

The Presence of Imam Reza (AS) and the Advancement of Shiite Developments in Greater Khorasan and its Reflection in the Historical Monuments Dedicated to Astan Quds Razavi

Abstract

The people of Greater Khorasan converted to Islam in the first half of the first century AH. At that time, Shiism had limited supporters; however, from the beginning of the third century, despite the authority of the Abbasid rulers, Shiism became the dominant religion of the people of the cities and villages of Khorasan. The beginning of this work initiated with the presence of Imam Reza (AS) and his actions. Nonetheless, in historical periods subsequently, until the tenth century, Shiism was once again a minority. However, as a result of various factors, Shiism flourished again with the mentioned rationality. The issue under study in this paper is the degree of the effectiveness of the endowments of Astan Quds Razavi in the growth and expansion of Shiism. The present research is accomplished via descriptive and analytical methods and relying on the data of library resources. The findings of the research indicate that the development of Shiite culture is one of the functions of the endowments of Astan Quds; in this regard, actions such as the growth of scientific and educational centers, development of libraries, publication of scientific and religious books, creation of pilgrimage and prayer areas, establishment of the Dar al-Shafa, organization of religious ceremonies and festivals can be mentioned. The increase in endowments of Astan Quds demonstrates that the accomplished actions took a large step towards the spread of Shiism; thus, the creation and development of welfare and cultural facilities in the Razavi shrine has succeeded in institutionalizing the Shiite culture.

Research aims:

1. Recognizing how and when Shiism developed in Khorasan.
2. Studying the role of Astan Quds Razavi endowments in the advancement of Shiism in Khorasan.

Research questions:

١. What factor triggered the development of Shiism from the tenth century onwards?
٢. What role did the endowments of Astan Quds Razavi, as one of the oldest religious institutions, play in the advancement of the Shiite culture in Khorasan?

Keywords: Imam Reza (AS), Endowments of Astan Quds Razavi, Shiite advancement, Khorasan.

Introduction

Islam has a high status as the last heavenly religion. The factors that spread Islam and Shiism from one of the cities of Hejaz (Mecca) to other parts of the world are among the issues discussed in the scientific communities of the world. Shiism, which is the main difference, has been accepted by a Muslims in parts of the Islamic world since the first century AH. Imam Reza's comprehensive actions caused Sunni, Zaydi, Ismaili and other Muslims to become interested in Imami Shi'ism and to convert to Shi'ism. After the martyrdom of the Imam and the domination of the Sunni rulers during the rule of the Abbasids, Mongols, Timurids, Uzbeks, etc., the religion of the people of Khorasan gradually changed from Shiism to different Sunni sects and Shiism became a minority.

However, due to the existence of the holy shrine of Imam Reza, throughout ages, the people and rulers who had Shiite tendencies, in order to promote and spread Shiism, dedicated their properties, lands, grounds and agriculture and their welfares to the shrine and this particularly enhanced during the Safavid period, who themselves claimed the Shiite religion. Furthermore, by officially declaring the Shiite religion in all lands under the rule by valuing the only shrine of the Shiite Imams in Iran and dedicating many real estate and property to the spread of Shiism through the establishment of primary schools called “Maktabs” and higher schools for so-called seminaries of Shiite jurisprudence and science, conducted by inviting chief Shiite scholars from Iraq and Lebanon, and many educated people, who were motivated Islamists, this belief developed throughout the country and aided the promotion and spread of Shiism. The importance of the issue becomes unblemished when scrutinizing the purpose of the endowments in order to institutionalize Shiite beliefs and structures. Since the function of Astan Quds endowments has been less in the

focus of researchers from this perspective, the necessity of investigating such a topic becomes evident.

A review of the background of the present study indicates that despite the existence of numerous studies on the Razavi endowment, no work with this title has been written so far. Alizadeh Birjandi and Naseri (۲۰۱۲) in an article entitled: "Implementation of the functions of the custodians of Astan Quds Razavi in Shiite culture (a case study of the Qajar era)" has studied the effect of endowments on the prosperity of Shiite culture in the Qajar period. Nik Mehr and Vakili (۲۰۱۳) in an article entitled: "Intent and expenditure of endowments of Mashhad endowments in the first and second Pahlavi period (based on endowments of the Endowment Office of Khorasan Razavi and Astan Quds" have studied the endowments of Astan Quds. Therefore, the present study, in a descriptive and analytical manner, by relying on the data of library sources, seeks to reveal how endowments provided the grounds for the implementation of the Safavid religious expansion policy and the proliferation of Shi'ah admirers in the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS).

Conclusion

One of the important results of the presence of Imam Reza (AS) since his arrival in Iran and during his tenure and his activities in Khorasan was the quantitative and qualitative growth and expansion of Shiism and the greater interest of these people towards the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (PBUH). Since the people of Greater Khorasan had direct access to the Imam without travelling long distances, and qualitatively, by hearing the doctrinal and practical rulings directly from the Imam, they became fully acquainted with true Shiism. Khorasan has a long history in admiring the family of the Prophet and the Alawites, and thus the Abbasids, took advantage of this interest in Shiism and chose the multi-faceted slogan of "Reza I am the family of Muhammad" for their movement. The Khorasanians, who believed that the kin of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was no family except for the kin of Imam Ali (AS), joined this movement. The Shiite tendencies of Khorasanians are worth considering especially in inviting Imam Reza (AS) to Khorasan. However, after the martyrdom of the Imam and the rule of the Sunni rulers, Shiite Khorasan became a minority until with the gathering of scholars and admirers of Prophet's family around the shrine of the Imam in Mashhad and later the city of Mashhad, increased the population Shiites in Mashhad. The downpour of endowments of the people and some Shiite rulers, especially the Safavid rulers who

sought to recognize the Shiite religion throughout their rule, increased significantly. Actions such as religious ceremonies, the preparation of scientific-religious books, and the creation of large libraries increased. As a result of endowments for the holy shrine of Hazrat Reza (AS), a glorious foundation was built whose dynamism and reliability in order to spread Shiite culture had been guaranteed and this was a symbol of the peak of success of endowments including the government and people in achieving the set goals in Shiite religious politics.

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