Shia in Republic of Azerbaijan

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?>

Note

This article is published here only for its useful contents, even we can't agree with its all ... contents and terms like Arab Invasion and

www.alhassanain.org

Introduction

Shia is a fraction of Islam which is now has followers in the Middle East. 10 present of all Muslims are Shia in the world. There are about 154 million Shia mostly they live in the Middle East. There are 3 Shia countries in the world (Iran, Iraq and Azerbaijan) that officially Shia is the dominant religion in there.

Shia generally originates from the Prophet Mohammad time by accepting Imam Ali as successor of him as leader of Muslims. Shia in the first centuries of Islam didn't spread fast. Thus, in that time Sunni was dominating by Caliphate in Baghdad, currently Iraq. All areas of Sassanid realm after Arab invasion in Iraq, Iran and central Asia were Sunni. Gradually, followers of Imam Ali and his sons called Alvi became larger in the first four centuries after .Islam

Iran and Shia in history

Sassanid dynasty was defeated by Muslim-Arab invaders in 651 AD Iranian had a lot of passionate towards Imam Ali called Alavi and a great role to fight against Caliphate in Baghdad during the first 3 centuries and Abbasid time. Shia community started to grow up in north of Iran in Mozandaran province. They also created independent government like Mardavich a Shia commander in north of Iran besides Khazar sea. Shia movements developed

258 AD.

nni Muslim conquered Iran and established an empire in Persia and central Asia (1370–1507). Then, Hulagu Khan founded a new dynasty of Mongol called Ilkhanid. They were Sunni Shafii or Hanafi branch.

In 1501 AD Safavid dynasty was founded by Shah Ismail. He was extremely Shia belong to twelver branch of Islam and announced Shia as an official religion in Iran and conversion process by force to Shiism started in Iran and Iraq as well.

When Shah Ismail 1 conquered Iran, Aran (now Azerbaijan), Dagestan, eastern Anatolia and Armenia, he forced Sunni Muslims in that area to convert to Shiism.

How region in the west of Mazandaran Sea, became Shia?

Arab invaders brought Islam in north of Araxes River in seventh century. In sixteenth century north of Araxes towards Mazandaran Sea, now republic of Azerbaijan became Shia by Safavid. Before it Azerbaijan was under the control of Timur and his sons. They were officially Hanafi Sunni Islam. But religion was an excuse for Timurid and his mentor was a Shia scholar. This region during his time became of Hurufi movement radical deviation of Shiism.[1]

In the first half of the 15th century, Azerbaijan was ruled by the Sunni Shirvanshahs and Turcoman Shia Black Sheep Tribal Confederation. Ismail conquered Azerbaijan and defeated Shirvanshahs and made the people to be Shia.[2]

The West part of Mazandaran Sea above Araxes River (Land areas which called now Azerbaijan) was under Safavid and then Nadir Shah, Zand dynasty's control until 1806. In this time Russian empire defeated Persian Empire in Ghajar time and separated Azerbaijan from Iran. Therefore, Shia people in north of Araxes were apart from motherland. Until 1918 the first republic of Azerbaijan, north of Araxes River was controlled by Tsar but they were not against

.Shia from the point of Imperialistic idea and Ideology

Shia during the Soviet Union time

In 1922, Azerbaijan became part of the newly established Soviet Union. The policy of anti-religion started and Shiism with the other religions were under the suppression until 1992 which Republic of Azerbaijan became independent.

One of the first anti - Shia strategy in Azerbaijan was prohibiting Shia holiday of Ashura, very religious commemoration among Shia. Communist party declared it as fight against superstition and fanaticism. Before 1918, there were 2000 mosques whilst in 1980 only 5 .mosques were active which only two of them were opened to pray

The impact of Islamic Revolution on Shia in Azerbaijan

Marxism was the main ideology of the Soviet Union and Shia funeral ceremonies in Azerbaijan more or less continued.[3] Generally practicing Shia Islam traditions during 70 years under communist rule were prohibited. Islamic republic in Iran has a big impact on Azerbaijan as the leader of the revolution was Imam Khomeini who was respected to all Shia population in the region especially in Azerbaijan.

