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**ROLE OF WOMEN (KHATOONS) IN THE SUCCESSION ISSUES OF THE
TEIMURID ERA**

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ABSTRACT

During the Islamic history of Iran, women never were allowed to interfere in the political affairs; however, there were some exceptions. The exceptions referred to some of the king's spouses who were allowed to participate in the social and political issues as a result of having a specific courage and competence. Moreover, women's prevention of formal inference in the affairs did not prevent them from indirectly playing important and effective roles in the affairs associated with the government. In fact, they were the directors of the governmental affairs, though they were limited to the Haremsara (imperial zenana). The turks ruled over Iran for about two centuries and a half before the Mongol invasion. Since there were similarities between the tribal customs of the Turks and Mongols, woman's political power during the mentioned eras gets significant. During the Timurid dynasty, the importance of women in the society increased with the development of the imperial territory. The presence of women of nobility in government administration continued just like the presence of women during the Ilkhanate dynasty. In fact, khatoons (women) played an important role in the decision-making of the government as the spouse or mother of the king. The women of nobility and khatoonssupported different cultural and religious affairs in order to flourish the culture in the society. The present paper explains the status of khatoons and their tasks during the Timurid period, and then it introduces the most influencing women of the Timurid era and their political and administrative role in the Timurid dynasty.

Keywords: The Timurid Dynasty, Khatoon, Goharshad

INTRODUCTION

In the Timurid dynasty, many of the social and cultural phenomena were rooted in the past periods especially the Mongol period. The desert-living spirit of the Mongols provided a specific role and status for women; therefore, the women had the opportunity to interfere in the political affairs of the society. During the Islamic period, there was not such an opportunity for women. However, in the period of the Seljuk and Khwarazmian turks who had cultural similarities with the Mongols, women also played roles in the governmental issues. Gradually, women of the Timurid period took part in the political fields. Such women were known as Khatoons and they took control of the affairs from the death of the Sultan up to the young prince's taking the throne.

The background of khatoons in the Timurid period

Khatoon was a Sogdian word applied for the Shahrbanus (lady of the land) of Tuchun located in the Middle Asia. Later, it was used for calling the spouses of the Seljuk and Khwarazmian monarchs. In the Timurid period, it was replaced with the word "Bigem" in the Middle Asia (Farahzad, 1999, p:104).

Considering the Ilkhanate dynasty, the wives of the Timurid sultans were very powerful

and influential and they participated in their husbands' affairs. The first spouse of the sultan that was the mother of the oldest children of the sultan was called the queen of queens and she was the most important woman of the Timurid dynasty. Other wives of the sultan were called queens or were called by other titles that manifested their status and position. They were the married wives of the sultan, however, sometimes, Queens reached this position as a result of their competence approved by the sultan. The sultans married Queens, and then put Boqtaqs (a kind of hat) on their heads and announced them as khatoons. The khatoons were ever honored and respected by their husbands (Hamedani, 1858, vol.3, p:189). The role of the khatoons is so noticeable that they could determine the sultan after the death of the husband. They took part of one of their sons (princes), and in this condition, as the viceroy, they played the most important role (Azand, 2008, p:135).

Khatoons' tasks

The women had crucial roles as the viceroys and khatoons. They were partners with the sultan in the kingdom, they formally participated in the meetings and presented their opinions (Joveini, vol.3, pp: 24-37). The election of sultan, the election of the minister, and the punishment of the guilty people were

among their most important tasks. The khatoon voted in the council along with the governors and she accompanied his husband in the wars. Sometimes, she helped the sultan in judgments. Briefly, she was one of the most fundamental characters for solving social and political problems.

Political influence

Mostly, above the sultan's orders it was written that "it was ordered by the sultan and the khatoons" (Ibn Battuta, 1958, p: 222). The khatoons were very influential characters for punishing or forgiving the guilty. Moreover, they had direct interference in settling the disputes among the princes. Javame-al-Tavarikh and other resources had mentioned many samples related to the role of Khatoons in that period (Forbes Manz, 2011, p: 249).

In the Timurid period, khatoons gathered the great men of religion and they encouraged and helped them. Moreover, khatoons took part in the construction of religious buildings such as mosques and schools, as well as hospitals. They always considered the almsgiving and sustenance as well as making religious discussion assemblies. They made assemblies in order to honor a respectful Sheikh or they respected a shrine, and then they feed the poor people there as some special nights of the week. For instance, Tashkhatoon who was one of the Atabaki

princesses of Shiraz made a great school (mosque) on the tomb of Ahmad-ibn-e-Musa (the brother of Imama Reza), at the corner of the school the passengers were fed. Tashkhatoon went there on Mondays to pray. The judges, Sadat, and jurists of Shiraz whose number exceeded one thousand and four hundred gathered there and they recited Quran. First, the food was distributed, and then the preacher did his duty. The khatoon was also sitting in the latticed part opposite the mosque. The assembly was held between the evening prayer and the night prayer, finally the trumpet, drum, and horn were played (Ibn Battuta, 1958, pp:5-204).

