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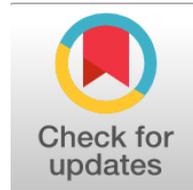
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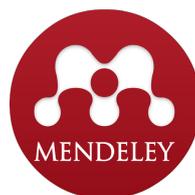
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Pre-Islamic Arab Political Marriages and Tribal Alliances

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Abstract

General Background: Marriage in pre-Islamic Arab society functioned as a central social institution linking tribes and consolidating authority. **Specific Background:** Historical narratives document numerous unions between kings, tribal leaders, and prominent families aimed at securing loyalty and stabilizing political relations. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite scattered references in classical sources, systematic discussion of political marriage alliances as structured mechanisms of tribal governance remains limited. **Aim:** This study examines forms, objectives, and consequences of political intermarriages among Arab tribes before Islam. **Results:** The findings show that such marriages created durable kinship bonds, facilitated negotiation, reduced intertribal hostilities, strengthened leadership legitimacy, and occasionally failed, leading to renewed conflict. They functioned as strategic instruments for alliance-building, territorial security, and consolidation of power. **Novelty:** The study synthesizes dispersed historical accounts into a coherent analytical framework that positions marriage as a deliberate political strategy rather than merely a social custom. **Implications:** Understanding these alliances clarifies patterns of authority formation and conflict resolution in pre-Islamic Arabia and provides deeper insight into the socio-political foundations inherited by early Islamic society.

Highlights:

- Marriage functioned as a political alliance mechanism.
- Kinship bonds structured tribal governance and authority.
- Alliances sometimes prevented conflict but could also fail.

Keywords: Pre-Islamic Arabia; Political Marriage; Tribal Alliances; Arab Kings; Kinship Networks

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Introduction

Among the marriages that took place before Islam was what happened between the king of Hira, Jadhima al-Abrash, who was a great king in Hira before the Al Mundhir, and he was also the one who killed a king of the giants, who was Amr Abu al-Zabba, the queen, and she was the daughter of Amr bin Zarb bin Hassan bin Udhayna bin al-Sumayda' bin Harthar bin Arib bin Mazin bin La'i bin Amalek bin Amalek bin al-Sumayda' bin al-Sawar bin Abd Shams bin Wael bin al-Ghauth bin Jidan bin Qatan bin Arib bin Zuhair bin Ayman bin al-Humaysa' bin Himyar al-Akbar, and the giants were the kings of the Levant, and al-Zabba was in a great and impregnable fortress, so Jadhima al-Abrash could not overcome her, so war broke out between them for a period of time. After that, because of the length of the war, al-Zabba sent to Jadhima asking him to marry her and to unite his kingdom with hers, and she was called al-Zabba' because of the abundance of her hair, so he agreed to what was asked of him, then he went to her, but her soldiers surrounded him and captured him and sent him to al-Zabba', who in turn killed him in revenge for the killing of her father at his hands [1].

Regarding lineage and its preference over women's beauty, Aktham ibn Sayfi said to his son, "My son, do not let women's beauty distract you from the purity of lineage, for noble marriages are a path to honor." Another example of such marriages is that which occurred between the king of Kinda, represented by his son Amr ibn Hujr, and Awf ibn Muhallim al-Shaybani, through his daughter Umm Iyas. Awf ibn Muhallim, her father, said, "Yes, I will give you both my daughters in marriage on the condition that I name her sons and marry her daughters." Amr ibn Hujr replied, "As for our sons, we will name them after ourselves, our fathers, and our uncles. As for our daughters, we will marry them to their equals among the kings. However, I will give her property in Kinda as her dowry and provide for the needs of her people; she will not refuse any of them their requests." Her father accepted this and gave her to him in marriage. We believe that these marriages aimed to gain power and protection, in addition to serving as a means of revenge and settling scores with other tribes, as well as strengthening alliances between Arab tribes [2].

