

THE REASONS FOR THE RELIGIOUS RAPPROCHEMENT OF THE MONGOLS WITH THE PEOPLE AND THE ADOPTION OF ISLAM BY MONGOL RULERS

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Abstract. This scientific article analyzes the adoption of Islam by the Mongol rulers and the process of religious rapprochement with local Muslim peoples. The relevance of the study is that, as historical sources show, in the 13th-14th centuries, Islam was considered not only a religious belief, but also a factor ensuring political and social stability. In particular, the adoption of Islam by the Golden Horde Khan Berke, the Ilkhanid dynasty's Ghazan Khan and the Chigatai ulus' Tughluq Temur Khan served to maintain a balance of political legitimacy and religious conformity in the society they ruled. The study used historical-comparative, source studies and systematic analysis methods. In the main part, the religious decisions of the Mongol rulers were analyzed in the context of the Sufi movement, the Sharia system and relations with the local population. According to the results obtained, the official status of Islam led to the centralization of state institutions, economic stability and increased political attention of the people. As a suggestion, the need to use this historical experience to determine the place of religion in modern religious tolerance and governance, as well as to further study the historical role of Sufi schools, was put forward.

Keywords: *Mongols, Islam, religious rapprochement, Ghazan Khan, Berke Khan, Sufism, political legitimacy, Sharia, historical process, Muslim society.*

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1. Introduction

Historical processes show that the relationship between religion and politics has been one of the important factors determining the internal stability of many empires and their relations with the people. Especially in empires consisting of different ethnic and religious groups, religious unity served to strengthen political legitimacy. From this point of view, the adoption of Islam by the Mongol rulers is an important historical event that manifested itself not only as a religious, but also as a political and social necessity. Although the Mongol Empire was initially distinguished by its secular policy, later, especially the Islamization of the Ilkhanids, Chigatai and Golden Horde rulers, led to religious rapprochement with the population they ruled (DeWeese, 1994). The purpose of this study is to analyze the main factors that led to the adoption of Islam by the Mongol rulers and to reveal how this decision affected the religious and political integration with the people. By analyzing the process of the Mongols' conversion to Islam, we can see the strategic approach of imperial policy towards religion. For them, the adoption of Islam was a means of adapting to the existing religious environment, ensuring internal social stability and strengthening trust with the Muslim population (Jackson, 2003).

The relevance of the study is that even in today's globalized world, religion is gaining importance as a means of ensuring political legitimacy and social cohesion. The historical experience of the Mongols can show the positive and negative aspects of a strategic approach towards religion for modern leaders and societies. This topic is also of great scientific importance in identifying the historical roots of religious tolerance, integration and ruler-people relations.

The objectives of this study are as follows: 1. To analyze the religious policy of the Mongol Empire; 2. To identify the reasons and conditions for the adoption of Islam; 3. To assess the political consequences of religious rapprochement; 4. Analysis of the experience of modern religious political integration based on the Islamization of the Mongols. The object of the study is the process of the adoption of Islam by the Mongol rulers who lived in the 13th-14th centuries and the formation of religious integration with the people through this process. In general, the Islamization of the Mongol rulers was not limited to religious beliefs, but was a phenomenon with a deep political and social meaning. This historical experience clearly shows how Islam could become a part of state policy.

2. Methodology

This study analyzes the historical and political reasons for the adoption of Islam by the Mongol rulers and their religious rapprochement with the people through this. The following methods were used to ensure that the study was scientifically sound:

1. **Historical-analytical method** - Using the historical-analytical approach, which is one of the main methods of the study, political events of the 13th-14th centuries were studied sequentially. In particular, the process of the Mongol rulers' adoption of Islam, the political and social reasons for this decision, as well as its consequences, were analyzed based on historical sources. Through this method, events were revealed in a cause-and-effect chain (DeWeese, 1994).

