

Investigating the Mutual Interaction between Islamic Civilization and Iranian Civilization and Culture

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Abstract: In the time of emergence of Islam, Iran (Persia) was one of the greatest and most effective civilizations of the world. At the time when Islam was only a new found religion, Iranians widely welcomed this religion and used their extensive civilization and culture to build, improve and flourish the Islamic civilization. In a very short time an Islamic civilization was found that has had detailed plans for all aspects of Muslims' lives such as political, social, economic, military and cultural aspects. Therefore, Islamic civilization owes its greatness to Iran and Iranians. Developed sciences such as philosophy, music, mathematics, medicine, architecture, arts etc, being present in Iran and the emphasis of Islam on gaining knowledge and spreading the knowledge led to a great progress and growth of Islamic civilization and it became one of the most powerful and flourished human civilizations such that it had the biggest effect in building the world's civilization. In this regard, Iranian scientists' role was much more prominent than other tribes. They not only did culminate in ancient sciences of which they were the leader before the emergence of Islam, but also progressed rapidly in Islamic sciences; such that many of the interpreters, historians, thinkers and narrators of Islam are Iranians. In the present study, the formation and mutual interaction of Islamic civilization with Iranian civilization and culture were investigated, using a descriptive-analytic method, based on original historical sources.

Keywords: Iranian Civilization, Islamic Civilization, Rational Sciences, Islam.

Introduction

Civilization (Tamadon: In Arabic) is a derivation of the word civil (Madinah: In Arabic: city) which is against nomadism. In fact living in cities is the result of humans' progress and promotion of life quality level and is a move from Bedouin life to a civil life. Will Durant defined civilization as a collection of human's physical and spiritual achievements across the history. The concept of civilization is so mingled to the concepts of progress, rationality and knowledge that each of these words will bring the concept of civilization up in one's mind. Allamah Jafari, one of the contemporary experts of Islamic world has defined civilization as the coordinated organization of humans in rational life, with fair interactions and participation of all individuals and groups of the society in advancement of humans' material and spiritual goals in all positive aspects. Islam is based on gaining knowledge and learning

sciences. The importance and excellence that Islam put on knowledge and savants, has pushed scientific movements toward a more dynamic and rapid progress.

Iranian Civilization before Islam

Iran was one of the greatest civilizations, due to Iranians' special attention and interest in science. Iranians' sciences were put at the service of Muhammad's (PBUH) religion and had great effects in advancement of Islamic goals. Iranians' behaviors were admired in Islamic narratives particularly in case of being open minded and unprejudiced. The 198th ayah of Shu'ara Surah states that "Had we sent it (Quran) down to one of Iranians, these (Arabs) would never have believed in it". Imam Sadeq (AS) also has stated that "If Quran was sent down to an Iranian, Arabs would not believe in it, but it was sent down to Arabs and the Iranians believed in it and it is an excellence of Iranians" (1999).

Unlike what some historians have written, Iranians accepted Islam voluntarily with no force of the sword. There are two reasons for this claim. Firstly, even before Islam, they have had returned from Zoroastrian such that there was a great tendency among Iranians to Christianity. Even Bozorgmehr who was the symbol of wisdom and enlightenment, before Islam, has had converted to Christianity and gave up his life for his belief (Beihaqi, 1989). The second reason is Islamic justice. The class system of Sassanid era was such that only the upper classes were having good lives and the lower class people had difficult times. This made them enter the religion the basis of which was found on justice and equality. Abdollah Ibn-Omar has quoted from Muhammad (PBUH) that "In my dreams, I saw a large number of white sheep entering a herd of black sheep". When people asked him to interpret this dream he said "The white sheep were Iranians who will enter your religion, will marry you and their blood will be mixed with you. If faith be hanged from the Soraya star (Pleiades), men from Persian would obtain it" (Majlesi, 1984).

Arab writers in that time had admired the Sassanid Empire that was the leader of eastern governments particularly in military tactics, painting, food provision, combining medicines, clothing, facilities of states, poetry, speech, rationale, cleanliness and righteousness. This Empire was the example for other governments in order and discipline. Before Islam, Gondishapur University was one of the most scientific places where different sciences were taught in. After Islam these scientific centers continued their activities. Gondishapur University which was mainly a medical center was not in any way damaged by Arab conquerors and continued its activities until 4th Hijri century. According to the book "bilateral services of Iran and Islam", after establishment of the great Hawza (Islamic scientific center) of Baghdad, Gondishapur was affected and gradually has vanished. Before Baghdad's becoming a great scientific center, the Abbasid used Iranian astronomers and physicians of Gondishapur University in their court (Motahari, 1991).

