

A Research in the Lexical and Content Structure of Devote Letters in Qajar Era

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Abstract: the structure of devote letters are usually composed of several parts. The introduction part that usually starts with praise, thank of God and commemoration of the benefactor. After that is the reason, motivation, and the explanations, benefactor's name and address, the subject of devotion, position, and geographical limits of the dedicated property, the date of dedication, instruction to use the income of endowment, and at the end, name, address, and benefactor or benefactors' seals that form the different parts of a devote letter and the content. In writing the devote letters, words are usually used that are linguistically very significant.

[Mohammad Molaei, Fatemeh Eybakabadi, Hassan Bigonah. **A Research in the Lexical and Content Structure of Devote Letters in Qajar Era**. J Am Sci 2012;8(5):475-478]. (ISSN: 1545-1003).
<http://www.americanscience.org>. 50

Keywords: devotion, endowment, a devote letter, uses of endowment, the content of devote letters

1. Introduction

The meaning of devotion is "to stand," "to settle," and "to imprison," and in the juridical term it means that a person maintains an estate and determines the interests for the individual or individuals or for work, or a special subject; for example, the person allots a piece of land for a mosque, a Hosseinieh, or a school. Since the benefactor will not involve in any financial profit of the property, and the profits are only for God's sake; therefore, stopping the private property and popularizing the profits for God and charity mean keeping the property and spending the profit for charity. Dehkhoda dictionary has translated the words as "to stand," "dedication to the needy and something for God's sake." In practice, devotion is a divine action in which the individual devotes some or all his property in perfect health, sanity, and thought without an expectation to get any reward, with love and for God's satisfaction to his fellow or fellows. In order to register their own devotion, ambitious benefactors set a devotion letter. Writing and arranging the devotion letters has had a special method since old times. Literary, juridical, and legal prose and specific terms that have been used to write the devotion letter, made a special literature recognizable in the context of devotion letters. Special geographical terms, Arabic words and terms, the verses of Quran, and literal themes applied in writing the devotion letters indicate the elated subject to the endowment and the general content that is highly important linguistically. Bands may also help to understand the possible effects of climate change, e.g. by providing baseline information to measure the effect of climate change and anthropogenic changes on vegetation.

1.1. Nature and Background of Devotion

Devotion is the best and the most efficient social means that includes the amount of property that an individual or some individuals bring out of their own artificial possession and return to the real ownership, who is God. Thus, it makes it possible for public who are the successors of God in his properties to use it, and spend the profits to satisfy the needs of people and realize the social justice. Dr. Raft believes that; one points of Islamic Shariat is that, it encourages people to give alms to poor people. Muslims believe that alms have heavenly reward in addition to earthly benefit; including devotion. Devotion has played a significant role in Islamic civilization and its progression since the old times. Jaber Ibn Abdullah has stated in a hadith that the Holy Muhammad PBUH said: among the generous disciples, everyone who was able to devote, had devoted some part of his property." In Maghazi book, Vaghedi quotes Makhiragh Ibn Nasr (3 AH) willed to the messenger of God PBUH to spend his property that was seven gardens for charity and God's sake, the Holy Muhammad set them as endowment. Therefore, the gardens remained safe and secure and the fruits were used by the Islamic nation. It has mentioned in Sirat that many of the fellows of Holy Mohammad PBUH devoted a property including four caliphs, and Abi Ayub Ansari, and Osman. Moreover, some groups devoted their properties after the Holy Muhammad PBUH passed away. The revenues of these endowments were used based on the benefactor's idea. This tradition continued and the generous disciples and the followers devoted a piece of their property for God's satisfaction or for their close relatives to do the good tradition of financial.

"Each nation has some signs and properties that separate it from other civilizations, most of these signs are derived from the fundamental principles and objectives of that nation. The Islamic civilization holds social independency point among the people in the society. According to this principal, Muslims had the form of one body; the suffering of one individual is regarded as the suffering of all the people of the nation. Therefore, Muslims try to share the passengers and poor people in the property that God has granted to them. This independency and unity feelings cannot be seen in other religions." According to Shafei scholars, the reason of devotion is a verse in Islam, the meaning of which is: "you won't find the whole boon, as long as you devote what you love in Allah's way." Master Seid Sabegh says, "The devotion system didn't exist in time of ignorance. The Holy Muhammad PBUH encouraged the generous disciples to satisfy poor people needs. After westerns got familiar with the Islamic civilization, they recognized devotion, and established some institutes. However, they set the aim of their action as mere worldly interest that has no relation with hereafter and its oblation. Spanish, and English endowments, got famous on training field, the most popular of which is the German Volkswagen Foundation, and the Nobel Foundation in Sweden."

