

THE EFFECT OF THE MONGOL INVASION ON THE COURSE OF IRANIAN HISTORY

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Among many foreign invasions to which Persia has been subjected in her long history, three more than others have influenced the culture and civilisation of the people of this country. These three invasions were those of Alexander, the Arabs, and the Mongols.

The Mongol invasion is considered the most destructive of all the invasions by the people of Central Asia. The invasion was motivated by three factors: first, material benefit ; second, acquisition of new pastoral and agricultural land ; third, revenge. This being the case, the invasion should not have really affected the Iranian society and its culture, for any human action which is based on force, material benefit and temporary success is usually superficial and of short duration. It is only when man's action is based on his philosophical convictions that the overall effect of his acts leaves a lasting impress.

Despite this fact, the Mongol conquest of Iran left such an effect on the totality of the Iranian society, its economy and culture that today even after seven centuries we can still witness the influence of the Mongol invasion in the country.

The original home of the Mongols was the Gobi desert, where Changiz Khan succeeded to unite its various Mongol tribes and to invade China proper at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

We know that about this time there existed diplomatic relationship between the Khwārazm Shahs and the Mongol emperor, Changiz Khan and that the latter wished such relationship to continue. The Utrar incident, of 1216, however, precipitated the Mongol invasion of the Islamic world.⁹²

The effect of the massacre of the inhabitants of the cities of Iran, the destruction of an urban civilisation, and an advanced rural economy adopted by the invaders were so strong that it took Iran many centuries to recover from this historical calamity. The agricultural economy was replaced by stock-raising which was one of the characteristics of nomadic life. Tribal life became once again the way of life and as a result the central authority collapsed everywhere in the country, In addition to a new ruler the farmers found a new enemy, that is to say, a number of tribes which later gave support to the Safavids, the Afsharids, Zends and the Qajars.

Another social effect of the Mongol invasion of Iran was withdrawal of the people from worldly affairs and their attraction to the mystical movement.⁹³

This was naturally the product of a general sense of insecurity that prevailed throughout the country. Similar condition is witnessed in Iran after the Afghan invasion of the country.

The poets and writers whose works bore gnostic and mystic colour were specially affected by the Mongol invasion. Linguistically, the Mongol invasion brought a series of Mongol and Turkic vocabulary into the Persian language through bureaucrats' official correspondence, royal decrees and direct contacts between Mongols and native Persians.⁹⁴

⁹² A.A. Juwainī, *Tārīkh-ī Jahān-Gushā*, edited by Muhammad Qazwīnī (Leyden, 1912), I, 63.

⁹³ J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London : Oxford University Press, 1973), p, 54.

⁹⁴ For further information on this see G. Doerfor, *Turkische rind mongolisehe*

Although more negative points can be mentioned in reviewing the Mongol invasion of Iran, there are several positive points: the invasion contributed to the economy and politics of the country, the termination of the Abbasid Caliphate by Hulagu and of the moral and religious domination of the Arabs in the Persian society.⁹⁵

As we know, from the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate to its end, the rulers tried with all their might and by every means at their disposal to discourage the rise of a national government and national unity in Persia.

Another positive result of the Mongol invasion was what we may term the promotion of international trade. Prior to the formation of the Mongol empire there existed in both West and East Asia many independent States that made it difficult for commercial goods to transit easily throughout the continent and from there to Europe. With the establishment of the Mongol empire borders between various States in Asia were opened and commercial goods easily reached, not only from one point to another in Asia itself, but also from Asia to the European continent. The commercial relationships between various parts of Asia and Europe opened for the first time a channel for cultural and scientific exchange between the two continents.⁹⁶

It was, for example, in the Mongol period that many European merchants, travellers and religious groups visited Asia, especially Persia and China. The case of Marco Polo who travelled from Europe to distant East in order to acquire some knowledge of the way of life in Asia and also to gain material wealth is a classical example of this development. Likewise, it was in the same period that a caravan of ambassadors from Mongol dominions was

Elemente im Neupersischen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung älterer neupersischer—Geschichtsquellen, Vor allem der Mongolen und Timuridenzeit, 4 Bände : Wiesbaden, 1963-1975.

⁹⁵ Bertold Spuler, *History of the Mongols*, trans. from the German by Helga and Stuart Drummond (Los Angeles : University of California, 1972), p. 115.

⁹⁶ J.J. Sanders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1971), p. 175.

sent to Europe to establish diplomatic relationship with various States in that continent’.

CAN MUSLIMS SAY THEIR PRAYERS IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUE?

In February 1932, a Reuter message from Constantinople stated that Kemal Pasha enforced saying of prayers in Turkish instead of Arabic in the mosques of Turkey. Dr Sir Mohammad Iqbal, when approached on the matter, expressed the following view:

The step taken by Mustafa Kemal is not a forward step ; it is a backward step. All ancient religions were rational in its significance. Christianity looked upon religion as a matter of individual conscience. Islam fully recognizes the value of individual conscience in religious life, but its aim is much wider. Its outlook is social, indeed, in view of its structure, it aims at a universal society. Muslim prayer in the Turkish language is an attempt to give Islam a national significance. This is looking at Islam with the eyes of a pre-Islamic ancient people. That is why I say that the so-called reform is a backward step and not a step in advance...

"My own belief is that the congregational prayer, i.e. the prayer conceived as a world institution, must necessarily be in Arabic the language of the revelation, and, further, the language of the country which occupies the central position between the Continents. What matters most in the congregational prayer is the social fact and psychologically a uniform attitude of mind. The intelligibility of language, though helpful in securing the uniformity of mind, is of secondary importance. . . . The congregational prayer in which man stands for a world society must always be in Arabic all the world over."

—Weekly Light, Lahore, 16 February 1932