

Social Status of Poets During Mongols' Era

Situación social de los poetas durante la era de los mongoles

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Abstract

The literary works are of great importance in terms of reference to the historical events and reflection of the social, political and cultural statuses and discernment of the people's mindset and psychology and, besides the historical references that are envisioned as direct resources, they are enumerated amongst the indirect resources. Exactly where the historians have exercised reticence and/or secrecy in real historical reporting due to certain expediencies, the poets and writers have shouldered their duties and explicitly and/or ironically pointed to those events and incidents and this has doubled the importance of those literary works. The present study aims at the investigation of the perspectives of Mongol era's poets and writers about the huge incident of Mongols' attack and their domination over Iran so that the intellectual, cultural and social declines of the then Iranian society can be revealed on the one hand and the literary men and poets' reaction and attitudes towards this national catastrophe can be clarified on the other hand.

Keywords: literary works, historical events, social status, poets, Mongol Era.

Resumen



Las obras literarias son de gran importancia en cuanto a la referencia a los hechos históricos y la reflexión de los estatus sociales, políticos y culturales y el discernimiento de la mentalidad y psicología de las personas y, además de las referencias históricas que se vislumbran como recursos directos, se enumeran entre los recursos indirectos. Exactamente donde los historiadores han ejercido reticencia y / o secreto en los reportajes históricos reales debido a ciertas conveniencias, los poetas y escritores han asumido sus deberes y han señalado explícita y / o irónicamente esos eventos e incidentes y esto ha duplicado la importancia de esas obras literarias. . El presente estudio tiene como objetivo la investigación de las perspectivas de los poetas y escritores de la era mongol sobre el gran incidente del ataque de los mongoles y su dominación sobre Irán para que, por un lado, se puedan revelar los declives intelectuales, culturales y sociales de la entonces sociedad iraní. y la reacción y las actitudes de los literatos y poetas ante esta catástrofe nacional puede aclararse, por otro lado.

Palabras clave: obras literarias, hechos históricos, estatus social, poetas, época mongol.

Introduction

Mongol era is considered as one of the most important and most molding and most adventurous epochs of Iran's history in terms of the diversity and occurrence of the determinant accidents. Besides the vast dimensions of massacre and destruction, these bloody accidents have been accompanied with the civilization decline and intellectual, cultural and social decadence. Disintegration of the social statuses and the intellectual and cultural decline and cruel and massive slaughter of the people and prevalence of various kinds of suppressions and spreading of the social corruptions and the abuse to the life, properties and honor of the people as well as poverty and disorder have been the results of this invasion [Jowaini ,1989]. The cities and villages were ruined and leveled to the ground in some of the cases. Genghis Khan believed that this is the God's chastisement descended to the sinners. Mongols overthrew the customs and administrative organization and the social classes governing Iran via their desert regulations and formations and paved the way for the novice opportunists to achieve positions and ranks through reconciliation with the invaders [Mashkur ,1971].

Amongst the distinct signs of the decline was the large number of the thinkers and scholars in the beginning of this period while the situation changes into another form in the end of this period [Safa ,1998]. If there are still seen prominent figures in the end of Mongols' era, their number is seminally very few and they are fostered in others of Iran's cultural areas and bases and/or they lived in other regions of Iran that sustained lesser damage by the Mongols' larceny through the strategies adopted by the national governors. The English Edward Brown, as well, realizes Mongols' attack as the largest stroke and most severe damage to the culture and civilization and literature of the Muslim nations and finds the works authored before and after this invasion vividly different in terms of rank and degree. [Kamal Al-Din Isfahani ,1969] who has been murdered in the course of the attack and raid and slaughter and plunder by the Mongols and eye-witnessed the massacre of the Isfahan's people in 1235, depicts the moods and states of the people and his homeland in the following words:

"Where are the eyes to cry for their homeland and severely shed tears for the miserable state of the people"

"Yesterday, two or several hundred persons were mourning at the side of a dead man; now, there is not even one person to cry for a hundred dead persons"