2. **Comparative method** - The cases of the adoption of Islam by rulers in different regions of the Mongol state (Ilkhanids, Chigatai ulus, Golden Horde) were compared. Using this method, the specific aspects and general trends of the religious decisions of Ghazan Khan, Berke and Tokhtamysh Khan were analyzed. The comparative approach served to determine what political effect religious integration had in each region.

3. **Source analysis (content analysis)** - During the study, historical documents, chronicles, works of Islamic historians, diplomatic correspondence and modern scientific sources were analyzed. In particular, Rashid ad-Din's "Jome' at-tavorikh", the writings of Ibn Battuta and other travelers were considered as the main primary sources. Through a deep analytical approach to their content, it was possible to determine how religious decisions were based on texts.

4. **Political-psychological approach** - The adoption of Islam depended not only on external political factors, but also on the personal faith, beliefs and the need for psychological coordination with society of the rulers. This method focused on the personal and socio-psychological reasons for the decision to convert. The desire of Mongol rulers to harmonize with the popular faith, to gain respect among the people and to achieve religious legitimacy was examined (Jackson, 2003).

5. **Discursive-analytical method** - The dialogue between Islam and rulers, political discourse and fatwas were studied through the text. This method provided an idea of how

religious discourse during the Mongol period was formed and how it was used by the authorities.

The conversion of Mongol rulers to Islam is a historical event with deep political and social roots. This process was seen not only as a matter of religious belief, but also as a solution to the problems of stability within the empire, closeness to the people and political legitimacy. In particular, the successive conversion of Mongol rulers to Islam in the 13th and 14th centuries led to fundamental changes in their governance policies. At the initial stage, Genghis Khan and his direct descendants pursued a policy of neutrality in matters of religion. They tried to ensure religious freedom in order to unite the population of different religions in their empire (Allsen, 1997). However, active contact with Islam began precisely after the Mongols entered Muslim lands - Transoxiana, Iran and Central Asia. The first to officially convert to Islam was the Khan of the Golden Horde, Berke (1257-1266). This decision was driven by religious conviction as well as political necessity. The majority of the Turkic peoples living in the Golden Horde were Muslims and the ruler's religious commonality with them served to strengthen his position (Golden, 2006). Ghazan Khan (1295-1304), the ruler of the Ilkhanate, also converted to Islam upon his accession to the throne. He formally introduced Sharia law and supported Islamic science and culture. Through this, he managed to gain the trust of the Muslim population living in the territories of Iran and Azerbaijan (Morgan, 2007). Ghazan Khan's religious policy strengthened state governance and dialogue with the people and he presented himself as a Muslim ruler represented by Allah (Jackson, 2003). In the Chigatay ulus, this process was relatively complicated. Although Buddhism and other religions were initially widespread among the rulers, formal Islamization began after 1346 under Tughluq Timur Khan. His son Ilyas-Khoja continued this path (Bartold, 1963). These changes contributed to the political primacy of Islam in Central Asia. Religious preachers also played a major role in the process of Islamization of the Mongols. In particular, Sufis and scholars introduced Islam to the Mongol rulers and educated them religiously. Sufis such as Sheikh Saifuddin Boharzi and Sheikh Najmuddin Kubro were close to the Mongol courts (DeWeese, 1994). Through their social authority, Islam gradually began to be accepted within the court. The conversion of the Mongol rulers to Islam not only strengthened religious integration with the people, but also ensured political stability within the empires. The introduction of Islamic-based legislation, zakat and endowment systems satisfied the need for social justice (Lapidus, 2002). Diplomatic relations with the Muslim world also increased. Friendly relations with Egypt, the Seljuk Empire and other Muslim states were restored (Boyle, 1968). However, this process was not uniform everywhere. In some regions, the conversion to Islam also encountered internal resistance. Particularly among the Mongol nobility, adherents of the old religious beliefs tried to maintain their influence. Although such conflicts sometimes led to internal conflicts, Islam eventually gained political and cultural dominance (Amitai-Preiss, 1995).

