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Research Paper

Investigating Zoroastrians' Social Status in Isfahan during the Safavid Era

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Abstract

The relationship between the government and religious minorities as well as their social status in the Safavid era is one of the most significant issues of the period. It gained a critical status especially since the beginning of the reign of Shah Abbas I and the choice of Isfahan as his capital. Although there is a lot of material about the welfare and special status of Armenians in Isfahan in the sources of this period, writings and resources about other minorities are available only sporadically. This is especially true for Zoroastrians in terms of their long presence in Iran. Although the number of Zoroastrians gradually decreased with the arrival of Islam in Iran, their transfer to Isfahan under Shah Abbas and the use of their power and skills in the flourishing economy of the Safavid period suggests the significance of this religious minority at that time. Using a descriptive-analytical research method and based on written sources, this study seeks to answer the question of the social status of Zoroastrians in Isfahan during the Safavid period. Earlier studies confirmed that the social status of Zoroastrians varied in different periods of the reign of the Safavid. Although this minority had a relatively favorable status during the reign of Shah Abbas I, with his death and the decline of religious tolerance in the Safavid government, the Zoroastrians were once again oppressed and many of them were forced to leave Isfahan.

Keywords: Zoroastrians, the Safavid dynasty, Abbas I of Persia, Isfahan.

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Introduction

After the collapse of the Sassanid government and the arrival of Islam in Iran, the status of Zoroastrians changed completely. Independent books and written resources about the Iranian Zoroastrian society during the Islamic era have long remained, containing scattered information about Zoroastrians. Many Zoroastrians sought to leave Iran because of the Islamic conquest; some of them chose China and some others India to seek asylum. Those seeking asylum in India set up their Atash Bahram (Fire of Victory) in Navsari in Gujarat, and established the Parsi (Indian-Iranian Zoroastrian community). But in the same period, groups of Zoroastrians remained in Iran, being able to preserve and protect their ancient religion for quite some time. Parts of northern Iran, especially the regions adjacent to the Caspian Sea, and territories in the center of Iran from the edges of Fars and Isfahan to Yazd and Kerman were the main areas where the believers in Zoroastrianism survived in some numbers.

It seems that after the arrival of Islam in Iran, due to the particular view of Islam and consideration of importance for religious minorities and religious tolerance, governments such as the Buyids survived for a long time, Zoroastrian fire temples in the corners of Iran continued to exist, and Zoroastrians freely performed their religious ceremonies and protected their religion especially in areas like Fars. Since the 4th century AH, due to various factors, including the emergence of fanatical dynasties such as Seljuks, in addition to limiting the scope of Zoroastrian activities, their presence in the central regions of Iran has been reduced and groups of this minority migrated to the eastern regions of the country and even other countries such as India and even China. This trend continued until the formation of the Safavid dynasty. The present article attempts to study Zoroastrians' status in the Safavid era in order to examine the evolution of the government's view of this minority and its

effects on the social life of this group from Abbas I of Persia's realm and the selection of Isfahan as the capital to the fall of Isfahan and consequently the Safavid dynasty. The research hypothesis is: Zoroastrians' social status in the Safavid era was in fact a function of the type of look and level of religious tolerance of the Safavid government. Although Zoroastrians in Isfahan had a relatively favorable status during Shah Abbas I of Persia's realm, after his death the decline of the Safavid kings' religious tolerance, the social status of this minority was also disrupted and gradually the pressure on Zoroastrians increased.

Zoroastrians' presence in Isfahan from the arrival of Islam to the Safavid government

Isfahan was so important during the Sassanid era that it was ruled under the supervision of the Sassanid crown princes (Kristiansen, 1988: 129). With the rise of Islam and the conquest of this city in the 23rd AH, residents of Isfahan continued to maintain their ancient religion by accepting Jizya (yearly tax). However, over time, groups of them were also attracted to the new religion (i.e. Islam) (Ibn Rustah, 1987: 185).

