



The Ethics of Shia Rulers and Its Impact on People's Inclination toward Shi'ism (From the Major Occultation to the Safavid Era)

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Article info

Received: 25.06.2026

Accepted: 24.09.2026

Available Online: 24.09.2026

Checked for Plagiarism: Yes

Keywords:

Major Occultation, expansion of Shi'ism, Imami Shi'a, ethics of Shia rulers

ABSTRACT

The period from the beginning of the Major Occultation (329 AH) to the establishment of the Safavid state (907 AH) is considered one of the sensitive junctures in the history of Islam and Shi'ism. During this period, the Shi'a faced a crisis of leadership of the Infallible Imam (peace be upon him) and underwent various vicissitudes. However, the numerous obstacles along the way could not prevent Shi'ism from growth and flourishing; rather, it continued its movement with steady steps and was able to extend its influence to various regions. This success after the Major Occultation was the result of several factors, among which the contribution of ethical components is significant. The present study seeks to answer the following question: What were the ethical-political components influencing the growth of Shi'ism from the Major Occultation (329 AH) to the establishment of the Safavid state (907 AH)? A descriptive-analytical examination of the ethics of Shia rulers demonstrates that legalism and the implementation of divine ordinances in society in accordance with the commands of the Shari'a, just behavior, populism, rationalism, and attention to the religious and Shia education of the people by most Shia rulers in the period under discussion were influential in promoting their school of thought and spreading the Shia religion.

Introduction

The period from the beginning of the Major Occultation (329 AH) to the establishment of the Safavid state (907 AH) was an era accompanied by numerous ups and downs and, at the same time, important in the expansion of Shi'ism. In this period, the Shi'a, on the one hand, faced the crisis of the occultation of the Infallible Imam (peace be upon him), and on the other hand, in the political arena, at times Shia states emerged in various parts of the Islamic world, and then the decline of Shia political power occurred. The decline of the Shia Buyid power, the emergence of the Sunni Seljuk state, the division of the Islamic world's territory, the struggle against rationalism and intellectual sciences, the Crusades, and the Mongol invasion were among the phenomena of this period.

This era is considered one of the most difficult periods in the life of the Shi'a. Now the Shi'as, who were a minority of the Islamic society, had to rely on themselves and stand on their own feet in the crisis of occultation to continue their existence.

Fortunately, the Shi'a was able to pass through the crisis of occultation well and emerge safe from all the battles and turmoil that arose, with all the ups and downs, and continue its life and expansion. One of the most important factors in this survival and success must be sought in the behavior and performance of Shia rulers in this period of time. Ethical components hold a special place in Shia political thought. However, this category of components has rarely been considered in the field of religious studies.

This is while these components in the political arena, as a foundational factor for the expansion of religion and the dissemination of the school, play an important role. The background of this discussion can be sought in the conduct of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Therefore, considering the gap in religious studies regarding ethical components and the utilization of these components by those great figures in the expansion of Islam, an effort has been made in this writing to examine and explain the role

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of the ethical components of Shia rulers in the field of religion and the school of society. The present study raises the fundamental question: What were the ethical components in the political arena that influenced the growth of Shi'ism in this period? What ethics did statesmen and politicians consider for the promotion and dissemination of Shi'ism? Obviously, examining these components can familiarize us more with the place and importance of ethics in the dissemination of the school of the Ahl al-Bayt.

Ethical Components and the Dissemination of Shia Teachings

The Shi'a faced the crisis of the Infallible Imam's leadership from the era of the Major Occultation (329 AH) and underwent ups and downs. However, the numerous obstacles along the way could not prevent Shi'ism from growth and flourishing; rather, it always continued its movement with steady steps and was able to extend its influence to various regions. This success, expansion, and survival of Shi'ism after the Major Occultation was the result of several factors, among which the ethics of Shia rulers is one of the most important factors in the survival, dynamism, growth, and expansion of Shi'ism. Here, some of the most important ethical components whose observance by rulers was influential in the expansion of Shi'ism in this period of time are mentioned.