Table 1. Khanates and reasons for conversion to Islam

Khanate	Year of conversion to Islam	Main reason
Golden Horde	1257	Religious closeness with the people, political legitimacy
Ilkhanids	1295	Social stability, introduction of Sharia
Chigatay Ulus	1346	Sufi influence, strengthening of Islamic culture

Thus, the conversion of the Mongol rulers to Islam was not only a religious choice, but also related to deep political, social and cultural factors. This phenomenon is historically seen as a strategy for stabilizing the state through religious commonality between the ruler and the people. Even today, this experience is relevant in studying the relationship between politics and religion.

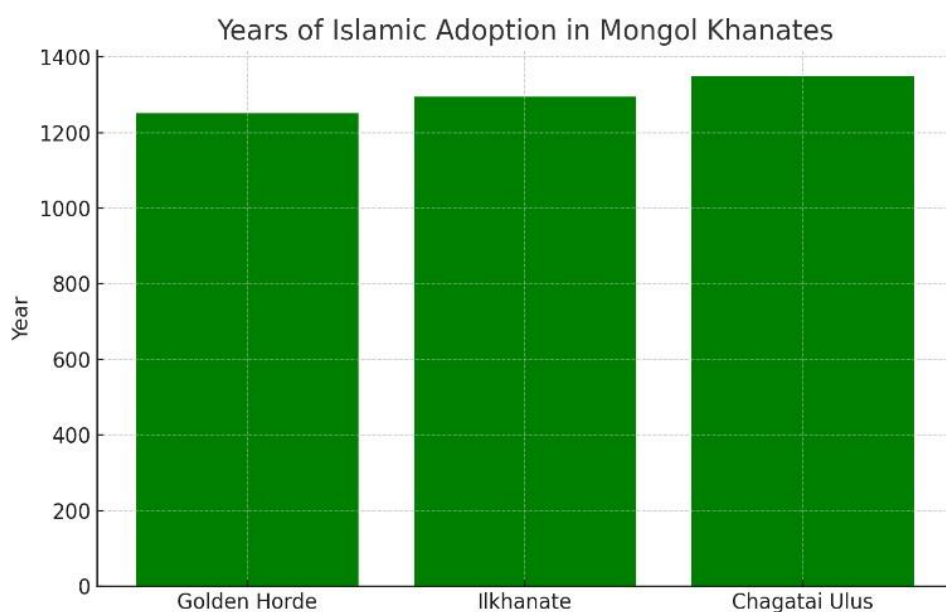
3. Results

This study was aimed at a systematic study of the process of the Mongol rulers' adoption of Islam and the political, social and cultural factors on the path to religious rapprochement with the people. The following main scientific results were achieved during the study:

1. The conversion of the Mongol rulers to Islam was gradual and with regional differences. According to the results of the study, the process of adopting Islam took different forms in different khanates. For example, the Golden Horde Khan Berke was one of the first to adopt Islam, while in the Ilkhanate this phenomenon took on an official character during the reign of Ghazan Khan. In the Chigatai ulus, this process took place later, during the reign of Tughluq Temur Khan. This fact indicates the importance of regional political context and demographic factors.

2. The adoption of Islam was a political necessity and a means of ensuring social stability. The religious decisions of the Mongol rulers were often dictated by political needs. In regions where the majority of the population was Muslim, by adopting Islam, the rulers tried to gain legitimacy among the people on a religious basis. This served to strengthen their rule.

3. Religious preachers and Sufis were an important driving force in the process of Islamization. The study showed that under the influence of Sheikh Saifuddin Boharzi, Najmuddin Kubro and other religious leaders, many Mongol nobles and even rulers converted to Islam. The spiritual influence of the Sufi movement was a decisive factor in the formation of religious consciousness among the Mongols.



