

## The Religion Manifestation in the Mongol Era Society

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**Abstract:** The religious situation of Iran faced with major challenges in the seventh and eighth centuries AH contemporaneous with the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries AD. Tatar tribes led by Genghis Khan had been succeeded to occupy completely east of Islamic lands (darol Islam) to Shamat and Egyptian border, by the use of disappointing and frustrating spirits dominating the society at that time. Therefore, the society had faced with severe social crisis, the sample of which is completely clear in the religion situation of that time. Although, at the time of Mongols, and especially the centralized government of the Ilkhanids- by the tolerance of the Mongolian, Islam was greatly expanded, and many scholars appeared in the fields of jurisprudence, mysticism, and theology, the progression was in another way in the hearts of the masses of people. Due to the cultural disintegration, a kind of protracted hypocrisy and pretence had been rooted among the people. Hypocrisy had become the dominant aspect of people's many everyday behaviors. Furthermore, the appearance of superstition was regarded as another aspect of this cultural and social disintegration. Nevertheless, one of the main reasons of this matter should be analyzed through the people's look at the issue of fate. Iranians- most of the statesmen, troops, and urban classes were firmly believed who acted completely passively. This issue facilitated the Mongol's invasion, and increased this kind of proceeds when they were dominated.

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### Introduction

When someone talks about the social situation of one society, inevitably, he should analyze the issues and factors that have the most roles in occupying the minds of that society people. In fact, every society- full, or hungry, -hopeful, or hopeless, pays attention to ideology and wealth, respectively. meanwhile, the various properties of the society including amount of welfare, hope, tendency to knowledge and science, credibility of lack of credibility to the superstitions, can only change people's approach to these two basic issues. This article aims at studying and investigating the role of religion among the population, free from the religious conflicts, and the type of religion, including Shi and Sunni, through analyzing the sources of Mongol era. In fact, although the scholars have discussed this issue many times, the issue that is highly important in the present article is the social and folk influences of religion, and not the issues that have been presented by the religious leaders. In the era under discussion, that includes the years of 616 to 736 AH, this concept faced with significant developments in comparison with the era preceding it. The invasion of Mongol, and basic the radical consequences of which caused that the Iranian society was basically changed. These changes, except from the positive or negative charges that one can consider for it, caused that different classes to have basically revision in their beliefs (Thomas T. Allsen. 2001). It can be stated that more than destroying the buildings and the urban

system, Mongols destroyed the foundations of our thoughts. The charge that caused Iranian society faces with extreme value dichotomy during those years. So that, on one hand, we see that some organizations such as Ayyaran, and Fatyan to insist on their moral doctrines, and on the other hand, we see the prevalence of moral deformity in the forms of passels of prostitutes, whores, thefts, and beggars in the society. Moreover, the prevalence of mysticism in its extremist form, and on the other hand, the prevalence of prostitution in the society of Iran can show this social imbalance.

In fact, the Mongol's massacre caused the widespread social disintegration in the cities conquered. This issue created a kind of real imbalance in our urban life that can be seen in different layers of the society. Having this introduction in mind, the writer is going to scrutinize the folk religion in Mongol era.

### Foreword

Since Mongols were not willing to promulgate any special religion and their seizure of the world did not have any firm ideological history, the Islamic notion and Muslim ritual grew fast in the governing period of these neglected wildernesses geographically, and reached around this vast empire. Joveini talks about the events of Ögedei Khan and believes that "Flags of Religion Mohammadi rushed around the blasphemy land, which has not even smelled the scent of Islam (Saunders, J.J. 1971). However, the most

aspect of religion among folk was in the scholar's sermon meeting. When an eloquent scholar was found, his meetings that were held mostly in the biggest mosque (Jameh Mosque) of the city were full of people. The explorers who visited Iran at that time, surprised at these meetings and high numbers of participants. The samples of these meetings could be found in the presence of Imam Sharaf Aldin Mousa, the teacher of Tostar School. His religious meeting was "the meeting of knowledge, preaching, and blessing."<sup>2</sup> People overtook to repent at his presence, and he got a promise from the repentances, and shaved their hair. Although, this kind of repentance hypnosis had mostly a theme of Christianity, people were such interested, that in one day fifteen scholars and two of Tostar folks had come to repent to his presence (Saunders, J.J. 1971). Women were the permanent customers of such meetings. They benefited, and gathered in the preacher's meetings to listen to his words several days of a week. Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays were the days that had the most number of customers, so that a thousand or even two thousand women in the warm seasons of the year gathered for the religious meeting in these three days. Such a populated gathering of women has been unexampled at that time (Nicolle, David. 1998). Similar to the residents of other cities, people of Baghdad started the Fridays by going to the tombstone of one of the dignitaries of the city such as Imam Abu Hanife, Imam Hanbal, Shebli, Sari Saghati, Beshr Hafi, Davood Taie, Jonaid Baghdadi, and the like. In the days of the week, people went to the tombstones of the other scholars and the dignitaries who were buried in this city (Saunders, J.J. 2001, Howorth, Henry H. 1927).