Legalism:

Shia leaders, considering their concern for the development of Shia culture, tried to implement the real ordinances of religion in society, which proved effective in the expansion of Shi'ism. From the very beginning of the establishment of government, following the conduct of the Prophet and inspired by him (peace be upon him), they aimed to implement divine ordinances in society in accordance with the commands of the Shari'a and tried to enforce the laws of the Shari'a at the level of society, and as much as possible, they did not allow lawlessness to grow and be promoted in society, and in case of encountering such cases, they immediately took action to resolve them. This greatly helped to strengthen the foundations of Shia states and spread Shia thought. Shia rulers, in order to establish the sovereignty of divine law in society, as leaders of society in various arenas of social life, took practical steps. The Buyid leaders, wherever they encountered a problem in governing the country, asked their jurisprudential and governmental questions from scholars such as Shaykh Mufid and Ibn Junayd Iskafi and governed the country based on their jurisprudential views [1].

The Sarbadars, who came to power in the east of the Islamic land, also established a lawful order. At the beginning, they called people to fight against chaos and lawlessness and fought against the extortion and

arbitrary taxation of rulers and demanded the implementation of Quranic commands and rituals and the preparation of the ground for the government of Imam Mahdi [2]. Shaykh Hasan Juri, at the beginning of the Sarbadar movement, in response to the envoy of Tugha, counted the sovereignty of Quranic teachings over various dimensions of social life among the goals of the Sarbadar movement, saying: "The king and we must obey God and act according to the Quran, and whoever does contrary to that is a sinner, and it is upon the people to stand against him. If the king submits to the obedience of God and His Messenger, we are followers of him, and otherwise, the sword will be the judge between us" [2]. It is clear that the purpose of issuing such decrees by Shia leaders was to implement the principles of Twelver Shi'ism and to spread and expand Shia culture. The implementation of divine ordinances in society in accordance with the commands of the Shari'a by some Sarbadar leaders among people who had seen nothing but oppression, tyranny, chaos, corruption, and lawlessness was a breeze of hope that caressed their souls and spirits and made them more and more familiar with the teachings of the Shia school [3]. Khwaja Shams al-Din Ali (748-752 AH) was another Sarbadar leader who fought against the corruptions of society by relying on Shia beliefs [3]. His prohibition of forbidden acts was in fact a jihad that he launched in Sarbadar society against corruptions and thereby drove people more and more toward the teachings of the Shia religion. As a true Shia, he rose against the corruptions of society; so much so that it is narrated that he threw nearly five hundred prostitutes into a well, and from the awe of his name, no one dared to mention the name of cannabis and wine, and criminals would lose their souls upon hearing his name [4]. Another Sarbadar leader was Khwaja Ali Mu'ayyad, who was famous for justice and fairness in Khorasan. He sought to administer Islamic society based on religious laws. Khwandmir says: "He observed the outward form of the Shari'a to the extent required" [5]. The Sarbadar rulers, in line with the implementation of the principles of the Shari'a, paid attention to Shia scholars and through this were able to take a step toward preserving and disseminating Shia teachings. Ghazan, the seventh Ilkhanid Mongol ruler, also from the very beginning made the observance of laws and the fight against corruption and debauchery his focus. According to Khwandmir's report, after taking power, he said: "Whenever an order contrary to the Shari'a and reason is issued by me, grant me the honor of punishment" [5]. In his period, in the law that was approved, corruption, debauchery, and chaos were severely fought. The administration of provinces and the collection of taxes became regulated, and tax farming was prevented. Orders were implemented for personal matters and marriage and divorce, and

most importantly, various laws were unified and a universal decree was approved [5].

