relations with the West whose mastermind was Dspina (Jozafa et al 1381, 17,123,197.Minorsky 1351, A173-174). According to the Venetian ambassador, Cathrino, Dspina informed Hasan that Venice would send the Ak Koynlu leader weaponry, ammunitions and warships if engaged in war with the Ottomans. So, Dspina constantly urged her husband to fight the Ottomans since they had eliminated the Trabzon state and killed her uncle and her sons. However, she corresponded the Georgian king Gorgora to side by Uzun Hasan in his war against the Ottomans in addition to her contacts with Venice. This indicates she had pledged much earlier to make the most of her influence in the Ak Koynlu palace against the Ottomans (Tehrānī 1977, 2/567, 584 „Dā'irat al-M'ārlf 1991, 393-394). Dspina's mission virtually terminates when Hasan launches his attacks on the Ottoman territories in 1472. She only waited for the results. The Ak Koynlu looted Tokat and attacked Kahraman through Sivas. In 1473, Sultan Mohammed entered war with Hasan leading 100,000 troops. Here, Ughurlu Mohammed's role became more apparent and active who used extraordinary military tactics to kill around 20,000 Ottoman troops.

Hasan Romlo the historian states that Ughrlu asked his father to continue their attack on the Ottomans so as not to let them reorganize their army. Seljuk Shah was not satisfied with this suggestion and told Hasan that Ughrlu's intention was to lead the defeat of the Ottomans to help him secure a better political position.

Consequently, Hasan called on Ughurlu to come back and suspend the engagement for a few days but the great battle commenced on August 11th, 1473 which ended with the defeat of Ak Koynlu army and took the life of Hasan's son, Zainal but Ughurlu fought bravely. Noticeably, Khalil's role is next to nothing (Jozafa et al 1381, 306. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/771-772). The question here is: why did Khalil have no role in the battles while he was Ughrlu's rival to succeed their father's throne? Was her mother, Seljuk Shah, redressing the balance in the

palace? The subsequent events proved this serious and crucial role.

Thus, an apparent sensitivity was perceived between Ughrlu Mohammed and Seljuk Shah. Yet, now Ughrlu Mohammed has made a handsome capital only to aggravate her stepmother's jealousy.

The conflict ended in Seljuk Shah's favor. In 1474 Ughrlu Mohammed hears that his father was dead. Before making sure it was true or not, he hastened to capture Shiraz which translated as the rich city of Seljuk Shah's son. What Ughrlu Mohammed sought was to succeed his father to the throne, as he was one of the elder sons, a fact that was fairly natural (Jozafa et al 1381,80,88,91,251,315. Tehrānī 1977, 2/514. Hasan Rumlu 1384,2/764,804.Tahrī 1384, 111). On hearing this rebellion by his son, Hasan gathered a huge army and headed for Shiraz. When Ughrlu heard that, he fled Shiraz for Baghdad where his brother Maksoud welcomed him. He did not stay long there and moved to the Memluk state in Egypt. He demanded some military assistance from the Memluks which they gave him and this encouraged him to go and fight the Ak Koynlu forces. He was defeated and seriously injured. After a period of tranquility, he sent his mother to the palace of King Ashraf Kaytbay in Cairo to reconcile him with Uzun Hasan. The effort was not successful (Ibn Āja 1986 ,169.Ibn ayas 1960, 4/458-459, Awzun çarshlī 1369, 2/105). This made him reconsider his situation and decided to turn to the Ottomans which infuriated Hasan.

The Ottoman Sultan Fatih gladly received and embraced him the way Uzun Hasan received the Kahraman family. To further strengthen his ties with Ughrlu Mohammed, he gave him his niece Gawhar Hanim and appointed him as the governor of Sivas on the border with the Ak Koynlu.

The Venetian ambassadors have pointed out that in order to arrest his son, Uzun Hasan spread the news that he was dying and wanted to see him before he passed away, when his son comes, he is arrested and then killed (Jozafa et al 1381, 86,316,253 Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/804,807).

Thus, Seljuk Shah's dream came true. In 1477, after he returned from Georgia, Hasan fell ill and was confined to bed. Even though he had not died yet, Seljuk Shah felt that the obstacles in her way were already cleared (Faḍl Allāh 1382, 96).

It is so unusual that even though Seljuk Shah strove so hard to bring her son Khalil to the throne, as soon as her son assumed power, he decided to send off his mother and two brothers, Jacob and Joseph to Diyarbakir on grounds that she interfered in the political affairs of the state.

