

The Establishment of the Ashoora Movement and the Role of Azerbaijan in It

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ABSTRACT: The present article discusses the symbol of Shiism, introduced as Ashoora movement. Pointing out the historical trend of Ashoora movement, the current study recognizes the Al-e-Buye dynasty as the initiator of this symbol, and considers the Saffavids as its founder. Further, it seeks to discover what role does Azerbaijan, in particular, Ardabil has played in establishment of the Shiism symbol. Moreover, it acknowledges that in the Saffavids' era, clergymen took a central part in the promotion of Shiism culture and made enormous efforts to purify this culture from misleading statements.

Keywords: Ashoora movement; mourning culture; Al-e-Buye; Saffavids; Shiism; Azerbaijan; emigrant scholars

INTRODUCTION

With regard to the historical trend in the Islamic world, Ashoora movement had been the most effective factor in Shiites' survival; this movement had considerable influences on spreading the Shia religion throughout Iran, especially across Azerbaijan. Its effectiveness in an extensive way is evident under Al-e-Buye and Saffavid rules. In this line, the study of the history of mourning for Ashoora movement is of high worth. Bringing up the first person of Saffavid dynasty, Azerbaijan, and at the very core, Ardabil has a significant part in creating the Shiism culture. It should not be ignored that developing and establishing affection for Ahl al-Bayt (family of the prophet Muhammad) has been developed in Ardabil. In order to explain this circle, the history of mourning is needed to be reviewed briefly to clarify the effect of mourning in the creation of the Shiism culture.

It must be mentioned that during the holy Imams' epoch, Shiites and lovers of Ahl al-Bayt, getting reminded and encouraged by them, would engage in lamentation in each anniversaries of Imam Hossein's martyrdom. This move was extended more with the appearance of Shiite Al-e-Buye dynasty, when lamentations were held publicly everywhere. Over several centuries, this practice was turned into the Shia's' slogan. Furthermore, in recent decades, it became more widespread by the formation of Saffavid's rule in Iran.

Attention To The Ashoora Movement During Imams' Era

In the process of the Shiism culture development, in the time of Imam Sadigayn, when the Omayyad rule had been debilitated, and finally overthrown by Abbasside, and the new rule which had not made its government's foundation strong, did not explicitly voice its opposition to the Ahl al-Bayt or the Shia, lamentation ceremonies of the Ashoora movement was considered as a religious ceremony, as well. However, when Abbasside became more powerful, they firmly opposed Shiites and symbols of Shiism, as a result, lamentation for Imam Hossein was prevented from further expansion. Even, Motavakkel Abbasi destroyed Imam Hossein's shrine, and prohibited visiting his holiness. Just in Imam Reza's time the ground had been laid for the Shia; Imam was sorrowful during the whole Moharram decade. In this period of time, he would arrange mourning rituals, and if a poet or an elegist was present in the ceremonies, he would command him to sing some laments for Imam Hossein.

On the other hand, after Imam Reza's period, i.e., the third century of Hegira, the Imams were prevaricating most of the time, and lamentation for Imam Hossein was not possible for them. Nevertheless, these ceremonies became widespread among Shiites as the time passed; some people gained the required skills for lamentation, and some got famous in this field.

The Ahl al-Bayt advised the affectionate and the Shia not to do business in the day of Ashoora, and try to look sorrowful. As Imam Reza stated to be the case,

if a person makes an effort for the satisfaction of his needs in the day of Ashoora, God will meet his requirements in this world as well as the afterlife world, and if a person choose Ashoora as a day for grieving and crying, God will make the judgment day a day of happiness and joy for him, and if a person choose Ashoora as a day for blessing (breadwinning) and storing worldly belongings, God will deprive him from blessing (Manageb, p. 89).

Correspondingly, it is clarified that the Imams identified the act of lamentation for Imam Hossein as the symbol of the Shiism and the Shiism culture.