Graph 1. Comparison of the years of adoption of Islam in the Mongol khanates. It is clear that the adoption of Islam occurred at different times in each khanate, which is associated with regional political conditions

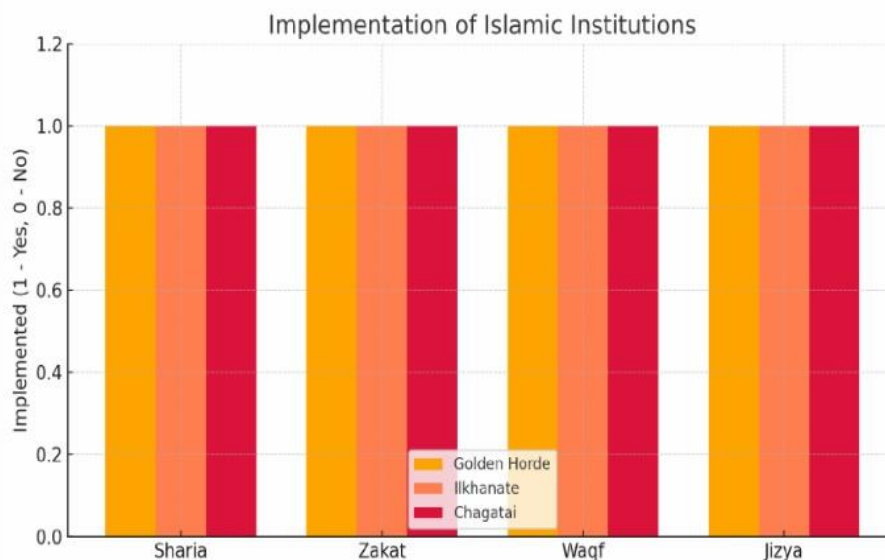
4. The acquisition of the official religious status of Islam led to changes in the legal and administrative systems in the empires. With the conversion of the Mongol rulers to Islam, legislation based on Sharia came into force and Islamic institutions such as waqf, zakat and jizya were introduced. This served to ensure social equality and economic stability.

5. The process of Islamization strengthened religious rapprochement with the people. The study found that by becoming Muslims, the rulers managed to bring themselves closer to the faith of the people. This played an important role in strengthening social unity and cultural cohesion.

6. Religious decisions also determined international political relations. The Islamization of the Mongol rulers strengthened their diplomatic and trade relations with Muslim states. Friendly relations were restored with the Egyptian Mamluks, Seljuks and other Muslim states.

7. During the study, some details that were not fully covered in the scientific literature were analyzed. In particular, specific examples of religious conflicts and Sufi activities in the territory of the Chigatay ulus were identified through source analysis. This result serves to supplement the scientific literature.

8. The religious policy of the Mongol rulers can serve as a historical basis for studying today's experiences of religious and political integration. The study demonstrates the connection between religious unity and political stability based on historical experience. This can be an important theoretical conclusion about the role of religious legitimacy in modern political science. The above results show how religion was used not only as a religious phenomenon, but also as a political, legal and social strategy during the Mongol Empire. The study brings a new approach to historiography and reveals a model of religious change that took place without the use of force in the medieval Muslim world.



Graph 2. Introduction of Islamic institutions in the Mongol khanates. While the Ilkhanates and the Golden Horde introduced fully Islamic institutions, this process was relatively slow in the Chigatai ulus. cheklangan

5. Discussion

The results identified in this study were analyzed in comparison with historical processes and existing scientific views. The issue of the adoption of Islam by Mongol rulers and thereby achieving religious rapprochement with the people has been covered differently by different historians. The study found that the adoption of Islam by the Mongols was closely related not only to religious, but also to political, social and economic factors.