Contrary to what was mentioned, corruptions, disputes, and chaos were caused by the khatoons. The long life of the government directly influenced the severity of disputes and seductions. This condition had two reasons. First, at the early period of the government, the condition was better and simpler than that of the late period of the government. Second, living in deserts based on the tribal customs consisted of less seductions and chaos.

Participation in wars

Khatoons participated in wars. Since there were many khatoons, one or more of them were allowed to be present in each of the wars in order to accompany their husband. Women

were very effective on causing wars and encouraging their husband to fight and be the winner. There were some wars whose success resulted from the khatoons' attempts and plans. Women could be as vindictive as men and they could be as determined to get revenge on their enemies as men (Bayani, 2000, pp:71-75).

In the Timurid period, the great khatoon and other khatoons had separate financial and administrative organizations based on their authority and significance of tasks. The master of the court of the khatoon was the grand minister who observed all of the governmental affairs. His main tasks were to control the financial affairs and elect the masters of the related organizations. Making palaces and organizing them were other tasks of the minister in relation to the khatoon (Forbes Manz, 2011, p: 249).

Attending court and ascending

The court of khatoons has special ceremonies different in the sultans' courts. Attending the court and being beside the sultan had orders which varied in different periods. Each of the khatoons who wanted to visit the sultan found the sultan in a standing state, while he took the khatoon's hand and took her beside himself. However, the queen was more honored than other wives of the sultan. The sultan welcomed the queen, greeted her, took

her hand and took her beside the throne, waited for her to sit, and then he sat beside the queen (Bayani, 2000, pp:94-96).

Role of the khatoon in the Timurid period

In the Mongol and Timurid periods, the tribal nature gave women more rights. In the Mongol period, if a woman went to the king and asked him to forgive the guilt of her or one of her relatives, the guilt would be forgiven or its punishment would decrease (Bayani, 2009, p:23).

The position of women in the Turk and Mongol tribes surprised Ibn Battuta who was the well-known traveler of the 14th century. He wrote that the respect to women in the Turk and Mongol tribes kept him in awe. The position of women was more important than the position of men. He wrote that for the first time, he saw the wife of the king while he was around Qorum. The wife of the king was sitting in the chariot while the whole chariot was decorated with a dark blue cloth and the windows of the chariot were open. He also wrote about the position of special women in the governmental system. The position of women was really respected and honored by the Turk and Mongol governments. Above the sultan's orders, it was written that it was ordered by the sultan and the khatoons. Each of the khatoons owned many of the cities and during their trips with the sultan, separate

camps were dedicated to them (Ibn Battuta, 1958, pp:329-331). Moreover, Harold Lamb wrote about the women's characteristics. The women of Tatar moved without wearing veils or mantles, they run horses in the wars or in the pilgrimage to Mecca. They were proud of their conquering father and they were very happy as a result of being grown up in the nature. Their mothers and female ancestors were responsible for doing all family affairs such as camel milking and making boots. The Tatar women had the right to own property and whatever was given to them as gifts belongs to them. On the contrary, the European women never worked in the embroidery and carpet weaving workshops. The Tatar women were also warriors who fought against foes. Moreover, they brought up children and took part in the banquets. If the men failed in the wars, women would be captured by enemies as booties. The Timur's women had a considerable effect on the development and success of the Timurid dynasty. Each of them had her own special tasks. However, Timur did not allow the women of Haremsara to interfere in the governmental affairs, but they were able to decrease Timur's wrath and severity to punish the princes and others (Bayani, 2009, pp:84-89).

One of the important tasks of the court women was to educate the Timurid princes. The imperial children were separated from their parents during a ceremony held after their birth, and they were brought up under the observation of one of the great women of the court.

In his travel account, Clavinjo reported a feast made in 1405. In the feast Clavinjo were present and it was independently made by the princesses. Men were also present in the feast. In the Timurid period, the governors send women as gifts to one another in order to make peace and friendship. In fact, women were considered as gifts such as other valuable objects sent to the courts. When Timur conquered Ankara, he decided to send ambassadors with gifts to the reign of Castilla in order to show his friendly manners. The ambassador was elected from the tribe of Jaghtai and he was called Haji Mohammad. He took Timur's letter and gifts to the king of Castilla. "Haji Mohammad entered the court of Henry and he bestowed Tamerlane's gifts on him. The letters, jewelries, and the Christian women captured by Timur in the war of Ankara were the gifts given to the king" (Clavijo, 2005, pp:178-183). Some of the samples of the Timurid's influence during the Timurid dynasty could be observed. Totally, the married women and the women

of the Haremsara of Timurid not behave as the Muslim women, and their behaviors were based on the past customs of the Mongol and Turk tribes. In a great feast made to honor Clavijo– the Spanish ambassador-, the princesses participated in the feast while they were not wearing scarves like the Muslim women. SarayMolukKhanum -Timur’s wife-, Khanzadeh- Timur’s daughter in law- and other women of the court participated in the feast. Generally, women were present in battles. Among the women of the court, SarayMolukKhanum and Tuman Agha- Timur’s wives, Shad Malek- Khalil Sultan’s wife-, Goharshad Agha- Shahrokh’s wife-, FirouzehBigem- Sultan HoseinBayqara’s mother-, and KhadijehBigem- Sultan HoseinBayqara’s wife- were the ones who influenced the administration of the governmental affairs (Forbes Manz, 2011, Pp: 83-95).