Iranians have not only had improved in rational and natural sciences, but also, as mentioned above, they had great mastery in other fields such as urban development, architecture and art. "The industries of Sassanid period are important regarding Iran's art history. Architecture has had experienced a great progress and still the traces of that great architecture can be found in remaining castles, houses, temples, palaces, dams and bridges" (Motahari, 1991).

On Islamic art, Will Durant said that "There is nothing remained from the greatness and wealth of Shapurs, Qobads and Khosrows except some artistic remaining of Sassanid period. However, this is enough to amaze us of the flexibility of art in Iran from Darush the great and Perspolis to Shah Abbas the great and Isfahan" (Durant, 1991).

The effects of literature, bureaucracy, architecture, military tactics, organization and order, art and Iranian culture in Islamic era were so great that undermined the effects of other civilizations; such that many of Greek, Roman and Indian sciences entered Islamic civilization from Iran.

Position of Science in Islamic Civilization

Islam is a religion that has started with the word Read (Iqra; in Arabic). Allah (the worshiped God in Islam) has sworn to "Pen" and has revealed a Surah called "Pen". Muhammad (PBUH) has stated to his followers to "seek knowledge since cradle until grave (from birth to death)" and "seek knowledge even if it is in china (which is very far from Arabia)".

Islam has warned people against blind imitation and sensual wishes and encouraged them to follow knowledge, certainty and reason. "Muhammad's religion is such wise that there is no need for force in spreading it. One only needs to be aware of its principle, and then he would simply believe in it. Islam's principles were such logical that half of the humans on earth believed in it in less than 50 years" (Kashefi, 2005).

From Quran's perspective, intellect is a divine asset that guides humans toward truth. "Quran introduces intellect as a force that humans can utilize in religious matters and lead individuals to truth and excellent deeds. However, if they deviate from this path, it is no longer called intellect. Intellect, in Quran, is the perception that is given naturally to humans" (Tabatabaei, 1996). The interaction between Islam and Iranian civilization was a mutual and constructive interaction. Islam has liberated Iranians from the class system of Sassanid period and eliminated religious superstitions. Islam brought a new life to Iran and revived its degrading civilization. Most of the Iranians has had positive attitudes toward Islam and had no intention except serving Islam and no Arab or non-Arab nation could compete with Iranians in this regard. No nation has ever helped progress of a religion as much as Iranians did to Islam. Islamic civilization development was strengthened when the Islamic Caliphs and Governors showed their interest in sciences. In Abbasid period when Iranian had more influence in governmental issues, Caliphs such as Abbasid Mamun, held science debates in their courts. In this period, there was a growing interest to philosophy which was brought up by the religious minorities such as Christians and Jews who lived among Muslims (Nasr, 2005). Of course, It is not that Arab Muslims only used the knowledge of others. Though Arabs were illiterate before Islam, because of being located in a an area that lacked political and economic importance, the emphases of Islam on gaining knowledge had led the rapid spread of knowledge in Islamic countries. "It is not that Arabs have added nothing to the sciences they inherited. Of course one can see their role in the mass of books remained from them" (Mie Lee, 1992).

The Contribution of Sciences in Development of Islamic Civilization

Muslims invented the sciences they needed to understand Quran and Sunnah such as Reciting, interpretation, jurisprudence, Hadith, syntax, semantics, etc. They also adapted some sciences. They translated all the sciences of other civilizations and they also added to these sciences. George Zaidan stated that "One of the advantages of Islamic civilization is that they collected the scattered sciences of Greece, Iran, India etc and translated them into Arabic and added their knowledge to them" (Burlot, 2007). They translated the best sciences from the most important countries. Arabs have actually invented revealed sciences (Naqli) and learned rational sciences from other nations. However, they have borrowed even some revealed (Naqli) sciences like history, literature and advice from Iranians who were the best in this regard.

The Prominent Role of Iran in Development of Islamic Civilization

According to the historians of Islam, Arabs had no industries of their own. After conquering Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Iran, Arabs adapted their arts. Some of the historical sources reported that Omayyad Caliphs, after conquering each land, used their materials and experts to build new cities, mosques and palaces. Byzantine and Syrian mosaic makers were used to decorate the mosques in Damascus headed by Iranian masters. Islam has revived art activities in Iran (Nahro, 1986).

