
**Ancient Persian Culture's Reflection in the Era of the Ghurid Dynasty
according to Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh***

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Ghurids was a local dynasty in Eastern Afghanistan which played a significant role in the political-military incidents of Khorasan and India during the 6th century A.H. The dynasty has been overlooked in cultural terms to date as a result of the lack of references. The only remaining valuable reference on this period is the book titled, *Tabaqaat* by Naseri Jowzjaani; amidst various political incidents, he points out a number of conventions and beliefs, the roots of which should be explored in the pre-Islam Persian culture. Given Jowzjaani's familiarity of Ferdowsi as well as the present evidence in the Ghurid's culture, it appears that they have been culturally influenced by Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. The purpose of this study is to identify the mental-cultural origins of the Ghurids and examine traditions, beliefs, and thoughts which are deeply rooted in the Persian culture and particularly, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. To this aim, it is attempted to provide answers to the following questions: To what extent the Ghurids were familiar with the Persian mythology? What are the cultural components reflected from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* in the Ghurid's culture?

2. Review of Literature

The Ghurids are somehow unknown due to lack of references; there has been no studies conducted on this dynasty in terms of cultural aspects. One of the valuable books written about this dynasty is titled, *The History of the Ghurids* by Foroughi Abri. However, the author does not point out the reflection of the ancient Persian culture in the history of the Ghurid's based on Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. In addition, in his book, *The Ghurids*, Atigh Allah Pezhvak addresses the political history of the Ghurids. In this book, he speaks of the

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Ghurids' familiarity with *Shahnameh*, mentioning how it was read by Ala'aldin Hussein Jahansouz when "Qazneh" was conquered. Nevertheless, he does not pay sufficient attention to the Ghurid culture. In another book titled, "The Political and Military History of the Ghurid House", Mahdi Roshanzamir addressed the political and military history of the dynasty without focusing on their culture.

3. Method

The present inquiry is a historical study conducted using the descriptive-analytical approach as well as referring to library references such as Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and *Tabaqaat* by Naseri Jowzjaani.

4. Results and Discussion

The Ghurid dynasty was an Islamic local Persian house in the sixth century A.H., overlooked in terms of cultural aspects within the Persian history. The main reference of the dynasty is the book, *Tabaqaat* by Naseri Jowzjaani. As a historian living amongst the Ghurids' royal court, Jowzjaani has, to some extent, been able to save the dynasty from being forgotten in the course of history by writing this book. The evidence present in his book suggest that Jowzjaani was perfectly familiar with both Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and the ancient Persian history. Among political discussions, he points out a number of beliefs and thoughts which are comparable to those present in *Shahnameh*. This study was conducted through a comparative approach between Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and *Tabaqaat* by Naseri Jowzjaani. The evidence suggest that there are 11 points of cultural similarities between the Ghurids' culture and Persians' beliefs, reflected in *Shahnameh*. These similarities include name and origins, political views (*Farra-shahi*, *Manzar behi*, the King on the move, the King's behavior transforming the natural system, etc.), the seven-day ceremonies, the seven-day mourning rituals, taunting in battlefield, etc.

5. Conclusion

As a reference with numerous beliefs and Persian subcultures, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* is a valuable treasure to seek knowledge on the cultural roots of the Ghurids. Conducted using the comparative approach, this study identified 11 points of similarity between the Ghurid culture in the sixth century and ancient Persians according to Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* which are as follows: 1. The name "Sam" has been repeated numerous times in the Ghurids' history. There are also names such as *Zaal Raz*, *Bahram*, and *Fereydown* in their mythology. 2. The Ghurids believe their origins to be from *Zahhak*; in their

family tree, there are names such as *Nariman*, *Fereydoun*, *Bastaam*, and *Siamak*. 3. The Ghurids were influenced by the Persian culture in their political views. Similar to the beliefs reflected in *Shahnameh*, they also believed that if a king is just or a tyrant, there would be changes in the natural system. 4. As there are many instances of “*farra-shahi*” or “*farra-shaahanshahi*” (divine kingship, godlike kings) to describe heroes or kings in *Shahnameh*, Jowzjaani also believed that the Ghurid Kings were equipped with “*farra-shahi*” as well.

Keywords: Ancient Persia, Culture, Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*, *Tabaqaat* by Naseri Jowsjaani, The Ghurids.

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