

A New Reflection on the Parthian Governing Structure; Feudalism or Central Government? (Based on Archaeological Evidence)

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Abstract

One of the most controversial issues in the historical period of Iran has been the governance style of Parthians, which due to the lack of evidence and relying just on the works of Greek and Roman historians, most researchers believe that the government system in this period has been a decentralized system run in the form of feudalism or feudality. If archaeological evidence shows that there was a centralized system in this period. To answer the question that the Parthian system of government based on archaeological evidence can be considered as a centralized system? The present research, initially, deals with the definitions and features of vast centralized and decentralized systems which have not been addressed in any other research so far. Then, the characteristics of a feudalistic and federal system are discussed. Next, through a comparative study of the mentioned definitions with the evidence remained of this period, a thorough analysis is carried out regarding the nature of Parthians' style of governance. Accordingly, it can be argued that the presence of large families and its impact on the governance style exerted by the kings has not been specific to the Parthian period, and the use of kings' names for semi-autonomous regions has been merely based on the perception of Greek and Roman historians and the type of governance they assumed for this period and hence it cannot be regarded as a convincing reason to indicate that the Parthian governance was based on a feudalistic system or regional election of kings. Using a comparative-analytical method, this study investigates features of the mentioned government systems and compares them with the archaeological evidence remained of the Parthian period. Also, by exploring the feudal system and according it to the economic system of the mentioned period, it is revealed that the Parthian government had a legislative system; and with reference to kings' power, it seems that the central legislative system may have acted either in a vast centralized or vast decentralized manner that in the vast decentralized system the political and legislative factors have in turn been centralized.

Keywords: Parthian Government, Vast Centralized, Decentralized, Feudality, Feudalism.

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