

CAUSES OF INTELLECTUAL DEVIATIONS IN THE ABBASID PERIOD

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and examine the causes of intellectual deviations in the Abbasid period. Several causes had combined including the political ones, as a result of conflicts over the issue of imamate. Accordingly, the Islamic nation was divided as a result of the struggle over the throne, and disputes over the ruler or who was the most eligible for that position. Then the religious reasons emerged and they were ramified as a result of the contact of Muslims with the followers of ancient religions and cultures, whereby some of these followers converted to Islam. This led to the emergence of many deviant sects and groups in the Islamic nation. Other causes were social due to the mixing of Muslims with the people of neighboring countries which led to make Muslims influenced by the customs and traditions of those countries. Still other causes were cultural as Muslims made contacts with other neighboring nations and these contacts had been negatively reflected on them. Moreover, the movement of translation from other languages into Arabic became active, and philosophy and logic moved to the Islamic world.

Keywords: Intellectual deviations, Abbasid period, Islamic sects, caliphate

CAUSES LEADING TO DEVIATION

First: Religious causes

There were various religious causes for deviation including the following;

- Muslims were close to many followers of ancient religions, some of these followers had converted to Islam. As a result of the expansion of the borders of the Islamic state, many followers of ancient religions converted to Islam, and each of them carried the beliefs of his ancient religion. These perceived Islamic truths in the light of their ancient beliefs. Accordingly, they raised many verbal issues among Muslims, and hatred found a way to their hearts. Thus, they wanted to enter Islam to destroy it from the inside by spreading false ideas and beliefs. This led to the emergence of esoteric sects (Abu Zahra, p. 113). An example for this was the populist movement which rushed fiercely in the Abbasid era to attack the authority of the Arabs through thought and belief. This movement demonstrated in its actions a wide cultural and religious conflict, and followers of this movement raised glamorous slogans against the real Islamic beliefs. Moreover, the Manichaeism activity emerged (Manichaeism after Mani, the founder of the Manichaeism belief, and Mani belongs to one of the royal families that appeared in Persia during the reign of King Sapur Bin Ardashir. Mani claimed himself as a prophet. Manichaeism believed that the world consists of two elements, light and darkness (Al-Shahristani, 1992, p. 268). It carried out wide missionary activities to preach the Manichaeism religion in a hidden way to revive the Persian religions. Therefore, its activities involved efforts to fight Islam (Al-Douri, 1962, p. 57).

- The disputes amongst sects and groups had serious bad effects on Islam and Muslims as a result of the intolerance of their leaders to their doctrines. These disputes had culminated in fighting, starting with the Kharijites who believed that Islam could only be completed through jihad (holy fighting) and the killing of everyone who did not embrace their doctrine (Al-Sha'ka, 1987, p. 519).
- Among the other causes leading to the emergence of deviation was the use of co-similar Ayahs in the Holy Qur'an (Abu Zahra, p. 15). Among the religious issues that raised the dispute was the question of the interpretation of the Qur'anic text. Interpretation here can be described as diverting the apparent meaning of the text to another meaning because of the presence of evidence that prevents taking the apparent meaning of the Quranic text. The division of thought into currents and schools was an inevitable result of the differences in understanding the religious text. This division might turn into an illegitimate one when a doctrine tends to saturate with an alleged idea of possessing the absolute truth and expiating the others (Al-Kilani, 2017, p. 18).
- This was the most prominent issue which led to the emergence of Islamic sects, many of which relied on the texts of the Holy Qur'an. They forged a rule necessitating that for each apparent meaning there must be an implicit one, and for each revelation there must be an interpretation to prove their belief. Examples for these issues include their deifying of their leaders or claiming their prophethood and denying the Day of Judgment. This issue had a great impact on the division of the Islamic nation as it stems from whims and intolerance in order to propagate their ideas and principles that contradict the truth (Bakhit, 2006, pp. 17-4). Interpretation did not appear in its idiomatic meaning, which means diverting the word from its apparent meaning to another meaning that it might bear, until after the first three centuries. The Companions used it (May Allah be pleased with them) in the meaning of explaining. Thus, the theologians changed the true meaning of this term, as was indicated in the Quran, the Sunnah and by the predecessors. It was disseminated among theologians and was able to find a place for itself as it was used by the theologians and the fundamentalists who wanted to support their beliefs and rhetorical opinions believing that their rational approach and verbal methods were the way to know Almighty Allah. When these violators saw that some of the texts of the Quran contradict their beliefs, they deliberately changed their meanings and misinterpreted them to meanings that were consistent with their beliefs, and called this an interpretation, because the mind in their opinions is the evidence which proves the law and its validity (Al-Otaibi, 1999, pp. 332-329).
- The interaction of Muslims with the people of other nations led to the emergence of what was known as the science of theology (the science that searches for the self-symptoms that exist on the basis of Islam, and that searches for the essence and the attributes of Almighty Allah (Al-Jurjani, 1983, p. 156; Al-Suyuti, 2004, p. 70). It also led to the emergence of the science of monotheism, which infiltrated into many sects which differed about it on many issues. It was destined to control the thinking of many Muslims, after the borders of the Arab Islamic state expanded and Muslims were affected by the customs and traditions of other nations that travelled to them. (Mustafa, 2003, p. 380). As example of this case was the Greek philosophy that moved to the Islamic world whereby some Muslims appeared to be trying to use the Greek methods in expressing Islamic beliefs, i.e. the role of Greek philosophy in an attempt to reconcile reason and religion (Hilmi, 2005, 128).

