BETWEEN TRADITIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM AND IRANIAN “NEW TRADITION”: NEW PHASE OF “EXPORT OF REVOLUTION” IN CONTEMPORARY SHIISM

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Abstract
In the first step of Iranian new regime after 1979, new state tried to agitate neighbor Shiites residence as it were “Export of Revolution”. The result was not good effect, rather lead international isolation. In result Iranian state followed less ideological path and tackled with religious education for foreign students and received foreign students from outside minority communities.

However it is unclear how such Iranian trend has influenced on “traditional” local religious education and how Iranian state tried to establish their hegemony in religious education. In this paper, I would like to explore transformation of higher religious education system and Iranian hegemony among contemporary Shiite education based on my field work in Mumbai. In result I made clear that Mustafa International University, controlled under Iranian government, had strengthened presence of Iran in religious education network. At the same time, I also made clear that trend of Iranian state toward domestic religious segment had possibility to influence on Shiites outside of Iran.

INTRODUCTION
After the revolution in 1979, Shiite religious segment came to be important political arena in Iran because of the unique political system. Shiite clerics have played great important political role under this political system. In a result, Iranian state has tried to control the segment, especially Howze-ye Elimiye, space of higher religious education in Shiism because clerical authority closely intertwined with reproduction of clerics in traditional clerical society. In addition to domestic area, new Iranian state has also tried to show Muslim leadership over outside Shiite communities. In the first step of Iranian new regime, new state tried to agitate neighbor Shiites residence as it were “Export of Revolution”. The result was not good effect, rather lead international isolation.

As a result Iranian state followed less ideological path and tackled with religious education for foreign students and received foreign students from outside minority communities. However it is unclear how such Iranian trend has influenced on “traditional” local religious education and how Iranian state tried to establish their hegemony in religious education. This matter relates with not only contemporary Shiism but also international political arena in Iran.

In this paper, I would explore transformation of higher religious education system and Iranian hegemony among contemporary Shiite education. I attempt to review discussions in political studies on Iranian foreign policy and Islamic studies on Iranian Shiia. Then I would like to reveal religious education in Mumbai and religious educational relationship between Mumbai and Iran by following anthropological method. In short, I would like to tackle with development of Islamic segment in Iranian foreign politics by following inter-disciplinary.
1. Islamic factor in Iranian foreign policy in post ideological attempts

Iranian revolution in 1979 created great change not only in domestic dimension but also diplomatic dimension. Under the slogan of “No East, No West (nasharq, nagharb)”, new Iranian state adopted ideological diplomacy and attempted to establish their state as Islamic leader\(^1\). Most major attempt was so called ‘Export of Revolution.’

‘Export of Revolution’ was an attempt of Khomeinism in international dimension which realized deliverance of “oppressed people” in Iranian revolution. Hezbollah, Shiite militant and political party in Lebanon, was the best example. In addition, this international Khomeinism was intertwined with Shiite political movements in Gulf countries which were influenced by Iraqi Shiite Islamic movement such as movements under Ayatollah Shirazi or Da’wa party controlled by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. In Gulf countries Khomeini’s religious representatives played role of politician and attempted to knock the monarchy. Especially Bahrain and Kuwait were of particular note.

In Bahrain, majority of residents was Shi’a but political and economic order was controlled under Sunni. After Iranian revolution, Hadi al-Mudarresui, Khomeini’s representative in Bahrain, fomented protests of Shiite residents against the regime from July to September in 1979. Eventually he was deported in September. He moved to Tehran and organized Bahrain Islamic liberation front. Then he plotted to overthrow Bahrain government in mid-1981 (cf. Louër 2008: 158-161.) In Kuwait, ‘Abbas al-Muhri, Khomeini’s representative and student in Qom and Najaf, also played key role in Shiite political movement. He returned to Kuwait and supported Khomeinism with his son Ahmad al-Muhri. Then they came into criticism against Kuwait government. Eventually, they were deported and continued their activity in Iran under Khomeini’s hospitality.

