

IRANIANS' REACTION TO FORCED CONVERSIONS

Dr. Kersey Antia, Jul 7, 2020

Forced conversion is a 'gift' of the powerful to the weak which confronts the latter with a double-edged bind: to refuse the gift is to lose and to accept it is to lose too, as the Iranians soon found it out and became entrapped with two confusing identities within themselves, ultimately finding relief in Sufism and Shi'ism. Garth Fowden dwells on the instances in Late Antiquity where adoption of monotheism was governed by the fear of force and rendered people vulnerable to negative reaction from the authorities. But, the reverse was true when the authorities were powerless, even temporarily, to dictate their religious preferences. Thus, when the Byzantine's position became weak, the Armenians and Georgians were able to reject the form of Christianity imposed on them by the Byzantine and revert to the one they preferred. (*Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1993).