

# Social Change in Medieval Iran 132-628 AH (750-1231 AD)

## The Perspectives of Persian Historiography

Maryam Kamali

استان ابوالفضل بهمنی و میرازد بد او خویش چنین گوید که چون  
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*The Perspectives of Persian Historiography*

*Maryam Kamali*

Amsterdam University Press



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To my mother, Tal'at, and my father, Hosseyn  
and  
to the Iranian people fighting for the freedom of Iran  
#MahsaAmini



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## Preface

What compels the historian to write is undoubtedly the intention to record events that have already ended or are about to end, and the narratives created based on what they have heard or observed take on the lasting color of history. The historian who seeks to immortalize their age never sees themselves as separate from the past or the future. Hence, today's researcher needs to look for the roots of current social change in history.

Today, social change is one of the most important topics in the social sciences, including history and sociology. In recent decades, researchers in the social sciences, especially sociologists, offered different definitions for social change. Still, none of these definitions can be used as an accurate template for assessing social change in different societies. Social change in any country is the product of the social characteristics of that country. Therefore, to achieve an acceptable definition of social change in Iran, we must make use of the tools of sociology and historical studies to provide detailed information about the events that happened over time in Iran.

This study aims to achieve a new perspective on the study of social change in medieval Iran from the rise of the 'Abbasid Caliphate (132–656 AH/750–1258 AD) to the collapse of the Khwarazmshahi (469–628 AH/1077–1231 AD) by relying on readings of Persian historical texts, on the one hand, and applying theories of sociology and historical research, on the other. Iranian historians played an essential role in shaping the Islamic historiography in the Arabic language, but with the development of the New Persian language from the language of the people of the street and bazaar to the written and scientific language, a new age of historiography began in Iran. *Tarikhnama-ye Tabari* (352 AH/963 AD) by Abu 'Ali Bal'ami was the first work that was produced in the court of the Samanid dynasty and became a model of Persian historiography for the historians that followed. Writing historical texts in Persian, and translating others into Persian, became so popular in Iran that later, during the rule of the Ghaznavids, the Saljuqs, and the Khwarazmshahi, Persian was more commonly used for the composition of historical texts than Arabic. This study examines the history of medieval Iran through the perspective of *Tarikhnama-ye Tabari* by Abu 'Ali Bal'ami (d. 363 AH/974 AD), the first known Persian historian, until the time of 'Ata Melak Joveyni (623–681 AH/1226–1283 AD), the great historian in the time of the Mongols. In this study, Arabic works have been referenced to provide a more accurate picture of social change in Iran.



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Maryam Kamali  
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# Introduction

History is the mediated account of past events in human life, an image of a series of events narrated in oral and written reports from multiple and sometimes conflicting points of view. It originates in ancient times and continues to accumulate data points even up to the present moment. Social change is one of the critical topics in the humanities today, including history and sociology, and its importance needs to be taken into consideration in interdisciplinary studies. This research is based on rereading Persian history using sociology and historical research theories, with a new perspective on the study of Iran's social changes in medieval times from the rise of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate (132–656 AH/750–1258 AD) to the collapse of the Khwārazmshāhi (469–628 AH/1077–1231 AD).

The written legacy of the historians writing in Persian reflects their accounts of the process of social change in its close connection with historical events, to the extent that history may not even be conceived without the concept of social change. However, the search for historical texts, especially when they are at a great distance in time from when they were written, is not easy for the humanities researcher because it requires familiarity with the science of history and a closer look at the historical texts. The history researcher is responsible for finding statements in the texts that reveal social changes occurring in specific periods and the changes whose impacts and replicas can be traced through the texts of subsequent generations of historians. To achieve this objective, they need to be equipped with research methods and a good understanding of the essential issues in humanities theories.

This work aims to discover the causes and foundations of social change, one of the primary concepts common to the science of history and sociology in medieval Iran (132–628 AH/750–1231 AD), and to examine the links between these changes diachronically. The study claims that the key to the treasures of the past can be traced back to the illumination of the modern disciplines of the humanities. A key lost in the past may open up multiple vistas for searching deeper into human and political history.

Examining the ancient roots of a historical experience will inevitably lead us to long and arduous periods of history. Searching for a reverse path

from the present to the past to reach the roots of an event may connect us to the causal propositions whose roots are even further away in history. In the interconnected chain of causes and effects, we can discover the origin of specific historical events. By originality, I mean that the events that shape social changes are unique and related to one particular time and place. In other words, the cause-and-effect relationship implies that the presence of the same causes may end with the same results, so they are not necessarily unique. However, the specialty of time and place differentiates social change in different areas of the world in various phases of time. In this study, I deal with social change as an integral part of historical events that are connected by the rings of cause and effect.

Considering the concept of social change from the point of view of historians writing in Persian, this book examines those interconnected circles of social changes that Iranian dynasties shaped to gain independence from the Umayyads (41–132 AH/661–750 AD) and the ‘Abbāsids.

To achieve a significant perspective on studying historical texts, I must initially present my definition of history. History in this study is intended to mean the originality of historical periods in which the characteristic of their separation from each other is manifested by a change in the structure of power and subsequently a change in the agents active in society’s structure. Since I consider three stages (formation, consolidation, and degeneration) for each historical period, I will also separate each period’s social changes to have a more accurate view of the very process of social change. Based on this process of social change, this study is divided into three parts covering three historical phases:

- Part I, “The Formation of Iranian Authority under the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate,” covers Iranian agents and structures in the establishment of the caliphate.
- Part II, “The Structure of Iranian Dynasties: From Dependence to Independence,” recounts the reign of the first Iranian local dynasties.
- Part III, “The Presence of Turkish Agents in the Power Structure,” addresses the rise of the soltānate.

### Historians Writing in Persian (352–658 AH/964–1260 AD)

The arrival of Islam in Iran was accompanied by social changes in Iranians’ language of science and thought systems. Islam’s emphasis on writing history and the spread of *Revāyat-e Hādīth* (The knowledge of narration of



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Hādith) helped Iranians access Arabic scholarship and thus keep up with other Muslim historians. The *Pārsi-ye dari*, which was popular in Iran from the Sassanid era (224–651), especially in the eastern parts, was recognized as the scientific and cultural language of the Iranians until the end of the third century and was used alongside Arabic to write both scientific and literary works.<sup>1</sup>

Before the eleventh century, Arabic, as a scientific language, required historians and other scholars to transfer their knowledge through this language. However, many Iranians were unfamiliar with Arabic; therefore, there was a gap between them and the knowledge of their times. The efforts of the Sāmānids (203–389 AH/819–999 AD), especially during the reign of Mansur ibn Nuh (r. 350–365 AH/961–975 AD), to translate essential works, including *Tafsir-e Tabari* and *Tārikh-e Tabari*, were in line with the community's need to access scientific productions in Arabic.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the translation of works from Arabic to *Pārsi-ye dari*, which was more pleasant and accessible to the Persian-speaking people,<sup>3</sup> continued throughout the period from 352 AH/963 AD to 658 AH/1260 AD. The translations of *Tārikh-e Bokhārā* by Narshakhi and *Tārikh-e Yamini* by 'Otbi are good examples of works written during this time that were primarily summarized or expanded versions of the original texts.<sup>4</sup>

For some historians, including Jorfādeqāni, the translator of *Tārikh-e Yamini*, translating from Arabic into Persian was not easy. They believed that Arabic had more capacity to convey scientific topics in terms of structure and vocabulary. However, the persistent efforts of Iranian intellectuals, including Bu Nasr Moshkān, Beyhaqi, Ibn Balkhi, Afzal Kermāni, and Jowzjāni, gradually demonstrated the Persian language's capacity to convey meanings and discuss highly complicated issues. These efforts culminated with Beyhaqi, Joveyni, and, later, Rashid al-Din Fazlollāh. It seems that in this direction, the Persian language gradually created a separate identity for historians writing in Persian, which I do not intend to address in this study.

