



An Analysis of the Social Status of Rural Women in The Ilkhanid Period Based on the Haas Village Cemetery Gravestones

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Citation: Kazempour, M. (2022). An analysis of the social status of rural women in the Ilkhanid period based on the Haas village cemetery gravestone. *Journal of Woman and Culture*, 13(50), 77-93.

DOR: 20.1001.1.20088426.1400.13.50.6.8

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 03.10.2021

Accepted: 20.12.2021

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Keywords:

Rural women
Ilkhanid period
Gravestone inscriptions
Has village

Abstract

The object of the present research was the analysis of the social status of rural women in the Ilkhanid period based on the Haas village cemetery gravestones. 200 gravestones were intact which by non-probabilistic sampling procedure 20 gravestones that contained the maximum data on women professions were selected and studied. Concerning the object, the research was a qualitative with descriptive-analytical method. To obtain the data, in the initial stage, based on field studies, the necessary documentation such as photography, redesign and interpretation of inscriptions and motifs were proceeded. After presenting the descriptions and library information, the data were reviewed by analytical method. The results indicated that, with the arrival of the Mongols in Iran, the situation of women changed and they were able to play a freer role alongside men in the various society affairs. Historical sources as well as artistic evidence showed the prominent position of court women (especially the Ladies) in political and social relations, and no data were available about rural women of the period. Meanwhile, on the tombstones of Haas Cemetery, rural men and women were depicted who, during their lifetime, each held a job in a social position and had acquired a social status commensurate with their profession. This was recognizable by the type and dimensions of the tombstones, artistic techniques, inscriptions, motifs, as well as objects on the tombstone. Men in professions such as farmer, rancher, hunter, musician and servant, and women in “Varni” weaving (durries weaving), who played a prominent role in the livelihood of the society of that period, enjoyed a similar position with men.



Extended abstract

Introduction: Haas Cemetery is one of the unique places in Iran that has gravestones from the Ilkhanid and Safavid periods in its heart and more than one hundred pieces of tombstones with various motifs related to the occupations of that period. The existence of the tomb of Timur Lang's mother (Topal Timur) and the belief in the sanctity of this tomb have led to the formation of a large cemetery with the burial of the dead around it. This cemetery is a unique example of the Islamic period cemetery in Iran, which provides objective and direct evidence from the occupations of the people of the Ilkhanid period to the Safavid period. In this cemetery, after burying each deceased person, a rectangular ascent stone was placed on top of the head and various motifs related to the social class and occupation of the person were created on it. These gravestones can be classified into two general categories with inscription motifs and motifs of different shapes, which were mentioned in the sample with inscription decorations: a poem by Saadi, Ayatollah Rahman, the name of the deceased, the name of the father and the date of his death. In the tombstones with motifs of Guanonun shapes, the motifs are related to the occupations of the deceased, such as hunter, farmer, warrior, musician and Durries weaver. The object of the present research was the analysis of the social status of rural women in the Ikhanid period based on the Haas village cemetery gravestones.

Method: 200 gravestones were intact which by non-probabilistic sampling procedure 20 gravestones that contained the maximum data on women professions were selected and studied. Concerning the object, the research was a qualitative with descriptive-analytical method. To obtain the data, in the initial stage, based on field studies, the necessary documentation such as photography, redesign and interpretation of inscriptions and motifs were proceeded. After presenting the descriptions and library information, the data were reviewed by analytical method.

Results: The results indicated that, with the arrival of the Mongols in Iran, the situation of women changed and they were able to play a freer role alongside men in the various society affairs. Historical sources as well as artistic evidence showed the prominent position of court women (especially the Ladies) in political and social relations, and no data were available about rural women of the period. Meanwhile, on the tombstones of Haas Cemetery, rural men and women were depicted who, during their lifetime, each held a job in a social position and had acquired a social status commensurate with their profession. This was recognizable by the type and dimensions of the tombstones, artistic techniques, inscriptions, motifs, as well as objects on the tombstone. Men in professions such as farmer, rancher, hunter, musician and servant, and women in weaving, who played a prominent role in the livelihood of the society of that period, enjoyed a similar position with men.

Conclusions: One of the highlights of the gravestones of Haas Cemetery was the presence of motifs related to the work of the deceased. Based on these motifs, a lot of information could be obtained from the existence of various professions in this village from the distant past. Due to the geographical situation and environmental conditions, this village had been suitable for nomadic summers since ancient times and according to historical sources, it was located within the summers of Mongol ilkhans. Also, one of the



points of interest in this village was the existence of various professions and each person had a specific social position in society based on these professions. However, in pastoral and rural communities, social hierarchies were not very common and a large number of these people were in the same social class. According to the gravestones of Haas Cemetery, the men of this village were engaged in animal husbandry, agriculture, hunting and music during the Ilkhanid period and gained a social status in accordance with their profession. This could be distinguished from the type and dimensions of the tombstone, artistic technique, inscriptions, motifs as well as objects on the gravestone. The plowing farmer, the rancher with his domestic animals, the musician with his instruments, and the hunter with his horses and hunting animals showed an objective representation of a class society in this period. In contrast to the male class, there was a class of rural women who, along with men, have played a role in providing a large part of the family needs alongside men throughout their lives. Especially in the pastoral community where men spend the night outside the village with the cattle until late at night, women played a special role in maintaining the security, leadership and daily activities of the village. This gave the women a special place in the pastoral community and put them in a row and in some cases higher than men. In the pastoral community, women did the village affairs, the production of secondary livestock products, as well as the important activity of durries weaving, and what was the most important was durries weaving. durries weaving was very important in the economy of the pastoral community because this profession not only provides the necessary basis for night and day comfort on the carpet, but also provides a large part of the family expenses by selling durries. So, it was not without reason that out of all the activities of the women and girls of the village, only the profession of durries weaving had been considered and exclusively this class of women had painted tombstones. It was as if anything other than weaving was a worthless daily activity, and durries weaving was defined exclusively as a unique art and characteristic of a woman's high social status. There were three social hierarchies among the motifs of women re-weaving, which are mentioned in the details of research findings.

Authors Contributions: All scientific content of this article has been written by Dr.Mehdi Kazempour in charge of this article.

Acknowledgments: Thanks to Mr. Papour Kazempour for accompanying me in this field study.

Conflict of Interest: in this study no conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding: this study did not receive financial benefits.