Method

A. Forms of Political Marriage Alliances

Among the marriages that took place between the kings of Himyar, specifically between King Amr ibn Tubba' and the leader of Kinda, Amr ibn Hujr al-Kindi, was that of Amr ibn Tubba'. This marriage occurred after Amr ibn Tubba' killed his brother, Hassan ibn Tubba', and ascended the throne. Amr ibn Tubba' then married his niece, Hassan ibn Tubba', to Amr ibn Hujr, a man of wisdom and nobility. Arabs generally avoided marrying into the families of Himyarite kings. As a result of this marriage, Hassan's daughter gave birth to a son named al-Harith ibn Amr ibn Hujr al-Kindi. Another marriage occurred within the Kinda tribe when Amr ibn Hujr al-Kindi married his daughter, Umm al-Malik, to the king of al-Hayr, al-Aswad ibn al-Mundhir. She bore him al-Nu'man ibn al-Aswad ibn al-Mundhir, the sister of al-Harith ibn Amr ibn Hujr al-Kindi. Al-Nu'man's reign lasted four years. Also, there was the marriage between Al-Mundhir Dhu al-Qarnayn ibn Ma' al-Sama' and Hind bint al-Harith ibn 'Amr ibn Hujr Akil al-Murar al-Kindi. Al-Mundhir Dhu al-Qarnayn is Al-Mundhir ibn Imru' al-Qays, and Imru' al-Qays is also known as Muharriq. Al-Mundhir ibn Ma' al-Sama' married Hind bint al-Harith ibn 'Amr ibn Hujr Akil al-Murar al-Kindi [3].

The reason behind this marriage was that the Persian king Qubadh ibn Firuz ibn Yazdgerd ibn Bahram Gur ibn Yazdgerd al-Athim ibn Nishapur ibn Shapur Dhu al-Aktaf ibn Hurmuz ibn Narsi ibn Bahram al-Awsat ibn Bahram al-Akbar ibn Hurmuz al-Batal ibn Shapur ibn Ardashir Babakan, so named because of the many people named Babak in his era, ibn Sasan ibn Bahman ibn Isfadiar or Isfandiyar, who was nicknamed al-Shadid ibn Bishtashp. Qubadh was a weak king, so Rabi'ah revolted against his governor in al-Hirah during his reign. He is Al-Nu'man bin Al-Aswad bin Al-Mundhir bin Al-Nu'man bin Imru' Al-Qays bin Amr bin Imru' Al-Qays bin Amr bin Adi. He fled from them and sought refuge with Iyad, and he died with them. Al-Mundhir bin Ma' Al-Sama' had his son Amr bin Hind. Then Rabi'ah went to Kindah and they brought Al-Harith bin Amr bin Hujr, the one who eats bitter things, and they made him king over Bakr bin Wa'il. They gathered with him and fought alongside him, and he became victorious over what the Arabs inhabited of the land of Iraq. In contrast, Qubadh refused, because of his weakness, to provide Al-Mundhir with an army. So Al-Mundhir wrote to Al-Harith bin Amr bin Hujr and said to him, "I am not among my people, and you are more deserving of taking care of me" [4].

So he transferred him to him. Then after that, Al-Harith married his daughter Hind to Al-Mundhir bin Ma' Al-Sama', and she bore him three sons (Amr, Mundhir, and Qabus) [5]. One of the purposes of marriage among the Arabs before Islam was to attract those who were distant and to reconcile enemies through marriage, so that the estranged would become friendly and the enemy would become an ally. Marriage between two people could also lead to harmony between the two tribes and loyalty between the two clans [6].