This study examines the history of social change in Iran through historians' perspectives from Bal'ami (d. 363 AH/974 AD) to Joveyni (623–681 AH/1226–1283 AD). After the Muslim invasions of Iran, Arabic became

1 Safā, 2000, vol. 1, p. 130.

2 Meisami, 1999, p. 13; Melville, 2012, p. xxx; Peacock, 2007, p. 53.

3 Narshakhi, 1984, p. 5; *Mojmal al-Tavārikh va al-Qesas*, 1939, p. 8.

4 The anonymous author tries to bring Persian poems in his work as much as possible, "Arab poets have written about him [Abu Ja'far] in many of their poems, but in this book we have restricted ourselves to the Persian except where writings in the Persian either do not remain or cannot be found. *Tārikh-e Sīstān*, 1987, p. 324; tr., 1976, p. 265.



the predominant language of learning and science throughout the Islamic Empire. As a result, eminent scholars wrote their works in Arabic. However, after two centuries, Iranians began to revitalize the Persian language as their language of science and learning. Historians were one group of these scholars who conveyed their understanding of Iran's social changes through the Persian language. Bal'ami is the first known historian writing in Iran to report on social change. His work is a summarized translation of *Tārikh-e Tabari*. However, Bal'ami also contributes his understanding of the history of Iran to his translation. *Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā*, the previous historical work of the study, ends with the fall of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate.

Social changes in Iran will be examined based on the most significant Persian historical texts written in the period between 352 AH/693 AD (*Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari*) and 658 AH/1260 AD (*Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā*). The books used in this study are: *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari* attributed to Abu 'Ali Bal'ami (352 AH/963 AD),<sup>5</sup> *Zeyn al-Akhbār* or *Tārikh-e Gardizi* (404 AH/1013 AD),<sup>6</sup> *Tārikh-e Sistān* (445–725 AH/1053–1324 AD),<sup>7</sup> *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi* (448–468 AH/1056–1075 AD),<sup>8</sup> *Siyar al-Moluk* or *Siyāsatnāma* (484 AH/1091 AD),<sup>9</sup> *Fārsnāma-ye Ibn Balkhi* (510 AH/1116 AD),<sup>10</sup> *Mojmal al-Tavārikh va al-Qesas* (520 AH/1126 AD),<sup>11</sup> *Atabat al-Kataba* (528–548 AH/1133–1153 AD),<sup>12</sup> *Tārikh-e Bokhārā* (557 AH/1161 AD),<sup>13</sup> *Tārikh-e Beyhaq* (563 AH/1167 AD),<sup>14</sup> *Saljuqnāma* (571–590 AH/1175–1194 AD),<sup>15</sup> *Tārikh-e al-Voza'ra* (584 AH/1188 AD),<sup>16</sup> *'Aqd al-'Ala Lel-Mowqef al-'Alā* (584 AH/1188 AD),<sup>17</sup> *Rāhat al-Sodur va Āyat al-Sorur* (599 AH/1202 AD),<sup>18</sup> *Tārikh-e Yamini* (603 AH/1206 AD),<sup>19</sup> *Tārikh-e Afzal* or *Badāye' al-Zamān fe Vaqāye'e Kermān* (606 AH/1209 AD),<sup>20</sup> *Tārikh-e Tabarestān* (613 AH/1216 AD),<sup>21</sup> *Nafthat al-Masdur* (632

5 Bal'ami, 1999.

6 Gardizi, 1984, p. 985.

7 *Tārikh-e Sistān*, 1987.

8 Beyhaqi, 1995.

9 Khwāja Nezām al-Molk, 1999.

10 Ibn Balkhi, 2006.

11 *Mojmal al-Tavārikh va al-Qesas*, 1939.

12 Atābak Joveyni, 2005.

13 Narshakhi, 1984.

14 Ibn Fondoq, 2011.

15 Zahiri Neyshāburi, 2011a.

16 Abol Rajā'e Qomi, 1984.

17 Afzal Kermāni, 1977.

18 Rāvandi, 2011.

19 Jorfādeqāni, 2003.

20 Afzal Kermāni, 1947.

21 Ibn Esfandiyār, 2011.



AH/1234 AD),<sup>22</sup> *Sirat-e al-Jalāl al-Din Mengeborni* (639 AH/1241 AD),<sup>23</sup> *Tabaqāt-e Nāseri* (658 AH/1259 AD),<sup>24</sup> and *Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā* (651–658 AH/1253–1259 AD).<sup>25</sup>

The long period under study and the diversity of texts limit me to examining the published works of this time; therefore, this study does not attempt to cover any unpublished manuscripts. In this book, as needed, Arabic works and historical sources from later medieval periods are referenced to provide a clearer picture of social change in Iran.

## Theoretical Framework

The study will approach social change in medieval Iran from the rise of the ‘Abbāsīd era (132–658 AH/750–1258 AD) to the collapse of the Khwārazmshāhi (469–628 AH/1077–1231 AD) through the main elements of structuration theory as proposed by Anthony Giddens. In *The Constitution of Society*,<sup>26</sup> Giddens presents the most extensive and explicit statement concerning this theory: “Every research investigation in the social sciences or history is involved in relating action to structure.”<sup>27</sup> The aim is to create an encompassing social theory that does not focus simply on human agents or structures but rather the interaction between these two elements of society to reach and consolidate power. These interactions take place in specific places and phases of time.<sup>28</sup>

Human agents or actors interact with social structures through invented values, norms, and social acceptance. Therefore, the role of the human agents is neither based solely on volunteerism nor restricted by the social structure.<sup>29</sup> Giddens infers a hierarchy of mental activity with discursive consciousness at the top, practical consciousness in the middle, and the unconscious at the bottom. This hierarchy comprises the centerpiece of the theory of the acting subject.<sup>30</sup>

Practical consciousness bears significant theoretical weight because it refers to the knowledge of how to act. Understanding how to act is nonverbal

22 Nasavi, 2006.

23 Nasavi, 1987.

24 Jowzjāni, 1984.

25 Joveyni, 2006.

26 Giddens, 1984.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

29 Lamsal, 2012, pp. 112–113; Turner, 1986, p. 972.

30 Stones, 1998, pp. 37–40.





tactical knowledge, which means that we learn much of it without didactic instruction and we take it for granted most of the time. Each day we perform a myriad of practices without conscious reflection.<sup>31</sup> Discursive consciousness is a state of awareness of our thoughts when, for any reason, a situation arises where we lack the ability in a way that is normal.<sup>32</sup> Giddens claims that human conduct is always subject to a compelling unconscious motivation, which is the need to maintain ontological security.<sup>33</sup>

In this theory, the emphasis is on the dialectic interactions of agents and structures to attain power:

Being an agent is to be able to deploy a range of causal powers, including that of influencing those deployed by others. Action depends upon the capability of the individuals to make a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to make a difference, that is, to exercise some sort of power.<sup>34</sup>

For Giddens, structures do not exist without agents. In other words, he believes that if structures have a locus, it is in the heads of the social agents.<sup>35</sup> He argues that the dualisms between agency and structure, and individual and society cannot be overcome merely by bringing these two types of approaches together.<sup>36</sup>

To overcome the problems of traditional dualism, he proposes the duality of structure. In this regard, the structure comprises two parts: the resources that enable and the rules that constrain.<sup>37</sup> In other words, social change is produced through the interaction of agents with social structures, agents which play the two roles of constraining and enabling.<sup>38</sup> Giddens describes social practices not as having structures but as exhibiting structural properties.<sup>39</sup> In short, the center of Giddens's structuration theory does not emphasize agents or structures but on the process of production, reproduction, and transformation of structures in a particular time and place.<sup>40</sup>

31 *Ibid.*, p. 283.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 284; Bryant and Jary, 1991, pp. 7–8.

33 Stones, 1998, p. 284; Bryant and Jary, 1991, p. 7.

34 Giddens, 1984, p. 14.

35 Craib, 1992, p. 42.

36 Loyal, 2003, p. 28.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

38 Giddens, 1984, pp. 16–17; Lamsal, 2012, p. 112; Craib, 1992, p. 35; Stones, 2005, p. 16.

39 Giddens, 1984, p. 17.

40 Craib, 1992, pp. 43–44; Stones, 1998, p. 24; Loyal, 2003, pp. 93–94.



The concept of power in structuration theory focuses on the agents and structures that are connected in order to reproduce structures.<sup>41</sup> Power is tied to agents who make a difference in society.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, in his theory, these elements are interconnected. Agents and structures in connection with power shape a triangle that reproduces the remnant structures of society. Thus, social change is not the outcome of the complete alteration in the current structures, but includes their reproduction.