In these meetings, the preacher had such an effect in the hearts of people that people died with a cry, and such an event took place for a dervish named Sayah in Sheikh Majd Eldin Ghoonavi's meeting, one of the scholars of the Minor Asia. In these meetings first, Quran was recited completely, the readers had pleasant voice. Food, fruit, and sweets were served to the audiences, and at the final stage of the meeting, the audiences listened to the preacher. These ceremonies were mostly between the afternoon and night prayers (Asr and Isha) (Preiss, Amitai. 1995). So that it can be concluded that people were free after the Asr (afternoon) prayer and went to such meetings with their families. Moreover, it could be guessed that the working time has used to be since morning until the afternoon (Asr) prayer.

Furthermore, men and women's clothing can indicate their religious tendencies and the rate of religion influence among the classes of people. Although there was no certain state law about the women's hijab, people respected it automatically.

Even through the content of Marco Polo's stories, it can be implied that in Baghdad, Christian women wore hijab and disrespecting this issue was regarded as a big sin<sup>10</sup>. Of course, as it was mentioned, although wearing hijab was not because of the rules that were implemented by the dominant ethics on the society, it was not the same in all the provinces of Ilkhanids government (Bosworth C.E. 1996). In fact, the women residing in the regions of "Belad Al-Rum" (the Minor Asia) who had mostly believed in Hanafi religion did not wear hijab at all (Mernissi F. 1987, Atwood, Christopher P. 2004). In those regions, due to the traffic of Roman bondwomen, the ethical situation was relatively discouraging.

Furthermore, people's respect and devotion to the knowledgeable and wise men can be regarded as another aspect of religion in people's hearts. Even if many years had been passed from the death of Sufis and religious scholars, they were present in the most hidden dimensions of people's lives, and people's alms and charities were permanently devoted and given up to their souls. Among these people, one can refer to Sheikh Abu Es'hagh Kazerooni whose high and respectable position had been reached to even India and China, so that no ship would come from those lands, unless they had brought thousand Dinars alms and charities for his convent<sup>3</sup>.

Another point is paying attention to the concept of Mahdaviat in this period. In fact, a huge wave of willing Mahdi was created in this era that was mostly promoted through Shiites and Sofia. The presence of different sects of Sofia by relying on the presence of Mahdi became one of the most significant issues of the history of Iran since then<sup>4</sup>. Shi were willing to practice their beliefs in Shi residing cities such as Najaf, and Helleh, so that Ibn Batooteh's story about the behavior of Helleh Opponents in acceleration for Mahdi's presence is very interesting (Trans, Gibb, H.A.R. (1929)). Anyway, the issue of Mahdaviat seemed reluctant even in an extreme form. People were introduced themselves as Mahdi, and were suppressed after a while. Ibn Batooteh, tells the story of a worker tribe in Rehleh, who has been called opponents and Shi by him. These people did not pray, and did not perform any of Islam practices; that they were very rude and illiterate people. After they rioted under the flag of Mahdaviat, they failed severely, and were completely suppressed at the end (Gibb, H.A.R.; Beckingham, C.F. trans. and eds. (1958, 1962, 1971, 1994, 2000)). However, in the whole period; religion flew in the bed of pretense and duplicity. In a society with the peculiarities of Mongol era society, where most of the values and the norms have either become ineffective or have been forgotten due to the foundations and the cornerstones of the society that

had been broken, such concepts as duplicity and pretense had reached the highest level (Prawdin, Michael, 1967). This pretense could be presented both in the form of its religious and juridical concepts, and in the formal levers of power-government, and state. Appearance of religious fraud - both in the tribe of Sufis, and among the scholars and preachers, was an example of the first type of duplicity and pretense; an issue that was reflected by Hafiz Shirazi's ghazalyat very well at the end of the eighth century. Resorting to the governors of Ilkhanids by the bribes and flippancy are some of the indicators (Haworth, Henry Hoyle, Sir, 1876). Among the people who were objected to this issue harshly, one can refer to a great Sufi of that era - Seif Aldin Farghani, and the other Zakani, the owner of the critical essay of mouse and cat. Most of Seif Aldin Farghani's ballades criticize the social situations, and especially the duplicity and pretense of the people versed in law, expressly. For example, after composing some verses in praising the new Muslim king, Ghazan Khan, composes as the following:

You've been converted to Islam  
 And there's no non-Muslim in these Muslim land  
 Governors are the kings  
 The mystics have no land and clothing  
 Scholars' convent has no rug and ceiling, and school  
 Is without water and bread  
 Without roof and door  
 Is both the healing of people oppressed  
 And both the food of dervishes' spirit  
 The poison of death  
 The torture of life  
 They wear stole like poor people  
 They ask for a bread like beggars  
 The gods of property  
 And the guards of gold  
 Of course, in order to distance the sword of accusation from him, the Sheikh starts praising the king:  
 I'm not the one who praises the king  
 I advised him

I did not say the good and evil of nobody  
 And I didn't praise and dispraise anybody  
 For whim-wham, and for gold and silver  
 Seif's ironic and sarcastic language is completely clear in different places of his Diwan, especially among his artistic ballades. His aggression and objection to the deeds of different classes of the society - from political leaders, judges, and ministers to the sham Sufis and low-class artisans restates the ugly face of duplicity and pretense in different dimension of the society in those days.

This unacceptable spirit was mostly reinforced by the dominant social flows. For example, in many cases, the cities of Khorasan regions made people pray by force of whip and financial fine. In Kharazm, everyone who was not observed in the lines of prayer

was whipped. Besides, he was fined for five dinars. Therefore, a whip was hanged up in Jameh mosque (the grand mosque) for this purpose (Lattimore, Owen, 1963). Thus, it is not unlikely that people use any chance that helps them to get free from the chaotic situation of that time. It is a natural property that leads people to a kind of inferiority in seeking the livelihood, unconsciously. As the writer of Vassaf History states:

*It's surprising, the Mongols put a horse on a piece of wood (it is called ghoilghan) so that hungry birds ate from that and became full. However, they do their best in destroying the practices of Muhammad (PBUH) and in destroying the alms and charities, and spend everything for their pleasures, dignity, and respect unfairly.*

Najm Aldin Razi talks about the social situation of that time in his Sufism book - Mersad Alebad, as well. He accuses his people to the ignorance and apostatizing, and gravitating to the world, and he calls down them as the following:

*From the extremity of ignorance, and merging in the world, and ignorance of death, the doomsday account, oblation, penalty, and resurrection, they are seemingly aware of the worldly life, and they are unaware of the doomsday*

In this way, a kind of painful complains can be observed in all the sources and dissertations that have been written and edited at that time, and perhaps, few books can be found that is written by the fair writer, and does not complain from the condition of people (besides the statesmen).

Poor the faithful and knowledgeable man who died and poor people who lived and didn't understand the taste of real life. The dissension and duplicity had many customers, and surprisingly, the morality and ethics that were worn out by the governors; the face of bounty and kindness became black

### **Religion: Ascending or Descending**

According to this description, and contrary to many writings that know the religious situation in this era ascending through Mongolian tolerance and appearance of some religious dignitaries, it should be mentioned that what has been manifested from the religion among the folk classes, showed a kind of religious failure. At this time, religion was strictly passive and was involved with people's superstitions and false beliefs. The literature that knows the religious situation of that era, being developed by the appearance of prominent individuals in the fields of religious jurisprudence, mysticism, and theology, in fact has paid attention to the religious situation in the religious and political leaders' opinions, otherwise, what should be called folk's religion had been regressed increasingly. This issue can be regarded as

one reason of being defeated by Mongols. Moreover, it can be regarded as the consequence and the result of being defeated by Mongols (Shirendev, B(1981)) . Both issues can be followed and analyzed in people's attention to the issue of fate.

In the years before Tatar invasion, people believed extremely in fate and inevitable judgment of God in the process of people's life. They went to visit the forecaster and astronomer, and performed passively in facing with events, and happenings. Seclusion and isolation in the forms of vast groups of Sufis is a kind of this mentality. None of the sources of this era can be found that has not been paid attention to the issue of fate. Even the system and foundations that should have tried to override these beliefs had been trapped. The political leaders and worriers carried the spirit of disappointment and frustration against these currents. Mohammad Kharazm Shah's attitude and his answer to the precautionary war with Khan Mongol on his son's insistence confirm this poin (Sevim A., and Bosworth, C. E. 1998). When Jalal Aldin advised his father continuously not to disperse the troops against Mongols, and if you are afraid of war and are willing to escape, transfer the troops to me so that I fight against them. "His father replied that fate good and evil has a determined value, and the weakness and strength of all affairs have certain extent, and in the page of fate, nothing will remain hidden forever. And the condition that has been occurred, has only one flavor, and the uninformed people devise desperately, and do not know the consequence of that, and they do not know which kingdom would be formed by the fate, and the winner cannot be described<sup>1</sup>." Moreover, Sultan used to cling to the meaning "the fortune star is evil (Stephen Turnbull). This spirit had a complete current in the whole society, so that the writer of Tarikh-e-Jahangosha uses this verse and similar phrase frequently; You give the domain to whoever you want, and get it from whoever you want<sup>3</sup>. The spirit of submission and conferment of the affairs had been turned into supernatural currents, everybody had got disappointed, and nobody could resist, and even this fear and apprehension prevailed until the dark points of hillbillies and the worriers of Islam troops. In a letter to the caliph of Baghdad and kings of Sham and Rome, Sultan Jalal Aldin Kharazmshah had confessed this point explicitly that "the mass army including Tatar army rushes and no castle will be remained and no city, and despair and frustration will penetrate in men's heart( Barthold, V. V.1962).