Similarly, among the marriages was that which took place between Hashim ibn Abd Manaf and the Khazraj tribe, when Hashim married the daughter of Amr ibn Labid al-Khazraji. [7] This occurred when Hashim was on a trading journey to Syria and arrived in Medina, staying with Amr ibn Labid. He saw his daughter Salma and proposed marriage to her. Her father agreed to her marriage to Hashim, and she bore him Abd al-Muttalib, whose name was Shaybah al-Hamd [1]. This marriage was important because the Khazraj tribe was one of the strong tribes in Medina. It is mentioned that when Hashim fell asleep at home, he saw in a dream a person urging him to marry Salma bint Amr al-Khazrajiyah because of her chastity and purity, and that he would be blessed with a son from her who would be the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace). Hashim woke up from his sleep, terrified, and brought his cousins and his brother al-Muttalib and told them what he had seen in his dream. His brother al-Muttalib said to him, "O son of my mother, the woman is well-known among her people, great in herself, and she has perfected chastity and moderation. She is Salma bint Amr bin Labid bin Hadath bin

Zaid bin Amer bin Ghanm bin Mazen bin al-Najjar." It is known that these marriages occur because of the strength of the tribe or because of obtaining the protection and strength that the tribes that intermarry with each other need [8].

They are people of chastity and hospitality. One of the accounts of the bravery of Banu Najjar is that Abd al-Muttalib handed over a slave belonging to his father. Nawfal ibn Abd Manaf [9], who was Abd al-Muttalib's uncle, confronted him in his courtyard. Nawfal seized him, so Abd al-Muttalib (also known as Abu al-Harith) went to a man from Quraysh to seek their help against his uncle Nawfal. They told him, "We have no involvement in this matter between us and your uncle." Therefore, Abd al-Muttalib wrote to his maternal uncles, Banu Najjar, describing what had happened to him. Abu As'ad ibn 'Udas al-Najjari [10] set out with eighty riders until he reached al-Abtah [11]. Abd al-Muttalib went out to meet him and said, "Where is the resting place, uncle?" Abu As'ad replied, "No, not until I meet Nawfal." Then he approached and stood before him with elders from Quraysh. He drew his sword and said to Nawfal, "By the Lord of this House, you will return his courtyard to our nephew, or I will fill my sword with your blood!" Nawfal replied, "By the Lord of this House, I will return his courtyard to him." He called upon those present to witness this. After that, Banu Najjar performed the Umrah. And they left [12].

One of the reason for the intermarriages that occur between tribes, individuals, or even kings stems from the formation of strong family ties and tribal alliances that bind Arab tribes together, aiming to connect them through marriage and lineage [13]. Intermarriages were numerous, sometimes occurring between kings and leaders of Arab tribes, and other times between the leaders of the people and their masters. Among these intermarriages was what occurred between Al-Harith bin Al-Salil Al-Asadi and Al-Qama bin Hafsa Al-Ta'i, when Al-Harith visited Al-Qama, who was his ally, and his gaze fell upon his daughter, whose name was Al-Rabab, and she was one of the most beautiful women of her time, so he was impressed by her and asked her father for her hand in marriage, and he said to him, "I have come to you as a suitor, and the suitor may be married, the seeker may attain his goal, and the one who desires may succeed". Alqama said to him, "You, O Harith, are worthy and generous." Then Alqama turned back to her mother and said to her, "Harith bin Al-Salil is the leader of his people in terms of lineage, position, and house. He has come to us to ask for our daughter Al-Rabab's hand in marriage. He should not leave us except with his request fulfilled. So, give your daughter permission for herself in his matter." Her mother said to her, "O my daughter, which of the men do you prefer: the old, wise, virtuous, and energetic man, or the handsome, languid, and ambitious young man" [15,14]. The ambitious maid said to her, "The young man changes you, and the old man provides for you, and the virtuous old man who gives much is not like the young man who gives much." Al-Rabab said to her mother, "O mother, the girl loves the young man as the shepherds love the elegant pasture." Her mother said, "O my daughter, the young man is very veiled and very reproachful, and the old man is gentle and does not shout much." She said, "O mother, I am afraid that the old man will soil my clothes, wear out my youth, and make my peers gloat over me" [3]. Her mother and daughter continued to talk at length until the mother prevailed over her daughter's opinion, so she married her to Al-Harith bin Al-Salil for five camels and a servant with a thousand dirhams. He accepted and consummated the marriage with her, then he traveled with her to his people [16].

