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A Study of the Cultural and Literary Situation of the Ghurid Period

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ABSTRACT

The cultural and literary history of Islamic Khorasan is shaped by the contributions of various ruling dynasties, scholars, poets, and intellectuals. The Ghurid period holds particular significance in this history, especially for its cultural and literary heritage. This study examined the cultural and literary situation of the Ghurid period, focusing on scholarly activity, poetry, and prose literature during Ghurid rule. The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach, relying on library research and the examination of historical and literary sources related to Ghor. The results showed that the Ghurid period witnessed considerable cultural and literary activity, including scholarly pursuits, poetry, and prose writing. They also suggest that the literary activities of the period extended beyond the region and were connected to wider cultural developments across Khorasan and northern India. In addition to written sources, architectural remains provide further insight into the cultural heritage of the period. The study contributes to a better understanding of the Ghurids' cultural and literary role in the history of Islamic Khorasan, particularly in Ghor, where these aspects of their history have received comparatively little scholarly attention. It also provides a basis for further research into the literary works and intellectual figures of the period.

KEYWORDS: *Cultural History, Ghor, Ghurid Period, Khorasan, Literary History.*

Introduction

Ghor, which is believed to have its roots in the Avesta, is a mountainous region whose towering peaks have long served as natural barriers protecting the region from external threats (Ghori, 2000). Amir Shansab is regarded as the earliest ruler of the Ghurid dynasty and is said to have embraced Islam during the caliphate of Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam (Alokozay, 2019). Its mountainous and rugged terrain has historically helped shield the region from foreign invasions, including those of the Mongols. The Minaret of Jam, situated in the heart of the Jam Valley, remains one of the region's most remarkable historical landmarks. The Ghurid dynasty was among the prominent scholarly and cultural powers of medieval Islamic Khorasan.

Its architectural legacy is evident in several remarkable monuments, including the Minaret of Jam, which Mustamand Ghori (2008) describes as one of the seven wonders of the world, the Grand Mosque of Herat, where Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad Ghuri is buried, and the Qutb Minar in Delhi. These monuments bear witness to Ghurid architectural achievements and the expansion of Ghurid influence into the Indian subcontinent (Ghori, 2000).

Despite its rich historical and cultural heritage, Ghor has received relatively little attention from researchers. Its mountainous landscape and remote valleys have made access to many parts of the region difficult, particularly for those conducting historical and cultural research. These difficulties, along with limited

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academic facilities and research resources, have limited opportunities for a systematic study of the region's past study. Moreover, most studies of the Ghurid dynasty have focused on its political and military history, with considerably less attention given to its cultural, scholarly, and literary life. This is particularly evident in Ghor Province, where these aspects of the Ghurid period remain largely unexplored. To address this gap, the present study examines the cultural and literary situation of the Ghurid period, focusing on scholarly activities, literary works, and prominent poets and intellectuals of the dynasty within the historical context of Ghor and Islamic Khorasan.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on the cultural and literary dimensions of Ghurid history, which have received relatively little scholarly attention. By bringing together information on the scholars, poets, literary works, and cultural activities of the period, the study seeks to provide a broader understanding of the Ghurids' literary and cultural contributions. It may also contribute to the preservation and documentation of an important part of Ghor's historical heritage and serve as a useful reference for future research on the subject.

Literature Review

The history of Ghor and the Ghurid dynasty has been discussed in various historical and literary sources, providing valuable information about the region's political, social, and cultural development. References to Ghor and the Ghurids appear in both contemporary and later works, including the poetry of Sultan Ala al-Din Ghuri Jahansoz, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* by Minhaj Siraj Jawzjani, *Gulistan by Saadi*, and *Chahar Maqala* (*Four Essays*) by Nizami Aruzi. These works offer different perspectives on the historical and literary significance of Ghor and provide useful material for understanding the period. The scholarly writings of Fakhruddin Razi also form part of the broader intellectual context of the period. In addition to these classical sources, several modern publications have examined the history of Ghor and the Ghurid dynasty. However, the extent to which they address the dynasty's cultural and literary activities differs. The following works are particularly relevant to the present study.