The reports presented by Ibn Rustah and Ibn Hawqal in the 3rd and 4th centuries indicate the active presence of Zoroastrians and their fireplaces in Isfahan (Ibn Rustah, 1987: 185; Ibn Hawqal, 1967: 109). Perhaps later, encouraged by Zoroastrians' presence, Mardavaj of the Ziyarid dynasty paid attention to the ancient customs and celebration in the winter of 323 AH, providing plenty of firewood on both sides of Zāyanderūd River, setting fire, and establishing a great festival to restore ancient customs (Ashtiani, 1991: 132). Later, with the rise of the Seljuks and the selection of Isfahan as the capital, the pressure on the Zoroastrian minority intensified. As in the days when the Shi'ite and Sunni conflicts peaked, not only Zoroastrianism was considered as heretic, Zoroastrians were defamed as infidels like

the Qarmatians (Tusi, 1994: 179). Thus, this ethnic minority in Isfahan was not protected of imprisonment and prosecution during this period. In addition to religious fanaticism, various ethnic groups' attacks on Iran and Isfahan, were among other factors limiting the Zoroastrian presence in this city. Timur's invasion on Isfahan is an instance during which seventy thousand people were killed in Isfahan solely on one day (Yazdi, 1957: 1/314). Therefore, attacks are important in discussion and investigations about the Zoroastrians in Isfahan. The sources of this period have consistently referred to the Zoroastrians as heretics, idol worshipers, and disbelievers against whom Jihad was one of the imperatives and important goals of the Tamerlane Army. According to the available evidence, during the time of the invasion of Tamerlane on Isfahan, the Zoroastrians of Isfahan, along with other residents of the city, were easily attacked and killed, because in addition to the charge of disobedience and rejection of the demand of the Tamerlane Army, they were also considered as idolaters. Jihad against them was mandatory (ibid., 2/102-105), hence gradually reducing the number of Zoroastrians from Isfahan. Some of them moved to some suburban areas, and more survivors of this minority came to other areas, such as Yazd and Kerman (Bois, 2002: 194-203). Those issues continued until the establishment of the Safavid dynasty. As a result of an increase in migration to Yazd and Kerman, these cities became the cannon of the Zoroastrian gathering and presence in the advent of the Safavids.

The establishment of the Safavid dynasty and its effect on Zoroastrians of Isfahan

With the establishment of the Safavid dynasty, although religiously, some changes were made in terms of formalization of Shi'ism in the views of sovereignty, no significant changes occurred in Zoroastrians' situation, and the

process of their migration and settlement to regions such as Yazd and Kerman continued to persist. Moreover, it seems that the special conditions of the beginning of the Safavid government did not affect the acceleration of these migrations, as at the beginning of the Safavid era and during Ismail I's invasions, Isfahan was once the victim of the invasion of the Safavid armies (Barbaro, 1349: 270-272). Therefore, some of the resources referred to the migration and settlement of a large group of Zoroastrians in Isfahan during this period in Kerman. This is due to the existence of a peaceful, gentle approach, and adaptation of the governors and agents of Kerman to this minority (Mashizi, 1990: 43-45).

In a letter sent from Yazd to the Parsees contemporary of Ismail I's era (880 Yazdgari / 916 AH), there were about a thousand people in the area where the Zoroastrians of Isfahan were part of them (Shahmardan, 1984: 265). It seems that the Zoroastrians' migration from other areas simultaneously with the of Isfahan Zoroastrians' migration to these areas continued and even grew, so that in another letter contemporary of Tahmasp I (966 AH), it was mentioned that three thousand members of the community of Behdinan of Khorasan were in Yazd. (ibid, 270). Afoshteh Natanzi mentioned the Zoroastrian neighborhood of Yazd as the greatest one in terms of plurality and large population (Afoshteh Natanzi, 1972: 531). However, according to some sources, at the beginning of the Safavid era, the majority of Zoroastrians still lived in villages and did not have a decent social status. For example, according to some sources, in Shah Tahmasp I's era, some of the villages inhabited by Zoroastrians were demolished and Zoroastrian inhabitants were forced to abandon there. But their temples and fireplaces survived only by mediation of some elites (Shahmardan, 1957: 53-55). In this regard, the Zoroastrian villages around Isfahan also benefited from this rule. For example, the active fire temple in Gaz

Village, dating back to the pre-Islamic period (Mostofi, 2010: 50), was able to survive destruction and abandonment, and this village would remain one of the Zoroastrian centers in the suburbs of Isfahan by the end of the Safavid era (Korsinsky, 1363: 75).