Result and Discussion

A. The Various Opinions Regarding Political Marriages

The researcher sees these intermarriages as part of establishing tribal alliances and forming a strong union among them. Among the intermarriages that took on a political character was the one that occurred between Qusay ibn Kilab ibn Murrah ibn Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy ibn Ghalib ibn Fihir ibn Malik ibn al-Nadr ibn Kinanah al-Qurashi and Hulayl ibn Hubshiyah al-Khuza'i. Qusay was a shrewd man [4] and of noble lineage. He asked Hulayl for his daughter Hubba bint Hulayl's hand in marriage. Hulayl knew of Qusay's noble lineage and desired him, so he gave his daughter in marriage to him [17].

At that time, Hulayl was among those responsible for the Kaaba and the affairs of Mecca. Qusay then stayed with his father-in-law (Hulayl), and she bore him four sons: Abd al-Dar, Abd Manaf, Abd al-Uzza, and Abd ibn Qusay. When his descendants multiplied, his wealth increased, and his honor grew, Hulayl died. Qusay then saw that he was more deserving of the Kaaba and Mecca than Khuza'ah and Banu Bakr, and that Quraysh were the descendants of Ishmael, son of Abraham. So Qusay spoke to men from Quraysh and Kinanah and called upon them to expel Khuza'ah and Bakr from Mecca. When they accepted his call and supported him, he brought them and their followers with him. Qusay's people, Banu al-Nadr, came and expelled Banu Khuza'ah from Mecca. Hulayl was the last to be in charge of the House (the Kaaba). When he became ill, he entrusted the guardianship of the House to his daughter, Hubba. She said to him, "I know that I am not able to open and close the door." He replied, "I will entrust the opening and closing to a man who can do it for you." He entrusted it to Abu Ghubshan, who was Salim ibn Amr ibn Buwayy ibn Malikan ibn [18].

But Qusai was then able to buy the guardianship of the House from him with a wineskin [19] and a stick, but Khuza'a rejected what had happened to the House, so they multiplied against Qusai and fought him, but Khuza'a was defeated and the attack took them [20] until it almost wiped them out. When Khuza'a saw what had happened to them, they left Mecca. Some of them gave away their homes, some sold them, and some settled in. Then Qusai was able to take over the affairs of the House and the affairs of Mecca and rule over it [21]. The Arab-Arab intermarriages did not end, but their reasons multiplied. This is the tribe of Banu Jusham and Banu Shaiban, who were mixed in one house [22], and out of the principle of unity and fear that they would be separated, Kulayb [23] married Jalila bint Murra bin Shaiban bin Tha'laba, who was the sister of Jassas bin Murra [3,4]. Marriages between Arab tribes may be to ward off danger or competition between the two tribes, in addition to forming an alliance between them aimed at strengthening alliances between the intermarried tribes.

Kulayb had a son named al-Hajras, whom his maternal uncle Jassas raised and married to his daughter. Despite this

marriage, a war known as the Basus War broke out between the two sides, resulting in much bloodshed. After the war nearly annihilated both tribes, they eventually made peace [24]. Furthermore, intermarriages occurred between the Thaqif tribe and the Quraysh and Kinanah tribes. These marriages helped to halt the bloodshed between the two sides through the marriage of Mas'ud ibn Mu'attib ibn Malik ibn Ka'b ibn 'Amr ibn Sa'd ibn 'Awf ibn Qays (of the Thaqif tribe) to Subay'ah bint 'Abd Shams ibn 'Abd Manaf. During the second Fijar War, Mas'ud saw Subay'ah weeping and asked her why she was crying. She replied, "Tomorrow, some of my people will be harmed." He told her, "Whoever enters your tent is safe." So she began to add pieces of cloth and other things to make it more spacious. When the two armies lined up, Subay'ah came out and called out loudly, "The enemy! The enemy!" When Qays was defeated by the Quraysh, some of Qays sought refuge in Subay'ah's tent, and Harb ibn Umayyah granted them protection. Intermarriage was instrumental in halting the bloodshed of war between Arab tribes, including the tribes of Abs and Dhubyah. One such intermarriage took place between al-Harith ibn Awf [25], one of the Arab leaders, and the daughter of Aws ibn Haritha ibn Lam al-Ta'i [1].