The Epoch Of Al-E-Buye And The Formal Establishment Of The Symbol Of Shiism

The expansion of grieving for Imam Hossein reached to its highest point in the third century (Hegira), under the government of Al-e-Buye dynasty when Shiism culture and the Ahl al-Bayt's school became widespread. It may be claimed that this time has been the climax of the Shiism culture development. Since governments such as descendants of Ali (AS) i.e., Alavian, in Hyrcania, Zeidian of Yemen, Hamdanian in the north of Iraq, Fatimid in Egypt, and Al-e-Buye in Iraq and Iran came to power, lamentation for Imam Hossein was held publicly for the first time in this century, in Al-e-Buye government's dominion, and by having their support. Ibn Jozy, as one of the Islamic chronographers, states that

in 352, Moez-al-doleh Deilami directed people to gather in the day of Ashoora, and show their grief; in the day, markets became closed and dealing was stopped; butchers did not slaughter sheep; Harrisah (Haleem) was not cooked; people refused to drink water; tents were erected in markets and according to the mourning custom, canvas was hung; women hit their heads and faces weeping for Hossein. (p. 15)

Moreover, Ibn Asir writes "a large number of participators with blackened faces and messy hair walked around Baghdad and beat the chest singing sad rhymes" (p. 549). With respect to the point that the fourth century was the pick of Shiism extension, and the Shia Rules were stretched to the majority of Islamic world's lands such as Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Egypt, and Hyrcania, the command of Moez-al-doleh was welcomed by Shiitate districts, especially, Baghdad. For instance, in that year, Seyf-al-doleh Hamdani, of the Shia Hamdanian dynasty's rulers, in his own dominion, in the north of Iraq, issued the command of public mourning for Imam Hossein.

Abu-Reihan-e-Biruni, in the fourth century, in "Asar-al-bagieh" writes: "However, Shiites recite elegies and shed tears; this ritual takes place in Madineh-al-Eslam (Baghdad) as well as other cities" (p. 329). Under the rule of Al-e-Buye, whenever Ashoora coincided with Norouz (New Year celebration) or Mehregan, Norouz ceremonies were postponed.

In Egypt, although Fatmids were rivals to Al-e-Buye, followed their practice, and in the day of Ashoora developed public mourning for Imam Hossein; Mogrizi reports that

under the government of Al-Moez-al-din-allah, in 363 (Hegira), in Egypt, all Fatemains and Shiites gathered beside the graves of Om-al-kolsum (some know her as Zeinab-e-Kobra) and Nafiseh (of offspring of Imams buried in Cairo) and lamented. And, Ibn Maamoon, in 515 (Lunar), using endowed charitable properties of Egypt, determined the day of Ashoora as an off day and a day of charity distribution. And during the period of Afzal Ibn Bad-al-din's government, the floor of Cairo's Hosseini Mosque was covered with mats, consequently, Afzal became beloved among people (pp. 314-318).

It is evident that Shiism extension reached its apogee after Abbasids and during the period of Mongol's and Ilkhanan's government, particularly, under the government of Sultan Mohammad Khodabande. This expansion of Shiism was appeared in different ways among which Shiism's agreement with Sufism was the most important; Many believes of the Shia were appeared in various parties of Sufism.

Establishment Of Shiism Symbol In Era Of Saffavids

Undoubtedly, by talking about the Saffavi era, Ardabil springs to minds, because the Saffavids was brought up in Ardabil and had a great affection for the Ahl al-Bayt. As we know, the coronation of Shah Esmail was in Ardabil; it means that Azerbaijan was effective in the Saffavids' coming to power, further, they were the Saffavids who appreciated Shiite scholars and savants, and educated many individuals. It was under their government that Ashoora movement-the symbol of devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt-was revived, and people engaged in mourning enthusiastically; In the era of the Saffavids, lamentation ceremonies for Imam Hossein entered a new stage; Saffavi kings not only were Shiite and passionate lovers of the Ahl al-Bayt, but also felt an obligation to propagate the Ahl al-Bayt's ideology, and popularize the Shiism. Commemoration and recital of Imam Hossein's martyrdom, of the Shiism's significant symbols, flourished in this period, as a result, lamentation for Imam Hossein was exalted. At this time mourning for Imam Hossein was extended to the all areas of Saffavi government, even to the rural ones. While, previously, in some areas, where prejudiced Sunnites were in the majority, like Isfahan, performing such rituals was not possible (Ibn Batute, 1407).

Additionally, the duration of mourning rituals was extended from the Moharram decade and Ashoora to Safar and Ramadan (the anniversaries of other Imams falls in these two months), whereas, there is no report about the Shiites' lamentation on other days in addition to the day of Ashoora, prior to the Saffavi government, with the exception of the period after Imam Sadeg, in which, Iraq's Shiites engaged in lamentation in Karbala, next to Imam Hossein's grave on certain days (in addition to the day of Ashoora) that some narratives about the virtue of visiting the Imam's grave on those days had been constructed (Ibn Goluye, 1375 (Lunar)).