As those Bahrain and Kuwait cases indicated, ‘Export of Revolution’ did not lead to a positive outcome. Rather it accelerated Iran’s international isolation even in the Middle East. Gulf monarchies organized the Gulf Cooperation Council as regional cohesiveness and supported Iraq in Iran-Iraq war (1981-1988) (Louër 2010: 77.) Thus new Iranian state had to change their policy from Islamism to pragmatism and came close not only neighbor Arab countries but also East and West behind closed doors in late 1980s under the war. In addition, this less ideological tendency was accelerated not only in foreign and domestic political arena under Rafsanjani pragmatic government.

However according to political studies on Iranian foreign policy, it is unclear what transformation from ideological Islamism to pragmatism related with transformation of Islamic segment in international political arena. At least, although there were difference in terms of quality, Islamic segment continued to have important political role in domestic political arena according to some Islamic studies on contemporary Shiism and political sociological studies (e.g. Buhta 2000; Walbridge 2001).\(^2\) Such continuity of the importance in domestic political arena indicates continuity of importance of religious segments even in international political arena in Iran. Thus it is necessary to explore development of Islamic segment relating with international political arena in Iran after late 1980s.

\(^1\) Of course, it was not totalitarian diplomacy since shortly after the revolution. Rather it was controversial but multiple even relationship between new regime and western countries. See Behrooz (1990: 16-17) and Murray (2010: 26-27).

\(^2\) In contrast with them, some studies such as Arjomand (2009) pointed out that religious segment came to less important in Iranian politics under Khamenei leadership, rather constitutional aspect was more important that religious segment. However there were a lot of controversial evidence between state and religious segment even after Khamenei’s succession. Thus I accord with attitudes of Walbridge (2001) and other researchers.
2. Organization of Religious Education foreign Students under Khamenei Leadership

According to some researches, it is clear that Iranian state under Khamenei leadership attempted to control the society of religious scholars by reorganization of religious segment (e.g. Gieling 1997; Buchta 2000; Walbridge 2001.) I have also tackled with this topic in terms of relation between religion and politics and made clear process of authoritarian regime in religious segment after his succession by focusing on Howze-ye Elmiye, religious academia (Kuroda 2010.)

Howze-ye Elmiye, religious academia, has been key element of society of Shiite scholars in terms of their reproduction of not only new generation but also their religious authority. Since late 18th century, Iraqi shrine cities, especially Najaf, played central role of transnational religious network under leadership of great scholars (Cole 2002). This religious network connected Iraqi central religious authority with local Shiite communities through dispatch of religious scholars and religious education. Religious centers in Iran such as Qom, Isfahan and Mashhad played local hub connecting central religious authority in Iraq with Iranian local societies.

However it became difficult to keep transnational network since 1980s by various reasons. One of the reasons was worse political condition in Iraq such as rise of Ba’th regime under Saddam Hussein. Most Iranian origin scholars were exiled from Iraq shrine and religious leaders in Iraq were also forced to terms with the regime including closing door of religious education. In this situation, Iran came to play central role of religious education behind new Iranian regime attempting to get hegemony among Shi’a.

Since early 20th century, Qom gradually came to influence on Shiite religious education under some great scholars such as Abd al-Karim HaeriYazdi and HoseynBorujerdi. Although Iranian monarchy tried to control religious segment after death of latter Ayatollah, development of Qom as religious center continued under Shah regime and connected with local religious schools in Iran. Then, religious services toward foreign communities gradually came to be organized and somecenters including dispatch service of religious scholars were launched in 1960s and 70s under influence of higher religious scholars. After the Iranian revolution, new state tried to control Iranian religious centers through the administrative reforms, especially in Qom seminary. In the result, some aspect of religious education center came to be organized.