With all the damages and hefty impacts that were imposed in that period of time on the body of Iranian society and its culture, this period witnessed struggles by Iranian scientists for the establishment of the largest scientific centers such as Maraqa Observatory and Rashidi's Rob'e [academic town] and credible libraries that were created by the efforts of such elders as Khajeh Nasir Al-Din Tusi and Khajeh Rashid Al-Din Fazlollah Hamadani and Shams Al-Din Muhammad . and others due to the cultural and scientific ancientness and richness. In the period of time studied herein, we can bear witness to the emergence of [Ajand, 2005]. as the bulk wave of Islamic Iran's sea of theosophy with Sa'adi being one of the highest apices of poetry; some of the other great poets of this period are [Awhadi, 1961], [Aqsara'ei, 1983] and [Razi, 1935] with Obaid being an outstanding critic of that time. The huge incident of Mongols' assault can be investigated from various aspects and dimensions line any other gigantic incident. One of these interesting and notable points is the elucidation of the then poets' reactions and attitudes upon encountering such a tremendous historical incident. So, the present study aims at the investigation of the attitudes of the then poets and literary men as well as their types of reaction to this historically crucial incident. To do so, the literary resources of this period have been explored due to their inclusion of important and useful clues and cues about the incident at that time so that the then people's attitudes, their judgments and beliefs can be elaborated regarding the incident of Mongols' domination and the issues of that ominous day and its importance.

Persian Poetry and Literature during Mongols' Attack:

Persian Literature during Mongols' Attack:

Mongols' attack began since 1219 and it was in 1257 that Baghdad crashed and the Ilkhanate Government was established in Iran. During these forty years, Iran's status was in perfect distress and there was no government

established. The absence of a government that could somehow support the literature and poetry was a huge stroke to the Persian literature's progress in this period. In the meanwhile, small governments that somehow paid tributes to the Ilkhanate government and could have saved themselves from annihilation took appropriate steps on this path.

Moreover, Khorasan has always been the growth center of Persian literature and this area sustained the largest damage in Mongols' invasion.

In addition, Mongols' attack caused the scattering and wandering of a large number of the scholars and literary men. This was effective in a respect in damaging the religious and popular literature in Iran but it also, on the other hand, caused the development of Persian language in the west of Iran and Minor Asia thence in India.

One should not ignore the idea that Mongols' attack caused the destruction of the forerunners' artworks; however, many succeeded in keeping themselves far from the Mongols' reach and find a safe and calm place for making literary creations. Furthermore, the situation became rapidly calm in the course of the formation of Ilkhanate government and a generation of the scholars and literary men that had actively entered the scene before the attack got involved in cultural productions. The testimony to this claim is the artworks left from that period for our today.

The important part of the poetry from this time, i.e. before and after the Mongols' attack, is the mystic poetry. It was due to mysticism that sonnets peaked with their contents being nothing other than the expression of the mystic concepts in poetical language and pivoting about the axis of love. Since then, there are a lot of mystic Persian proses produced.

Kamal Al-Din Ismail Isfahani

One of the poets from this period is [Kamal Al-Din Isfahani 1969] (murdered in 1237) who was known as Khallaq Al-Ma'ani [mind creative in producing significations]. He was reciting extolling poems about the kings. This was continued until the disordering of the situation at which time he found out he is not making any progress in his work. He was residing in Isfahan and he watched the clashes between Hanafis and Shafe'is in two neighborhoods, namely Dardasht and Joobareh, every day. Kamal Al-Din had become so annoyed by such violence and recited the following verses within a poem:

"As long as there are Dardasht and Joobareh Neighborhoods, there are not left for us any chances of struggling and attraction"

"O' the God of the seven planets, the kingship has become the opportunity of the blood-suckers"

"To level Dardasht to the ground and make blood flowing from Joobareh"

"To increase in the number of the people by tearing each into two hundred pieces"

His curse quickly came true. In 1235, Oktay Qa'an entered Isfahan and engaged in murdering the people. Kamal Ismail, as well, was accidentally captured by

Mongols and murdered. Having witnessed the massacre of the city's people, he recited the following verses:

"There is nobody to cry for his homeland and shed tears intensively for the people's miserable state"

"Yesterday, two or several hundred persons were mourning at the side of a dead man; now, there is not even one person to cry for a hundred dead persons"

The poems left from him are different from those he has composed in extolling and praising the kings. His poems are mostly romantic and that from the angle of the mourning and grief for the beloved. In his mind, the pain the cure of which is death cannot be soothed:

"Tonight, I will sleep soaked in blood out of the grief for you and I will get up from the bed of good health"

"If you do not believe, send me your dream so that it can see how I will sleep without you"

Farid Al-Din Muhammad Attar Neishabouri:

Attar is one of the prominent theosophists and poets from the 12th century and he was murdered in 1220 by Mongols when he was nearly 80 years old. He had been enchanted by the Sufis in Neishaboor since his childhood in such a way that he himself has written: "in my childhood, the memory of this tribe's friendship was boiling in my heart".

