

The quarrel and the adaptation of Zoroastrains of Sistan with Islam and Muslims in the first and second Hejri centuries

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ABSTRACT

In the year of thirty Hejri, the Arab Muslims came in Sistan which was one of the important and saint centers for Zoroastrains and after different fights dominated on it. In this research, by descriptive-analytic method and based on library resources, it is tried to examine the reasons of the quarrel and the adaptation of Zoroastrains of Sistan with the religion of Islam and Muslims. They fought the invaders to protect their religious and political independence, but they adapted after resistance without any result. The lack of political unity, the reaction of Zoroaster and it's leaders and the attraction of Islam provided the necessary background for adaptation. The result of adaptation was that most of them were attracted by Islam and the rest, by paying tax and keeping their religion, had peaceful life with Muslims.

KEYWORDS

Sistan, Zoroastrains, Muslims, quarrel and adaptation.

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Introduction

Sistan, the center of myths and epics of the Iranian people, is of a special holiness for the Zoroastrians. The people of this land have played considerable roles in Iran's political and cultural history. The first king in Sistan was Garshasb who had been vested in the power to rule other territories like Zabul, Kabul and India by Fereydun as a gratitude to his services. He justly ruled those regions for a period

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of nine hundred years. After Garshasb, the government of Sistan was endowed by him to Rostam and his descendants¹.

After settling down in Sistan, Scythians established a local and semi-autonomous government and paid poll taxes to the Arsacids. They were strong and chivalrous a clan; the Scythian armored cavaliers played a substantial role in the victory of Parthians over the Roman commander, named Crassus, in Kareh or Haran in 53 BC. Sassanid Kings used to recruit Sistan's warriors to supply themselves with their military forces and the Scythian forces in Sassanid army enjoyed a great military value². Some of the Sassanid princesses who were likely to become kings in future were assigned the governorship of Sistan and they were given the title of Kings of Scythians³. During the late Sassanid era and with the weakening of the kings' power as well as due to the emergence of disorders in administrative and military formations, the local rulers found greater power and freed themselves from the central government's control and became almost autonomous in a way that Iran Ben Rostam Ben Azadkhoo Ben Bakhtiyar, from a local clan, governed Sistan⁴. Besides its military and political importance, Sistan was also of a considerable significance religiously.

Concentrating on the political-religious importance of Sistan for Zoroastrian followers, the present study is seeking to find an answer to the following question: "How did Sistan's Zoroastrians react to the arrival of Muslim Arabs and upon being confronted with Islam? Our answer is based upon this assumption that in such a confrontation they chose to fight and finally compromise with the invaders.

Sistan's Religious Importance and Sacredness for Zoroastrians:

For Zoroastrian followers, Sistan is a sacred land. The historical evidences signify that the people from Sistan practiced the creed of Mazdisna which was based on monotheism and it was considered as a divine religion. It is stated in the history of Sistan that "since the beginning of Garshasb's governorship till the government of Faramarz, son of Rostam, the people of the region practiced the same rituals that had been brought by His Highness Adam (peace be upon him). They used to say prayers; fornication, sodomy, robbery and unjust blood-shedding were denounced among them and they knew obligatory sacrificing animals and donating alms and hospitality and forbid marriage with immediate family members⁵. Such rites were quite common in Sistan up to the time that Gashasb converted to the religion of Magus. Upon hearing the news, Rostam, the Sistan's governor, became very angry at the idea that he has given up the religion of his forefathers and dethroned Gashtasb from sultanate with the help of the Sistan's people. Gashtasb dispatched

¹ Anonymous, (2008), "the history of Sistan", revised by Malak Al-Sho'aray-e-Bahar, Tehran, Mo'een, p.52

² Clifford, Edmund Basurth, (2009), "the history of Sistan: from the rise of Arabs to the overturn of Saffarids", tr, Hassan Anusheh, Tehran, Amirkabir, pp.14-15

³ Khandmir, Ghiyas Al-Ddin Ben Homam Al-Ddin, (2001), "the history of Habib Al-Sseyr", v.1, Tehran, Khayyam, p.605

⁴ "The history of Sistan", p.54

⁵ Ibid, p.73

his son, Esfandiyar, to fight Rostam⁶. The rejection of the gift sent by Mehrab, king of Kabul, who was an idolater, by Zaal, Rostam's father, is considered as a clue indicating that Zaal and his clan were monotheists⁷.

The creed of Magus was promoted by Bahman after defeating Rostam's offspring. Bahman, a follower of Magian's rites, raided on Sistan by the order of his mother to avenge the blood of his father, Esfandiyar, who had been killed by Rostam and he killed Faramarz, a Rostam's son and the other of his relatives, and married Homay, his daughter, and the girl became pregnant of him⁸.