Reinforcement of the presence of Zoroastrians in Isfahan during Abbas I of Persia

With the rise of the Safavids, a dramatic change occurred in the political situation in Iran. This development reached its peak during the period of Abbas I of Persia with the help of his special economic and political measures. In this regard, emigrating various ethnic groups and minorities and settling them in Isfahan, besides opening trade and political relations with foreign governments, Abbas I took advantages of their power and art in this way and in the prosperity and development of Iran, especially Isfahan. Accordingly, Chardin explains that "Abbas I of Persia, who considered his country's development and prosperity to be dependent only to commercial growth, was constantly thinking that he should promote trade with foreign countries. Hence, he took measures in various fields; for example, assisting every one of Armenians who tended to trade in India and European countries in cash and non-cash. Other than these immigrants, Abbas I of Persia forced another group of Zoroastrians and Armenians, who were craftsmen and artists, to migrate Iran and resided them outside the capital beyond Zāyanderūd River. But now they are settled in New Julfa. He forced thousands of Armenians and Georgian from the Caucasus, Iberia, and the lower Armenians as well as one thousand and five hundred Zoroastrian families from Kerman and Yazd to migrate to Isfahan" (Chardin, 1995: 4/1573).

At this time, Abbas I of Persia resettled Zoroastrians in a neighborhood in the southeast of Isfahan. This neighborhood subsequently came to Gabrestan or Gabr

Abad and later to Sa'adat Abad neighborhood (Della Valle, 1991: 78). Adopting this strategy, Shah Abbas considered several goals: while transferring this Zoroastrian group to the capital and residing them alongside other minorities such as Armenians and Jews, Abbas I of Persia could show a more balanced and distinct face than their predecessors regarding Safavid religious politics and obtain a special place in court. Chardin's verdict confirms this issue that Shah Abbas was convinced to receive attentions and trust of all nations, especially European ones, and because he was fascinated by their industries and commerce, constantly tried to receive their attentions and thereby he could benefit the Iranian nation. Thus Shah Abbas gave the minority groups full freedom in performing their religious ceremonies (Chardin, 1995: 4/1431). In addition, Shah Abbas considered the presence of the Zoroastrian minority group and its strong growth in regions such as Yazd and Kerman in a long-term, which could create crises against the government, so that sometimes sectarian differences between Muslims and Zoroastrians in Kerman was so intensified that Shah had to interfere personally and end the crisis. For example, during Ganjali Khan's rule in Kerman, one night Shah had a nightmare that half of Kerman was burned, and the day after that, a complaint came from the Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman. In order to deal with these complaints, Shah went secretly to Kerman to investigate and search the case, and in return, he ordered the comfort and welfare of the Zoroastrians, and rulers followed the orders (Bastani Parizi, 1983: 301).

Other than these issues, at this time, Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman also enjoyed specialist professions: according to Tavernier, Zoroastrians of Kerman, who were more than 10,000 people, and had fire temples and regular religious organizations, were active in the wool business (Tavernier, 1957: 112), and Zoroastrians of Yazd had a special skill in the texture of a

silk cloth. (Greene, 1985: 415-416). Some researchers attributed weaving Termeh cloth to Zoroastrians in Yazd for the first time. It seems that the Zoroastrians originally used this cloth to prepare pantyhose for celebrations and weddings (Ashrafian, 2000: 29-30). Therefore, the presence of this minority in the capital had significant effects on the economic development of the capital and the commercial prosperity of Iran in the Safavid era. The sources in this period have also referred to Zoroastrians as industrial migrants who, along with Armenians, were forced to migrate to Isfahan in order to boost the flow of business and industrial development (Chardin, 1995: 4/1572). In fact, Zoroastrians in Isfahan were an active and active minority group during this period, and they had close links with Zoroastrians of Kerman and Yazd. The Zoroastrians of Isfahan, especially in the field of wool trade, were intermediaries between the Zoroastrian merchants of Kerman and the Isfahan market (Bastani Parizi, 1979: 127).