However, he kept on his herb-selling occupation and he used to sell herbs and plant-based medicines.

Attar who has been said to have been originally from the village of Kadkan started subliming in the city of Neishaboor which is one of the eastern Islamic cities most prosperous in science and knowledge and it was in the course of his main job that he became familiar with the knowledge of philosophy, theosophy and jurisprudence and began schooling in a great many of the schools of this city in the classes held by the then famous masters. In between, he become also interested in mysticism and expressed his hatred of philosophy like the other Sufis. In poems he has composed in his Elegy Book "Mosibat Nameh", he says: "You should become a man of religion and become the harem of mysteries and subsequently hate the philosophical fancies"

"A person is in the same distance from both the canon of the Hashemi Prophet and the philosophy"

"The commands of the prophet should be interpreted and enforced; but, exercising philosophy is just remaining idle"

"Learn knowledge only to the extent of your life matters and do not reckon that you are saved by just reading the Shafa"

By Shafa, he means learning the contents of the Book of Shafa by Avicenna. Apart from his theosophical beliefs, Attar believed that a handful of philosophical terms accepted by the philosophers and he himself had deformed the religion for which reasons he calls his religion the very creed of the old women.

"I should talk about my religion to you but when would it be accepted by you"

"My true utterance is the very creed believed in by a group of old women"



Aside from the scientific materials and the things that are related to the subjective theosophy, Attar's main capital is the stories and tales commonly told by the mystics; these fall in two parts, historical and fictional or, in better terms, pseudo-historical. The latter includes the imaginations and fables retold in the books as means of expressing the cognizance and the Sufis used them quite prevalently; [Mowlavi, 1987]. has also made a lot of use of them. The former includes the stories about the well-known Sufis the names of a great many of whom has been mentioned by Attar in the book "Tazkerah Al-Awlia'a" [biography of the elders].

Most of these stories contain the virtues of mysticism sheikhs but they cannot be ordinarily analyzed and accepted by the ordinary intellect.

Attar is a Sunni theosophist who has been a great fan of the first caliphs in opposite to many of the other theosophists and, of course, he has also had utmost love and admiration for Amir Al-Mo'menin Ali (PBUH).

Attar's main task has been composing poetry and that at the service of mysticism and theosophy. He has codified several collections, including Khosrow Nameh, Mokhtar Nameh, Elahi Nameh, Asrar Nameh, Mosibat Nameh, Manteq Al-Tair and Book of odes and sonnets that amount four thousand verses. Mokhtar Nameh is the collection of his quatrain poems. So, he has several poetical works and a prose work.

A substantial part of Attar's poetical book is comprised of sonnets which are mostly poems describing the beloved's appearance such as her lips and freckle and eyebrows and so forth; they have been mostly means for expressing the real love and its spiritual aspects. He has predominantly paid attention to the theosophical themes like evanescence and survival as well as the other subjective theosophy's issues.

The book "Tazkerah Al-Awlia'a" presents the biographies of seventy two of Islam's elders and mystic sheikhs; the first part of the book is about the forerunners with the first and the last of them being Imam Sadeq (PBUH) and Mansour Hallaj, respectively. The second part wherein the historical chronology has not been so much observed mostly presents the biographies of the late mysticism sheikhs, including a biographical account of Imam Bagher (PBUH). Anyway, a number of narrations and stories are given for the life of a person in every biographical account. Such a type of writing was commonly exercised by Sufis in both Arabic and Persian with Tabaqat Al-Sufiyeh [Sufis' classes] by Khajeh Abdullah Ansari being one example thereof.

Many of the narrations presented by Attar in this book were later on ridiculed and cursed by the opponents of mysticism because they are so marvelous that they are hard to believe even for the gullible persons. He has the following words about Ahmad Khezraviyeh: "he was a magnanimous person of the path, the devotee of the court, the master of conduct and famous in mortification and he used to articulate eloquent words; he also had a composition; he had a thousand disciples who entered any water and jumped into any air by his order".