Magus creed began declining with the Zoroastrian religion reaching Sistan and the Zoroastrian religion was extensively promoted with the support of Sistan's governor. The Zoroastrian prophet, ordered by Ahura Mazada, left his home territory along with several of his assistants and close relatives so as to save himself from the conspiracies and plots of the dissidents and foes and went to Sistan to promote his new religion there. Wishtasb, Darius's father, expressed his protégé for Zoroaster and accommodate him in the mountain of Khajeh so as to guard him against the Magians' harms⁹.

Sistan's people received the Zoroastrianism teachings directly and with no intermediary. Due to the same reason, the most appropriate geographical bedding and the birthplace of the oldest parts of Avesta should be sought in eastern Iran, especially on the plain of Sistan and Hirmand Basin¹⁰. Hirmand River and Hamun Lake (Kiyansiyeh) and Khajeh Mountain (Ushiderm) are the sacred Zoroastrians' places, all of which are pointed out in Zamiyad at the back side of the item 66 and it is announced that Sushiyant would appear from there¹¹. The birth and the rearing place of Hushidar and Hushidarmah and the emergence of Sushiyant, the Zoroastrians' promised saviors, are said to be from there¹². Due to the same reasons, Sistan is a sacred land of a great importance for the followers of Zoroastrianism.

Sistan's Zoroastrians' Fight with Islam and Muslims:

The contentions between Sistan's people and the Muslim Arabs commenced from the very beginning of the confrontation between the two. The majority of the historical reports signify that Sistan was conquered in the year thirty of hegira century¹³. At that year, Abdullah Ben Amer was appointed by Othman, the third caliph, as the governor of Khurasan. He dispatched Mojashe'e Ben Mas'oud Al-

⁶ AbuHanifeh, Dinvari, (1989), "Akhbar Al-Tawal", researcher/reviser: Abdulmon'em Amer and Jamal Al-Ddin Shial, Qom, Manshurat Al-Razi, p.25

⁷ "the history of Habib Al-Sseyr", v.1, p.187

⁸ "Akhbar Al-Tawal", p.27

⁹ Hertsfeld, (1975), "history on the foundation of archeology", tr. Ali Asghar Hekmat, Tehran, Iran's National Relics, p.113 and Fray R., N., (1989), "Iran's archeological heritage", tr. Mas'oud Rajabniya, Tehran, Scientific and cultural publication corporate, p.50

¹⁰ "Iran's national heritage", p.50

¹¹ Doostkhah, Jalil, "Avesta (reports and researches", (2006), "v.1, Tehran, Morwarid, p.497

¹² Assana, Jamasb (compiler), "Pahlavi Texts", reported by Sa'eod Oriyan, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran's National Library, p.70

¹³ Belazari, Abulhassan Ahmad, (1988), "Fotuh Al-Baladan", Beirut, Al-Hilal publication center, p.382; "the history of Sistan", p.111; and, "Akhbar Al-Tawal", p.141



Ssalmi to Sistan. Many Muslims were killed in the battle between Mojashe'e and the Sistan's people. "When Othman got aware of the whereabouts of Mojashe'e that he has returned from Sistan with that state, he accompanied an army with Rabi'e Ben Ziad Ben Asad Al-Zayal Al-Haresi to go to Abdullah Ben Amer and ordered him to dispatch him towards Sistan and Abdullah did as he was ordered¹⁴". Passing through Kerman, Rabi'e arrived at Sistan and attacked a village called "Zalegh" within a five-kilometer distance from the city of Zaranj, Sistan's capital, on the day of Mehregan Ceremony and took the head landlord there as captive. The head landlord accepted to inundate with gold and silver the cane that was plunged by Rabi'e into the ground. The offer was accepted and the parties ended in peace. Then, Rabi'e went to a village called Karkuyeh and captured it without war and by signing a peace pact. He, also, conquered Hisun village with no war. The people from Zusht, at the proximity of Zaranj, entered to a tough war with him and killed a group of Muslim Arabs but they were finally defeated with lots of casualties. Rabi'e went to the village Nashrud and the village Sherwaz and dominated them in wars and took a great many of them as captives¹⁵.

After conquering all these villages, Rabi'e arrived at Zaranj. The people there fought with him and a great many of both parties were killed. Eventually, the Sistan defenders went to the city and besieged the Arabs there. Sistan's border guards pleaded for peace after consulting with the city head priest and elders and peace was established between the parties. Rabi'e stayed in the city for several days. Then, he left the city and went to Khash and the city of Bost. People from Bost fought with him. In this battle, a great many of them were killed and a large group of the people were enslaved¹⁶. Then, Rabi'e went to Gharnayn wherein there was a barn that Rostam's horse was kept and taken care of. The people there also fought him but they were defeated and that place was also conquered by Muslims. Rabi'e stayed in Zaranj for two years and then went to Abdullah Ben Amer¹⁷.