Despite the significant presence of this minority in Isfahan and its participation in the economic affairs of this city, however, it must be borne in mind that this minority never enjoyed the privileges and welfare of its neighboring minority in Isfahan, i.e. Armenians residing in New Julfa (Turkaman, 1971: 2/668). Don García de Silva Figueroa, who visited Isfahan in 1026 AH, writes that "most of [Zoroastrian] men work as daily workers, laborers, or farmers; they are also artisans and merchants, but their number is very small, because they are often poor and do not have enough money to trade, their women assemblage on the doorsteps of the houses, thread wool, and then weave cloth from spindles". He continued to report about the settlement of this minority: "almost their settlements are composed of three thousand homes with long and straight alleys, often branched, to compensate for the heat of the air. Although it was not more than ten years

under the command of the king to develop Isfahan, these people were displaced from their hometown and settled in the area. Nevertheless, it could have been a great and beautiful neighborhood in the suburb and even a beautiful city" (Figueroa, 1362: 207). This writer described the Zoroastrian neighborhood more beautifully than Julfa neighborhood because it was properly constructed after Julfa neighborhood more properly (Della Valle, 1991: 77-79). In this period, Isfahan has four neighborhoods, Abbas Abad, Julfa, Gabr Abad and Isfahan. These four neighborhoods were so close to each other that only Chahar Bagh Avenue and Zāyanderūd River running the middle the city separated them from each other. In fact, the bridge can be considered as the center, e, the Isfahan begins from northern part, the eastern corner of the avenue. Abbas Abad begins from that angle towards the west, and, i.e. Julfa neighborhood is on the other side of Zāyanderūd River in the south. Gabr Abad was a neighborhood special to Zoroastrians' settlement (ibid, 48-49).

Regarding the religious beliefs of Zoroastrians in Isfahan, investigating the sources confirms that during this period, there was no real understanding of the beliefs of this minority among the general population of the capital (i.e. Isfahan). Therefore, people generally viewed them as a fire-worshipping minority. This issue was a major factor of their general isolation. Petro Della Valle writes that "one of the Zoroastrians told us that they do religious rites three times a day, the first time when the sun rises, and the other turns are at noon and the sunset. They worship and believe in the only God and Creator of the Universe who is invisible. When we said that we heard about the otherwise, the man's wife laughed and shouted in Persian: Oh God! How is it possible for us to not know you? Who you are? And where are you? Thereby, I found out that considering them as idol worshipers is nonsense. However, they told us that the Sun and to a lower

degree, stars are sacred for them" (Della Valle, 1991: 80). At this time, Zoroastrians, as part of the population of the Safavid capital (Isfahan), freely performed and preserved their lifestyles, clothing fashions, and religious rites (Figueroa, 1983: 207).

The decline of the Zoroastrian's social status in Isfahan after the death of Abbas I of Persia

With the death of Shah Abbas I of Persia, gradually the social status of Zoroastrians in Isfahan changed. As in the first step in 1046 AH, Shah Safi made a decree to Mirza Muhammad Taher, the Chancellor of Royal Court of Isfahan to donate 200 houses in the neighborhoods of Gabr Abad to the homeless Armenians. But this decree resulted in local conflicts (Hashemi, 2015: 110). This incident seems to be the beginning of the blurring the atmosphere of religious tolerance that Abbas I of Persia first established in Isfahan in relation to religious minorities. In addition to creating hostility between Armenians and Zoroastrians, this incident was tentatively disrupted by the psychological relaxation and hope for a better life in the Safavid capital, which was formed during the period of Abbas I for Zoroastrians. After the death of Safi of Persia, with the reign of Abbas II, the pressure on Zoroastrians in Isfahan gradually increased. At this time, at first, by order of Shah Abbas II (1060 AH), the construction of the Khaju or Hassan Abad Bridge (Qazvini, 1950: 259) or Shahi Bridge (Shamloo, 1992: 1/518), or Gabr Abad Bridge (Shahmardan, 1360: 174) began on Zāyanderūd River.