The Prominent Position of Iranian Scientists in Islamic Civilization

Sassanid dynasty was of one of the greatest independent governments of Iran and had a totally Iranian nature. Many of the ancient Iranian rituals that had remained in Khorasan (northeast of Iran) and Transoxiana were revived in this period. Sassanids paid much attention to Persian and Dari poems and prose and many valuable useful books were translated. Moreover, followers of different religions were free to do their religious rituals and there was no limitation for religious minorities. Extensive research on this period has shown that the reason of this attention to poem and prose in this period was due to presence of several Iranian intellectuals as politicians in court. Among the intellectuals of this period were Abolfazl Bal'ami, Amir Esmeil Samani and his son Ahmad, Nasr, Abu-Abdollah Jeyhani the scientist minister, Nasr ibn-Ahmad Sasani, Hosein ibn- Ali Marvazi the tactful commander. In this regard, the Iranian generalissimos who were at the center of power and political strength must not be forgotten (Haqiqat, 1978). With a glance on the early centuries of Islamic civilization, it is evident that most of the Islamic scientists are Iranians. Their interests in learning different sciences had had made them polymaths who were aware of almost all the sciences of their time. "The intellectuals who were expert in exact sciences and at the same time were linguists philosopher and expert in theology, they were given a honorary title of Hakim (in Arabic:Sage) (Berthels, 1995).

The Effects of Islamic Civilization on Iranian Civilization

The effects were not only from Iranian civilization on Islamic civilization. There was a mutual interaction between Iranian and Islamic civilization in the course of history and both of them affected each other. The contribution of a tribe to a religion is to put the material and spiritual forces, talents, thoughts and innovations at the service of the religion. As stated by Motahari, the effects of Iranian civilization on Islamic civilization were extensively discussed but it is mostly neglected that Iranians have created their masterpieces in the way of Islam and nothing but the power of faith and love can create such masterpieces. Indeed it was Islam that stimulated Iranians' talents. Otherwise, why Iranians couldn't use their talents for their previous religions (Motahari, 1991)? Among the effects of Islamic civilization on development of Iranians' civilization, the following cases can be mentioned:

1- The Effects of Arabic Language on Iran

Though Arabic was the official language of Iran for several years and after the decline of Sassanid and Zoroastrian that were the two main supporters of Pahlavi language, they did not have an official language and script. Arabic language could not affect people's language who was one of the greatest civilizations of their time. Iranians tried to liberate themselves from the Arab's government and thus there was a struggle between Iranians and Arabs for three centuries. "A great number of authors have had written their works in Arabic. Arabic script was far easier than Pahlavi and people were familiar with Arabic through Quran and it was the language of their religion, thus it was a holy language for them (Mirbaqeri, 2002) and it soon replaced Pahlavi script and other common scripts in Iran. It is worth mentioning that after the decline of Sassanid and acceptance of Islam, the class system was declined and the talents of ordinary people suddenly flourished. The first scientific schools were built in Khorasan, and in Transoxiana. The first school in Khorasan was established in 907 while the schools of Iraq, Levant, Egypt and Hijaz were established in 1064, 1097, 1137 and 1183, respectively (Naaji, 2000).

Iran's political independence happened in 820 when Al-Mamun appointed Taher Zol-Yaminin as the governor of Khorasan, from Jabal to Halvan (Naaji, 2000). However, Taher and his successors were strongly dependent on Abbasid Caliphs and thus tried to strengthen Islam in their territory and thus it contributed to the spread of Arabic language (Berthels, 1995). In the 50 years of their government, the only language used in Iran's court was Arabic. It is narrated that once, Abdollah Taher threw the book of "Vaamaq and Azra" (A famous Iranian love tale) into fire and said "This is the book of magi and it has nothing to do with people who read Quran (Zarin Koob, 1955).

2- Revival of Iranian Ancient Traditions in the Form of Islam

Yaqub Leith has had claimed self-government in 862 in Sistan, (southeast of Iran). Sistan, being far from the capital and being located in an unimportant strategic region, was not an important area for governors and Caliphs. Thus, the Khawarij who survived from Nahravan fight, first escaped to Kurdistan (west of Iran) and then to Sistan (Spuler, 1994). Yaqub Leith was in no way dependent on Baghdad Caliphs, because he called himself a bandit who gained power by his sword and did not need Caliphs support. On the other hand because he and his successors did not know Arabic, naturally they did not support Arabic language."Though Ale Taher were generous and kind for public, they did not believe in Persian and Dari Language" (Aufi, 1982). According to some historical sources, it was in this period that Pahlavi and Arabi languages were replaced by Persian, as an independent and official language.along with these two dynasties, Samani Dynasty was gaining power in Transoxiana. Samanyans were appointed by Mamun and governed Khorasan, Tabarestan (north of Iran) and parts of Persian-Iraq from 900 to 998. Samanid era was the age of flourishing and developing Persian language and literature and the beginning of admiration of the greatness of Iran after Islam. Samanyans were Iranian and new well that to strengthen the foundation of their government, they should have had revive the ancient traditions of Iran in the form of Islam. Thus, they were Muslims who were against Arabs' domination (Shamisa, 2000).