As a Sufi and theosophist, Attar was not a fellow of religion in the sense of attachment to a given creed and insistence thereon. This is what was called bigotry and avoided by Sufis. In his time, both Shiites and Sunnis continuously spoke about the veracity of Amir Al-Mo'menin Imam Ali (PBUH) and Abu Bakr and Attar interprets this dispute as a form of religious dogmatism:

"O' the one with your soul sunken in bigotry and absolving the sins of the people in your court"

"You have a heart full of stupidity glare and cunning and you are stuck in figuring out if Imam Ali (PBUH) was right or Abu Bakr"

"What does it have to do with you if this or that is good; you are like a ring on the door"

"You have sat all your life in this pain; I do not know when you are going to worship the God"

"I am sure that seventy two sects will be united before the ring"

"What can I say if all of them are good or bad; if you look at things pessimistically, everybody will seek it"

Attar was killed in 1220 in the course of Mongols' attack. Mongols who had lost Taqarjar Gurkan, Genghis's son-in-law, in the siege of Neishaboor, brutally attacked Neishaboor and killed all the people except several craftsmen whom they took to Mongolia; Attar was amongst the murdered.

Jalal Al-Din Mowlavi:

One of the most well-known Iranian theosophist poets was [Aflaki, 1983]. son of Beh Valad, a mystic sheikh in Mesopotamia and a pupil of [Ibn Athir, 1973]. Following the disagreements with Sultan Muhammad Kharazmshah, Beh Valad exited the east along with his family and a number of his assistants about 1211-1212 and migrated towards the west and sought refuge in Minor Asia. He stated in his speech during the last days that he is leaving the region for the Mongols' attack. He had a lot of pupils; when he set off on the journey, three hundred camels were carrying his precious books and the water mill of his own and his assistants' house. He went to Baghdad at first; then, he travelled to Mecca and eventually settled down in Konia by the invitation of one of the Seleucid sultans in Minor Asia till he died in 1230 or 1233.

At this time, Mowlavi was not still ready to take the place of his father as his successor; however, the disciples of his father asked him to sit on the chair of his father for teaching and preaching them. A short while later, he was subjected to education by one of his father's pupils named [Khajavi Kermani, 1995] and he started learning Hanafi Jurisprudence in Aleppo and Shaam [Damascus] in the years between 1232 and 1239. After that, his job was teaching jurisprudence and preaching the pupils and the people in Konia which was considered as the capital city of Roman Seleucids' government. Up to this time, his job was only scientific and his method was solely canonical but not mystic.

This situation was continued till 1226. In this year, he met a Sufi named [Torabi, 2001]. who had recently come to Konia and he spent three months with him in seclusion.

As it is known, this meeting had a wonderful and internal effect on Mowlana and caused a great psychological revolution in him; he has the following narration in this regard:

“O’ the one whose abrupt resurrection is an endless mercy; O’ the flaming fire in the thicket of the thoughts”

“You have come laughingly today; you have come like the key for the astute; you have appeared to the indigent like the God’s mercy and benevolence”

Such an alteration was so huge that he deserted his scientific life and started practicing asceticism and mortification. This time, he had become a Sufi in its perfect sense and also a sheikh to the followers. Mowlana kept on accompanying Shams until the time he disappeared or got killed and also kept on living with his love and affection to the morgue. He was in the company of [Sepahsalar, 2006]. after Shams and it was following his death in 1171 that he joined the company of [Sepahsalar, 2006]. with whose incitation he composed a book of couplet poems [Masnavi]. The same person assigned Sultan Valad, Mowlavi’s son, to his succession after his death and it was afterwards that the Mowlaviyeh Mystic School that had been established by Mowlavi began its historical move and it is still being continued [Jami, 1991].