Although the construction of the bridge facilitated the transportation of Zoroastrians to northern areas of Isfahan, some reports also suggests that its construction was a means for Zoroastrians' less communication with the center of Isfahan and, as a result, their marginalization, because the bridge caused the Zoroastrians not to have pass across Chahar Bagh Avenue for traveling to the main part of Isfahan (du Cerceau, 1985: 203). Some

sources also reported Zoroastrian workers' participation in the construction of this bridge. As a result, it is called Gabr Abad Bridge (Shahmardan, 1981: 174). However, it seems that the proximity of this bridge to Gabr Abad Neighborhood was one of the main factors of calling it as Babr Abad Bridge. Tavernier referred to Abbas II' issuance of a decree on the construction of the bridge to enjoy the river and its beautiful landscape near Gabr Abad:" the first houses of this neighborhood begins the riverbank" (Tavernier, 1957: 419).

Although some of the travelers visiting Isfahan during this period considered the Zoroastrians in Isfahan in the second rank after Armenians in terms of improving the social situation among followers of other minorities (ibid .: 410), there are reports of the increase in pressures on Zoroastrians especially in terms of paying heavy Jizya. As mentioned in sources, in 1068 AH, after failing to conclude the issue of paying heavy Jizya, a panel of five hundred Zoroastrians from Isfahan and Kerman blocked the way to Shah Abbas II, and complained of it (Mashizi, 1990: 251). During this period, the census of Zoroastrians and collection Jizya from the Zoroastrians were handed over to people who newly changed their religion from Zoroastrianism to Islam. This was because such people usually knew all the Zoroastrians and were aware of their wealth. In most cases, tax authorities sent to regions like Kerman and Yazd, were elected from those who newly changed their religion from Zoroastrianism to Islam in Isfahan. Perhaps because they were more committed to the Safavid court than the Zoroastrians in Isfahan, the treatment of this tax authorities was sometimes a source of Zoroastrians' dissatisfaction (ibid., 496).

In this period, the annual amount of Jizya was an average of 4.6 grams gold per person. In addition, a kind of tax was determined for some profession whose amount was usually equal to Muslims'. In commercial matters, Zoroastrians would have to pay 10 % of the tax of

export/import of goods. That was determined as 5 % for Muslims. The purpose of these pressures was to ban the Zoroastrians from their religion and their tendency toward the religion of Islam, which the government took to promote its (Qazvini, 1950: 218). The pressure on the Zoroastrians of Isfahan continued during Abbas II's era. He commanded (1070 AH) to force Zoroastrians generally to move from their own neighborhood, i.e. Gabr Abad, and placed them in a neighborhood next to Armenians in Julfa neighborhood. The writer of the book *Abbas Nameh (History of Shah Abbas)* writes that "in this year, prosperity came towards Gabr Abad and King in court of Isfahan commanded to set up an agency adjacent to Sa'adat Garden and Zāyanderūd River, besides the new bridge. Therefore, Zoroastrians should move from there and migrate to Julfa Neighborhood" (Qazvini, 1950: 270).

In addition Shah Abbas II commanded that a Zoroastrian tower located in Gabr Abad be deconstructed via cannonballs. Zoroastrians laid the bodies of their dead on top of the tower, Abbas II was destroyed by the ball. Kaempfer explains the reason of this command as "the king did not want to observe the implementation of non-Islamic rites near his garden" (Kaempfer, 1971: 218).