3- Arabic Literary Works by Iranians

The 8th and 9th centuries were the beginning of emergence of Persian literature and that was when some Iranian kings ruled over some parts of Iran independently (Aufi, 1982).

Persian poem followed the poems and hymns that were sang in festivals and invocations and were syllabic poems not prosodic. Since poem is the projection of emotions and believes of the poets and poets are the representatives and speakers of people, some historical events can be found in poems of that time (Manazir Ahsan, 1989).

Meanwhile, many Iranians started to write poems and books in Arabic. According to Iran's literary history, this was parallel to the spread of Arabic script instead of Pahlavi and opened the way to overall effects of Arabic on Persian words, expressions and even culture. Replacement of Arabic script picked up all the barriers between Persian and Arabic and the Persian scholars would publish their works in Arabic (Safa, 2005). The content of Persian poems continued to follow pre-Islamic subjects. However, the form changed into Arabic and literary prosody. Some scholars related these poems to pre-Islamic poems which dated back to Zoroastrian invocations called Avesta Gatha (Zarin Koob, 1955). In all these times the national language of Iran was the Old language. Each province spoke its own accents. The scientific language in west and south of Iran was Pahlavi and it was Dari in east and Nimroz provinces. Because other languages were not promoted and Pahlavi was difficult, Arabic gradually replaced other languages (Bahar, 1989). In the early independent or semi-independent governments in east of Iran, after Islam, Persian dialect was used for literary and administrative affairs and Dari accent was selected as the official language (Dari language comes from the word Darbaar in Persian which means court, and Dari was a language used in courts) (Khanlari, 1989).

4- *Quality and Types of Effects of Islamic Issues in Poem*

Due to the holiness of Quran and Hadith, it was always an honor for poets and writers to use ideas and expressions of Quran and Hadith in their works and it was a sign of wisdom and enlightenment and gave the holiness to their works (Raastgoo, 2004). Reciting and memorizing Quran has always been an important part of Muslims' lives particularly in the early years when Iranians converted to Islam. Quran had become an example in eloquence and oratory for writers and orators and they tried to utilize its characteristics in their works. Among non-Arab nations, this happened mostly in form of adaptation, Allusion. Gradually it became very common among literary writers such that they only used one word of an Ayah or Hadith to convey a whole idea (Halabi, 1998).

Hadiths and narratives which were also called Sunnah, were also present in poets' poems and people's beliefs. The spread of sermons and people's appreciation of them which led to mysticism and Sufism, and scientific circles of great scholars, brought Quran to the core of people's lives and there were few if any, poem, speech, teaching or sermon that Quran or Hadiths were not used in them. However, a few of jurists and scholars believed that this overuse of Quran in every occasion is being disrespectful to Quran (Raastgoo, 2004). Suyuti stated that "Malekis did not allow using Quran and Hadith in poems but it was not forbidden among Shafi'is and Shafi'i Muslims have and continue to use Quran and Hadiths in their works" (Suyuti, 2005).

The earliest signs of Islamic sciences and knowledge in Persian poem were Arabic words and expressions such as Tasbeeh (in Arabic; bead role), Qadr night, Sajde (prostrate) and Governmental expressions such as Amir (king), Hakim (Governor) and some Arab famous figures. Because in that period, all of the literary works, whether historical events, or medical textbooks or commands of the kings, must have been in the form of poem, poets must have initially gotten familiar with all scientific fields of the time and it was impossible without learning Arabic language, because almost all of the important scientific books were written in Arabic (Berthels, 1995).

Discussion and Conclusion

All in all, it can be concluded that because Iranians have voluntarily accepted Islam, did their best in founding, development and perfection of Islamic civilizations such that they founded the Islamic civilization on the basis of Iranian civilization. Iranians have generously given all the knowledge and information they have had collected during centuries from different lands such as India, China, Rome, Greece, Khorasan and Gondishapur. Islamic civilization evidently owes its greatness to the efforts of Iranians in the course of time. On the other hand, Islamic teachings, its emphasis on knowledge stimulated Iranians toward sciences and its social justice emancipated Iranians from blind prejudices and the tyrannical class system of Sassanid government. Islamic freedom has led the hidden talents to flourish. Though Islamic civilization is the essence of all Muslim nations, the role of Iran in this regard was much more prominent than that of any other nation. There are some reasons for this great influence which explained below. Iran was one of the greatest civilizations of its time and Iranians were among the first nations who converted into Islam. Islam spread in all over the Iran in a few decades because Iranians were not much committed to their previous religion and openly accepted Islam. On the other side, Iranians have contemplated in Islamic teachings and utilized them in building the Islamic civilization. Thus, the interaction between Islamic civilization and Iranian civilization is claimed to be mutual and both sides had gained benefits from this interaction.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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