During the USSR's perestroika era, Azerbaijanis identified themselves with the Islamic Shiism. Shiism started to revive again. Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was a popular symbolic alternative to the Soviet system, His picture was often displayed in people's homes.[4] After revolution of Iran in 1979, Shia followers in Azerbaijan showed their Islamic feelings. In 1983 - only a few years after Iranian revolution, reports spread that the shadows of Shia Imams had been sighted in Baku. For several days, thousands of people thronged Sovetski Street hoping to observe this miracle.[5] This event showed how strong is the Shia .believes in Capital city of Azerbaijan

Shia population in Republic of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is the third Shia country after Iran and Iraq in the world. It has around 10 million populations. According to the official statistics in 2012, in Azerbaijan over 96.9 percent of the people are nominally Muslim.[6]

Among them, report shows 85 percent of the total Muslims are Shia.[7] But some statistics say the number of Shia is less than 75 percent. According to official running to the religious affairs

in Azerbaijan Sunni Muslims are 35 percent which means Shia are 65 percent. There are not exact figures of the Shia - Sunni communities in the country.

Islamic world web shows that 75% of people in Republic of Azerbaijan follow Shia traditions.[8] Whilst World Population Review says that 85% of Muslims in the country are Shia Muslims.[9] Generally, we can say in average 75% is mostly possible figure.

Baku, Ganja (the place of Imamzadeh Mausoleum), Lankaran, are the most Shia populated cities in republic of Azerbaijan. Shia population in south near the border of Iran are mostly religious than in north or center.

Shia parties or movement in Republic of Azerbaijan

After independence of republic of Azerbaijan in 1992, the policy of communist anti- religions was lifted but the new government in Baku continued to take some measures against Shia movements.

The Juma Mosque and its Imam in Baku is one of the active Shia communities in Azerbaijan. Ilgar Ibrahimoglu is Imam and political leader of Shia movement in the country. He is from a new generation of radical Shia clerics who is follower of Imam Khomeini leader of Iranian revolution in 1979.

He went to Iran and started Shia studies in Iran. He is active in politicization of Shia. Following of presidential election in October 2003, Ibrahimoglu was arrested in December of the same year and charged with using religious avenues to cross the border into politics and also for his participation in the opposition's post - election violation demonstrations. He was sentenced to a five years suspended sentence.[10]

Nardaran was the birthplace of the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan (IPA) in 1991 which was pro Iran, anti-Israel and America. In 1995 the party was banned by law in Azerbaijan.[11] IPA was pro Ayatollah Khomeini and continued its campaign for Sharia until now. In 2002, protest over lack of service and employment led to clashes with the police. They were suppressed but the protest erupted in 2006 and in 2011 -2012 the leaders of IPA were arrested. Imam Taleh Baghirzade is a Shia cleric in Nardaran. He studied theology in Qum, Iran.[12]

Nardaran uprising is a political movement of Shia in Azerbaijan started in 2001. The movement is known as Nardaran movement. Nardaran is a village in 25 kilometers from north east Baku. It has 8000 people and there is a grave of Rehime Khanim Mosque, sister of Imam Reza (Eighth Imam of Shia).[13]

Nardaran has become a challenge for the government. In November 2015, police clashed with religious followers in Nardaran and in 2016 again Taleh Baghirzade and sixteen members of

.his Muslim Unity Movement were arrested

Conclusion

It has to be mentioned that Shia in republic of Azerbaijan is a dominant religion. But Shia has not officially recognized as a government policy. Therefore, secularism is a main agenda of the administration in Baku. Shia people can practice their traditions now more or less but there is not a strong political movement among Shia which can be an alternative for the government[14] in Azerbaijan. Shia can be remaining as social movement with least religious .demands in future

Notes

[1]- Goyushov, Altay, Islam in Azerbaijan (Historical Background), Caucasus Analytical Digest No.44, 20 Nov 2012, P3.

[2]- Ibid.

[3] - Goyushov, Altay, Islamic revival in Azerbaijan. Current Tends in Islamist Ideology/ VOL, 7. P70.

[4] - Valiyev, Anar. Azerbaijan: Islam in the Post- Soviet Republic. Middle East review of International Affairs, VOL 9. No.4 (December 2005). P3.

[5] - Goyushov, Altay, Islamic revival in Azerbaijan. Current Tends in Islamist Ideology/ VOL, 7. P70.

[6]- The World Fact book, CIA, May 18, 2015.

[7] - Al Samadi, Fatima, Azerbaijan: Religious Pluralism and Challenges of Cultivating Identity, Al Jazeera Center for Studies, Report, 15 October 2015.P2.

[8] - www.islamicweb.com/beliefs/cults/shia_population.htm.

[9] -www.worldpopulationreview.com/countries/Azerbaijan-population/

[10] - Cornell, E. Svante, The Politicization of Islam in Azerbaijan, Central Asia- Caucasus Institute Silk Road Paper, October 2006, P59.

[11] - Fautre, Willy, Azerbaijan, and Emergency Situation in Nardaran: Villagers not Allowed hold a Shia ceremony. Human Rights Without frontiers. 2015, P2.

[12] - Ibid.

.[13] - Ibid