After Rabi'e's departure, the people revolted against his agent and expelled him from the city. Abdullah Ben Amer as ordered by Othman dispatched Abdulrahman Ben Samreh to Sistan. He entered Sistan and Iran Ben Rostam went to welcome him and said: "I am still loyal to peace pact, but Rabi'e left us undetermined and went away; Abdulrahman stood there until he found something unexpected has happened in Othman's affairs"¹⁸. Quite contrary to what is posited by the author of "the history of Sistan", Belazari writes: "Abdulrahman entered in a war with the people of Sistan and took over them by the power of sword. Abdulrahman surrounded Marzban's palace on a day that Persians were having a feast. Marzban had to pay two thousand thousand (two million) dirham and submit two thousand slaves to please the Arab commander to compromise with them. Afterwards, Ibn Samreh continued conquers along the eastern borders and captured regions such

¹⁴ "the history of Sistan", pp.111-112

¹⁵ "Fotuh Al-Baladan", p.382

¹⁶ "The history of Sistan", pp.112-113

¹⁷ "Fotuh Al-Baladan", p.383

¹⁸ "The history of Sistan", p.114

as Kash, Rakhaj up to the territory of Davar and doing so he could enter the land of Ratbil¹⁹.

The people of Sistan were expected to display a far greater dogmatism for defending their religion and rites against the invaders due to the fact that Sistan enjoyed a great deal of sacrosanctity religiously but this was not acted out seriously because at the later periods of Sassanid government, Zoroastrianism had sustained distortions and was more politics-stricken and it had lost its significance for the people. Some believe that Zoroastrianism had reached to its utmost corruption during late Sassanid era and it had been divided to various branches and every branch was in fight and dispute with the others and odd and peculiar teachings had become common among the Iranians²⁰. Zerwaniyeh beliefs, which were more inclined towards pessimism, were highly followed by the then people. Undoubtedly, at that time there were sects among the Zoroastrians; but, when the religion and the government are unified and share the same background story the only tool that is used to distinguish believers from infidels is the proper fulfillment of the religious rites not being truly faithful²¹. Zoroastrian clergymen enjoyed abundant power and the reason behind such a great power was the intervening activities they exercised in regard of the common affairs and made these affairs sanctified and colored them with religious paints. They had the judicial affairs at their own discretion and the registration of the births and marriages and purification and sacrifice and so forth were also assigned to them. On the other hand, they had huge wealth and properties that they had earned through religious penalties and tenth and alms and made them enjoy full-scale independence and they were, indeed, a state inside the government²². Their extreme power and influence was effective in exacerbating the political and economical statuses and caused the legitimacy of the religion and government to sustain losses before the people and the society was streamlining towards decline. Under such circumstances, fighting against Islam and Muslim Arabs was not an easy task and the people from Sistan, like the other regions in Iran, resorted to peace after finding the uselessness of their power. The lack of unity and unanimous agreement between the local rulers as well as desperations of the Sassanid government and its rapid overturn has not been devoid of effect in such an issue. However, they did not surrender to the tyrannical and discriminative policies exerted by Omavi and Abbassid's caliphate systems and took part in anti-caliphate revolts whenever the conditions were deemed appropriate.

The sources put forth reports of the contentious unrests made by Sistan's Zoroastrians during early Abbasid's caliphate. They engaged in Beh-Afarid and Estazesis rises against the caliphate system and their proponent Muslims.

Beh-Afarid is the same person who made reforms in Zoroastrianism and even claimed prophecy. He rose up in Khurasan and was killed by Abu Muslim

¹⁹ "Fotuh Al-Baladan", p.383; and Ibn Asir, (1964), "Al-Kamel fi Al-tarikh", v.3, Beirut, Dar Al-Sader, p.130

²⁰ Zaydan, Jorji, (1998), "the history of Islam's Civilization", tr. Ali Javaher Kalam, Tehran, Amir Kabir, p.31

²¹ "Iran's national heritage", p. 376

²² Christianson, Arthur, (1989), "Iran at Sassanid era", tr. Rashid Yasemi, Tehran, Donyay-e-Ketab, p.176



Khurasani²³. Many villagers from Sistan, Harat, Badghays and the peripheral areas holding shovels and hatchets in their hands participated in Beh-Afarid revolt²⁴.

Estazesis took out his revolt in the year 150 hegira century and many people from Sistan, Badghays, Harat and the other regions of Khurasan joined him in a way that they reached to a population of three hundred warriors²⁵.

A Sistan commander named Harish who was considered as one of the close assistants of Estazesis and was considered a very sophisticated and far-sighted and courageous man led his army²⁶. Mansoor, Abbasid caliph, was forced to commission his son, Mahdi, who was also his dauphin, to suppress Estazesis's rise. It took the caliph's army a year to impel Estazesis to surrender during which it sustained a seventy-thousand toll and fourteen thousand captives were taken from the Estazesis's helpers and army and finally freed the thirty thousand captives that were held by him²⁷.