The first is *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, which is not only an important work from a historical perspective but also from a literary one. It provides a valuable account of the Ghurids, particularly the period following the Mongol invasion (Jawzjani, 2012). Although the work contributes to understanding the dynasty's history, it does not provide a comprehensive account of its cultural and literary activities. Another relevant work is *Tarikh-e Mukhtasar-e Ghurian* (A Concise History of the Ghurids) by Mustamand Ghori (2008), which discusses the Ghurid dynasty from its early history to more recent periods. Along with the previously mentioned sources, this work provides useful historical background for the present study. However, it does not fully address the cultural and literary contributions of the Ghurids, which require further scholarly examination. In addition, a more recent work is *Shenasnameh-ye Ghor* (A Profile of Ghor Province), compiled by a group of Ghori writers. It provides information on the region's social, political, and historical conditions (Group of Writers, 2019). However, they overlooked the historical and cultural significance of the Minaret of Jam, one of the most significant monuments of Ghurid architecture and the world's second-largest historical brick minaret. Instead, they included a carpet-map representation that associates Ghor with the *"Chahar Aimaq"* division, rather than highlighting its distinct historical and cultural identity. Similarly, *Ghor and Gharjistan* by Saqee (2024a) discusses the Gharcha lineage and the region of Gharjistan. The author describes the region as extending from Ghor and Ghalmin, the place of origin of the Gharcha kings, to the borders of Bamiyan and the Ghorband Valley. Although this information is not supported by reliable historical evidence, the work provides useful background information on the region and its past. Furthermore, *Tazkira-ye Sho'ara-ye Ghor* (Biographical Anthology of Ghori Poets) by Mowahid Rahimi (2011), which classifies Ghori poets into three groups: poets of the early Ghurid period, deceased classical poets, and contemporary living poets. It also includes selected examples of their poetry. This work is useful for documenting the region's poetic heritage; however, it is important to distinguish poets of the Ghurid period from those of later generations when examining the literary

contributions of the dynasty. Alongside these publications, *Tarikh-e Ghurian* (The History of the Ghurids), published in Iran, offers an account of the Ghurid dynasty (Foroughi, 2008). According to some sources, the book does not offer an in-depth study of the Ghurids; rather, it mainly recounts the history of the Ghurids and their dynasty. Nevertheless, it provides an external perspective on the Ghurids, making it a valuable source for understanding their history.

In addition to these books, other publications, including articles and academic studies, also shed light on the history and cultural heritage of Ghor. Although these works offer useful historical and cultural information, the literature and cultural life of the Ghurids have not been examined in depth as a distinct subject of study. This gap highlights the need for a more systematic examination of the subject, which the current study seeks to provide.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-analytical approach and relied mainly on library research. The materials examined included both primary and secondary sources, such as historical chronicles, biographical works, literary texts, and contemporary scholarly publications related to Ghor and the Ghurid period. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their contribution to understanding the region's historical, cultural, and literary heritage.

The study involved three stages. First, it examined the historical background of Ghor and the emergence and development of the Ghurid dynasty to provide the historical context for the study. Second, it explored the cultural and intellectual life of the Ghurid period, focusing on surviving architectural monuments, scholarly activities, and prominent intellectual figures. Third, it examined the literary heritage of the period through historical and biographical accounts, literary sources, and surviving prose and poetic works, with particular attention to writers and poets associated with the Ghurid courts and their wider cultural environment.

For data analysis, the collected materials were examined within their historical and literary contexts. Historical and biographical accounts were used to establish the background and contributions of prominent figures, while literary texts and selected poetic samples were examined in terms of their authorship, themes, and literary features. The study also distinguished between figures and works belonging to the Ghurid period and those from earlier or later periods to maintain chronological accuracy. This approach provided a clearer understanding of the cultural and literary life of the Ghurid period within its historical context.

Results

An Introduction to the Historical Background of Ghor and the Lineage of the Ghurids

Present-day Ghor, whose capital is the city of Firozkoh (Chaghcharan), has undergone significant geographical changes throughout history. It is historical territory and population used to be considerably larger than those of the present-day province. Historical Ghor actually encompassed the region between Herat and Ghazni, including the mountainous valleys of the Safid Koh and Koh-e Baba ranges. In earlier centuries, this region served as the center of the Shansabani dynasty, a lineage of local rulers and princes who exercised independent authority over the mountainous region, with Firozkoh as its capital (Hesarian, 2012a). Minhaj al-Siraj Jawzjani (2012), records Bistam as the first ruler of Ghor in *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*. He describes him as a descendant of Zahhak who served as the governor of India during his reign. Following Zahhak's defeat by Fereydun, the latter dispatched an army to India. Unable to withstand the invading forces, Bistam fled towards the mountainous regions of Bamiyan. As the army continued its pursuit, he sought refuge in the fortified strongholds of Ghor and eventually settled at the foot of Mount Zarmurgh. Jawzjani further elaborates on this in *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*:

> Bistam ruled the kingdom of India under Zahhak. He was one of Zahhak's descendants, namely Bistam ibn Mashhar ibn Nariman ibn Afridun ibn Mirsas ... ibn Zahhak. When Zahhak was captured, Fereydun sent

> an army to take control of India. Bistam was unable to resist Fereydun's forces and retreated to the mountains of Shaqnan and Bamiyan, where he settled. Later, Fereydun's army was again sent in pursuit of him. Bistam had previously visited the mountains of Ghor several times while hunting and travelling through the regions of Shaqnan and Takharistan. Because of its abundance of springs, the area was known as 'Hazar Chashma' (the Land of a Thousand Springs). As a result of Fereydun's pursuit, Bistam came to Ghor and chose to settle at the foot of Mount Zarmurgh (Jawzjani, 2012, p. 344).

Mahmood also mentions Bistam as the first ruler of Ghor in his book *Tarikh-e Ghurian* (The History of the Ghurids):

کجا پشت پیل آوریدی به زیر سر غوریان بود بسطام شیر

(Mahmood, 2007, p. 76)

Bistam the Lion, lord of Ghor's land,
Before his strength, no elephant could stand.

However, there is no general agreement on the origin and lineage of the Ghurids. Different researchers and writers have put forward various views on this subject. For instance, Abdul Hai Habibi, traces their origins to the Suri tribe and considers them remnants of the Saka people. Historical sources also refer to them by titles such as Ghurshahan (Kings of Ghor), Gharjshahan (Kings of Gharjistan), and Shahran-e Gharjistan (Kings of Gharjistan) (Habibi, as cited in Heydari, 2014). *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* describes the Ghurids as being of Arab origin. Jawzjani (2012, as cited in Mahmood, 2007, p. 77) states: "In the land of Ghor, their origin was from an Arab tribe, and they were raised and brought up in the foothills and mountainous regions."

Some writers have described the Ghurids as Turks or linked them to the Char Aimaq and Hazaras. In a recent study, Saqee (2024b), a Ghori writer a researcher at the University of Oxford, examined the historical identity and heritage of the Ghurids. Drawing on historical sources, the main points of his argument are summarized below.

If briefly define who was historically referred to as "Tajik" in this region after Islam, four main characteristics can be identified:

1. They are Farsi-speakers.
2. They are Khorasani or Iranian in origin.
3. They are settled populations living in urban or rural areas, in contrast to nomadic groups.
4. They are people of the pen and letters, engaged in literary, administrative, and urban professional activities.

In early historical sources, three terms are used to describe Ghori identity: Suri, Ghor, and Tajik, with no other terms mentioned. The first two terms are not central to the present study, as they are clear. Therefore, the focus is placed on the term "Tajik" through an examination of classical sources. Jawzjani, narrating from a Ghurid prince known by the title Khusraw-e Ghor, writes:

> He returned to Ghor from the vicinity of Taliqan with the permission of Genghis Khan. The following account was heard from him: … He said that when we left the presence of Genghis Khan… two Mongols were brought who had been asleep during the night… Aqalan turned to both Mongols and asked, "Were you asleep?" They both admitted that they were. I was astonished. Aqalan then said, "Why are you surprised? You are Tajiks; such is your habit to lie. Even if the Mongols had a thousand lives, they would choose death over lying, whereas lying is the habit of you Tajiks. It is because of such traits that God has sent His punishment upon you (Jawzjani, 2010, pp. 347–375).

A similar reference to the term appears in Saifi Heravi's account. Describing the killing of the Mongol commander Daneshmand Bahadur, one of Uljeitu Sultan's leading commanders, by Jamaluddin Muhammad Sam at the citadel of Herat, Saifi writes:

> Daneshmand Bahadur… entered the fortress with one hundred and eighty men. Jamaluddin Muhammad Sam rushed forward and performed the rites of respect and honor… Daneshmand Bahadur angrily addressed him: 'O foolish Tajik enemy! How dare you display such boldness and composure before me? Your king, despite all his grandeur and majesty, did not disobey my words… and submitted to the command of the just ruler, Sultan Uljeitu… Yet you, along with a few ignorant Tajiks, have become proud of your power and taken refuge in this fortress, joining the ranks of those who rebel against the world-ruling king… (Saifi Heravi, 2006, p. 508).