[Razi 1935]. realizes the Mongols’ mutiny and corruption beyond words and more common than being in need of explication and expression. He calls Mongols the wolves of Islam’s herd and knows it compulsory for the king and commanders and troopers to repel it; he invites the lords of his time to unification and agreement and realizes that obedience to the God’s command and performing of Jihad on the path of God is obligatory for them and states that “they should sacrifice their lives, properties and lands for repelling the Mongols’ mutiny and do their best by their lives otherwise neither water nor bread would be halal [permissible] to them”. According to him himself, “he is tolerating the intensities and pains in the hope that a blessing morning and the felicity sun may rise after the dark night of this calamity and rebel” [16]. He underlines that this should be kept in the heads of the children and the widows and that the dears and friends should keep on speaking about it. He finally shouts “Al-Zarurat Tabayyoh Al-Mahzurat” and leaves all his belongings and seizes “Wa Man Naja Bi Ra’asehi Faqad Rabaha” and prefers to escape rather than staying and gives up his dears to the hands of the disaster through resorting to the tradition that “Al-Farar Mimma La Yataq Min Al-Sonan Al-Morsalin”. “In the absence of calamity, he considered her as a dear; upon being imposed with calamity, he gave her up” “So, you should know that you have nobody at all in the disaster time” [Obaid Zakani, 2000].

Mowlavi:

Although [18] lived in the focal point and field of Mongols’ raid and rampage, i.e. Minor Asia, he was busy guiding and instructing himself disregarding their terror and dread and the horrible storm they had caused to rise through slaughter and destruction. The existent evidence

and documents show that he overlooked the Mongols’ power, even their great commander, i.e. Hulagu, and prohibited his assistants and disciples from any cooperation with them and with that huge betrayal in utmost impudence and negligence.

Sa’adi:

Except in his facetiae that he has expressed his criticisms and objects through witticism and satire, Sa’adi has intended in the majority of his odes and prose and poetical segments to teach the way of serving the justice and the people and relieving them through guidance of his contemporary elders. Sa’adi’s social position and his relations with Ilkhanate government as well as his special way of conduct and spirit might have instigated him to confront with the issue through guidance. On the one hand, he composes mournful dirges in Persian and Arabic with the following preludes for the death of Mosta’asam to show his heartfelt sorrow:

“The sky has the right if it cries blood to the earth for the decline of the kingship of Mosta’sem, the caliph of the believers” [Sa’adi 1994].

“Jafto Bi Jonofi Al-Madame’e La Tajri; Fa Lamma Taqa Estatal Ala Al-Sakar” meaning “The tear ducts dried by the sides when the sugar drowned” [Fozuli 1962].

On the other hand, he explicitly points to the conquering of Baghdad in the same year (1258) and downfall of Abbasids’ generation and their long-lasting government:

“We were living a happy life during this time but the migration occurred in 1258” [Fozuli 1962].

He also has composed an ode with the following opening verses in praising the Mongol Ilkhan which is said to have been Hulagu, to wit the person who overthrew Salqurids’ Government:

“This was a gift from the sky to the dwellers of the earth; and, this was the blessing by the God of the world to the world residents”

“The distant parts of the land and the sea have come to confirm His justice while waving the sword of accident and speaking of safety” [20].

Conclusions

Besides having vast dimensions of slaughter, pillage and destruction, the Mongols’ era was the period of social, cultural and intellectual decline in Iran and its outcomes and consequences remained for centuries. In this period, a number of poets and theosophists were murdered in the course of the Mongols’ attack; a group migrated to other lands and another group stood to cope and burn with the hardship and difficulties and/or followed the majority to be granted corporeal positions. The investigation of the historical and literary works from this period signifies that the Mongols knew themselves as chastisement descended by the God to the head of the people; a vast majority of the then people some of whom were elders and famous figures considered the Mongols’ flooding raid as a divine wrath and as a sign of the God’s chastisement. the poets and literary men who lived in this period of time and had been fed up with the time’s situation and statuses were



either advising and counseling to guide and direct the suppressors and occupiers so as to quit annoying the people or explicitly and bitterly criticizing them through facetiae and satire and witticism and sarcasm. Sa'adi's name can be pointed out from the first group; Saif was in the second group and Obaid's name can be mentioned in the third set. In between, Mowlana was expressing his opposition in his own specific style with utmost magnificence and disregarding the terror and dread Mongols had filled the people with; he kept on emphasizing it to the owners of high positions and the elders with whom he was in relationships that they should avoid collaborating with Mongols and accepting inferiority and humility. There were some other literary and theosophical figures in this period like Awhadi Isfahani who spent all their efforts and struggles on making mysticism and Sufism appear profane and absurd.

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