Fear of Mongols had made people so much disappointed that "people had been affected so much in this relentless scourge that the one, who had been captive, seemed more relax than the other who had sat in his house<sup>1</sup>." At the end, people found their attempts

to fight against Mongols ineffective. The border cities were mostly destroyed. Even hiding in crypts and going out of cities and taking refuge in the countryside did not guarantee their survival. The one who faced with Mongols' invasion knew well that whatever he did, his fate would be death or captive. Moreover, as Genghis Khan names himself as the whip of God's wrath<sup>2</sup>, people believed that he and the event that have been happened to them, is the fate that could not be stopped. The number of Mongol army and the number of troops that have been gathered behind the gates of cities were not significant; however, what was important was that "Mongol has invaded." This sentence was enough that the hundred and twenty thousand troops know themselves loser beforehand. The word Mongol was passive automatically. This kind of people's reaction reminds the psychological theory "learned helplessness." The meaning of "learned helplessness" indicates the most negative mood of the concept. "learned helplessness" mentions this point that attempts are not related to the progression. The people in who this mood has been grown think that whatever they do, they will not be succeeded. Their belief is on the basis that events are not under their control at all<sup>1</sup>.

People of Iran had the same spirit in the years of 616 AH until the end of Holakouee conquests and continued for the following years. They were completely sure that whatever they do, they will lose. Unfortunately, Imams of the religion reinforced this belief as well. Scholars and Sufis, who were the leaders of the society, were the propagator of this spirit among different classes of people. It is quoted that in the beginning of Mongol government; a righteous man became governor in Khorasan. "The people of Khorasan praised the governor in front of Sheikh Sa'ad Aldin Hamoy's. Sheikh said: "he will be deposed very soon. They said Oh Sheikh "in these days that the people around the world are caught by the governors' oppression, God has given such a righteous governor; we should praise God for this. Why the Sheikh says he will be deposed soon? He said: "He is against the real fate!<sup>3"</sup>

This submission spirit continued for years after the establishment of Ikhanids and after collapsing it, until the beginnings of Timor's invasion in this negative form. In literature and daily conversation of people, many words could be found that showed this issue that even Ghazan Khan issued one of his commands (Boyle, J. A. 1968). At this time, whenever, Emirs and the troops of Sultan's army were defeated "they said that we did our best; however, God determined our fate to be defeated, and these words were spoken by everybody. Everywhere in major and minor affairs, these words were spoken (Eisma, D. 2006).

It was only one side of the coin. It means that what we called Mongol invasion was the consequence of disappointing spirit and widespread submission. However, seen from the other side of the coin, this invasion reinforced this spirit as well. Mongols have been succeeded very well to make the residents of the defeated society understand that they are real losers, losers cannot do anything, and they only have to be obedient. This issue could be understood very well in the society, that people are not responsible for anything. Mongols were the owner of people's life, property, reputation, honor, and in one word, their destiny; therefore, according to these issues it can be stated that after establishing, Mongols grew the spirit of defeat increasingly. The spirit razed the Iranian society to the ground so that the dominant tribe could supply their interests much more.

#### Conclusion

1. Contrary to many writings and literature that believed the Iranian society has had a growing trend, historical narratives indicate that due to cultural poverty and military defeat of the Islam world and especially that of Iranians from Mongols, and consequently the overthrown that occurred in the layers and classes of the society, had increased duplicity and pretense in that society. The representation of these duplicities could be searched in both the relationship with Sharia practices and both in the relationship with rulers.
2. Many people violated the morality to achieve higher positions.
3. Moreover, different religious groups including Sufis, jurists, and Fetyan could be found that led people to Sharia, morality, besides of their applications and material interests.
4. The spirit of fate was the dominant spirit of the Iranian society in the society of Mongols era. This issue both facilitated the Mongols invasion and caused their dominance of the social life of that era.

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