

Muhammad Uljaytu's Conversion to Islam

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After the Mongols' invasion of Iran, no one could ever imagine that the grand children of Genghis Khan would pave the context for the growth and dissemination of Islam in later periods. Genghis Khan, himself, was a shaman and his grandsons, such as Hulagu Khan and Abaqa Khan, and Abaqa Khan's children were Buddhists. However, they always dealt with the followers of other religions and sects with respect. The court of Hulagu Khan in Iran was always frequented by the scholars of other religions. Some of the children and grandchildren of Hulagu Khan abandoned their ancestral religion because of the necessities of their time and converted to Islam or Christianity. In this regard, reference can be made to Ghazan Khan and Muhammad Uljaytu who, because of the penetration of Muslim scholars in their courts, paid attention to Islam and *Shi'ism*. Ghazan Khan chose the *Hanafite* religion but did not formally acknowledge his conversion to *Shi'ism* for certain political reasons. Muhammad Uljaytu, his brother, persuaded the king to follow *Shi'ism* more openly for several reasons including the penetration of some Muslim scholars and *Shi'ite* ministers and rulers, such as Allamah al-Hilli, his son Fakhr ul-Muhaqqiqin, and Amir TarmTaz, in his court and their arguments as to the superiority of *Shi'ism* over *Sunnism*. Uljaytu chose the Twelver branch of *Shi'ism* and, at the sometime, issued the order of reading sermons in Friday prayers in the name of the *Shi'ite* Imams (a) and minting coins in their names. During the time of these two Mongol Khans, particularly Uljaytu, the life conditions of Muslims and, specifically, the *Shi'ites* were improved.

Key Terms

Islam. Uljaytu. *Shi'ite*. Muslim. Mongols

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