However religious education for foreign students was beyond control at the first step of the administrative reform under Khomenei leadership. In fact, foreign religious students studied with Iranian students in same seminaries in 1980s (Sakurai 2006). This situation gradually changed after Khamenei succession. He also tried to control religious centers more aggressively than his predecessor by covering his lower religious authority. Eventually, he could not

According to some biographical description such as Agha Buzurk al-Tihrani (1404 vol.1: 8-9, 18-19, 27-28, 53, 58, 73, 76-77, 91-92, 135-136, 153-154, 159-160, 195, 196-197, 198-199, 206, 224-225, 247-248, 255, 267-268, 269, 295), it is possible to point out multifactorial connection among religious center in Iraq, local religious center, local societies. In addition, there were also multifactorial financial relations among them (al-Tihrani 1404 vol.1: 339-340, 223-224). About detail on transnational and local relation among religious scholars in late 19th century and early 20th century, see Amanat (1989: 40) and Kuroda (2008).

According to my some interview with higher religious scholars in Qom, some major religious scholars such as Ayatollah Mohammad KazemShahrudi exiled from Iraq after rise of Saddam regime.

While Mashhad and Isfahan, other major religious centers in Iran came to less powerful under Shah regime since early 20th century, those cities also connected with local religious school.
achieve to control religious centers completely but to influence on the organizational administration strongly. At the same time, religious education under Qom seminary came to more organized and systematic including religious education segment for foreign student.

After Emam Khomeini seminary was established in mid-90s, most foreign students from all over the world excepting for Iraqi and Afghani students came to study there. At the same time, some governmental centers such as world center of Islamic knowledge (markaz-e jahan-e olume e eslami) came to give an examination for foreign students. Such governmental centers cooperated with Iranian embassies and culture centers of Islamic republic of Iran. This conjunction religious education with Iranian government gradually escalated. Probably, establishment of Mustafa International University (Jami’at Mustafa Alamiya, abbr, MIU) in 2009 was the highlight. This university was quite unique center for religious learning in Iranian context. In Iranian context, that was first learning center to receive qualification of religious scholar under governmental control.

However it is unclear what establishment of the university has influenced on religious education in Shiite minority outside of Iran. Thus I would like to make clear this point by based on my field research in Mumbai in November in 2012 and from February to March in 2014.

3. Contemporary Shiite Religious Education in Mumbai

Mumbai is one of major center of Shi’a Muslims as minority in contemporary India. Of course, Lucknow in north Indian and Hyderabad in central India are well known as major Shiite centers in India. On the other hand, Mumbai is not known better than those cities. However there have been not only “native” Shi’ites but also “migrant” Shiites in Mumbai and the city came to be important Shiite city in India, especially since early 19th century. Major factor which triggered to come to be important Shiite city was onslaught of Iranian merchant (Green 2012: 145-148). Mughal Masjid, located in today’s Dongri, central part of Mumbai, is one of their footprint. The mosque is also known as Irani Masjid or Shirazi Mosque, derived from the founder Mohammad HoseynShirazi, Iranian trader from Shiraz, south central Iran.

It is unclear exact number of Shiite population in Mumbai today because there is no official figure about Shiite populations in the city. Shiite Muslims in Mumbai are scattered and live next to not only other Muslim sect but also Hindu. Of course there are some major Shi’ite areas in Mumbai and the suburb such as Dongri, Bandra, Andheri, Mira Road, Kurla, Mulund, Govandi, Mumbra and so on but in such areas, Shia Muslims are not always majority (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Shiite location in Mumbai and suburbs

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6In my field work in September in 2008, there was controversial discussion over plan of administration of religious education under ministry of Education. Even prostate grand ayatollahs such as LotfollahSafi Golpayegani clearly opposed to this plan. In result, that plan was withdrawn but segment of religious education for foreign students was achieved.
According to my field research, there were five religious schools in Mumbai and the suburb in March 2014. Surprisingly, while Mumbai was important Shiite center in India, emergence of religious schools in Mumbai was relatively recent event. Madrasa al-Amir al-Muminin in south Dongri, the oldest religious school in Mumbai, and Madrasa al-Nur al-Huda in Govandi were founded in early 1980s. However rests of religious schools were founded in 2000s (see Table 1).