The basis of this study into the phenomenon of social change is the work of historians writing in Persian and some elements of Giddens's theory of structuration. Social change is defined as social reproduction, i.e., the product of interactions between agents and structures to achieve power. Putting structuration theory in this context, this study examines the social change in Iran during the 'Abbāsīd reign, which emerged from the interactions between social agents and structures aimed at achieving power in the medieval territory that is currently called "Iran." To achieve power manifested in independence, social agents' social change was developed by dealing with the rules and resources of structures.

## Key Terms of Research

**Social change:** Considering the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens and Persian historical works, this study defines social change as the result of the dialectical interactions between social agents and structures in a specific time and place to achieve power. Through these interactions, entirely new structures are not produced, but previous structures are reconstructed. Regarding this study, social changes are the interlocked rings of reconstructed structures that develop into Iran's historical phases.

**Power:** The aim that inspires the interaction between social agents and structures. In this study, power is manifested in achieving political independence in Iran from the 'Abbāsīds. Based on Persian historical works, the Iranians always maintained the ideal map of the pre-Islamic territories of Iran under the Sāssānīds. In this study, independence does not mean a national movement as it is defined in modern times, but it does involve having a distinct political structure involving territories in the Sāssānīd map of Iran.

41 Craib, 1992, p. 50.

42 Loyal, 2003, p. 80.



**Structure:** Structure is composed of two parts: the resources that enable and the rules which constrain agents. In other words, social structures themselves are both enabling and constraining. Here, the structures are caliphate, soltānate, vizierate, and amirate.

**Agent:** Social agents are the people in power who interact with social structures through invented values, norms, and social acceptance to reconstruct the structures. In this study, the intended agents include:

- Caliph/king/soltān (*shāh/shāhanshāh*) in the leadership structure
- Vizier (minister) or another bureaucrat in the vizierate
- Amir (military commander) in the amirate

**Place:** The place under study is greater Iran, i.e., the eastern Islamic territories from Mā Varā al-Nahr (Transoxiana) in the east to Baghdad in the west. This study's geographical region shifts along this terrain based on the development of different local and regional dynasties.

**Time:** This study covers the history of Iran from the rise of the 'Abbāsids (132–656 AH/750–1258 AD) to the collapse of the Khwārazmshāhi (469–628 AH/1077–1231 AD). Based on the social changes that develop through the interactions of different agents and structures, the study is classified into three historical phases:

1. The establishment of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.
2. The reign of the first Iranian local dynasties, including the Tāherids (205–259 AH/820–872 AD), the Sāmānids (203–389 AH/819–999 AD) the Saffārids (247–393 AH/861–1003 AD), the 'Alawites (250–316 AH/864–928 AD), and the Buyids (320–448 AH/932–1056 AD).
3. The rise of the soltānates, including the Ghaznavids (351–582 AH/963–1187 AD), the Saljuqs (429–590 AH/1037–1194 AD), and the Khwārazmshāhi (469–628 AH/1077–1231 AD).

### Social Change vs. Social History

As this book intends to show, social change has quite a different meaning from social history. Social history is the branch of history that emphasizes social structures and the interaction of different groups in society rather than affairs of the state. An outgrowth of economic history, it expanded as a discipline in the 1960s. As a field, it often borders on economic history on



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the one hand and sociology and ethnology on the other.<sup>43</sup> As G. M. Trevelyan, the British historian, defines it, social history is the history of a people with the politics left out.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, social history merely examines the actions and structures of social actors insofar as they deal with people's daily lives and thus distances itself from addressing the dialectics of actors and structures in line with the will to power.

This study is not concerned with social history, but instead with social change. It focuses on the actions of social structures such as the caliphate, soltānate, vizierate, and amirate. Even ordinary people are essential in interacting with the existence of power. In other words, unlike social history, which does not deal with power directly and may even "leave out the politics," this study focuses on the political and administrative mechanisms by which society is shaped and examines how agents' will to power and their interaction with social structures led to extensive and lasting changes in medieval Iran.

### Social Change vs. Nationalism

The topic of this book is social change and not nationalism. It concerns the dialectic interactions of agents and structures in the process of gaining power in Iran from 132 AH/750 AD to 628 AH/1231 AD. During this long period, Arabic, Iranian, and Turkish agents and structures were involved. The fluidity of "Arabs," Iranians, and Turks who embraced diverse identities that intersected in complex ways regarding place of origin, lifestyle, language, and social status, and that absorbed other identities through mixed lineage families, religious conversion, language acquisition, and other strategies of integration is an essential element that must be considered in this book.

This book examines the production and reproduction of structures resulting from dialectic interactions of different agents and structures that had roots in Arab, Iranian, and Turkish ethnicities. For example, in the first chapter of the book, the structure of *da'va* will be examined and how the 'Abbāsids used this structural resource to spread their words throughout Khorāsān. *Da'va* was one of the main traditions (*sonna*) of the prophets, inviting people to monotheism, and it has had a long chapter in the history of religions. The religion of Islam was essentially founded on *da'va* by which Mohammad spread his message in Arabia. Chapter 5 shows how this

43 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2016.

44 Burke, 2005, p. 6.



structure was reproduced by the Ismā‘ili *dā‘ies*, including Hasan Sabbāh, and helped them establish their power in some regions of Iran.

To give another example, Chapter 9 examines the structure of kingship (*shāhi*) and how it was reproduced by ‘Azod al-Dowla with the title of *shāhanshāh*. In Chapter 9, the Ghaznavid dynasty will be studied and how Soltān Mahmud could reproduce this structure with the title of *soltān*. In these two examples and other structures and agents that are examined, the book does follow the circle of social change in Iran as it was shaped in different ways by Arabs, Iranians, and Turks. In this regard, ethnic identity was produced and reproduced under social pressures in a complex way that interacted with other identities, and its permeability best defines that.

This book contributes a Persian writing-based report of the social changes that took shape during the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. It provides a narrative of social changes shaped by different agents over a long period of time through the eyes of historians writing in Persian. This book focuses on these historians because there is no other study that provides a narrative of the history of Iran based on historical works in Persian. It does not mean that book’s theme is one of nationalism. Indeed, many medieval Iranian historians wrote their works in Arabic (such as Abu Hanifa Dinevari in *Akhbār al-Tevvāl*) and were nationalistically inclined, but these works are not used the basis of this book. However, Arabic works are referenced, as needed (for example, for the Buyid dynasty, Arabic works are consulted to provide a clearer picture of social change in Iran). Many Persian historians whose works were introduced and used in this book have not been seriously considered before. In this sense, this book contributes to medieval historiography.

## Research Methods and Theoretical Framework for Reading Historical Texts

The definition of social change used in this study is based on the work of historians writing in Persian and Giddens’ theory of structuration. Thus, social change is defined as social reproduction, which results from the dialectic of agents and structures to achieve power. All my efforts in this research project provide a clear and historical account of the social changes in medieval Iranian history by preserving the existing lines and boundaries in interdisciplinary study and approaching a new perspective on historical events. Therefore, we only deal with those social changes that can be examined according to the definition provided.



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Besides all my attempts to keep moving within interdisciplinary studies, I intend to present a clear historical narration of social change in medieval Iran under the ‘Abbāsids. My main objective is to introduce a new perspective of Iran’s social changes; therefore, I have restricted the focus to those kinds of social changes that are accessible through the definitions given.

The research method in this book will be descriptive-analytical. Based on this, the social changes resulting from the dialectic of agent and structure to achieve power are introduced, and the process of their formation is evaluated. As the most important factor in the agent’s move toward structure and engagement with its rules and resources, power forms a circle of social change by reproducing social structures and institutions. In this analysis, attention to the source of power and how it is legitimized, as well as the role of the two factors of religion and war as effective tools in the dialectical mode of action and structure, are emphasized.

This study argues that the circles of social change in its historical process are never separate, but all of them reproduce past structures and institutions whose social actions have changed their construction according to the needs of the day. This book tries to find the social changes of Iran and their links during the Middle Ages (132–628 AH/750–1231 AD) by using Giddens’ theory of structuration.