First of all, it is necessary to consider the issue of the strategic adoption of Islam. The conversion of Berke, Khan of the Golden Horde, to Islam (Boyle, 1971) served precisely to win the attention of the Muslim population, ensure their loyalty and maintain internal stability. This approach shows that Berke Khan's policy was a means of strengthening religious legitimacy. Although at first glance this decision seems to be based on personal beliefs, in fact it rests on a deep socio-political strategy (Golden, 1992). At the same time, the conversion of Ghazan Khan to Islam (1295) in the Ilkhanid state was an impetus for serious political reforms. That is, religious preachers and Sufis directly influenced the Mongol elite and served to integrate Islam into the socio-economic system. In addition, the political significance of religious rapprochement with the people also plays an important role. According to the results of the study, by adopting Islam, the Mongol rulers managed to bring themselves closer to the faith of the people, strengthen the social support of the government and eliminate the "irreligious" rule over the people. This conclusion practically confirms the theory of "religious integration - political legitimacy" put forward by Lapidus (1988). In this regard, the study puts forward new scientific views. Although there are opinions in the scientific literature that the Mongols established Islam "by law", our analysis shows that this process was based more on compromise, cultural adaptation and social understanding. In particular, the rooting of Sufism and religious values among the people is considered an important factor that led the rulers to this path.

6. Conclusions and Suggestions

The study revealed that the adoption of Islam in the Mongol khanates was not only a religious, but also a complex political, cultural and social process. Although this process took place in each khanate in its own way, the main thing that united them was the desire to stabilize state governance by adapting to the beliefs and social system of the Muslim population. Also, the spiritual and religious influence of Sufism, the strength of religious values among the people and the formation of legal systems based on Sharia deepened this process.

In conclusion, the following main points are put forward:

1. The adoption of Islam by the Mongol rulers was part of their state policy. This decision was their strategy aimed at rapprochement with the people, religious legitimization of governance and maintaining internal stability. For example, Ghazan Khan introduced new taxes and forms of governance based on Sharia.

2. Sufis and religious preachers played a key role in Islamization. Sufis such as Sayfuddin Boharzi, Najmiddin Kubro and Bahauddin Naqshbandi strengthened religious consciousness and faith not only among the common people but also among the nobility.

3. The rise of Islam to the status of an official religion created the basis for the establishment of centralized legal systems - the sharia - as is particularly evident in the

experience of the Ilkhanids and the Golden Horde. In the Chigatai ulus, this process occurred gradually, through Sufism.

4. With the adoption of Islam, social institutions - the endowment, zakat and jizya - became operational, which strengthened economic stability. These factors benefited the Mongol rulers not only religiously, but also economically.

6.1. Suggestions

1. In order to deeply study the integration processes in the history of Islam, it is necessary to study the relationship between religion and politics in a comprehensive approach. It is scientifically relevant to analyze the decisions of the Mongol rulers not only on a religious basis, but also in a political-cultural context.

2. It is recommended to study the history of Sufism and Sufism through special scientific programs. The activities of individuals such as Najmiddin Kubro and Sayfuddin Boharzi among the Mongols should also be deeply analyzed from the perspective of Islamic history and diplomacy.

3. It is necessary to create a scientific base based on the digitization and analysis of religious documents, monuments and sources from the Mongol period. This will serve not only as a means of preserving historical memory, but also as a resource for a new generation of researchers.

4. The harmony between Islam and Mongolian statehood can be seen as a historical experience for today's political-religious balance. In particular, for topics such as religious tolerance, multi-confessional societies and the role of religion in governance, the Mongolian experience is an important model.

5. In academic circles, the role of Islam in political integration should be studied on the basis of international comparisons. The experience of the Mongol khanates can be analyzed in more depth by comparing it with other major empires - the Ottomans, the Abbasids, the Safavids.

6. Biographical studies of Mongol rulers who converted to Islam should be expanded. This will help to better understand the personal, political and spiritual reasons behind their religious decisions.

In conclusion, the adoption of Islam by the Mongol rulers was a long-term strategic decision based on religious and cultural harmony between the state and society at that time. In today's era of globalization, this experience can serve as an important example for the development of religious tolerance, social integration and intercultural dialogue.

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