The Mar'ashis also tried from the very beginning of the establishment of their government to implement the laws and ordinances of God at the level of society. Sayyid Qawam al-Din in Amol fought against oppression and corruption and undertook the consolidation of the rules and principles of the Shari'a [5]. Sayyid Qawam considered the law of the Shari'a and its promotion as first and foremost before everything and also advised his children to it [6]. On the eve of the Mar'ashi uprising, local turmoil and political and military tensions among the leaders and instigators of local power had caused the collapse of the lives of the subjects of this region. They sought a period of calm and the spread of justice and equity at the level of society; therefore, they became attached to the teachings of the Mar'ashis, which spoke of justice and fairness and the fight against oppression and tyranny, and joined them in droves [7]. Therefore, considering the totality of what has been said, the implementation of Islamic ordinances and the enforcement of laws in accordance with the commands of the Shari'a by most Shia rulers in this sensitive juncture was influential in inclining people toward their school of thought and drove them more and more toward the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

Just Behavior:

In addition to the characteristic of legalism, the just behavior of some Shia rulers was also influential in the expansion of Shi'ism. Just behavior is one of the best ways to be effective and influence hearts. Throughout history, it has also been seen that the just performance of rulers, on the one hand, has caused everyone to love them from the depths of their hearts and to move willingly in the direction of implementing their orders and to assist them in achieving their goals, and on the other hand, it has led to the continuation of power and government. The Buyids, who were themselves Shia, based on the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) in line with the policy of expanding Shi'ism, tried as much as possible in social management to treat all religions and Islamic sects with justice. In the fourth and fifth centuries, with all the terrible violence of the Hanbalis against the Shi'as in Baghdad, the behavior of Shia scholars and Shia officials with the Hanbalis was accompanied by fairness [8]. According to Rawandi's report, the followers of different religions also had a great share of the freedom and justice of the Buyid sultans [9]. The just behavior of some Shia emirs and viziers in Islamic states, especially Shia ones, is also noteworthy in this regard. Sahib, the Shia vizier of the Buyids, when he reached the position of vizier, in the first step, eradicated reprehensible innovations and oppressive customs. He was very diligent in administering justice and removing oppression from

the people [10]. Also, justice-seeking was a prominent characteristic of Muhallabi, the vizier of Mu'izz al-Dawla. He eliminated many injustices [11]. He traveled through cities to discover injustices [11]. According to sources, in the Seljuk period as well, the progress of Shi'ism was the result of the just behavior of individuals such as Majd al-Mulk Qumi, Mu'in al-Din, and other Shia politicians with other Islamic sects and groups [12].

In Iraq, Sayf al-Dawla, one of the emirs of the Shia Banu Mazyad state, also treated people with justice [11]. The just behavior of most Shia rulers with the people and their possession of good ethics attracted people toward them. The countless presence of various classes of people on the scene in the Banu Ammar state (464-503 AH) caused Fakhr al-Mulk, the Shia ruler of the Banu Ammar state, to manage well the ten-year siege of the Crusaders, which would have broken the back of any government. The unparalleled popular welcome and mobilization of various groups of people in the Banu Ammar state was to such an extent that, according to sources, in this period the city became full of the presence of the most famous literati, jurists, poets, and linguists who had flocked to Tripoli from every point. People from different races, religions, and sects also made their way to this city. Also, traders, tourists, seekers of knowledge, and scientists from various lands had set foot in this region [13]. Given the unparalleled welcome of the people, it seems that the behavior of their rulers was one of the main factors in the success and progress of Shi'ism in this period.

Attention to the establishment of justice in political-social management in the Mar'ashi government is also well observed. After conquering each region, the Mar'ashis strove to promote social justice and establish justice and fairness, as well as to appoint just rulers. Sayyid Qawam al-Din, the founder of the "Mar'ashi" dynasty of Gilan, always spoke of the realization of a situation in his government in which a kind of Islamic equity, care for and support of the helpless and the poor, enjoining good and forbidding evil, and justice and fairness were institutionalized [6]. He also advised his children to this matter [6]. An interesting point is that the people's inclination toward the model presented by one of the Shia governments caused the people of neighboring lands to incline toward the Shia movements of that region and was very effective in accepting the Shia school and disseminating the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). As the influence of the Mar'ashi family was to such an extent that the Shia Al-i Kia family rose up in Gilan following the ideals of the Mar'ashis and ultimately paved the way for the emergence of the Safavids. In the Sarbadar period, the society of Khorasan was on the verge of liberation from the Mongol yoke. At this time, social, political, and economic inequalities existed. The Sarbadars believed that if God grants us success, we will eliminate oppression and repel the