## Review of Related Research

Ann K. S. Lambton’s *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> Century* (1988) is one of the few works of independent historical research on the social changes of medieval Iran. This work, which is the expansion of five lectures given at Columbia University in 1981, covers administration, law, landed property, taxes, and social classes under the Saljuqs, Khwārazmshāhi, and Mongols. Lambton emphasizes continuous development and constant change throughout the three centuries under consideration and that continuity and change should not be seen in sharp contrast. Overall, the most obvious break in continuity, and therefore the sharpest contrast, occurred in the early Mongol period, before Ghāzān’s conversion to Islam.

Lambton believes that the developments in Iran were related to the rulers, and its continuation was associated with the institutions and affairs of the judiciary. At the same time, religious and social affairs and other institutions witnessed a very calm and gradual change. The author emphasizes the role of military forces, especially that of the Turks, as the source of fundamental



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changes in the rule and governance of Islamic societies and the beginning of a new era politically. Lambton opens a new window into the medieval history of Iran. However, she seeks to prove her theory of the role of the bureaucratic and military structures rather than revisiting developments in Iran through the lens of historical texts.

Jürgen Paul (2016) in *Lokale und imperial Herrschaft im Iran des 12. Jahrhunderts. Herrschaftspraxis und Konzepte* focuses on the pre-Mongol history of Iran and how political rule was organized there. It examines the connections between the sultan and the local lords and the important people of the empire who belonged to the sultan's household. This book aims to teach the reader about the social ties between representatives of different power levels, including caliphs, sultans, governors, and amirs. In another book, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und Transoxanien in vormongolischer Zeit*, Paul (1996) examines the reach of state power in Iran, including Khorāsān, Mā Varā al-Nahr, and central Iran, and the activity of those who mediated between the state and local communities, including towns, villages, special interest groups, in the pre-Mongol era in three key areas: irrigation and water distribution; taxation; and the military. He argues that the decentralized society with a multilayered power structure and a wide range of informal, personal networks limited the sphere of direct action by the ruler or central administration.

*Din va Dowlat dar Iran-e 'Ahd-e Moghol* (2002) by Shirin Bayāni analyzes Iran's political, social, and religious conditions in the Mongol era. In this book, while reporting on the events in Iran during the era, Bayāni discusses the social changes resulting from the Khwārazmshāhi rule and the Mongol invasions and how the attitude of important actors shaped transformations in the religious and political systems of that time. The researcher's problem-oriented approach and the rereading of firsthand works and references to various sources according to the developments of the Mongol era cause the reader's mind to be eager to learn more about the social changes of the Khwārazmshāhi and Mongol eras.

The editors' introductions to the Persian historical works under study provide a solid basis for learning about these sources and their authors. These introductions were produced by Mohammad Roshan (*Tārikh-e Tabari*), 'Abdol Hayy Habibi (*Tārikh-e Gardīzi*), Mohammad 'Ali Bahar (*Tārikh-e Sistān* and *Mojmal al-Tavārikh va al-Qesas*), Khalil Khatib Rahbar (*Tārikh-e Beyhaqi*), Mohammad Qazvini (*Ataba va al-Kataba* and *Jahān-goshā*), Modarres Razavi (*Tārikh-e Bokhārā*), Mohammad Bahmanyār (*Tārikh-e Beyhaq*), Mohammad Dāneshpajuh and Badi' Al-Zaman Foruzānfar (*Rāhat al-Sodur Va Āyat al-Sorur*), Mehdi Bayān (*Tārikh-e Afzal*), 'Abbās Eqbāl (*Tārikh-e Esfandiyār*),



Amir Hosseyn Yazdgerdi (*Nafsat al-Masdur*), Mojtabā Minovi (*Sirat-e Jalāl al-Din Mengoberni*), Abdol Hayy Habibi (*Tabaqāt-e Nāseri*), and Mohammad Qazvini (*Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā*). Besides, works such as the book *Tārikh-e Adabiyāt dar Iran* by Zabihollāh Safā, *Tārikh-e Adabiyāt-e Iran* by Edward Brown, and *Sabkshenāsi* by Mohammad ‘Ali Bahār provide us with a list of the historical works of this period and in the light of Persian literature.

Julie Scott Meisami’s book *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (1999) examines some of the leading historical texts of the Sāmānid, Ghaznavid, and Saljuq dynasties. It concentrates on the emergence of Persian historiography relying on pre-Islamic Persian and Arabic works, its connection with Iranian and Arabic models, and its political and cultural functions. This study addresses issues relating to the motivation for writing the works in question, its purpose, the role of the author, patrons, and audiences, the choice of language, and the reasons for that choice. Meisami aims to emphasize that historians, in addition to narrating events, have provided a meaningful account of their contemporary society. *Persian Historiography* (2012), edited by Charles Melville, comprehensively introduces historical works in Persian. In this work, which has been written in collaboration with prominent researchers and experts in the history of Iran, the process of writing historical texts from the Sāmānid period to the Pahlavi period has been studied and the important chronicles of each period have been introduced. The course of Persian historiography in other countries, including the Ottoman Empire, India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, has been followed, and significant works have been briefly introduced. In the introduction to the work, Melville emphasizes that Persian historiography has always been on the margins of Arabic historiography and has been neglected. Therefore, their work is merely an attempt to provide an overview of the state of Persian historiography. In this work, the historiography of the period (352–658 AH/964–1260 AD) is introduced by Julie Scott Meisami, Daniel Elton, and Charles Melville. Each of these authors looked at historical works from different perspectives. In this work, the emphasis is on the Persian language, and historical texts are examined as a subset of Persian literature; therefore, this book informs the reader about the historical and literary aspects of chronicles.

In *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Bal‘ami’s Tarikhnamah*, A. C. S. Peacock (2007) examines Bal‘ami’s *Tārikhnāma* as the oldest political and surviving cultural work of Persian prose and how political circumstances influenced its composition and reception. This research’s primary purpose is to answer the question of to what extent and how the political conditions and historical context have been influential in the authorship, content, public acceptance, and subsequent developments





of this text. While addressing the central issues in Bal'ami's history, Peacock compares the structure and content of Bal'ami's translation with *Tārikh-e Tabari*. By enumerating the differences between the historiography and the history of Tabari, Peacock intends to introduce Bal'ami's main purpose in competing with Tabari and the famous authority of his work. He concludes that the variety of topics in *Tārikhnāma* is more diverse and that there are no conclusive answers about the number of narrations in the history of Tabari. The current study approaches the social changes in the medieval period through a coherent process based on interdisciplinary studies.

Mimi Hanaoka's *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries* (2016) is a notable contribution to medieval Islamic historiography, especially in regard to local chronicles. Considering five cities and regions in Iran (Bokhārā, Beyhaq, Qom, Sistān, and Tabarestān) the first three chapters focus on five chronicles that were written between the tenth and thirteenth centuries: *Tārikh-e Bokhārā*, *Tārikh-e Beyhaq*, *Tārikh-e Qom*, *Tārikh-e Sistān*, and *Tārikh-e Tabarestān*. The subsequent chapters are dedicated to the discussion of different discursive elements. This book is an essential companion on how to read local chronicles in the medieval Islamic world.

Examining works created by historians writing in Persian, this study presents a coherent narrative of the changes that occurred in Iran due to the activities of social actors and to the structures that arose during the period from the rise of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate (132–656 AH/750–1258 AD) to the collapse of the Khwārazmshāhi (469–628 AH/1077–1231 AD).