- In addition to this, some of the religious customs of the Jews and Christians had infiltrated the Muslims. Some Muslims have taken the Christian festivals as holidays. For instance, during the Abbasid era, the day of the Sa'anin or Palm Sunday was well-known. It is the festival of the olive tree and its interpretation is glorification. They do it on the seventh day of their fast, whereby they take out palm branches from the church (Nuwayri , 2001, p. 191). It is one of the Christians festivals (Amin, 2003, p. 369).

Second: Political Causes

It should be noted that the differences between the sects began as being political, tending to take a political orientation, but the nature of the Islamic politics was associated with religion, being its strength and foundation. Hence, it approached it at times and distanced itself from it at others with implications that contain deviations from its principles (Abu Zahra, n.d p. 29).

Abu Zahra argued that what divided the Islamic nation into the various sects, the Shiites and others, was the dispute over the imamate in every era and after the death of each imam and in life since the death of the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Thus, the nation was divided into three sects; one of them claimed the authority and the throne, namely the supporters (Ansar), and another tended to the pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with him), yet a third group relinquished him. This particular division and disagreement confirms that the disagreement over the position of the imamate was a reason for the emergence of conflicting political and ideological sects and currents over whoever is more deserving of the caliphate. Therefore, the issue of the caliphate was one of the most complex issues facing the Islamic thought, and the first issue on which Muslims differed (Al-Nubakhti, 2012, p. 31, Al-Kilani, 2017, p. 20).

The differences among Muslims began after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and centered around the issue of governance as these were purely political conflicts. Opponents practiced controversy and argumentation over this issue. To resolve this issue, they resorted to 'ijtihad' (personal opinion). For instance, what was resolved on selecting Abu Baker Al-Siddiq as the caliph was not a complete conclusion of this dispute. The focus of the dispute and conflict continued throughout all Islamic ages. A dispute among the Islamic sects regarding who is eligible for the caliphate emerged, so the Kharijite sect went to openly resisting the unjust ruler, even if the death of the whole sect was certain (Thabit, 2002, p. 238).

Intolerance was the essence of the dispute that divided the Islamic nation and turned it into sects and parties. Islam had fought tribalism in the texts of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Intolerance played its role in the Abbasid era and the eras before it as a result of the expansion of the borders of the Arab Islamic state and the convert of some Persians into Islam. The influence of those Persians on power increased, so they attempted the restoration of power to be completely Persian since the beginning of the Abbasid era, especially during the reign of the Caliph Harun Al-Rashid (170-193 AH / 786-809 AD). This led to an increase in their influence. However, the Arabs did not surrender to the power and influence of the loyalists. Rather, they resisted that, and there was a conflict between the two parties which took several forms until it came to the point that some Persian ministers were abused by the Abbasid caliphs at certain intervals.

The history of the Persian ministers represented a series of catastrophes after the caliphs felt the danger of the influence that the Persians formed and their tyranny over matters without referring to the caliphs (Amin, 2003, pp.60-62).

The Abbasid era was full of political struggles over power, especially what happened during the era of the two caliphs, Al-Amin (193-198 AH) and Al-Ma'mun (198-218 AH), which eventually led to many revolutions. During the reign of Caliph Al-Ma'mun, the great political vacuum left by the killing of Al-Amin created a room for those greedy for power to revolt against the Abbasid authority to achieve their ambitions (Faraj, 2013, p. 122). Therefore, the political issue was one of the most important factors and causes of the emergence of the disputes among the sects (second century AH / eighth century AD) and their beliefs. The imamate, over which the conflict raged, was the cause of the emergence of sects. It also was the cause of the entry of many non-Islamic beliefs into Muslims. These beliefs influenced some Muslims whereby they integrated them with their own beliefs, including the idea of the commandment advocated by some Islamic sects (Abu Haltam, 1990, p. 53).