This move was a shortsighted one of Khalil since it gave an excuse to some leading figures in Diyarbakir to gather and reorganize to fight Khalil. At the end, Jacob rebelled against him and defeated Khalil's army somewhere between Khoyn and Marand. On July, 15th, 1478, they killed Khalil and Seljuk Shah and Jacob went back to the palace after spending only six months outside of it (Faḍl Allāh 1382, 154. Hasan Rumlu 1384, 2/811,819.Gaffarī 1343,253.Tahrī 1384, 124-125).

The Women's Religious Roles

Generally, Ak Koynlu palaces have attended to religion and cared for religious people. Hasan himself had many religious clerics and scholars around him who would give him advice on the Islamic jurisdiction and Prophet's statements as well as Koranic interpretation. Before he assumed power, he was keen on mingling with the Sheikh's and religious scholars (Budāq munshī 1378, 74-75). In the same manner, Seljuk Shah was passionate about religion.

When Hasan hears about Sheikh Dede, the famous leader of the religious order, he calls him to his palace and grants him

unconditional access to the palace and becomes his disciple; likewise, Seljuk Shah liked the Sheikh very much but it was Sultan Jacob who gave him a khanaqah (temple), which belonged to Jihanshah's mother Amina in Tabriz. The Sheikh had disciples not only from Tabriz but also from around the Ak Koyunlu state; it is also said that even Seljuk Shah herself took the order at the hands of the Sheikh (Hafiz Husan Karbalai 1383, 472,601-602. Al-'Azzāwi 1936,2/275. Hints 1377, 157).

An account given by the historian Fazlullah Rozihan runs: "In terms of charities and philanthropic activities including renovating the Grand Mosque of Tabriz and replacing the old Qiblah with a new one (1382,406).

Similarly, Dspina exercised a lot of influence on Uzun Hasan. His political marriage made him tolerant and lenient towards the Christians. This led Dspina to be more cooperative with the Christian followers under Ak Koyunlu authority. She was, as Zind states, the most pious among women of her era who regularly attended the Last Supper at the Greek church (Jozafa et al 1381, 228. Hints 1377, 158).

Conclusions

Uzun Hasan has had three wives, the first was Seljuk Shah from the Turkomen of Riha (Urfa) and had three sons: Khalil, Jacob and Joseph. The second wife was daughter of the Kurdish Devlet Shah of Ageel who became mother of Ughrlu Mohammed. The third wife was Dspina, daughter of Trbazon emperor from whom Hasan had one son, Maksoud, and three daughters. One of these daughters, Martha, later became Shah Ismael the Safavid's mother.

Hasan's motivation for marrying Seljuk Shah was to preserve the Turkoman breed while he married the Kurdish one due to his political relations within Diyarbakir province. His marriage to Dspina was owing to a formal agreement to protect the Trabzon Empire. Thus, these wives helped him to mingle and strengthen his ties with Turkmens, Kurds and the Christian populations of Diyarbakir province.

Seljuk Shah was constantly living with her husband at the Ak Koyunlu palace and was the most active one. However, his Kurdish wife had little chance, if any, to live in the palace as Turkmen managed it exclusively, particularly militarily. She established strong ties with military leaders, as she was Khalil's mother who was Hasan's elder son. She was directly hostile to Ughrlu Mohammed and never concealed this hostility, but Mohammed's mother's role is not felt in the palace affairs. When Seljuk Shah sent Ughrlu Mohammed off the palace to a distant province, she also managed to expel his mother and his sons, too. Finally she killed him by way of her military leaders in a well-planned conspiracy.

Seljuk Shah was an actual and exclusive ruler in the palace after clearing Ughrlu. Her authority was uncontested, but when her son Khalil assumed power, he sent her off the palace on the grounds that she interfered in the state affairs. However, when Jacob overthrew his brother, he brought his mother back to the palace in Tabriz.

Since Seljuk Shah served as the focal point in the Ak Koyunlu palace, everyone was consulting her and act upon her advice, but when she died in 1489, the palace became severely divided. She was an ardent fan of Sheikhs and the Order leaders.

As for Dspina, the Christian wife, she was keen on living among the Christian community and enhancing the Ak Koyunlu foreign relations with Venice and Trabzon. She was consistently trying to achieve on solitary aim which was to mobilize efforts to deter the Ottoman's threats to the Trabzon empire and the Christian world.

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