## A Review of the Main Sources of the Research

### *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari*, Attributed to Bal'ami (352 AH/963 AD)

*Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari* is the translation of *Akhbār al-Omam va al-Moluk* by Mohammad ibn Jarir Tabari. After the *Introduction to Shāhnāma-ye Abu Mansuri* in 346 AH/957 AD, *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari* is the second known prose text in the Persian language.<sup>45</sup> In 352 AH/963 AD, *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari*, was translated under Mansur ibn Nuh ibn Ahmad ibn Ismā'il (350–365 AH/961–976 AD), the Sāmānīd amir. There is some controversy about

45 'Abdol Razzāq Tusi, the commander of Khorāsān, commissioned his vizier, Abu Mansur Marmari, to supervise the compilation of a prose *Shāhnāma*. Of this *Shāhnāma*, only the preface survived (Bal'ami, 1999, vol. 1, p. 12; Meisami, 1999, p. 20).



whether this book was translated by Abu ‘Ali Mohammad ibn Mohammad ibn ‘Abdollah al-Tamimi al-Bal‘ami (d. 363 AH/974 AD), the vizier of Mansur ibn Nuh,<sup>46</sup> or by scholars in Bokhārā employed by Bal‘ami.<sup>47</sup> At any rate, because of the critical role of Bal‘ami either as the translator of the book or the person in charge of employing others to translate it, *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari* is attributed to him. It relates events that happened from the time of Adam to that of the author. It contains invaluable myths, stories, national and ritual legends, and original words and expressions in *Pārsi-ye dari*.

The first section of the book covers the history of the prophets and the pre-Islamic kings of Iran. It was edited by Mohammad ‘Ali Bahār and Mohammad Parvin Gonābadi in 1962. The second part constitutes the history of medieval Iran from the arrival of Islam to the time of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph, al-Mostarshed Bellāh (r. 496–513 AH/1118–1135 AD). The second part, titled *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari*, was edited by Mohammad Roshan and published in four volumes in 1987.<sup>48</sup> Although *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari* was essentially intended to be the translation of *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari*, it differs from Tabari’s work.<sup>49</sup>

In this research, *Tārikhnāma-ye Tabari* is the basis for the examination of social changes in Iran from the establishment of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate (132–656 AH/750–1258 AD) to the reign of the Sāmānīds (203–389 AH/819–999 AD). The book places emphasis on the Iranian agents of the military and the bureaucrats in shaping the power structure of the ‘Abbāsīds. It examines the Iranian dynasties of the Tāherīds, the Saffārīds, the Sāmānīds, the ‘Alawītes, and the Buyīds. The author is not confined to narrating social changes, but analyzes the interactions of social agents compared with contemporary structures to portray a full picture of the social changes of this time.

### *Zeyn al-Akhhbār* (404 AH/1013 AD)

Abu Said Abdol Hayy-e Gardīzi<sup>50</sup> wrote *Zeyn al-Akhhbār* as a general history at the court of Abdol Rashīd, the son of Soltān Mahmūd Ghaznavī (r. 441–444 AH/1049–1052 AD).<sup>51</sup> It is a brief account of pre-Islamic dynasties in Iran, the

46 Nezāmi ‘Arūzi, 2004, p. 23.

47 Bal‘ami, 1999, vol. 1, p. 13; Bal‘ami, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 7–8.

48 Bal‘ami, 1999, vol. 1, p. 33.

49 Peacock, 2007, p. 3.

50 *Zeyn al-Akhhbār* lacks a preface and the ending pages; therefore, it is not known whether Gardīzi was a scribe or a minor official at Soltān Mahmūd’s court (Meisami, 1999, p. 68).

51 ‘Abdol Hayy-e Habībī, the editor of the book, states that Gardīzi, the author of the book, had taken the name of the book from the title of Soltān ‘Abdol Rashīd, i.e., ‘Ezz al-Dowlat va Zeyn al-Mellat, Seyf Allah ‘Abdol Rashīd’, which was inscribed on Ghaznavīd coins (Gardīzi, 1984, p. 20).



history of Islam from the beginning to the time of the ‘Abbāsids, and the history of medieval Iran under the dynasties of the Tāherids, the Saffārids, the Sāmānids, and the Ghaznavids to the time of the author. Hence, it is oriented toward the history of Iran.<sup>52</sup> Like the works of the Sāmānids, *Zeyn al-Akhbār* is written in simple language.<sup>53</sup>

In this study, *Zeyn al-Akhbār* is used to examine the history of the Ghaznavids. Although the author summarizes the circumstances of this era, we can still explore the origins of many social changes, particularly the passing of power from Mahmud to Mas‘ud. The problem of succession and the status of bureaucrats in the power structure of the Ghaznavids are some of the main issues that Gardizi examines.

### *Tārikh-e Sistān* (445–725 AH/1053–1324 AD)

The *Tārikh-e Sistān* is the local history of Sistān from 465 AH/1072 AD to 726 AH/1325 AD.<sup>54</sup> Several anonymous authors wrote it in different periods, so the book’s style varies from the simple language in the first part to rhetorical language in other sections.<sup>55</sup> Because the work’s original title is unknown, Mohammad Taqī Bahār, the book’s editor, named it the *Tārikh-e Sistān*.<sup>56</sup>

*Tārikh-e Sistān* was used to examine the social changes developed from the emergence of Abu Moslem Khorāsāni, the Tāherids, the Saffārids, the ‘Alawites, and the Sāmānids. The historian’s attention to the power structure of the Saffārids and how they could establish an independent political structure from the ‘Abbāsids turned *Tārikh-e Sistān* into a significant source for the examination of social changes.

### *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi* (448–468 AH/1056–1075 AD)

*Tārikh-e Beyhaqi* or *Tārikh-e Mas‘udi* by Abol Fazl Mohammad ibn Hos-seyn Beyhaqi (385–470 AH/995–1077 AD) is one of the primary sources

52 Gardizi’s main source in writing his book *Zeyn al-Akhbār* is *Al-Tārikh fi Akhbār Volāt-e Khorāsān* by Abu ‘Ali Salami Beyhaqi Neyshāburi (300 AH/912 AD), one of the scholars in the court of Chaqānids (Gardizi, 1984, p. 9), and the works of Biruni, Ibn Moqaffa‘, Abu Zeyd Balkhi, Ibn Khordādbeh, and Abu ‘Abdol lāh Jeyhāni (ibid., p. 21). However, he wrote the accounts of the reigns of Soltān Mahmud and Soltān Mas‘ud based on what he witnessed (ibid., p. 379). Meisami, 1999, p. 68; Melville, 2012, p. 124.

53 Zarrinkub, 2007, pp. 14–18.

54 The first part of *Tārikh-e Sistān* draws on many sources, including ‘*Ajāyeb al-Boldān* or ‘*Ajāyeb al-Barr va al-Bahr* by Abol Mo‘ayyed Balkhi (early eleventh century) (*Tārikh-e Sistān*, 1987, p. 12).

55 *Tārikh-e Sistān*, 1987, p. 61; Meisami, 1999, pp. 108–109.

56 *Tārikh-e Sistān*, 1987, p. 5; Meisami, 1999, p. 108.



that examines the social changes of medieval Iran. Beyhaqi served in the Ghaznavid chancellery (Divān-e Rasāʿel) as an assistant to its head, Abu Nasr Moshkān (d. 431 AH/1039 AD).<sup>57</sup> It covers the history of Soltān Masʿud (r. 421–432 AH/1030–1040 AD) and the conflicts between the Ghaznavids and the Saljuqs (429–590 AH/1037–1194 AD), which led to the domination of Toghrol I (r. 429–455 AH/1037–1063 AD), the first sultān of the Saljuqs.

Working within the Ghaznavid chancellery, Beyhaqi had full access to the archives of the dynasty. In addition, he was a witness to many of the events he recounts.<sup>58</sup> As Khalil Khatib Rahbar, the book's editor, notes, *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi* was compiled in 30 volumes, but only six volumes have survived.<sup>59</sup> The style of the book is both rhetorical and pleasant.

Beyhaqi's attention to social changes under the Ghaznavids, the interactions between social agents and structures, and his precise attention to the details of events distinguish his work from others. His attention to the issue of succession, the conflicts between two generations of the Ghaznavid agents under Mahmud and Masʿud, and the irrational measures of Soltān Masʿud, which challenged the power structure of the Ghaznavids, can be thoroughly followed in *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi*. The presence of Beyhaqi as a bureaucrat in the court provides the readers with a vivid picture of social changes under the Ghaznavids that would be inaccessible without him.