In addition to indicating the unity of the Shiite community, the above-mentioned points reveal that Saffavi kings paid attention to the holy Imams; they encouraged poets to compose poetries on the virtues of Imams and elegies of Imam Hossein instead of praising them. For instance, Eskandar Beig Torkaman in the biography of Shah Tahmasb writes:

I am not pleased that poets praise me, they should make poetries on the status of the top spiritual leadership (Shah-e-Velayat) and innocent Imams, they should expect a reward of gifts primarily from the holy spirits of the excellencies, and then from us; because by thinking deeply they may make the long meanings and conceits eloquent, and attribute them to the princes, whose content contain untruthfulness, his best is not usually in his subject. However, if they attribute them to the holy excellencies the content is more likely to happen (p. 233).

Holding the lamentation ceremonies and the establishment of the Shiism culture is the result of scholars' efforts, as well. Therefore, a brief explanation of the atmosphere of that time is worthy of mention.

The Role Of Scholars In The Establishment Of The Shiism Symbol In Saffavi Era

After the establishment of Shiism as the official religion, there were some shortcomings in publicizing and carrying out the Shiism commands; authorities of high ranks did not have any information about Shiism. Additionally, there were not enough required religious books for teaching the Shiism. To overcome the drawbacks, Shah Esmail and after him Shah Tahmasb invited a large number of Shiite scholars from foreign countries to Iran. Under the government of Shah Tahmasb, many Arabian religious scholars willingly came Iran, and were supported. Hor Ameli in "Amal-al-Amal" has mentioned the names of over 1100 Shiite scholars who were imported to Iran from Arabic speaking lands, particularly, from Jabal Amel areas. Entering Iran, they enriched people's understanding of the Shiism, and started to write books and teach at religious schools. Persons trained in the first martyr's school from Jabal Amel were invited to Iran by the Saffavi rule. Moreover, Shiite scholars emigrated from Iraq and Bahrain to Iran. However, emigration of Jabal Amel scholars was so large-scale that could be considered as the main wave of emigration to Iran. Shah Abbas set issuing invitation to the scholars as part of his policies. Further, he granted them authorities over the government affairs, and offered them many positions such as a chairman, prayer leader on Fridays, etc. Sheikh Hasan Ameli, Sheikh Bahai's father, and Sheikh Ali Menshar were of scholars who rose to the rank of Sheikh-al-Eslami, however, Mohaggeg Karaki was the most important and powerful emigrant Shiite scholar, who entered Iran under the government of Shah Esmail, and traveling extensively in Iran, engaged in publishing hadiths (a record of the words and deeds of the prophet of Islam), composing, teaching, and issuing fatwas (religious statements) in the royal camp. He achieved greatest success under the government of Shah Tahmasb when he was given an absolute authority over the all political and religious affairs. He appointed special agents in various areas, the way the first martyr did; Shah himself was considered as his assistant. As the result of this supporter, sending some pronouncements to the all provinces, he collected tax from the people of the cities. In the command of the year 939, Shah mentioned his name as a senior cleric. Clearly, in this command, he determined the depth of his belief, and announced Mohaggeg's superiority over himself. Mohaggeg attained such a tremendous success that after his death, Shah demanded the designation of a person among other clergymen of Jabal Amel in his place (Chelongar, 1994).

Problems in learning theologies of Shiism, which mostly were in Arabic at that period of time, led Shah Tahmasb to adopt a policy of translating religious texts from other languages especially Arabic into Persian, in addition to writing them.

It was a matter of Shah's cultural policy that Shiite scholars were requested to translate the heritage of Shiism, and the responsibility of providing guidelines for it lay with Shiite scholars. The Arabic texts which were about the Imams' biographies were translated at Shah Tahmasb's command for promoting the Shiism, further, many books on the subject of leadership (Imamat) and Shiite principles were written (p. 69).

Generally, striking a balance from the following four significant aspects was done by the clergymen:

1. Striking a balance in the kingdom in order to protect the kings from being called absolute powers
2. Creating a religious balance, and preventing religious conflicts among the Islamic religious groups, particularly, between the Shia and Sunni
3. Achieving a balance inside the government, for example decreasing the influence of military authorities such as the heads of Qizibash

Respecting Seyyed (Descendents Of The Prophet) And Visiting The Graves Of The Imams' Offspring

Respecting Seyyeds and visiting the graves of the Imams' offspring were of other characteristics of that epoch which made Iran an ideal land for Seyyeds, where they gained wealth and achieved social positions, and became so close to the king that the countries' dignitaries would refer to them for delivering their sayings to the king. When Shah was going to appoint the clerics as chairmen, he chose among Seyyeds. He constructed beautiful buildings over many graves of the Imams' offspring, and strengthened people's connection with such places. During the epoch, a large number of mosques were built, on most of which the name of Shah Tahmasb was carved. Tax exemption for the cities which were pioneer in Shiism was of the king's other measures for promoting the Shiism.