It seems that another reason for issuing this command was the completion of the landscaping of a new royal palace. After the destruction of the Gabr Abad and the transfer of Zoroastrians to the end of Julfa neighborhood, royal palaces, such as Haft Dast Palace, Mirror Hall Palace (Talare Ayeneh), Namakdan Palace, Golestan Garden, Lake Garden Mansion, and Sa'adat Abad palace and the garden were built in there (Rafiee Mehrabadi, 1973: 60).

Reviewing the resources of this period suggests that during Abbas II's reign, the strict policies towards religious minorities was intensified encouraged by his courtiers (Qazvin, 1950: 218). Even Armenians, who until that time were in the midst of

prosperity, seemed to be wronged by courtiers. Chardin writes in this regard that Shah Abbas II always told the elders of his court "if we try to annoy Armenians, who are always trying to boost the country's commercial and developmental affairs, and apply strict measures to them, it is against God's justice and satisfaction. We must protect them and pave the path for their freedom and welfare" (Chardin, 1995: 4/1655).

With the reign of Suleiman of Persia, religious tolerance for the minorities more or less decreased, so that Zoroastrian groups in Isfahan were forced to emigrate and return to Kerman and Yazd. Thus, at this time, the emigration and gathering of these Zoroastrians in Kerman caused the formation of a large number of Isfahani Zoroastrian migrants there (Mashizi, 1990: 43). Zoroastrians' mandatory migration to Kerman and Yazd was not limited to this period; after Zoroastrians' escapes from Isfahan to Kerman by order of Suleiman of Persia and in order to prevent the Zoroastrians' communication with the people of Kerman, followers of this minority were forced to move from their old neighborhoods in the city center and reside outside the city. Since the new Zoroastrian neighborhood was not protected by any tower or fences, it was invaded and looted repeatedly by other tribes. As Chardin writes, "a large number of Zoroastrian families gradually returned to Isfahan after the death of Abbas II of Persia, and now there are about 300 Zoroastrian families in Isfahan. Some of which work as farmers in fields and others do felting and make special hats and clothes" (Chardin, 1995: 4/1573). Moreover, another part of these Zoroastrian families took refuge in the villages around Isfahan and began to work in agricultural fields, especially in the cultivation of grapes and wine (ibid, 4/1524). Face of this problem, the Zoroastrians of Esfahan made a special effort to maintain the customs and especially their language, and did not

accept any changes (Strauss, 2017: 213). In this regard, Zoroastrian priests wrote in Pahlavi in order to preserve their religious texts (Mehrafrin, 2015: 115). According to some resources, the correspondence with the Indian Parsees had increased since 1082 AH, and the Parsees, facing these pressures, provided assistance to the Zoroastrians in Iran (Bois, 2007: 115; Bahrami, 1990: 3). This increase in correspondences seems to have been an attempt to preserve Zoroastrian religious texts, in addition to the desire of the Parsees for more religious education. Although the Zoroastrians of Isfahan were different from the other inhabitants of Isfahan, they still did not differ much from the people of Isfahan in terms of their clothes. Women's clothing was very simple and unpretentious. They, like Muslim women, covered their hair and threw a larger fabric over their heads and tied their corners under their chins to completely cover their chests and necks (Carri, 1969: 96).

Zoroastrian men also wore long coats and baggy trousers. Their coats collars were closed and their sleeves were open (Carri, 1969: 213). Investigating the resources of this period confirmed that there remained solely a small village from Gabr Abad about one mile long, with a simple temple that only there was a light hung from the ceiling and a small chamber where the sacred fire was kept (Carri, 1969: 96).

With the rise of Sultan Husayn, the brightening of the role of the jurists, and the intensification of religious rigors, the status of the remaining Zoroastrian minority in Isfahan became more challenging and strict. Sultan Husayn issued a decree to force Zoroastrians to be Muslims after sitting on the throne. (Gilanentz, 1965: 101).