### *Siyar al-Muluk* or *Siyāsatnāma* by Khwāja Nezām al-Molk Tusi (479–484 AH/1086–1091 AD)

*Siyar al-Muluk* or *Siyāsatnāma* by Khwāja Nezām al-Molk (d. 485 AH/1092 AD), the vizier of the Saljuq, is the most outstanding work in the genre of mirrors for princes. Khwāja Nezām al-Molk composed it for Soltān Malekshāh (r. 465–485 AH/1072–1092 AD) in 479–484 AH/1086–1091 AD. It contains the knowledge and experience of Khwāja Nezām al-Molk about politics and political structures. He draws upon the past for exemplary accounts of past rulers.<sup>60</sup> It contains 50 chapters on different social topics, including the role of different social agents in the political structure. These include the kings, viziers, amirs (military men), judges, spies (*monhis* or *jāsuses*), and messengers (envoys).<sup>61</sup> Written in simple language, it forms a bridge

57 Meisami, 1999, pp. 79–80.

58 Ibid., p. 80.

59 Beyhaqi, 1995, vol. 1, p. 24.

60 Meisami, 1999, p. 145.

61 Safā, 2000, vol. 2, p. 906.



between two phases of Iranian historiography, the Ghaznavid and the Saljuq.<sup>62</sup> What highlights the significance of this book concerning social changes is the interactions between social agents such as soltāns, viziers, and amirs. Writing about his problems in managing the extensive empire of the Saljuqs, Khwāja Nezām al-Molk highlights his conflicts with the social structures of the soltānate and the amirs. The conflicts between religious structures (including the Sunnis and Ismāʿilis) are some of the main social changes covered in *Siyāsatnāma*. Khwāja Nezām al-Molk points to his religious policies in establishing Nezāmiya schools (religious colleges) to consolidate Saljuq central power.

### *Fārsnāma-ye Ibn Balkhi* (510 AH/1116 AD)

*Fārsnāma*, the local history of Fars from pre-Islamic times to the reign of the Saljuqs, was written by an anonymous writer whose father was from Balkh. Therefore, Le Strange, the editor of the book, has called the author Ibn Balkhi.<sup>63</sup> He was appointed by Barkiyāroq ibn Malekshāh (r. 485–498 AH/1092–1104 AD) in 492 AH/1098 AD to serve as a *mostowfi* (financial administrator) in Fars.<sup>64</sup> Examining the religious conditions of Fars under the Saljuqs in simple language, *Fārsnāma* provides valuable information on social changes of this era.

### *Mojmal al-Tavārikh va al-Qesas* (520 AH/1126 AD)

*Mojmal al-Tavārikh va al-Qesas* is a general history compiled in 25 chapters by an anonymous historian from Hamedān. It begins with the myth of creation and goes to 520 AH/1126 AD under the Saljuqs.<sup>65</sup> As the name of the book implies, the style of the book is a brief account of events in simple language.<sup>66</sup> Even though the book's content is brief and does not include details, it constitutes precious information on social change under the Buyids, the Ghaznavids, Ziyārids, and the Saljuqs. What is critically useful

62 Meisami, 1999, p. 162; Bahār, 2003, vol. 2, p. 110.

63 Ibn Balkhi, 2006, p. 3; Meisami, 1999, pp. 162–163.

64 Ibn Balkhi, 2006, p. 3; Meisami, 1999, pp. 162–163.

65 It goes through political events, but also the geographical history of cities. In addition, the author sometimes includes legends and folklore about historical places and figures (*Mojmal al-Tavārikh va al-Qesas*, 1939, p. 16).

66 It draws on significant sources like *Tārikh-e Tabari*, *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi*, *Tārikh-e Yamini*, *Ketāb-e Tāji*, and *Riyāz al-Ons le ʿAqd al-Anās* (ibid., p. 16).



to this study is the chapter on the consolidation of the Shi'ite structure of the Buyids in Baghdad and the heartland of Sunni structures.

### *Atabat al-Kataba* (528–548 AH/1133–1153 AD)

*Atabat al-Kataba* is a collection of letters of Montakhab al-Din Badi' Atābak Joveyni (681 AH/1282 AD), the scribe of Soltān Sanjar (511–552 AH/1117–1157 AD) and the chief of the chancellery of the Saljuqs. The author lived in the time of Rashid Vatvāt (d. 577 AH/1181 AD), the famous poet of the Khwārazmshāh, and Anvari (d. 575 AH/1179 AD), the prominent poet of the Saljuq court and the person who intervened for the life of Rashid Vatvāt in the court of Sanjar.<sup>67</sup>

*Atabat al-Kataba* contains two sections. The first is the *Soltāniyāt*, which introduces the duties of different agents such as judges, *mohtaseb* (a supervisor of bāzārs and trade in the medieval Islamic countries), and rulers of cities and the people in charge of *eqtā'* (land grants). The second part, *Ekhvāniyāt*, examines the political, social, and economic conditions of Khorāsān after the death of Soltān Sanjar when the amirs achieved great authority.<sup>68</sup> *Atabat al-Kataba* is written in a difficult rhetorical language and is full of Arabic words. It provided valuable insight into the structural resources of religion and science and, particularly, Nezāmiya schools under the Saljuqs.

### *Tārikh-e Bokhārā* (557 AH/1161 AD)

The original text of *Tārikh-e Bokhārā* by Abu Bekr Mohammad ibn Ja'far Narshakhi (286–348 AH/899–959 AD) is in Arabic. It was written under Amir Mohammad Nuh ibn Nasr, the Sāmānid amir, in 343 AH/954 AD.<sup>69</sup> Abu Nasr Ahmad ibn Mohammad ibn Nasr Qabāvi summarized and translated it into Persian in 522 AH/1128 AD. Then Mohammad ibn Zafar ibn 'Omar modified it in 547 AH/1152 AD. What we have now is no longer a literal translation of the Arabic text.<sup>70</sup> It is instead a brief account of the local history of Bokhārā from pre-Islamic times to the time of the author under the Sāmānids. The book is written in simple language. It provides information about the events

67 Dowlatshāh-e Samarqandi, 2006, p. 35.

68 Rezāiyān, 2000, pp. 16–21.

69 Narshakhi, 1984, p. 6.

70 Narshakhi, 1984, pp. 12, 16. It drew on several sources, including Mohammad ibn Sāleh al-Leysi and Abol Hasan Meydāni (ibid., p. 180).



in Bokhārā under the Sāmānids and the relationship between Iranian bureaucrats and Turkish military men.

### *Tārikh-e Beyhaq* (563 AH/1167 AD)

*Tārikh-e Beyhaq* by Zahir al-Din ‘Ali ibn Zeyd Beyhaqi, known as Ibn Fondoq (d. 565 AH/1169 AD), a prominent scholar of the Saljuqs, is the local history of Beyhaq in Khorāsān. It examines the historical geography of Beyhaq, the geography of its cities and villages,<sup>71</sup> and the life of prominent intellectuals, especially religious scholars, in lively rhyming prose.<sup>72</sup> One of the main reasons for the significance of *Tārikh-e Beyhaq* is that it draws upon primary sources, many of which do not exist any longer.<sup>73</sup> It contains information about what the author witnessed. Ibn Fondoq’s attention to the religious and philosophical structural resources and rules of the Saljuqs provide us with precious information about their society.

### *Saljuqnāma* (571–590 AH/1175–1194 AD)

The oldest dynastic history of the Saljuqs still available today is the work of Zahir al-Din Neyshāburi (d. 582 AH/1186 AD), a prominent figure in the court of the Saljuqs.<sup>74</sup> It is considered the fundamental source from which other comparable histories are derived.<sup>75</sup> Zahir al-Din Neyshāburi wrote the history of the Saljuqs from the rise of Toghrol I (r. 429–442 AH/1037–1063 AD), the founder of the Saljuq dynastic power, until the death of Mo‘ez al-Din Arsalān (d. 555 AH/1160 AD) and the rise of Toghrol III to the throne (r. 571–590 AH/1175–1194 AD).<sup>76</sup> In 599 AH/1203 AD, Abu Hāmed Mohammad

71 Ibn Fondoq, 2011, p. 26.

72 Ibid., pp. 22–25; Meisami, 1999, p. 209.

73 Some of these works are *Ketāb-i Beyhaq* by Ibn Fondoq (‘Abdol Karim Rāfē’i Qazvini, 1997, p. 22), *Tārikh-e Neyshābur* by Hākem Neyshāburi (d. 405 AH/1014 AD), the works of Abol Qāsem Ka’bi Balkhi (d. 319 AH/931 AD) on the history of Khorāsān, specifically Neyshābur (Ibn Fondoq, 2011, pp. 154, 156, 225), *Tārikh-e Neyshābur* by Ahmad Qāzi (ibid., p. 21), *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi* (ibid., p. 175), *Mazid al-Tārikh* by Abol Hasan Mohammad ibn Soleymān (ibid., pp. 132–133), *Tārikh-e Yamini* by Mohammad ibn ‘Abdol Jabbār ‘Otbi, and *Tārikh-e Marv* by Abol ‘Abbās Ma’dani (ibid., pp. 20, 26, 87, 93, 176, 227).