2.1. Documents of Devotion (Devotion Letters)

Although using the devotion documents as the sources for widespread cultural researches does not have a long experience in our country, and in the beginning, there was an only attention to the bureau documents and for studying the political history, paying attention to the context of legal documents, especially devotion letters. And the attention of other people to the research and historical significance of these works should be considered as the efforts of great men such as Iraj Afshar, Modarressi Tabatabaie, Manoochehr Sotoudeh, Torabi Tabatabaie, and late Mohammad Taghi Danesh Pajoh, Sepanta, However, few number of devotion letters had the chance to be published before the Islamic Revolution of Iran. The document of devotion is a writing that the benefactor set about devoting his property, and orders in that, about different issues relating to endowment management and the way in which the revenues of the property and other issues should be spent.

3.1. Framework of Devotion Letters

Most of the devotion letters available are similar to each other. Therefore, they can be divided into several parts: introduction part, the case of devotion and the usages, the duties of the trustee, supervisor, and witnesses.

This form of writing the devotion letters is a tradition that was customary since Safavid era. In the beginning, the benefactor starts praising God for giving such a property to use in charity, and then the person confesses to some of his sins and begs God to forgive him, and mentions that the aim of world is nothing except building the hereafter. Therefore, he uses all his property to fix his heavenly life, and consciously he devotes all his property for charity. God will forgive the person for this job and God will forgive his sins. Of course, this part in devotion letters is mostly composed of Arabic, traditions, narratives, and sentences. The next part that is followed the introduction part, is the Persian part, in which the author mentions the level of his knowledge and piety, besides praising the benefactor. After that, the benefactor or the author of devotion letter, mentions the properties devoted (such as estates, shops, agricultural lands, houses, subterranean water, and gardens), and in the next part, that is known as the benefactor's intention, the uses of revenues achieved from the endowment is stated. In other word, the benefactor writes about the ways in which the revenues of properties should be spent, and at the end, the duties of the endowment supervisor should be specified. In the end part, the date in which the devotion should be done is mentioned and some of the great and reliable men's names are written as the witnesses of the devotion. In order to study the devotion letters, in order to study it linguistically, and in order to get acquaintance more and more with the devotion documents as one of the valuable texts that includes useful scientific, literal, historical, social, artistic information, it is necessary to get familiar with the terms used in devotion letters and their meanings in the beginning.

4.1. Benefactor

The benefactor is the individual who devotes a part of his property while he is alive.

5.1. Endowment

It is the property, the devotion of which is integrated and has legal personality regarding having accuracy condition.

6.1. Trustee

The trustee is the person who is determined in the devotion letter from the benefactor in order to manage the endowments. In terms of Civil Rights of Iran, the trustee does not have the right to abdicate after accepting the post of trusteeship. The benefactor does not the right to dethrone the trustee, and if his betrayal were observed in managing the endowment, the trusted person, would be attached to him by the decision of the court.

The benefactor can accept the post of trusteeship within the coagulation of devotion. The benefactor may determine several custodians in a devotion letter, and separate their duties

7.1. Been Devoted to Someone or Something

An individual or something to who, or to which the revenues of devotion are allocated.

8.1. General Endowment

It is a devotion, whose object is not specific to a determined class of people, such as a devotion to poor people, or devotion to schools, mosques, or scholars, in term of jurisprudence.

9.1. Special Dedication or Devoted to Children

It is something that is endowed to children and the others do not have the right to use it.

10.1. Superiority of Devotion

The custodians and the offices of endowments are responsible to act towards endowments in a way that increasing their revenues to be prior to everything. This object is called the superiority of devotion.

11.1. Incursion and Wastage

Incursion is when the endowment trustee exceeds the limits that have been determined for him by the benefactor. In other word, if the custodian exists form one of the current regulations of the country intentionally and it causes penalty or obtaining the compensation, it is called incursion. Moreover, wastage happens, when the endowment custodian does not do the job that is necessary for the endowed property according to the devotion letter, and his job causes losses to the endowment.