Villagers' main incentive in joining these movements was their discontent with the way the Abbasid statesmen governed the country. A great many of the villagers had not yet converted to Islam in Sistan and Khurasan and as "protectorates" they had to pay poll taxes. Some others who had already become Muslims were in search of a savior and a redeemer to relieve them from such miserable situation when witnessed the cruelty of the caliph's agents and observed the tax pressures and other kinds of impositions and humiliations. Even the ones who had become Muslims sometimes gave Islam up and became apostates; in a way that Estazesis and some of the people from Badghays who had become Muslims returned to their prior religion and supported Estazesis²⁸. Estazesis, himself, had become a Muslim before his rise and he was enumerated as one of the powerful and influential individuals in Badghays in such a manner that when Mansoor appointed his son, Mahdi, as his heir to the throne, all of the commanders and the people in Khurasan expressed their allegiance to him except Estazesis and the people of Badghays who refrained from doing so and rose up in contention against him²⁹.

Getting rid of the tyranny and violence of Bani Omayyeh had revived ideals in the hearts of the villagers and the poor members of the society but after a short while elapsed from the governorship of Bani Abbas, they found out that not only there is not made any changes in the performance of the new government in respect to them but also the situation has got worse so they became disparate at the caliphate of Bani Abbas and were seeking to find a person who could save them

²³ Gardizi, Abi Sa'eed Abdulhay Ben Zahhak, (1984), "Zayn Al-Akhbar (Gardizi History)", Tehran, Donyay-e-Ketab, p.277; and "Al-Kamel fi Al-Tarikh", v.5, p.594

²⁴ Moghaddasi, Motahhar Ben Taher, (no date), "Al-Bada'a", v.6, revised by Pursa'eed, no place, Maktabt-Al-Tefagheh-Al-Diniyyeh, p.87

²⁵ Tabari, Abu Ja'afar Muhammad, (2008), "Tabari History", v.8, researched by Muhammad Abulfazl Ibrahim, Beirut, Dar Al-Torath, Tab'eh Al-Saniyeh, p.30; and Zomchi Esfezari, Mo'een Al-Ddin Muhammad, (1959), "Rowzat Al-Jannat fi Owsaf Al-Madineh Al-Harat", v.2, revised by Sayyed Kazem Emam, Tehran, Tehran University Publication, p.49

²⁶ "Tabari History", v.8, p.31

²⁷ "Al-Kamel fi Al-tarikh", v.5, pp.593-594

²⁸ "Zayn Al-Akhbar", p.278

²⁹ Ya'aghubi, Ahmad Ben Abi Ya'aghub, (no date), "Tarikh Al-Ya'aghubi", v.2, Beirut, Dar-e-Sader, p.381

from their injustice and actualize their ideals. The individuals who rebelled to fight the then existent situation were supported by the villagers and landlords and they holding the same shovels, hatchets and axes at their hands joined the rebellions. Some believe that Estazesis was envisioned as a promised doomsday savior and a type of Sushiyant by a great majority of his followers and he was highly sanctified and venerated by his assistants for the same reason³⁰.

Besides the joining of a great many of Sistan's people to Estazesis movement in the period between the years 150 to 151 hegira century, a man named Muhammad Ben Shaddad rose up among the "Loghbaryan" in Sistan, especially the city of Bost and its suburbs and Azarouyeh Al-Majusi and Marzban Al-Majusi accompanied by a large group of people joined him and rebelled against the tyranny and cruelty of the caliphate system and its appointed governor and departed towards Zaranj. Yazid Ben Mansoor, Sistan's governor, went to fight them and was in a long battle with them and was finally defeated and escaped to Nayshabur³¹.

Malek Al-Sho'aray-e-Bahar, in a footnote to the "history of Sistan", writes of the possibility that Muhammad Ben Shaddad, Azarouyeh and Marzban's movement in Sistan is a subsequent and pertains to Estazesis's movement and thus it has to be recounted as a branch of the aforementioned revolution as a result of termination of which in Khurasan this other one has also reached to its end³².

Sistan's Zoroastrians' Compromise with Islam and Muslim Arabs:

Sistan Land, due to its religious sacrosanctity in Zoroastrianism, has always been a very important region for the Zoroastrians. For the same reason, it was expected to exhibit a very intensive resistance to Islam and Muslims but a serious and essential combat was never occurred between the two parties for the causes that will be put forth and Islam gradually penetrated among the people and the Zoroastrianism followers became minorities. Some of the most substantial reasons behind the Sistan people's agreement and conversion to Islam are stated below.