74 Zahir al-Din was in the service of Soltān Ma’sud b. Mohammad (1133–1152) as the tutor to two Saljuq princes, which included Mas’ud’s nephew of Arsalān b. Toghrol (1176) (Melville, 2012, p. 150).

75 Cahen, 1962, p. 73.

76 He wrote his book after the accession of Toghrol b. Arsalān (1176) and before the death of Atābak Jahān Pahlevān (1186) (Rāvandi, 2011, pp. 64–65).



ibn Ebrāhīm wrote the last chapter of the book and ended it with the death of Toghrōl III, the last Saljuq soltān. Ismā‘il Afshar edited and published the book in 1953.<sup>77</sup>

*Saljuqnāma* is written in nonrhetorical and straightforward language. It is a relatively brief text and likely to be “regarded as disappointing” by anyone looking for substantive historical information.<sup>78</sup> However, since it is the first Persian historical work of the Saljuq era with an analytical view of historical events, considering the scarcity of historical works under the Saljuqs, this book’s real importance continues to stand.<sup>79</sup> *Saljuqnāma* provides us with information about the social changes of the Saljuqs, the status of military men in their political structure, and the fruitless attempts of bureaucrats to reconcile military men with the civil structures.

### *Tārikh al-Vozarā* (584 AH/1188 AD)

*Tārikh Vozarā* by Sharaf al-Din Abu Nasr Anushirvān ibn Khāled Fini Kāshāni (459–533 AH/1066–1138 AD), the vizier of Caliph al-Mostarshed Bellāh. ‘Emād al-Din Kāteb Esfahāni (d. 597 AH/1200 AD) translated the book into Arabic in 597 AH/1200 AD and Bondāri Esfahāni summarized it in 623 AH/1226 AD and named it *Tārikh-e Dowlat-e al-Saljuq*. It constitutes the history of the Saljuq viziers in elegant figurative language, full of similes and metaphors.<sup>80</sup> It was edited by Mohammad Taqi Dāneshpajuh and published with the name *Tārikh al-Vozarā*.<sup>81</sup> This book gives us rich information about the power structure of the bureaucrats under the Saljuqs and the serious challenges the agents of this power structure faced.

### *‘Aqd al-‘Olā lel-Mowqef al-‘Alā* (584 AH/1188 AD)

*‘Aqd al-‘Olā lel-Mowqef al-‘Alā* was composed by Afzal al-Din Abu Hāmed Ahmad ibn Hamid Kermāni in the late Saljuq period in 584 AH/1188 AD. Afzal dedicates his book to the Ghoz conqueror Kermān Malek Dinar (r.

77 It was believed to be irrevocably lost, but Ismā‘il Afshār discovered an incomplete manuscript of it within the book *Tārikh-e Gozida* and a complete copy of it within *Zobdat al-Tavārikh* by Abol Qāsem Kashāni and after comparing them with yet another copy, published *Saljuqnāma* in 1953 (Zahiri Neyshāburi, 2011a, p. 8; Cahen, 1962, p. 73; Meisami, 1999, p. 229).

78 Morton, 2004, p. 30.

79 Cahen, 1962, p. 289.

80 Abol Rajā‘e Qomi, 1984, p. 16.

81 Ibid., p. 14.





582–591 AH/1186–1194 AD).<sup>82</sup> It was edited and published by ‘Ali Mohammad ‘Āmeri Nā’ieni in 1932. During the uprisings of the Saljuqs, Afzal wrote three other works, including *Badaye’ al-Zamān fi Vaqāye’-e Kermān* and *‘Aqd al-‘Alā lel Mowqef al-‘Alā*.<sup>83</sup> In *‘Aqd al-‘Olā lel-Mowqef al-‘Alā*, Afzal, using rhetorical literary language, criticizes the chaos-creating measures of the rulers in Kermān. It examines in detail the social changes caused by the arrival of the Turks in the political structure of Iran during the late Saljuq period.

### *Rāhat al-Sodur va Āyat al-Sorur* (599 AH/1202 AD)

Mohammad ibn ‘Ali Rāvandi, the scribe of the Saljuq, wrote *Rāhat al-Sodur va Āyat al-Sorur* in 599–603 AH/1202–1206 AD and dedicated it to Qiyās al-Dīn Key Khosrow ibn Qalaj Arsalān-e Saljuqi (r. 601–607 AH/1204–1210 AD).<sup>84</sup> It covers the history of the Saljuqs in Jebāl from the beginning until the collapse of the dynasty in Ray by the Khwārazmshāhi (469–628 AH/1077–1231 AD). One of the main features of this book is its focus on the *atābaks* (governors) of Iraq and Azarbāijān. Rāvandi draws on *Saljuqnāma* by Zahir al-Dīn Neyshāburi.<sup>85</sup> It contains a chapter on nonhistorical topics that form an appendix to the history in an excessively rhetorical language.<sup>86</sup> This study examines *Rāhat al-Sodur* to learn about the social changes occurring under the Saljuqs and the Khwārazmshāhi. The author’s attention to the religious and thought structures in the late Saljuq period provides valuable information about the social changes of this era.

### *Tārikh-e Yamini* (603 AH/1206 AD)

*Tārikh-e Yamini* by ‘Otbi includes the circumstances of the late Sāmānids and reaches the time of Soltān Mahmud. He primarily details the Ghaznavid campaigns in India, the history of the dynasties of the Ziyārids, the Simjurids, the Khāniāns, the Fariqunids, the Ghurids, and the Khwārazmshāhi.<sup>87</sup> Encouraged by the vizier Abol Qāsem ‘Ali ibn Abi Hanifa, Nāseh ibn Zafar ibn Sa’d Jorfādeqāni, a Saljuq scribe, translated it into Persian in 603 AH/1206

82 Meisami, 1999, p. 234.

83 Afzal Kermāni, 1977, p. 5.  
Rāvandi, 2011, p. 15.

84 Ibid.

85 Melville, 2012, p. 247; Meisami, 1999, p. 238.

86 Meisami, 1999, p. 238.

87 Rāvandi, 2012, pp. 12–13.



AD.<sup>88</sup> Jorfādeqāni generally follows ‘Otbi’s elegant rhetorical language, although he tries not to conceal the book’s purpose and meaning with excessive ornament.<sup>89</sup> *Tārikh-e Yamini* examines the social changes under the Ghaznavids and the Saljuqs. The author’s attention to the formation of the Ghaznavids by military agents is incredibly useful for this study.

***Tārikh-e Afzal or Badāye‘ al-Zamān fi Vaqāye‘-e Kermān (606 AH/1209 AD)***

*Tārikh-e Afzal or Badāye‘ al-Zamān fi Vaqāye‘-e Kermān* by Afzal al-Din Kermāni in 606 AH/1209 AD covers the history of the Saljuqs in Jebāl, Khorāsān, and, especially, the history of Kermān under the Saljuqs until the time of Malek Dinār, the Qoz ruler (d. 590 AH/1194 AD). Mehdi Bayāni edited it in 1947.<sup>90</sup> The role of Turkish amirs in the political structure of Iran and especially in Kermān is one of the main topics of this book.

***Tārikh-e Tabarestān (613 AH/1216 AD)***

*Tārikh-e Tabarestān* by Mohammad ibn Hasan, known as Ibn Esfandiyār (d. 613 AH/1216 AD), is the oldest local history of Tabarestān.<sup>91</sup> It describes the formation of the power of the ‘Alawites in Tabarestān by Hasan ibn Zeyd (d. 270 AH/880 AD) and his descendants.<sup>92</sup> It was written in 613 AH/1216 AD using rhetorical language. *Tārikh-e Tabarestān* provides us with useful information on the uprising of Iranian agents, including Bābak, Māziyār, and Afshin, against the ‘Abbāsids and the formation of the ‘Alawites, the first Shi‘ite power structure in Iran.