Following the decree, the Zoroastrians quickly transferred their sacred fire from Isfahan to Kerman (Lockhart, 1965: 85) and as much as possible attempted to conquer the beliefs and rites of their

ceremonies (Mir Ahmadi, 1990: 101). During this period and under the pressure increasing day by day, the number of Zoroastrians in Isfahan was reduced and few of them remained there. The Zoroastrians who lived in the southern Isfahan villages also lost their villages, and some of them still sought asylum around Yazd and Kerman (Shahmardan, 1981: 176-177). Few Zoroastrians living in Isfahan also did not enjoy a good livelihood. One of the Christian priests describes the situation of the Zoroastrians in Isfahan: "they have a hard life, are often farmers, or gardeners, and offering them the worst and most difficult public professions" (French priests, 1991: 108). The priest continues to promote religious teachings among this religious minority "because they are born and widened in the arms of poverty, and this is why our missionaries can more easily teach them truths in the Bible, and call them to the religion of Jesus Christ" (ibid., 111).

Zoroastrians of Isfahan during the Afghan invasion and the collapse of the Safavid capital

Sultan Husayn's mismanagement with the minorities living in Isfahan, especially the Zoroastrians, was widespread since the late of Shah Suleiman's era, and Sultan Husayn and his courtiers did not take chaos seriously until when the Afghans surrounded the capital. The story of the wretched condition of the people of Isfahan at this time and their involvement in famine, hunger, and Sultan's ignorance of people and their affairs is very long. For example, Krosinsky narrates the conditions as follows: "the doors were all closed, but people repeatedly knocked them. The servants came out of the palace to answer the people. They told servants that if their king would come out of the palace, they would fight and sacrifice their lives for him. The people shouted and cried. No one spoke to them, and the king did not pay attention to anyone else. The people were crying because of hunger and calamities.

Servants took weapons, and shot the poor people. Some people were killed in that arena. The people were disappointed of the King and left the city in different groups” (Krosinsky, 1984: 62).

Some resources clarify that during of the fall of the capital, Zoroastrians colluded with the Afghans, and confirms their claims by referring to the presence of Nasrullah Khan the Zoroastrian as one of Mahmoud’s commanders, and using this minority in the conquest of the castles of the villages (Gilanentz, 1965: 98). Although the Zoroastrians were unsatisfied with the Safavid government, but this claim needs more evidence. As known, the revolt of Afghans and their invasion to Isfahan were more of a domestic insurgency and a result of the Safavid king’s and courtiers’ insolvency and ignorance of the arising problems. Moreover, cooperation of Nasrullah Khan the Zoroastrian, as one of Mahmoud’s commanders, cannot be extended to all Zoroastrians. Some resources even questions the originality of Nasrullah Khan the Zoroastrian and considers him to be from Ka’b Tribe in India (Krosinsky, 1984: 72). Additionally, there is another report claiming that after the conquest of Isfahan, Mahmoud executed all the Iranians who betrayed their country during the siege, because he believed that one could not trust those who betrayed their king and country. And if they had a good opportunity, they would betray him too (ibid. 68). Following the domination of the Afghans on Isfahan, Mahmoud issued orders to honor the Afghans, and classified people into seven classes to deal with their affairs, the Zoroastrian minority was in the fifth rank. “The Afghans must be the first rank, the, the Second are Sunni Dargozini people, the third are Armenians and Christians, the fourth are Multanis who are Hindus, the fifth are fire worshipers (Zoroastrians), the sixth are Jews, and the seventh are Rāfiḏī (Shiites) (ibid. 72).

After occupying Isfahan, Mahmoud created a horrifying environment to suppress any opposition, so that during a magnificent celebration with the presence of one thousand five hundred of the best men and slaves of the Safavid king, he slaughtered all of them. One of the agents of the Dutch company who was in Isfahan at that time described the event as follows: “There was such a period of panic, turmoil, sorrow and cry. When I was with the Dutch in the company garden, I heard cries. We were almost scarred and numbed, not knowing for what those cries was. In the morning of that day, dead bodies of one thousand five hundred of the best men and slaves of the Safavid king were laid on the ground in front of the royal palace to show how he [Mahmoud] savagely took revenge of the people of Isfahan. At that time, everyone in Isfahan was afraid (Floor, 1986: 238). Naturally, in such a climate of horror, created by Afghans, along with Sultan Husayn ineffectiveness, and his surrender policy caused religious minorities to support dominant people.