The Management Of Religious Affairs

Mohaggeg Karaki traveled to many cities of Iran supervising religious works; he had occupied himself with teaching. This practice continued for the following decades, and was turned into a culture (Hosseinizadeh, 1991).

Almost 60 scholars of Jabal Amel left for Iran from the beginning of the 10th century to the end of the 11th, and by taking up positions such as Sheikh al-Islam, judge, and chief, in addition to controlling the political power, made attempts to improve academic and religious settings through holding classes, founding (seminaries) theological schools, and training seminarians. Besides, they tried to extend the Shiism principles and instructions throughout Iran by writing books with various subjects such as theology, theosophy, interpretation, and biography, also by translating the works of Shiite great ones in the field of Shiism understandings (Khalegi, 1990).

During the epoch, the role of the clergymen was to deal with the religious principles, God limits, and judicial affairs, thereafter these positions became official, and the clergymen occupied a social position specific for themselves.

On the whole, it may be discussed that the Saffavid's authority was due to an extensive conceptual support, which primarily was stood on the two pillars of Shiism and Sufism, however, when the Shiism was made official, the instructions of the Shiism school turned to its conceptual support, and the religiously educated, especially, emigrant scholars took a crucial role in its promotion and popularization.

Sometimes, this question flash across the mind that why some characters like Mohaggeg Ardabili and Allame Helli did not participate in the Saffavi government. It needs to be mentioned that Mohaggeg and others had not absolutely abandoned and prohibited the cooperation with oppressive rulers either Shiite or non-Shiite. Mohaggeg Ardabili even believed that this cooperation could be sometimes permitted or even necessary wherever it is needed. Although, he did not consider the Saffavi government as an equitable system, regarded the act of cooperation with it as legal when necessity arose. He did not participated because under the conditions of that time, he recognized a more urgent necessity, which was making a move in the Shiism culture field, since by the Saffavi government's formation the basis of Shiism and its instructions had been attacked and doubted by the opponents of the Shiism and the Saffavi government. For example, some introduced it as a religion fabricated by Shah Email Saffavi; this perturbation is evident in Mohaggeg Ardabili's writings. With respect to the problems, he planned to clarify and stabilize the Shiism's principles and instructions comprising religious texts, life histories and traditions of the prophet and Imams, and its religious instructions. Consequently, he preferred making attempts to revive and preserve the Najaf seminary's independence, training pious scholars, and writing scientific and painstaking works to participating in Iran (Khalegi, 1990).

The first-group clergymen's interaction with the government and ruling institutions was a kind of functional relationship, because, according to the Shiism principles, for the first time after Imam Ali' government, Shiite clergymen could have stronger presence in the most superior status of the country. It is obvious that according to the logical and rational principle, in the survival of the fittest between a government with a non-Shiite ruler and a government with a Shiite ruler and highly religious agents, it seems rational to accept the interaction choice. On the other hand, a reciprocal relationship existed between the Saffavi rule and its politicians, and the clergy, that is, as this relationship had some benefits to the clergy, in general, it was of importance for the government. The interaction was more than a superficial one; it was a deep and strategic relationship. In spite of the fact that this interaction put either sides to some expenses, the scale tray moved down on the side of an active and effective participation.

CONCLUSION

Having a history as long as the history of Islam, lamentation in the mourning for Imam Hossein goes back to the prophet's life and traditions. Moreover, during the epoch of Ahl-e-Bait, it was taken under consideration, and some Hadith were constructed about it. However, in era of Al-e-Buye, it turned to be a culture as well as the symbol of Shiism, and in era of Saffavids, it was established. Azerbaijan, at the very core, Ardabil was extremely effective in bringing up the founder of the Saffavi dynasty and popularizing the school of Ahl-e-Beit. Emigrant scholars seek

to select from this vast pool, and slake the thirst of eager people by the crystal-clear headwaters of the Al-e-Beit's school. The secret of the Shiism's survival can be discovered in the Ashoora movement.

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