***Nafsat al-Masdur (632 AH/1234 AD)***

*Nafsat al-Masdur* by Nasavi Khorandezi is the tragic biography of the author, the scribe of Soltān Jalāl al-Din Mengoberni (r. 617–628 AH/1220–1230 AD),<sup>93</sup>

88 Jorfādeqāni, 2003, p. 10; Bahār, 2003, vol. 2, pp. 387–388; Meisami, 1999, p. 238.

89 Jorfādeqāni, 2003, pp. 10–11.

90 Afzal Kermāni, 1947, p. 4.

91 Ibn Esfandiyār, 2011, vol. 1, p. 5.

92 Ibn Esfandiyār draws on *Tārikh-e Tājī* by Abu Eshāq Ebrāhim ibn Helāl Sābi and *Al-Ifadā fi Tārikh-e al-A‘emat al-Sādāt* by Abu Tāleb Yahyā ibn Hosseyn Hārūni (d. 424 AH/1033 AD) (ibid., p. 86).

93 Nasavi came from a prominent family in Khorāsān where they owned the Khorandez castle in Zeydar, one of the districts of Nesā (Nasavi, 2006, p. 45).



the last Khwārazmshāhi soltān, as he accompanied the soltān in his last campaign against his local rivals as well as the Mongols.<sup>94</sup> The book was written in 632 AH/1234 AD in figurative rhetorical language, full of Qorʾān verses, Hādith, and Persian and Arabic verses.<sup>95</sup> This book introduces us to social changes under the Khwārazmshāhi and early Mongols. The transformation of the Khwārazmshāhi from a local group to a vast empire and the measures taken by Soltān Mohammad (r. 596–617 AH/1199–1220 AD) and Soltān Jalāl al-Din to fight the Mongol invasions are the issues scrutinized by Nasavi.

### *Sirat-e Jalāl al-Din Mengoberni* (639 AH/1241 AD)

*Sirat-e Jalāl al-Din Mengoberni* by Nasavi Khorandezī is the primary source for the history of the Khwārazmshāhi dynasty (469–628 AH/1077–1231 AD) under the last years of the rule of Soltān Mohammad (r. 596–617 AH/1200–1220 AD) and the reign of Soltān Jalāl al-Din (r. 617–628 AH/1220–1231 AD). An anonymous person translated *Sirat-e Jalāl al-Din* into very expressive Persian language in the late thirteenth century AD. Compared to the Arabic text, the Persian translation omits some parts that contain Nasavi's autobiography.<sup>96</sup> In 1891, O. Houdas found a copy of the work's original Arabic text, which was copied and published.<sup>97</sup> In 1953, Hāfez Hamdi re-edited the same manuscript and published it in Egypt. Mojtabā Minovi found a single manuscript of the book in the personal library of Khalil Yenānj, a professor of history at the University of Istanbul, and edited and published it in 1966.<sup>98</sup> The vivid analytical report of Nasavi from events he witnessed amplifies the unique value of his work.<sup>99</sup> *Sirat-e Jalāl al-Din* helped us learn about social changes in the late Khwārazmshāhi and early Mongol eras. The development of the Khwārazmshāhi from a local dynasty to an empire in the Islamic world and its conflicts with the ʿAbbāsids before the Mongol invasions are the intriguing subjects of this book.

94 Nasavi draws on *Tārikh-e Yamini* and its translation, *Monsha'ūt-e Badi' al-Zamān Hamedāni, Maqālāt-e Hariri*, and *Kelīla and Demna* (Nasavi, 2006, p. 19).

95 Nasavi, 1987, p. 13.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

97 Nasavi, 1987, p. 9.

98 Nasavi, 1987, pp. 8–9.

99 Ibn Asir is one of the primary sources that Nasavi draws on to write his book (Nasavi, 1987, p. 34). Ibn Khaldun and Abol al-Fadā' referred to this work to complete their chapters on the Khwārazmshāh (Nasavi, 1987, p. 9).



### *Tabaqāt-e Nāseri* (658 AH/1259 AD)

*Tabaqāt-e Nāseri* was written by Menhāj al-Serāj Jowzjāni (d. 589 AH/1193 AD) in 658 AH/1259 AD. He served Nāser al-Din Mahmud, one of the local rulers of Ghur in present-day Afghanistan, so Minhaj al-Siraj Jowzjāni called his book *Tabaqāt-e Nāseri*. The book is a general history of the lives of prophets, kings, caliphs, and rulers of dynasties in Muslim territories up to the Mongol invasions of Iran and Baghdad. *Tabaqāt-e Nāseri* examines the reign of the Ghurids, the soltāns of India, and the Mongols, which the author either witnessed or obtained quotes about from reliable oral and written sources.<sup>100</sup> In this study, *Tabaqāt-e Nāseri* is used to contribute to an analysis of social changes from the formation of the Tāherids to the collapse of the ‘Abbāsids. The historian’s attention to social changes under the Mongols opens new windows for us to see the social changes of Iran under the Khwārazmshāhi and Mongols.

### *Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā* (651–658 AH/1253–1259 AD)

‘Atā Malek Joveyni, an outstanding figure in the time of the Mongols, wrote *Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā* in 650–658 AH/1252–1259 AD. He was revered among the Mongols, particularly Hulegu Khān (615–663 AH/1218–1264 AD). Following the capture of Baghdad in 656 AH/1258 AD, Hulegu appointed Joveyni as the governor of all the territories that the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs had directly held.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, he witnessed many significant events under the Mongols. He had access to the archives of many libraries, including that of the Ismā‘īlis, that the Mongols destroyed.<sup>102</sup>

*Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā* covers the history of the Khwārazmshāhi and the rise of the Mongols and their invasions of Islamic territories until the fall of the Ismā‘īlis (483–654 AH/1090–1256 AD). It is divided into three sections or volumes: 1) the rise and career of Genghis Khan and his successors until the deaths of Geuk (644–647 AH/1246–1249 AD) and Jaghatāi (d. 640 AH/1243 AD); 2) the history of the Khwārazmshāhi dynasty (491–616 AH/1097–1219 AD); and 3) the history of other khāns of the Mongols to the reign of Hulegu

100 Jowzjāni, 1984, vol. 1, p. 15. 134. Some of Jowzjāni’s sources are *Tārikh-e Volāt-e Khorāsān*, *Takmelat al-Latāyef*, *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi*, *Ehdās al-Zamān* by ‘Abdollah ibn ‘Abdol Rahmān Sheybāni, *Sonan-e Abu Dāvud Sajestāni* by Soleymān ibn al-Ash‘as-e Sajestāni, *Al-Bad’ va al-Tārikh* by Maqdasi, *Tārikh-e Yamīni* by ‘Otbī, *Nasabnāma-ye Ghuriyān* by Fakhr al-Din Mobārakhshāh, *Tārikh-e ibn-Heysam* by Nabi, and *Aqāni* by Abu Eshāq Museli (Jowzjāni, 1984, vol. 2, p. 285).

101 Joveyni, 2006, vol. 1, p. 54; tr., Juvaini, 1997, pp. xxx–xxxvii.

102 Joveyni, 2006, vol. 1, pp. 12, 101.



Khān and his conquests of the castles of the Ismā‘ili in Khorāsān and Jebāl.<sup>103</sup> Although completed in 658 AH/1259 AD, *Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā* does not cover the collapse of Baghdad, which had occurred two years previously. It seems that he did not want to end his book with the decline of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, which had been honored by Sunni Muslims like Joveyni. Joveyni writes his book in an elegant figurative language and decorates it with Qor’ān verses, Hādith, and Persian and Arabic verses.<sup>104</sup>

*Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā* was particularly useful for learning about the social changes of the Khwārazmshāhi and Mongols in Iran. It provides a detailed introduction to Mongol thinking, their political, military, and religious structural resources, and their agents and how they clashed with Iranian structures. *Tārikh-e Jahān-goshā* is a precious source of social change in medieval Iran.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp. 31–54.

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