oppressors, and otherwise, we will put our heads on the gallows of choice and will not tolerate injustice and tyranny [14]. One of the characteristics of Shaykh Khalifa's teachings was its anti-oppression and justice-spreading aspect. In fact, the oppression of the ruling class of this era toward the subjects in various social, political, and economic aspects was one of the most important issues that drew them toward the teachings of Shaykh Khalifa and Shaykh Hasan, who promised them justice and the fight against oppression, tyranny, and corruption. So much so that subsequent movements were in a way influenced by this way of thinking. Hafiz Abru writes in this regard: "The justice-spreading and equality that Shaykh Hasan Juri took from Shaykh Khalifa was so effective due to the existence of social and economic inequalities and political oppressions that it caused the fear of the rulers and the scholars affiliated with them" [4]. In such conditions, the religious leaders of the Sarbadars incited and mobilized the people against the oppression and tyranny of the ruling class, and the oppressed people of this era joined them in droves and groups [3]. Ibn Battuta, a Sunni traveler, writes: "And in Tus, which is the place of martyrdom of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), one of the great Rafidi (Shia) figures named (Shaykh) Hasan (Juri) is present, who is considered among the righteous by the Shi'as. So he agreed to the leadership of the Shi'as and they called him Caliph. He also ordered the Shi'as to practice justice" [15]. Hafiz Abru writes: "Many of the provinces of Sabzevar and the 'Kuhpayeh' of Nishapur became his disciples and believers and accepted his invitation." And elsewhere he says: "Most of the inhabitants of the rural districts of Nishapur followed him," or elsewhere he writes: "The inhabitants of the 'village' of Bashtin had for a long time entered the circle of his devotion." So much so that in a short time many people became his disciples and believers to the extent that they would sacrifice their lives at his word [16]. Dawlatshah Samarqandi mentioned the strictness of Khwaja Shams al-Din Ali, one of the Sarbadar emirs, in enforcing justice and eliminating discrimination among the subjects [17]. Khwaja Yahya Karravi (752-759 AH), another Sarbadar emir, also strove to enforce justice and eliminate discrimination among the subjects.[17,4,5]. Khwandmir has described Khwaja Yahya Karravi with the attribute of justice [5]. Shia rulers in the practical arena also tried to observe justice and fairness in social life and as much as possible to behave based on it. Khwaja Rashid al-Din in Jami' al-Tawarikh mentions Ghazan as a justice-nurturing, justice-spreading king and his government as the envy of Darius and Ardavan and the object of envy of Ardeshir and Anushirvan [18]. Given the totality of what has been said, it can be said that the possession of this component by Shia leaders

created a special popularity for them among the people and caused them to accept Shia teachings.

Populist Behavior:

Shia rulers in this era, by adopting populist behavior, provided the grounds for people's inclination toward their religion. Following the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), they tried to treat people with justice and kindness. The just and affectionate behavior of Shia rulers with the people was such that it even made believers of other Islamic sects participate actively in the direction of the goals of Shia governments. Ali ibn Buyah, the founder of the Shia Buyid state, would so charm prisoners of war with his goodness and justice that when they were freed, "they all chose to stay with him; he gave them robes of honor and treated them well" [11].

Historians have considered the justice and gentleness of Imad al-Dawla with prisoners and his magnanimity and gifts as the factor of his victory [19]. Ibn Athir has praised the political efficiency of Imad al-Dawla in governance and care for subjects. [11] He attracted the defeated to himself by treating them well [20]. In Ibn Athir's account of Rukn al-Dawla, he writes: "He treated his subjects and soldiers well and was kind to them, and in judging between them, he took the side of justice. He turned away from oppression and also prohibited his companions. He refrained from bloodshed and considered the preservation of blood necessary except in cases where there was no choice" [11].