Political Status:

One of the factors that forced the Sistan's people compromise with Muslims was their political status. When the Muslim Arabs intended to capture Sistan, the power was at the hands of the local governors who enjoyed autonomy in administrating their internal affairs. These governors were usually from the great families residing in the same areas and governorship was hereditary in their families and clans. At this time, Sistan's governor was Iran Ben Rostam Ben Azadkhou Ben Bakhtiyar³³. Local governors had great powers both financially and militarily; but a sufficient amount of unity and coherence between them was missing. Investigating the way these regions were conquered reveals the lack of program and unity and unanimity between the local rulers. According to Belazari's report, Rabi'e Ben Ziad invades several fortresses and cities and villages in Sistan, including Zalagh, Karkouyeh, Hisun, Zusht, Nashrud and Sherwaz, before conquering Zaranj and some of these regions like the people from Zusht get

³⁰ Zarrinkoub, Abdulhussein, (2001), "Epochs, Iran's history from the onset till the overturn of Pahlavi sultanate", Sokhan, p.334

³¹ "The history of Sistan", p.161

³² Ibid, p.161

³³ Ibid, p.112



engaged in tough wars with the invaders and kill a great many of the Muslim Arabs³⁴ but an intervention by the rulers and the Zoroastrian priests for assisting the people against the invaders has not been mentioned in any reports. This is assertive of the lack of coherence and unity among the local rulers and Sistan's landlords. On the other hand, since the religion and government were interrelated in the governmental structure of the Sassanid Dynasty and their subordinate governorships, the overturn of the government and the governors supporting the religion brought about the grounding for the overthrow of Zoroastrianism and the Zoroastrians had no other way but to compromise with the Muslims.

Social Status:

Sistan's social situation was another factor that paved the way for Zoroastrians' compromise with the Muslims. The Muslims' suggestions to the people of the lands for the conquering of which they were dispatched were of three types: first, they could become Muslims and enjoy its relevant rights; second, they could remain on their previously-held religions but pay poll taxes; and, finally, they could choose to fight³⁵. Various social classes of people in Sistan reacted differently to the prevalent tribe and culture therein, which will be pointed out below.

Local Rulers and Landlords:

The local governors and landlords soon figured out there is no hope in the survival of Sassanid system and they cannot resist the invaders alone so they agreed to compromise and sought a way to stabilize their status. They thought of preserving their properties and riches and their social base and envisaged it expedient to become Arabs' tributaries and converted to the new religion in certain cases. With such a ploy, they not only preserved their previous base but they also became capable of perpetuate their influence and social base in Sistan and even found a better and higher position. The author of "the history of Sistan" calls this group the "fellows of Homes"³⁶ and writes: "A man, named Muhammad Hamdun, of the descendants of Marzban from pre-Islam Sistan and introduced himself a posterity of Rostam, enjoyed an eminent position and rank before Amir Bu Ja'afar and his son, two of Saffarid dynasty governors in Sistan, in the fourth hegira century³⁷."

The bilateral needs of the Muslim Arabs and landlords also caused them to get closer and reach agreement more than before. The landlords who had been previously assigned the duty of collecting taxes for the Sassanid government had a great influence and power among the peasants and farmers and they were the government-tax payers' link³⁸. Due to the fact that these landlords were aware of the amount of earnings in their regions more than anyone else, they usually were kept in their tenures and provided service to the new government. Joining Islam was first commenced by this class; because, they could preserve their social status with accepting Islam and became exempted from paying poll taxes that was considered as somehow humiliating and socially degrading their prestige and honor by them³⁹. Therefore, this group should have not demonstrated severe opposition towards Islam and Muslim Arabs. However, some of them did not accept Islam's

³⁴ "Fotuh Al-Baladan", p.382

³⁵ "Tabari History", v.4, p.12

³⁶ "the history of Sistan", p.197

³⁷ Ibid, p.312

³⁸ Danner, Danniell, (1979), "per capita tax and its effect on inclinations towards Islam", tr. Muhammad Ali Movahhed, Tehran, Kharazmi, p.7

³⁹ Ibid, p. 19

rites and remained on their previous creed by paying poll taxes. Due to their being fellows of knowledge and literature, they preserved and guarded their religious and historical stories and narrations for centuries after the Muslim Arabs' domination. As an example, Abdulazizi Ben Abdullah, upon being installed to the tenure of Sistan by Abdullah Ben Zubair once called for the presence of Rostam Ben Mehr Hormozd Al-Majusi, a Zoroastrian speaker and thinker from Sistan, and told him: "the landlords are sagacious, so teach us something wise⁴⁰". Rostam Ben Hormozd expressed some wise issues to him.

Farmers and Peasants:

There is no clear-cut report in the documents of the way the Sistan's farmers and peasants, constituting at that time a great majority of the society, reacted to Islam and Muslim Arabs. It is imagined that the farmers had been encumbered by doubts and intellectual crises because they had to, on the one hand, be bound to their prior religions to which they had been accustomed for centuries and withdrawing from it and converting to a new and unfamiliar religion was not deemed an easy and ready task and, on the other hand, the social lives of these people had been formed in the course of centuries based on social class system in which the society was divided into two groups, namely master and peasant and the latter saw himself hereditarily the subordinate and servant of the former.

