

## Survey of movement of Mazdak in Sassanid period

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**Abstract:** Political, economic, social and religious problems in the mid-Sasanian period leads the movement of MAZDAK in the time of Qobad king. The military conflicts between the Sassanian, Rome and Hiyath and other attackers who were in the neighborhood of the Sasanian state and class structure that the government had granted all the privileges to nobility of society and also paying taxes to Hiyath and receive tax from people and more famines and droughts in addition to decay of Zoroastrian beliefs against of other religions and having too much influence the Zoroastrian priests in governmental affairs, leading to occurring the big Mazdak movement in this period of time.

**Key words:** *Sassanian; Qobad; Movement; Mazda; Zarathustra*

### 1. Introduction

Every social movement typically depends on the political, economic and social situations and the time of movement occurrence. The quality of the domestic affairs is the starting point and the goal of the movement is based on it, and appearance of Mazdak's doctrine is upon this way.

Regarding the domestic situation and the nature of the Sasanian Empire in (490 AD) we can find out the appearance reasons of Mazdakian movement at this time.

### 2. Political context

By forming Sassanian government feudalism was dismantled and the powerful Sassanian government was established in the year 226. In terms of international problems Sassanian had continued on three fronts frequently. Romans in the West, Kvshanyan and Hyath in the East and primitive tribes in the north. However Sassanian battles in these areas had weakened the Iranian military and Armenia was the big problem. Armenia ethnically and religiously inclined to the Roman and Sassanian didn't want to lose its influence in Armenia. (Those nobles that repined of the Roman dominance about Armenia supported the Sassanian). The difference between domestic and exterior situation in Armenia had been more and serious between Persia and Rome (Diakonof, 1990). Abnormal political situation, especially after the king Shapur II's death caused to done some reforms in Sassanian political affairs.

### 3. Social contexts

Mazdakian movement was the result of profound social phenomenon and deteriorating development of productive forces and relations of production appropriate; anyway the movement had gripped a significant number of people. This is especially true in the Ancient Worlds and the middle Ages movement.

There was the movement in the various classes of society but the main forces were peasants and rural (Piigo Lasciya, 1977).

However Sasanian succeeded to adding Iranian people in a social, economic, religious and political framework and could create a perfect Iranian community, because the nature of nobility, large groups of people that had been rural and lower classes people remained in difficult conditions and lived such slaves (Pigo Lasciya, 1964). In the Sassanian times, there were two distinct categories:

- 1-Nobles
- 2-Population.

Nobles including the pastorate and aristocratic families who were divided into several groups. Among the nobility classes, the king and royal family members had more power, and the princes, king of the States and the mayors had been lower (Klima, 1988). The next level of nobility called Vezrganand then the lower class people (Azadan) oppressed who were divided into various groups. All members of the royal family were in power.

Much of assets, palaces, huge buildings and ... were belonging to them. The populace was created exclusively for the payment ransom and tax, cause to the killing, looted and expensive had been done in length of occupation the country by Hyath the nobility and were extremely unhappy. The majority of government revenues which provided from the tax expended to courtier costs, and protect the

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privileges of nobility and military maintenance Clergymen.

While the nobility had all types of facilities lower classes of society were deprived of the means of primary life. There was a great difference between the king and nobles and own nobility.

An example of these differences is Qobad difference with Zarmehr Sokhra that led to murder him by his adversary called Mehran Razi.

There was a great class antagonism in Sassanid community and progress of low class to a high class was not allowed. There is sometimes an exception, when a vassal indicated a special art.

According to a Tenser's letter the person had performance at present of king and priests and in the sole discretion the person went to the high class. Of course, before going to the nobility class customs of it should be learnt well. (Tansar's letter to Gushnasban, 1964, p. 57)

In fact, the Mazdaks movement was the limited reaction against stratification system.

Clergymen Zoroastrian created social classes as social justice developed a huge social inequality.

#### 4. Economic contexts

According to the political and social issues in the field of the Sassanid government, the economic situation was faced with a serious crisis. Sassanid defeated Hyathlin the time of Firuz king led Iran had to pay tribute and this caused state coffers to be empty. Certainly the only way to fill the coffers of the country was the increasing tax. The most important government income was the tax and tax of land government and personal tribute.

Personal tribute had been determined at a beginning a year, amount is determined. Then tax agents of the government to share it among people in a best way. Agriculture and the villagers were exploited and as mentioned before achieved wealth had used to for luxury. Productive affairs had no importance for the kings. This course provides the high concentration of big landed aristocrats and villagers fled to the city at the same time.

In the course there is a dispute between Savaran and Sassanid warriors against owners of industrial who were the agriculture, in same time courtiers and nobility confiscated all own lands and farms frequently (Khosravi, 1969).

Agriculture and slaves had to work the land and pay taxes directly to the king and his officials. The Clear tax determined and its quantity does not change, and if agriculture was not the owner of the land tax was collected anyway. Osvaran, Ospohran, Azadan, the noble class and the elderly were exempted from taxation. (Shygan, 1988, page 27) In this time the king granting land to nobles, had to atone their support, caused to weak economy and the influence and power of the king. It means that properties had lost out the feudal and amount of public and state decreased constantly treasury stock declined (Diyacof 1990).