It was argued that the imamate had been established as a succession to prophethood in guarding the religion. Moreover, managing the politics of this life by whoever shoulders it in the nation was agreed upon as a compulsory duty. However, there was not a complete agreement on its obligation whether it was compulsory by reason or by law. One group said it was obligated by reason as it is in the nature of the wise persons to submit to a leader who prevents them from grievance, and resolves their conflicts and disputes. Another group said that the caliphate was imposed by the law without the reason; because the imam performs legal religious matters, and the imamate is established in two ways; one by choosing influential men of decisions, and the second by a pre-established covenant (Al-Mawardi, 1989, p. 653).

Third: Social Causes

Among the social causes that led to the emergence of deviation in the Abbasid era was the prosperity and popularity of economic life at that time. The effect of this change reflected its impact on the social life. This appeared as a result of the convergence of many races, elements, and religious and non-religious sects in Iraq, the heart of the state. The first Abbasid era was marked by the tyranny of the Persian element in the society, which left clear traces, especially with regard to manifestations of luxury and wealth, such as building palaces and multiplicity of fashions, as well as gatherings for entertainment and singing. Along with the Persian element, there was the Turkish element, which also dominated the Abbasid society. These were able to overcome the rest of the elements of the society and wreaked havoc in it by confiscating money and spreading chaos among people until the population became tired of them. In addition to these two elements, there was the Arab element which did not lose its privileges as a result of the spread of Arab tribes in various parts of the state, as well as the tribes that began to migrate to Iraq in the fourth century (the fourth AH / tenth AD), including a group of Bedouins who left bad traces in the social life by spreading unrest and attacking cities and villages and plundering them, in addition to their adherence to the spirit of fanaticism with all its disadvantages. (Ayoub, 1989, p. 250,249).

As a result of the interaction of Muslims with the people of the conquered countries, Muslims were affected by the customs and traditions of those countries, especially the 'game of chess', which was transferred from India and became common among Muslims. People lived in this era a luxurious life. During the reign of Caliph Harun Al-

Rashid, Persians were famous for their tendency to have fun and drink wine excessively, in addition to the abundance of money in Iraq and the abundance of what was carried to those parts such as taxes of other countries. This led to a great increase in prices, and the poor classes became despaired because the money of the state was not evenly distributed. Thus, there was a great disparity among the classes, as a lot of money was spent on building palaces for the caliphate, the employees of the state, whereas the common people suffered from poverty and misery (Amin, 2003, p. 146). In addition to that, slavery and maidservants trade became active, and the markets were flooded with them. In addition to that, amusement and immorality became common in the society.

An atmosphere of luxury and extravagance prevailed in this era. On this basis, there was no doubt that social hardship and the dominance of injustice on the one hand, and the luxury and disparity among social classes on the other hand, made people deviate from religion to be carried away by abnormal beliefs (Abu Haltam, p. 242). Luxury and prosperity which prevailed in the Abbasid era resulted in the emergence of the Volunteer (Mutattawa'a) Squad to denounce immorality. This movement raised the slogan of enjoining good and forbidding evil to demand reform. The second movement was the ascetic movement, because some people were tired of the wealth and saw that their souls did not obey them to be close to those with authority, or they tried and failed, so they resorted to contentment to tame themselves with it. Their slogan was 'if you do not attain what you wish, so be pleased with what it will be (Amin, 2003, p. 150).

It was due to this great disparity in the economic levels and the luxurious life of a large segment of the people that the major cities in Iraq witnessed certain social deviations. Unemployment was common in some cities among the ranks of the common people, and some groups were roaming the markets in search of livelihood through looting and plundering. Among these groups were gangsters and thieves. They were in the form of groups of common people and they performed certain movements as they did not have a goal or an opinion, but were driven to plunder and loot in Baghdad and other cities (Al-Dhahabi, n.d, p. 117; Fawzi, 2009, p. 141). Moreover, there also was the social problem in the countryside, namely the problem of steady migration to major cities, which led to a shortage of labor and increase in wages. This situation prompted the Abbasids to use slaves in agricultural work in the southern part of Iraq (Mahmoud, n.d, pp. 244-247).