Upon hearing that Muslim Arabs and Islam promote public parity and cry for brotherhood and equality they found themselves entrapped in struggling in a conflict between prior spirituality and hope in new order. Anyhow, some believed that this group, despite their religious dogmatism that derived from their closed rural lives, should have welcomed Muslims to some extent with a hope in achieving a better situation and envisioned them as their saviors⁴¹. Also, Bolt believes that among the various parts of the Iranian society, two groups more than every other one had tendencies towards Islam in the Omavayan era. One of them was the war captives and the other set was comprised of the individuals who were from the lowest class of the society, mostly poor peasants who were busy working on agricultural farms⁴².

It appears that the conversion of Sistan's landlords and elders to Islam could have been a robust incentive encouraging public masses, especially peasants, to convert to Islam, because they imitated their masters. However, farmers and villagers remained on their previous creed long after their land had been conquered by Muslim Arabs.

Tradesmen and Inferior Urban Masses:

Tradesmen and inferior urban masses' reaction to Islam and Muslim Arabs should have not been accompanied with so much opposition and severe stubbornness because their religion was a cause of their impurity based on Zoroastrianism. The reason for their impurity was that they fell short of respecting fire, water and soil which were all highly venerated in Zoroastrianism and hence they were outcasts and dishonored by the law and religion so nobody took interest in them⁴³. They,

⁴⁰ "The history of Sistan", p.132

⁴¹ Denial, Elton, (1988), "Khurasan's political and social history in Abbasid's Government", tr. Mas'oud Rajabniya, Tehran, Scientific and cultural publication center, p.42

⁴² Bolt, Richard, (1985), "conversion to Islam in the middle centuries", tr. Muhammad Hussein Vaghar, Tehran, Tarikh-e-Iran, p.44

⁴³ Arnold, Sir Thomas, (1979), "the history of Islam's expansion", tr. Abolfazl Ezzati, Tehran, Tehran University publication, p.150



finding themselves considered impure and unclean by the Zoroastrian priests and clergymen and being always humiliated by them and even perhaps regarded having weak faith, saw the new religion more consistent with their own temperaments⁴⁴. This group saw their relief from such a psychological pressure in converting and accepting Islam. More strongly, the industrial men and the tradesmen inhabiting various cities of Sistan including Zaranj, the capital of this state, have not exhibited much insistence on accepting Islam and converting to a new religion and giving up their previous creed.

Magus Priests and Zoroastrian Clergymen:

There is a scarcity of the existent literature on the reaction of the clergymen and Magi in confrontation with the Arabs and Islam and there is recorded no news of the Zoroastrian clergymen's confrontation with the Muslim conquerors or any sort of the other religious instigations against them. However, the silence of the sources in this regard cannot be taken as implying that this class of the then society chose to remain silent in the face of the tribes that besides fighting the political and military battles boasted their ideological and religious combats⁴⁵. The repetitive rebellions by the people of Sistan during the years after conquer can be a reason for the religious leaders' lack of agreement to the new religion but all these moves were in vain and fruitless.

Political and religious Zoroastrian leaders took the way of compromise upon being frustrated of success in confrontation with the Muslims. Sistan's governor consulted with the head Zoroastrian priest and after gaining his consent, he decides to surrender to the invaders and the head priest was also present at the time of sitting for a contract⁴⁶.

Zoroastrian clergymen tried to broom away the deviational thoughts from their creed since then and make it close to Islam and monotheistic religions through making reforms so as to meanwhile improving their relations with Muslims set the grounding for continuing their own and their rites' survival. They used to tell Muslims "we worship the God and this fire temple and this son we have is not because we worship them but they are of the position equal to your altar and Kaaba⁴⁷". They knew themselves as the "fellows of the book" like Jews and Christians and tried to adapt themselves with the new situation. However, some of them who failed to adapt to the conditions that had come about had to incumbently emigrate. Although the sources have nothing to say in this regard and there is no talk of the Sistan's people migration but this has happened in other regions in Iran and it is more likely that the same could have occurred in Sistan. For instance, at the time of conquering Kerman, a great many of the people there

⁴⁴ Fray, R., N., (compiler), (1993), "the history of Iran", v.4, tr. Hassan Anusheh, Tehran, Amir Kabir, p.32; and, Eschpuler, Bertold, (1990), "Iran's history in the preliminary Islamic centuries", v.1, tr. Maryam Mirahmadi, Tehran, scientific and cultural publication corporate, p.249

⁴⁵ Moftakhari, Hussein and Hussein Zamani, (2010), "Iran's history from the Muslim's entry till the end of Tahirids", Tehran, Samt, p.46

⁴⁶ "The history of Sistan", pp.112-113

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.122

ran away and took the way of sea and some emigrated to Makran and a group went to Sistan⁴⁸.