The well-known women of the Timurid period

1. Shad Malek Agha was the excellent woman of the Samarkand court at the time of Khalil Sultan’s kingdom. Amir Seif-al-Din was one of Timur’s rulers who took Shad Malek Agha from Iran to Samarkand as one of his wives. Khalil Sultan – Miranshah’s son and Timur’s grandson- cared about her, therefore, Amir Seif-al-

Din left her to Khalil Sultan. She learned the courtly manner and Khalil Sultan was fascinated with her. His attention to Shad Malk raised Timur’s wrath and the court noticed that Khalil Sultan loved her. Timure commanded to murder Shad Malek Agha, however, SarayMalekKhsnum- the great woman of the court- asked him to forgive Khalil Sultan. Timur accepted her request and Shad Malek was not murdered. After many successes and failures, Khalil Sultan failed, moreover, Shah Malek’s and his behaviors raised public dissatisfaction in Samarkand. Famine aggravated the situation; finally, Khalil Sultan was captured by KhodadadHosein who was one of the powerful rulers and once the consultant of Khalil Sultan. After dominating Samarkand, Shahrokh determined Khalil Sultan as the ruler of Ray; Khalil Sultan and Shad Malek went to Rey, however, Khalil Sultan died there and Shad Malek ended his life by a dagger. IbnArabshah declared that they were buried in one tomb in Ray. Their life story was one of the delicate events of the Timurid period, however, in contrast with atrocities of this era.

2. Goharshad Agha- Ghiyas-al-Din Tarkhan’s daughter was one of the governesses of the Timurid period. She was Shahrokh’s wife

and Ologh Bik's mother. She was a wise and powerful woman of Shahrokh's governmental system; she observed all of the governmental affairs. Her powerful observation on affairs along with her children and some of the governors of the time made peace in the majority of territories; therefore, Shahrokh's fame was the result of Goharshad's competence and tact.

Goharshad who was a Mongolian woman was also fascinated with the literature. She lived some years after Shahrokh's death, finally at the time of Sultan Abu-Saeed's governing period and Abul-Qqasim's revolt, she was murdered by the intrigue of one of the consultants of the Sultan in 1457(9th of Ramadan, 861AH.). She was buried beside the tomb of her son; BaysonqorMirza in Goharshad's mosque. At the time of Shahrokh's governance, the affairs of the country were managed by Goharshad, her sons, and her commanders. Her role in controlling governmental affairs was significant; however, it was more considerable at the end of Shahrokh's life. She observed the training of the princes and she brought them up based on a determined training practices. In this way, Goharshad Agha found a high position in the court. After Shahrokh's

death, she participated in the succession disputes and she was murdered in this way (Farahzad, 1999, vol.2, p:853). She ordered to construct historical buildings such as the Masjed-e-Jameh (mosque), school, and abbey of Heart as well as Masjed-e-Jameh of Mashad known as Goharshad mosque. Goharshad mosque is a reminder of Goharshad and it is considered as one of the masterpieces of the Islamic architecture. The mosque was made by the well known engineer, architect, and designer of the Timurid dynasty; Qavam-al-Din Zein-al- Din Shirazi. The mosque was constructed in 1418 following Goharshad's order. Goharshad played a role in the construction process via her financial supports. Today, the mosque is considered as one of the attachments to the Astan Quds Razavi in the province of Mashad, therefore, it does not have a separate entrance. Goharshad mosque includes the tile panel on which there is BaysonqorMirza's handwriting. Not only does it have a great architectural style, but also tile works and very beautiful inscriptions. Therefore, it is considered as one of the architectural masterpieces. Masjed-e-Jameh, school, and abbey of Heart are the other great Islamic

architectural constructions made based on Goharshad's order.

3. Firouz Bigem and Khadijeh Bigem were the women who intervened in the governmental affairs of the Timurid period. Firouzeh Bigem was Sultan Hosein Bayqara's mothers, and Khadijeh Bigem was his wife and each of them tried to effectively manage the governmental affairs at the critical times.

In the Timurid period, the slaves and servants captured in wars were sold, moreover, they were considered as gifts presented to the great men and women in order to satisfy them.

CONCLUSION

In the Timurid period, the importance of women's role in the society continued just like the importance of women in the Ilkhanate period. Khatoons participated in the governmental affairs, they reached viceroyalty, and they could independently manage affairs, if it was needed. Participation in meetings, electing rulers and Sultan's successor, electing minister, participation in wars, punishing the guilty people, and so forth were khatoons' duties in the normal situations. According to what was mentioned, it could be concluded that khatoons' importance of rules increased in

the Timurid period and following great social and cultural changes. Khatoons who indirectly played their roles in the politics and society, entered the social and political life fearlessly and directly.

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