In his last speech addressed to his court and the people Sultan Husayn declared: “In this case, I have no other chance except surrender and submission, I destroyed the structure of my government, and I forgot the blessings of Allah. Enemies penetrated into our society via hypocrisy, and we handed over them everything we had because of incompetency. Since the will of Almighty God tends to this issue, let us go to the new King and be his servants”. That night, Sultan Husayn roaming around the city cried until the morning. That night, Sultan Husayn, the people, and the army did not return home, gathering in the court and agreeing to surrender. Then, Sultan went to Mahmoud, addressing him: “Destiny considers you as the king of Iran, congratulations”! Then Sultan told his courtiers and Mahmoud’s companions that until that time, he was the king, and from that day on, Mir Mahmoud was their king. He then advised his companion to follow

Mahmoud and the Sharia" (Krosinsky, 1985: 66). In fact, in such an atmosphere it seems that not only the Zoroastrian minority, but all the people of the capital, were forced to accept the Afghan tribe to preserve their existence. If, after this incident, the presence and cooperation of two thousand Qizilbash troops in Mahmoud's Army (Gilanentz, 1965: 71).

It seems that claims raised about Zoroastrian minority have been exaggerated, because, with the fall of the Safavid, although severely pressured against minorities, Zoroastrian, compared to other minorities in the capital, obtained no special privileges and preferences, and the process of their migration from Isfahan the central regions and eventually outside Iran continued (Shahmardan, 1961: 140).

Conclusion

After the arrival of Islam in Iran, Iranian Zoroastrians migrated to some countries such as India and China to survive their political and social lives, while others moved to regions such as Yazd and Kerman to be far from government's oppressions. So gradually, these cities became the cannon of the gathering of Zoroastrians in Iran. Zoroastrians in Isfahan were not isolated from this rule and immigrated to these regions in different periods of time and due to the intensification of pressures.

However, with the rise of Shah Abbas I as the Safavid king, and the selection of Isfahan as the capital, significant changes appeared in the status of religious minorities in Isfahan. These changes were undoubtedly due to Abbas I's religious tolerance policies with religious minorities. Following this orientation, the Safavid government once again provided the ground for the return of groups of Zoroastrians to Isfahan under the command of the Abbas I of Persia. In this direction, according to Shah Abbas I, measures were adopted to promote the Zoroastrians' welfare, and this minority, like Armenians, were resettled in a neighborhood called

Gabr Abad, to use their skills in production of textiles such as Termeh cloth. Although the Zoroastrian social status was relatively well-regarded at this time, the position of this minority was never ranked Armenians. With the death of Abbas I and the decline of the atmosphere of religious tolerance in the Safavid court, the situation of the Zoroastrians in Isfahan was disrupted. These pressures were initiated by submitting some Zoroastrian dwellings to Armenians, and during the period of Abbas II, simultaneously with the reduction of the religious tolerance of the court with the minorities, and in particular with the Zoroastrians, Shah issued a decree for compulsory migration of them from Gabr Abad neighborhood.

The bottlenecks and pressures on Zoroastrians were eventually pursued during the reign of Shah Suleiman with their mandatory immigration from Isfahan to desert areas such as Yazd and Kerman. In this way, again, during the gradual flow of the day, the population of this religious minority in the capital of the Safavid government was reduced. Eventually, the pressure on this minority peaked during the reign of Shah Sultan Husayn who issued a decree on the mandatory religion change from Zoroastrianism to Islam. The consequences of those pressures were the adoption of the policy of concealment of religious beliefs and religious ceremonies by Zoroastrians, the decrease in the number of followers of this minority in Isfahan, and the increase in their migration to the regions such as Kerman and Yazd and foreign countries such as India.

If the policies adopted towards Armenians during this period was also applied to the Zoroastrians, and the religious pressures and prejudices were reduced, Zoroastrians, like Armenians, could have more efficient economic effects for the Safavid government and Iran as the merchants trading with India.

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