It was common with religious schools in Mumbai that lecturers used Urdu language in their lecture. In short, local language in Mumbai, Mahratti, was not used for religious education. Of course, Urdu language has been important meaning as common language as Muslim in South Asia and second sacred language to Arabic. In addition, lectures used Persian in their lecture in some religious school. I went to all madrasa and interviewed with lecturers and student there. I expected that all lecturers could speak Persian because they probably had studied abroad in Iran behind difficult situation in Iraq. Indeed, all lecturers I talked with in all religious school studied Islamic education in Iran. But this expectation was partly correct because not only lecturers but also many students in some religious schools could speak Persian. My experience indicates quite important transformation of religious education.

Table 1: List of Shiite Religious Schools in Mumbai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Found</th>
<th>type</th>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Found</th>
<th>type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madrasa al-Amir al-Mu’minin</td>
<td>Early 1980s</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Jami’a al-Murtadawiya</td>
<td>Around 2004</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawza ‘Ilmiya Imam al-Sadiq</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>New traditional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Move to recent place ² Persian language class

In traditional religious schools in the Middle East, lectures use Arabic language and their local language for account. Arabic language has long tradition as religious language in Islamic context. Thus religious students have learned Arabic language to understand religious books treating fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), usul al-fiqh (source of law) and so on. In addition, utilization of Alfiyya, thousand line poem by medieval Arabic gramamian of Ibn Malik, or commentaries on Alfiyya such as commentary by Jamal al-Din al-Suyuti has long tradition for learning Arabic in Islamic education not only in Shia but also Sunna (Nasr 1987.)

However some religious schools in Mumbai in which lecturers used Persian did not use Alfiyya or the commentaries. Although there were Arabic classes, they used Minhaj al-Arabiyya. Such Arabic textbook has been used only in MIU in Qom. Thus they adopted curriculum of MIU. Indeed I asked them about curriculum, lecturers in Madrase-ye Elmiye al-Nur al-Huda and Hawza ‘Ilmiya al-Imam al-Sadiq answered me they adopted the curriculum.
and textbooks.

Here I would like to call religious schools which adopted traditional curriculum traditional ones. On the other hand, I call religious schools which adopted curriculum of MIU new traditional ones. Although I distinguish two styles, MIU has had great influence on even traditional ones.

When I interviewed with Abedi, responsible person in madrasa al-Amir al-Mu’minin, about students’ career after the religious school, he answered me that some students continued his study in Qom and some students in Najaf as I expected. In case of Najaf in Iraq, grand Ayatollah Sistani, responsible authority of the religious school, supports students financially. On the other hand, students who want to study in Qom have to find their financial resource and in many case students find post of lecturer as their financial resource. In such case, students try to contact MIU office in New Delhi to find post of lecturer according to his answer. Thus even traditional religious schools cooperate with MIU.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I attempted to explore development religious segment in Iranian foreign policy after pragmatic transformation by focusing on Shiite higher religious schools in contemporary Mumbai as formation of the religious education network.

In recent Mumbai, there were five religious schools and three of them adopted traditional curriculum in terms of language education. On the other hand, rest of them adopted MIU curriculum. Such relation between education and language made clearer presence of Iran in religious education among contemporary Shiite. In addition, such presence has connected with political sphere. As I mentioned, Iranian state tried to control domestic religious segment relating with problem of state stability. And MIU was first learning center to receive qualification of religious scholar under governmental control. In short, although establishment of MIU was a compromise result but it was series of state control over the religious segment.

It is unclear that establishment of MIU connected with strategy of Iranian state to hold hegemony over contemporary Shiite religious authorities outside Iran under pragmatism. At least, it is clear that MIU has strengthened presence of Iran in religious education network. At the same time, as MIU case indicates, it is possible to say that trend of Iranian state toward domestic religious segment has possibility to influence on Shiites outside of Iran.
References