12.1. Records

Records mean verifying the context of devotion letters by the governor of initiated and the certificate of witnesses that is regarded as one of the most important parts of documents. However, the records of each document based on the location of placement is divided into two or three parts of "top of document," "right margin," and "left margin."

12.2. Analyzing the Contents of Devotion Letters

As history testifies, the endowments have been existed with social needs. In arid and semiarid regions, the construction of water storages and public drinking water supply, construction of inns in the caravan routes, construction of schools in appropriate environment, establishing of endowment clinics and hospitals in needy and pathogenic areas, all include Muslims benefactors' actions. Thus, the benefactor

has endowed his property regarding the time. For example in Qajar era, before establishing Darolfonoon (academy school), the benefactors devoted their property to preserve and disseminate the religion. The significance that benefactors regarded for these schools can be seen in the styles of architecture and decoration of these schools and the size of endowments that they considered for them. When Darolfonoon was established, and people got familiar with new knowledge, some schools were established and devoted in the modern style. Although the content of each devotion letter is different from other devotion letters, to the number of all devotion letters that have been written, there are diversities in the content of these letters, the most number of endowment uses that form the content of devotion letters are mentioned in the following:

1. Mosques that are regarded as the God's houses on the Earth and are considered as Islamic affairs of people.
2. Schools regarded the Islamic civilization as the only scientific center in the world for several centuries.
3. Libraries provided free chance of learning for all the interested people.
4. Giving mortgage loan to needy, and helping the needy boys and girls to marry.
5. Protecting museums, places, and ancient objects
6. Building hospices for Sufi and his disciples
7. Creating schools in cities, and villages to memorize Holy Quran and to train
8. Building hospitals: advanced centers for examination and treating physical and mental diseases
9. Construction and paving the ways and protecting them
10. Release of prisoners: by paying the blood money to get them released, and giving them money to spend for their families
11. Helping to those passengers who cannot afford returning home
12. Helping to accomplish the rituals of Hajj for those who cannot afford going Hajj
13. Giving gold ornaments to the poor brides who cannot afford to buy them during the marriage ceremony
14. Helping to the wives whose husbands got divorced and they could not find any place to live, or the place they lived was far from them. Therefore, some houses were built that were under the women's supervision and were managed by a woman who did her best to reconcile them with their husbands
15. Building bridges over the rivers.

16. Helping to blinds, disabled people, and those who were suffering from a hard disease
17. Curing wounded animals and birds and caring domestic fowls
18. Creating centers of "milk distribution", as special assistance to nursing mothers to help them to feed the babies
19. Providing Iftar tables for poor and strange people in Ramadan
20. Creating gardens and orchards, especial for passerby to enjoy the shadow and fruits throughout the year
21. Preparing dishes for sorrow and happy ceremonies for those who cannot afford to buy them, moreover, the dishes that servants broke were substituted with them not to be harassed by their employers and masters.
22. Paying the cost of poor and strange people burial
23. Creating cemeteries to bury strange and poor people
24. Building public mills to grind the grains for free
25. Creating the center of supervision and maintenance of disabled and chronic patients
26. Creating inns for business and travelers' leisure, and creating bakeries for baking bread, and drinkers for poor people to drink water
27. Creating public bathrooms

3. Conclusion

Through analyzing the content of some devotion letters in Qajar era, it can be stated that the most reasons of devotion in Qajar era has been mourning for Imam Hossein, construction and rehabilitation of mosques, students' education, educational fees, health expenditures, and helping the poor people. The style of writing the devotion letters is usually literal and full of rhymes that are in accordance with the case of devotion. In writing the introduction of these letters, the verses of Holy Quran has special place in addition to combining scrambled sentences and Persian and Arabic words and phrases

as rhyme and rhythm. Moreover, one of the advantages of analyzing the devotion letters of Qajar era linguistically has been understanding the quality and the style of people's life, and their opinions and beliefs. Moreover, they help us to understand the jobs of people in those societies, and to know the places and geographical regions of the endowment. In addition they help us to understand the scales that people used, and to understand the cultural programming of people, and knowing the great men who lived at that time, and acquaintance with tools and means that were used by people in that time. Finally, they help us to get acquaintance with Arabic words, combinations, terms, and lexicons that were customary with people in Qajar era.

Acknowledgements:

Authors are grateful to the persons for support to carry out this work.

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4/29/2012