Populism was not exclusive to the Buyid government; rather, this issue is also observed in other Shia governments. As historians have considered the behavior of Khwaja Ali Mu'ayyad, one of the Sarbadar emirs, with the people, even though the majority were Sunni, as one of the main factors of the people's support for him against the fierce attacks of Malik Ghiyath al-Din Pir Ali, who was also of their faith, and to the extent that even Isfizari in Rawdat al-Jannat, although he is often in the position of condemning the Shia Sarbadars and praising their enemies, in reporting the attacks of Malik Ghiyath al-Din Pir Ali on Nishapur, opened his tongue in praise of Khwaja Ali Mu'ayyad's behavior with the people and considered him, among the "Sarbadariyya," distinguished for care for subjects, populism, and praiseworthy ethics, and called him the foremost of that dynasty [21]. The rise to power of populist Sarbadar rulers in place of the oppressive Mongol rulers in conditions where the people of Khorasan were fed up with the oppression and tyranny of the Mongol rulers was influential in promoting and spreading their religion.

The Mar'ashi rulers, who had placed the promotion and dissemination of Shi'ism at the top of their affairs, were far from any violent behavior in contact and dealing with the people. Their affectionate behavior caused them to penetrate hearts and made

their court a refuge for the people [5]. Of course, it is necessary to note that when we speak of the good temperament and kindness of rulers, we should not think that they behaved in such a way in all circumstances; rather, in cases where it was necessary, they decisively confronted any movement contrary to law, chaos, and lawlessness and showed a harsh and severe reaction.

Some Mar'ashi rulers played an important role in this regard with populist behavior such as gaining the people's satisfaction and their participation in various arenas. The appropriate and fair and non-discriminatory behavior of Sayyid Qawam with friend and enemy, the elimination of social classes by implementing the method and manner of dervishhood and chivalry among the people, honesty in speech and behavior toward the people, and fair performance according to the agreement with enemies and opponents after war or peace, appointing just rulers, creating justice and fairness among the people and making great efforts to eliminate oppression and tyranny, involving people in the reconstruction and development of cities, abundant social services, and the development of areas under occupation with the help of the people themselves can be considered among the factors of the spread of the Shia religion in the land of Mazandaran. Also, the physical presence of Sayyid Qawam al-Din Mar'ashi himself in battle dress in some wars and its political and social effects was another factor in Sayyid Qawam's success. When Sayyid Qawam al-Din put on battle dress to go to war, the people of those areas also, following him, prepared for war and accompanied him. In addition, Sayyid Qawam's propagation activities also caused people to incline toward the Shia religion in groups [6]. The appropriate and good behavior of Sayyid Qawam al-Din and his children with the people, even with enemies, caused them to be attracted to him. The request of Kia Vak's wife, who was Sayyid Qawam's enemy and was killed in the war, for the honorable burial of Kia in linen cloths and the Sayyid's agreement to this [6], or the agreement with Kia Jalal Mustamarr's request for the preservation of his property in case of surrender and adherence to the word and agreement by him and his children, brought about an amazing transformation in friend and enemy and inclination toward him and Shi'ism [6]. Khwandmir has also spoken of Ghazan's populism and care for subjects: "In strengthening the pillars of the prophetic religion and managing the affairs of the Mustafavid nation, he exerted effort and diligence to the extent possible, and in establishing the foundations of kingship and lordship and arranging the ceremonies of justice and care for subjects, he was never satisfied with himself in negligence" [5].

Preventing oppression of subjects is an example of the efforts of Shia statesmen in promoting and spreading the Shia school. For example, in the

Mongol period, Khwaja, by mentioning the violations that the soldiers of Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah committed against the people of northern Iraq after their defeat, invited Hulagu to world-ruling and populism. Then Hulagu Khan says: "We, praise be to God, are both world-conquerors and world-rulers; we are world-conquerors with the rebellious and world-rulers with the tribe, not like Jalal al-Din who was afflicted with weakness and incapacity" [18].