One day, al-Harith said to one of his companions, "Do you think I would propose marriage to any Arab and be refused?" His companion replied, "Yes." Al-Harith asked, "Who is it?" The companion answered, "Aws ibn Haritha ibn Lam al-Ta'i." Therefore, al-Harith told his servant, "Mount," and they rode until they reached Aws ibn Haritha, who was in his territory. When Aws saw al-Harith, he greeted him warmly. Al-Harith replied, "And to you." Aws asked, "What is your purpose?" Al-Harith said, "I have come to ask for your hand in marriage." Aws turned away without speaking to him and went to his wife, who was from the tribe of Abs [26].

B. The Objectives of Political Marriages

It is certain that intermarriage aimed to strengthen relations between Arab tribes, as well as to calm tensions, improve relations among their members, and spare the intermarried tribes the ravages of war [27].

There were also intermarriages between tribal figures, including Sa'sa'ah ibn Mu'awiyah [19] and the wise Arab, 'Amir ibn al-Zarb [29], through his daughter 'Amrah, the mother of 'Amir ibn Sa'sa'ah. 'Amir said to him, "O Sa'sa'ah, you have come to me to buy my very lifeblood, so have mercy on my son. I will accept you or reject you. A noble man is worthy of a noble man, and a good husband is worthy of a father after a father. I married you to him for fear that I would not find anyone like you." Then he said, "O people of 'Adwan, your noblest woman has left your midst without desire or fear. I swear, were it not for the division of fortunes according to lineage, the first would not have left the last anything to live on." [30]

Arab intermarriages were diverse. Among them was the marriage between Labid ibn 'Anbasah al-Ghassani and al-Zahra, the sister of Kulayb. This marriage was political, aimed at controlling the Arab tribes and making them subservient to the kings of Yemen. However, this marriage failed and led to the death of Labid, the Yemeni leader, at the hands of Kulayb and his men from the Rabi'ah tribes. The reason for his death was that Labid had married Kulayb's sister, whose name was... Al-Zahra and Kulayb had broken the covenant between them and Labid. When Labid learned of Kulayb's actions, he returned, overcome by drunkenness, and lost his senses. He began cursing and insulting Rabi'ah, Kulayb's father, and threatening her. His wife came out and calmed him down. He said, "Do you know that anyone would dare to defy the king?" His wife, Al-Zahra, replied, "Yes, Kulayb fears nothing, is intimidated, and pays no heed to the king's armies." One day, a verbal argument broke out between him and his wife, Al-Zahra. He became angry and said to her, "You are a slave, you are my servant, and you think your people will refuse to obey me?"

The researcher believes that marriage alliances between tribes were part of an effort to create a strong alliance encompassing the most numerous and powerful tribes. Marriage also served as a means to end bloody conflicts between tribes or to form alliances against a common enemy, strengthening ties, expanding influence, securing protection, and establishing political and military alliances.

Conclusion

The researcher believes that marriages or alliances between Arab tribes, or between kings and tribal leaders, were intended to ensure the loyalty of tribal elders and to prevent fighting between the intermarried parties. Such alliances also contributed to strengthening political stability and consolidating power by creating durable bonds of kinship and mutual obligation. Moreover, these marital ties facilitated negotiation, conflict resolution, and cooperation, thereby reducing the likelihood of prolonged tribal disputes.

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