Fourth: Cultural Causes

Among the important cultural causes that led to intellectual deviation was the contact of Muslims with the cultures of other nations, especially the foreign ones. The second century AH (eighth century AD) witnessed a wide cultural movement that was aided by foreign cultures such as the Persian, Greek and Indian. The mixing of these cultures led to the emergence of many doctrines and beliefs influenced by these cultures. Hence, the movement of translation into Arabic became active. One of these cultures was the Persian culture. The Persians converted to Islam, yet that was not out of a sincere faith or a sincere belief, rather it was an attempt to escape from killing. Accordingly, they kept waiting for opportunities to pounce on this religion. Also, some Persian ministers encouraged the scientific and cultural movements, so they began to transmit what suited their old beliefs (Abu Haltam, 1990, p. 244).

The Persian literary figures and writers were active in various fields, trying to confirm the ancient heritage, deny the Arabic heritage, and spread the Persian character in the Abbasid administration and protocols with the aim of belittling the Arab-Islamic culture. Supporting this class were some Barmak ministers (Barmak was a Persian family from the people of Balkh houses that were in charge of the House of Fire). The Barmakah were said to be the custodians of the house and its veil. They took over the work during the reign of Abu Al-Abbas Al-Saffah, who appointed Khalid Bin Barmak as the tax holding principal. Thus, they had control over issues until the days of Al-Rasheed, who appointed Yahya Bin Khalid as a ministry. (Al-Maqdisi, n.d, p. 104). This situation continued until Al-Rasheed attacked them in 187/803 H. However, during their dominance, the Barmakah encouraged the movement of culture and translation from Persian into Arabic. Most of those in charge of this translation were accused of heresy, such as Abdullah Bin Al-Muqaffa, the famous writer of eloquence and the author of the 'Wonderful Letters' (Al-Rasayel Al-Badeya'a) from Persia. Originally, Abdullah Bin Al-Muqaffa was a Magian and then he converted to Islam at the hands of Issa Bin Ali, Abu Al-Abbas Al-Saffah and Al-Mansur. He translated many books, including Kalila wa Dimna (Ibn Khalkan, 1900, p. 151), and (Khudaynamah fi Sir al-Malik al-Persian) (God of letters in the biography of the Persian kings), a book which contained many legends, sermons, and Sassanian traditions and protocols. Another book he translated was 'Mazdak' which included Magian literature and moral virtues contrary to Islamic concepts. In short, the Persian culture was the most dangerous culture that invaded the second century AH (eighth century AD) because its advocates did not confine themselves to their culture, but transgressed it to the Indian and Greek writings and their culture in order to elevate their status (Al-Douri, 1962, p. 51).

The Greek culture reached its impact on the Muslims. Accordingly, it swept into the Muslims and had a great impact on them in form and content. In terms of form, it was due to the influence of the Greek logic, as it had a great power over the minds in the Abbasid era, that a group of Arab theologians was affected by it. As for the content, the impact of the Greek philosophy was great in the teachings of the theologians (Mahmoud, n.d, p. 276). The Hellenistic culture left an impact on the Arab thought as well. The effect of this cultural fusion was that the battles between the old inheritance and the emerging new customs intensified. These battles extended to every aspect. For instance, in the field of poetry, there appeared those who disparaged the pre-Islamic people for their way of composing the poem, and called for liberation from the rigid patterns of the pre-Islamic era (Mahmoud, p. 281). It also appeared in the field of theology and doctrines, and the Mu'tazilites, armed with logic and Greek thought, sat out to fight other groups that still depended on the old doctrines in their way of thinking (Mahmoud, p. 281).

Philosophy and logic moved to the Islamic world through the movement of translation. Some scholars believe that the transfer of the sciences of the Indians, Persians and Greeks represented an organized movement to introduce new sciences to confront the Islamic culture and work to weaken it as a reaction to fanaticism for the Arab-Islamic culture. Yet, some believe that the introduction of philosophical sciences by movements, such as Al-Batiniya which was associated with the populist movement, the movement that fought the Arab nationalism, were driven by the motives of revenge against Muslims and the defeat of Islam by all religious, sectarian and intellectual means. Populism participated in the codification of sciences, and this participation was

an opportunity to prefer every foreign thing over everything that was purely Arabic (Al-Sayyid, 2001, p. 122).

CONCLUSION

The study could arrive at the following important findings

- The neighborhood of Muslims with other nations and the expansion of the Arab state had a prominent impact on the emergence of intellectual deviation, in addition to the mixing of Muslims with the people of other nations, especially since those newcomers who converted to Islam remained influenced by their ancient civilizations and religions.
- The issue of the imamate was one of the most prominent political reasons for the occurrence of deviation, as there had been many political struggles over power. Also, the economic reasons were very influential due to the disparity between economic levels, luxury, and the lack of even distribution of fortunes.

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