Being popular, not distancing oneself from the people, having a correct understanding of the state of society, and being aware of the real problems of the people by the majority of Shia rulers in this period helped the expansion of Shi'ism. In reality, the distancing of rulers from the people causes the people to lose trust in them, and this is the most important obstacle to achieving their goals. Shia leaders, in accordance with the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), always tried never to place a distance between themselves and the people, and this was one of the main factors in their success in social management. The closing of the breach of the "Rafil" and "Baduria" rivers by Mu'izz al-Dawla [22], the visit of Adud al-Dawla, the most powerful Buyid ruler, to Shaykh Mufid [23], and the generosity and gentle behavior of Rukn al-Dawla with the common and the elite [11,24] are examples of the appropriate relationship of Buyid rulers with the people. The countless presence of various classes of people on the scene in the Banu Ammar state during the ten-year siege of the Crusaders indicates the appropriate relationship of the Shia rulers of Banu Ammar with the people, because if they had distanced themselves from the people and did not have a correct understanding of the state of society, the people would certainly have abandoned them, and as a result, the rulers would have lost their effectiveness and could not have succeeded in implementing their goals. The non-distancing of some Sarbadar emirs from the people and understanding the pain and problems of the people caused the mass of society to have a positive view of the Shia religion that the Sarbadar emirs were promoting. During the Sarbadar government, soldiers and dervishes could freely enter the court of the rulers [9]. Amir Wajih al-Din Mas'ud treated his followers with great informality and without ceremony and dealt with them like one of their own. This caused the fascination of his followers, to the extent that they did not hesitate to sacrifice their lives in his path [4]. And he did not create a distance between himself and the people [9]. Khwaja Shams al-Din Ali, Yahya Karabi (Karravi), Haydar Qassab, Khwaja Najm al-Din Ali were other Sarbadar rulers who did not create a distance between themselves and the people, and all people, common and elite, benefited from their table [9,4,17]. And the performance of Khwaja Ali Mu'ayyad in nightly patrolling of the city's neighborhoods and financial

assistance and orders to widows [17, 5], or providing more facilities for ordinary people by Kalu Esfandiar (747-748 AH) [25] and special attention to ordinary people and slaves in the political arena [3] are other examples of the appropriate relationship of Sarbadar rulers with the people and their populism.

Historians have also introduced Sayf al-Dawla, one of the emirs of the Shia Banu Mazyad state, as very generous, a refuge and supporter of the helpless, a lover of literature, and a respecter of jurists [12,26] Sayyid Qawam also placed the deprived and the poor under his support [6]. This matter is also true about some Abbasid caliphs to whom Shi'ism has been attributed. As in the case of al-Nasir li-Din Allah, the powerful caliph, it is stated in Tarikh Fakhri: "Al-Nasir loved attending to the affairs of the subjects. At night, he would patrol the neighborhoods of Baghdad to be informed of the people's condition" [27]. Therefore, the popularity and appropriate performance of Shia rulers and statesmen was one of the main factors that provided the ground for the acceptance of the school of thought of Shia rulers by the people and its growth and expansion.

Conclusion

Shia rulers, who considered the expansion of Shi'ism their duty, were able to promote their religion through the implementation of the real ordinances of religion in society. They, who had placed following the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) at the top of their political activities, tried as much as possible to behave with justice and fairness in social management with all sects and religions. Although in some cases they were not immune from error, they were able to achieve their goals. They were able to create a special popularity for themselves among the people by adopting populist and popular behavior and thereby provide the ground for promoting their school of thought, namely Shi'ism. Their "being logical and rational" in this period of time had the greatest impact on the preservation, survival, and durability of Shi'ism. This element is what drew a personality like Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi to cooperate with the Mongols. Khwaja, with the knowledge, logic, and rationality that he had learned from the infallible Shia leaders (peace be upon them), realized that if he were removed from the pyramid of power and politics in those conditions, no name of Islam and Shi'ism would remain. Therefore, he tried with all his power to use this destructive power in the service of Islam and the strengthening of Shi'ism, which shows the peak of logic and intellectual maturity and wonderful wisdom of Khwaja. In reality, it was this tact and prudence of Shia scholars and politicians that provided the ground for the officialization of the Shia religion in the Safavid period. And the last

point is that the attention and interest of Shia rulers through the construction of Shia schools and scientific centers and education and training and increasing education in society in the period under discussion caused the spread of Shia teachings.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest reported by the authors.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to data analysis, drafting, and revising of the paper and agreed to be responsible for all the aspects of this work.

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