Cultural and Religious Factors:

Cultural and religious factors have been effective in setting the ground for Sistan's Zoroastrians compromise with the Muslims. The followings are but some of the reasons.

Poll tax Payment:

As it was mentioned previously, one of the suggestions made by Muslims to the people from the lands they were dispatched to conquer was paying poll taxes and remaining on their prior rites. Poll tax and tribute were both common and customary in a form during Sassanid era but in Sassanid era poll taxes had nothing to do with the religion; poll tax has in fact been a tribute that the aristocratic privileged class and clergymen and warriors did not have to pay and it was levied from the inferior classes as a protectorate right and for administration purposes. In Islam, as well, Muslims do not pay poll taxes rather it is levied from the non-Muslims and as a support. In both of the cases to wit in the pre-Islam Zoroastrian communities as well as in the Islamic community, poll tax payment is a sign of inferiority, abjection and disgrace⁴⁹.

In the Holy Quran, the idea is pointed out that "Fight with those 'fellows of the book' who do not have faith in God and the other world and do not know forbidden whatever has been declared impermissible by the God and do not submit to the right religion and make them pay tax polls with their own hands in humility and out of abjection⁵⁰". Of course, unlike Sassanid era, the Non-Muslim tributaries were given privileges in return for the poll tax they paid including their exemption from military service and were somewhat free in their religions⁵¹. It is evident that the people from privileged social class in Sassanid era who were exempted from paying poll tax had to pay it under the new conditions and this was considered as disgrace by them. Therefore, they had either convert to Islam, emigrate or tolerated the stigma of paying poll tax. Some of them preferred to accept the new religion and acquire advantages provided to Muslims.

Muslims' Behavior and Conduct:

Another factor that facilitated the compromise between the parties was the Muslims' manners, moralities and behaviors. Piousness and courtesy of some Muslims made some Sistan's Zoroastrians give up Zoroastrianism and join the group of Islam followers. Rabi'e Ben Ziad Haresi became the governor of Sistan in the year forty six of hegira century and "and a great many of the ghebers converted to Islam upon bearing witness to his well manners"⁵².

"Ratbil", a local ruler in eastern Sistan, whose family resisted Islam for a long period of time, expresses his grief and alas for the Muslims' incipient army at early second hegira century, at the time of Yazid Ben Abdulmalek and comparing it with the Muslim army at his time states that "where are the group of people who came to us with sunken and hungry bellies and the faces darkened and blackened for

⁴⁸ "Fotuh Al-Baladan", pp.380-381

⁴⁹ "Per capita taxes and its effect on inclinations towards Islam", p.19

⁵⁰ "Towbeh: 29"

⁵¹ Hassan Ebrahim Hassan, (1981), "Political history of Islam". tr. Abulghasem Payandeh, Tehran, Javidan, p.249

⁵² The history of Sistan, p.121



continuously saying prayers and made their footwear from palm leaves?⁵³ It is natural that the good behavior and morality of the virtuous and pious individuals attracts the non-Muslims and provides for making them more inclined to Islam.

Accommodating Arab tribes alongside with the Zoroastrians provided for conciliation and the continuation of a peaceful life between the parties. They were settled in regions to which they were accustomed in terms of their ways of living and they acquired properties and wealth gradually in their places of residence and, particularly, they could get rid of the formal way of approaching the people and established cordial relationships through getting associated with the aristocrats and wealthy individuals in various areas; marriage between the local residents and the newcomers caused novel interests to arise between them⁵⁴ and faded the animosities and eliminated controversial grounds.

The Passive Role of Zoroastrianism Versus Islam:

Zoroastrianism had been weakened and made passive during the late Sassanid dynasty era and it did not have much popularity among its followers. In some researchers' ideas, tormenting, torturing and prosecuting religious beliefs caused a sort of hatred against Zoroastrianism, as the formal religion, and the kingship family, that contributed to the imposition of this religion on the people, and made the conquer by Arabs look like a type of rescue, relief and freedom⁵⁵.

Also, after the overturn of Sassanid government, no other force capable of supporting this religion came out; moreover, Zoroastrians found the change of religion and accepting Islam simple and easy because the Zoroastrian religion leaders had become weak due to the weakness of the Sassanid government and they could not keep the people under the influence of their teachings⁵⁶. Also, religious leaders had not been able to teach themselves how to stay independent and needless of the governmental backups and the overthrow of the Sassanid kingship system brought about the grounding for the disordering of the priesthood system that had been organized in a very precise hierarchy and Zoroastrianism, as the formal religion of the government, collapsed subsequently⁵⁷.