Donating agricultural lands into nobility caused to decline agriculture and agriculture in Iran. Other economic factors that provided the contexts of MAZDAK reform was famine and drought that occurred in this period. As mentioned before for seven years there was a famine in Iran. Although Firouz king done some works to facilitate the life but the people due to lack of food were in a bad and hard situation.

#### 5. Religious contexts

Sassanid Empire was the religious government that established by Babak. The most important goal of he and his son Ardeshir was formalized the Zoroastrian religion in Iran. When Ardeshir throne done this, In Parthian Empire, the government did not interfere in the religious affairs and religious freedom was established.

There were many religions in Iran and spread of foreign beliefs (a Buddhist, Greek, Jewish and Christian) led the Iranians to try once again for revival their ancient religion, and these efforts resulted in Sassanian period. Zoroastrian Faith in Sasanian period changed as a militant ritual that its ceremony and detailed rules were adjusted (Diyacof, 1990). In this covenant religion and government mutually linked and connected. The Sassanid coins, Sassanid kings image, with a large fireplace can be seen. Clergymen, Zoroastrian priests and the king were at the top of the social pyramid and influenced Sassanid society.

Clergymen Zoroastrian despite social, economic and political changes in society that created after the advent of Zoroaster still used the Avesta (a holy book) to manage and promote their community's future. Avesta during long after the advent of Zoroaster and history vicissitudes had a great diversion. Now, after this long, its custodians other intellectual and cultural had not withstand against new other religious ideas, like Christianity, Manichaeism and Buddhism.

So the Sasanian government faced with cultural and intellectual crisis. These new ideas penetrated to the ancient Zoroastrianism religion in Parthian period. The influence of because of progressive ideas, especially in the ancient legends of creation which had no similarity to Zoroastrianism, the religion was entered in that. Also at this time Zoroastrian religious Clergymen became very selfish and such situation do not belong to original Zoroastrianism.

In fact, we can say that Zoroastrianism had served upon feudal and only supported the royal and nobility. It must be said that the Zoroastrian religion and Sassanid government have been integrated, according to the Christian Cen, the power of the priests had been more as kings power and the priests of the Zoroastrian religion were exploited common. However they had no interest about the original Zoroastrian religious, for example priests learned to people who pay atonement of their sins to them which remove the guilt and assignment. In

addition to supporting the priests by Herbad (it is the lowest rank in the Zoroastrian priesthood) raised powerful, ambitious them some of them are, Tansar, Ardaviraf, Kartyir and is Mehrsepandan, the four great effort against assault and invade other religion Zoroastrianism have done and have been able to maintain the unity of the faith. The four great priests effort against assault and invade other religion Zoroastrianism done and have been able to maintain the unity of the faith, these per great effort against assault. The power of priest more rose so they played an important role in choosing the king. Although the Sassanid kings had not much power, the highest levels of spiritual representatives, military and teachers emprise choosing a king, clergymen actions was damage reputation of the king in the Sassanid period, constantly interfering of clergymen in the people life of, especially common, interventions and religious rigor and formality, spending a lot of costs on them and this dissatisfaction was primarily noticed by priests.

Doctor Ali Shariati says about the decay of Zoroastrianism: Sassanid ostensibly relied on religious sanctities Zoroastrianism, and praised him but in fact they used the force through virtue and holiness in the form Zoroastrianism. RadhalKriyshnal says: "The greatest disaster is when the force wear the clothes of virtue and holiness and while the force be with fact, this is the force chewing like termites and decay it and then there is not knowing neither fight it and do nothing and not to recognize the religious and the truth, the Sassanid Zoroastrian religion became hollow, rotten, stale, backward and deflected".

## 6. Conclusion

Remaining on Aryans customs in ancient Persia leading to the formation of a strong government that name the Sassanids in 226 AD. it done this by defeat the feudal government of Parthia. Sasanian rule established from the beginning focus on two basic principles which political power and the choice of a religion as the official religion of the country and combination religion and government caused to influence the clergymen in the affairs of government were Clergymen and Zoroastrian priests and the clergymen and Zoroastrian religion as one of the strongest elements of the Sassanid government, was entered into the social system.

The power and influence of large family, aristocrats and nobility that inheritance of the previous government continued in this period, clergymen and Zoroastrian aristocrats and nobility, and large family had direct involvement in most important decisions, such as choosing the king.

Considering the numerous power elements in the Sassanid government obviously these factors created conflict with each other and with the king obvious therefore Sassanid government all time was facing difficulties due to the different groups of society. On the other hand Sassanid lower classes of society the life situation was not favorable, the majority lived in

poverty, fortified class, class contradictions, heavy taxes, famine and drought and lack of social justice strongly hurt the lower classes of society. Mani appearance and tendency the king Shapur I to him who offered a new interpretation of religion of Zoroaster, was the consequence of the problems in Sassanid society. The early of fifth century, these problems of Sassanid society faced it with a new crisis.

Invasion the neighboring tribal, dispute over the succession and the inability of the kings of this period to solve them improvement the dissatisfaction among the lower classes of society. Finally, in the first period of Qobad king (488-496 AD) while the Sassanid to spend one of the most critical time someone called "Mazdak" walk into the realm of Sassanid Empire.

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