Believing in the other world in the Zoroastrianism ideology provided for the passivity of Zoroastrianism in respect to Islam. Based on a report by the author of "the history of Sistan", in the thirtieth year of hegira century that Muslim Arab army reached to the outskirts of the city of Zaranj, Sistan's border guard told the magus and the elders of the city that "this is not a task that can be accomplished within a day or a year and it will last thousands of years and it is evident from the books and this religion and this situation will perpetuate for years and this task cannot be fulfilled by killing and fighting and nobody can change what has been determined in the skies, so the best strategy is to reconcile; everyone confirmed, so a messenger was sent to give them the message that we are not incapable of fighting because our city is famous for its heroes and warriors, but one cannot fight with the eminent God and you are the army of the God and your arrival and the appointment of Muhammad (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny with the best of His regards) are the matters we had been given the news of in our books and your government will last for a long time and it is better for us to settle

⁵³ "Fotuh Al-Baladan", p.389

⁵⁴ "Iran's history", v.4, p.30

⁵⁵ "The history of Islam Expansion", p.149

⁵⁶ "Political History of Islam", p.249

⁵⁷ "Iran's history during the preliminary Islam centuries", v.1, p.338

down our disagreements so as to prevent killings from both parties”⁵⁸. There are talks of the other matters in this book that are indicative of Zoroastrians’ beliefs in the end of the world and the reports also assert that when Iran Ben Rostam and the magus and the elders of the city went to the commander of Arab army for negotiation, they observed that Rabi’e Ben Ziad has sit on platform made of the Sistan’s people dead bodies. Border guard told his companions that it is said that “the devil will not be seen on days and there is no doubt in it!” Rabi’e asked: “what does he say”, the sentence was translated for him and he laughed a lot⁵⁹. Zoroastrians believed that a sign of the end of time is the bodily manifestation of the ogres. Due to the same reason, they took the Arab army commander as the manifestation of the major calamity and this strengthened the inevitability of the Muslims’ victory in Sistan. The soothsaying literature based on the revelation of the end of the world regarding the Muslim’s domination and the Zoroastrians’ decline blurred the differences between the conquerors and the losers and this facilitated the conversion of Iranian community to Islam through linking the two societies within the course of the events’ inevitability in such a manner that a large part of the subordinate community was gradually adsorbed to the dominating group⁶⁰.

Some commonalities between the two religions have been effective on the Zoroastrians’ compromise. A Zoroastrianism follower could, in the Holy Quran, observe many of his religious principles of his traditional religion such as belief in the one God, Allah, Ahriman, Satan, angels, Sarat Bridge, Heaven and Hell and so on⁶¹. Therefore, a great many of the Zoroastrians who were aware of the inability and decline of their religion and religious formations and witnessed the simplicity and parity and equality in Islam found themselves not in difficulty with changing their religion and converting to Islam and compromising with Muslims.

Conclusion:

Sistan’s Zoroastrian community in confrontation with Islam and the Muslims firstly resorted to contention and tried to resist them so as to preserve and guard its political and religious independence. Numerous fights and consecutive rebellions by the Sistan’s people in the instigation of which the religious leaders had evidently been involved were among their aggressive contacts with the invaders. They gradually gave up contending Islam but their belligerence in respect to the tyrannical and discriminative way the caliphate system and Muslims defending it treated them was kept up the distinct sample of which was Sistan’s Zoroastrians’ active participation in Beh-Afarid and Estazesis movements. Thus, it can be understood that their hostile behaviors have been largely against injustice and tyranny and cruelty exercised by the caliphate system and their agents not against the undoubted religion of Islam; in other words, their responses have been against the Arabs’ domination and they were not in much of a challenge with the real Islam.

On the other hand, Sistan’s Zoroastrians took the way of reconciliation and compromise after their resistance and opposition against the invaders failed. They

⁵⁸ "The history of Sistan", p.112

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.113

⁶⁰ Choksi, Jamshid Karshasb, (2002), “the contention and compromise of the defeated Zoroastrians and the dominated Muslims in the early Islam centuries’ Iranian community”, tr. Nader MirSa’eedi, Tehran, Ghoghhus, pp.77-78

⁶¹ “Iran’s History”, v.4, p.32; and “the history of Islam expansion”, pp.150-151



quitted acting aggressively when peace pacts were signed between the parties and accepted the political and military domination of Muslim Arabs and a great majority of them from various social classes gradually converted to Islam in the course of which political, social and cultural factors like the ones stated in the following sentences were of a great influence: the lack of political unification between the local rulers, Zoroastrianism and its leaders' passivity in respect to Islam, interest conflicts between the various social classes, the divine and human attractiveness of undoubted religion of Islam and so forth, all of which set the required bedding for compromise and conversion to Islam. Of course, some of them started peaceful lives with the Muslims during the upcoming centuries and remained on their own religions by paying poll tax and tributes. Magi clergymen also tried to lessen the intellectual contradictions between the Zoroastrians and Muslims via carrying out reforms in the religious beliefs of the Zoroastrians and pave more ways for their compromise and the smooth flowing of a peaceful life.

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