Similarly, Zamchi Esfezari, in *Rawzat al-Jannat fi Awsaaf Madinatul Herat*, describes the Mongol military campaign during the reign of Malek Mu'izzuddin Husayn Kart of Ghor. He writes, "Malek Mu'izzuddin Husayn declared independence and organized royal ceremonies and state affairs… Amir Gharghan ordered, "What power does a Tajik have to claim kingship and rebel against the command of Genghis Khan?" (Zamchi Esfezari, 1995, p. 13). Abru also recounts these events, noting that Malek Mu'izzuddin constructed a wall along the eastern and northern sides of Herat, from Boy-e Morgh to Kahdistan. Amir Qazaqan arrived with an organized army from the Balashtan valley and advanced into Kahdistan. The next day, his men climbed a high hill and observed the army of the king from there. He then said, "These Tajiks do not know the art of warfare" (Abru, 2016, pp. 223–226).

The Ghurid Empire

In fact, Ala al-Din Husayn Ghuri may be regarded as the founder of the Ghurid dynasty, as Ghurid rule continued independently of the Ghaznavids and the Seljuks after his reign. However, it was during the reigns of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din and his brother, Mu'izz al-Din Sam, known as Shahab al-Din Ghuri, that the Ghurid Empire reached the peak of its power. Although the two brothers were very close to each other, they both possessed considerable natural ability and talent, strong leadership and command skills, an aptitude for state administration, a commitment to the well-being of their people, religious tolerance, and considerable political and military acumen. Sultan Ghiyath al-Din established a powerful state in Ghor, with territories extending from Khorasan to the Indian subcontinent. At its peak, the empire state rivaled the Khwarazmian Empire. He first defeated his uncle, Fakhruddin Masoud, and brought him under his authority in Bamiyan and Tukharistan. Then he seized the cities of Merv and Nishapur from the Khwarazmian rulers. Following these successes, al-Nasir, the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, formally recognized his rule. The sultan also forced Khusrow Shah, the Ghaznavid ruler, to flee toward Lahore and, in 569 AH, recaptured Ghazni from the Ghuzz, who had occupied the city. Finally, Khosrow Malik, the last Ghaznavid ruler, was captured in Lahore on the Indian subcontinent in 585 AH. He was subsequently imprisoned in Ghor and killed in 598 AH. Thus, the Ghurids brought the remaining Ghaznavid territories, including their Indian possessions, under their control. Moreover, Sultan Ghiyath al-Din had a powerful tribal army and enjoyed the support of the Tajik feudal nobility in Badakhshan and the territories extending to the Amu Darya. So with their support, the regions of Vakhsh, Chaghaniyan, Shighnan, Wakhan, and Badakhshan as a whole came under his administration. At that time, Ghor served as the political and cultural center of a vast realm encompassing Khorasan, Sistan, Baluchistan, Sindh, and Punjab, extending as far as Delhi. He died in Herat in 599 AH at the age of 63 and was buried beside the Grand Mosque of Herat, which had been built on his orders. His younger brother, Shahab al-Din Ghuri (538–602 AH), succeeded him and assumed power in Khorasan (Hesarian, 2012a).

During the reign of his elder brother, Ghiyath al-Din, Shahab al-Din Ghuri was responsible for administering the eastern territories of the Ghurid Empire and leading its military campaigns in India. In 571

AH, he chose Ghazni as his political and military base. He then conquered Sindh, Multan, and Lahore, wresting these territories from Ghaznavid control. Building on these victories, he extended Ghurid authority across northern India and appointed Qutbuddin Aibak, his slave, to govern his conquests in Indian territories. Under his rule, Ghurid forces conquered several territories across northern India, including Kannauj, Benares, and Nehrwala, while Bakhtiyar Khalji extended Ghurid authority into Bihar and Bengal, greatly expanding the empire's territory. He was eventually assassinated in 602 AH at Damik, near the Jhelum (or Nilab) River in present-day Punjab, by several Ismaili assailants. His body was then taken to Dehak, a village in the Kerman (present-day Kurram) region of Ghazni, where he was buried.

The sultan was known for being courageous, just, and devout ruler. His military campaigns in India have received considerable attention from historians, particularly when compared with those of Mahmud of Ghazni. Whereas Mahmud's Indian campaigns are often associated with the destruction of idols and the acquisition of war booty, those of Shahab al-Din's are portrayed as having a religious purpose, especially the spread of Islam and the revival of religious life. Following his conquests, he established a powerful and stable government in India, which continued after his death under the leadership of his Turkish military commanders and former slaves, including Qutbuddin Aibak, Nasiruddin Qabacha, and Iltutmish. His death marked a turning point that led to the weakening and eventual fragmentation of the Ghurid Empire. The empire eventually divided into three principal branches: the Firozkoh, Ghazni, and Indian dynasties. Meanwhile, Muhammad Khwarazm Shah emerged as a major rival of the Ghurids, and in 612 AH, Ala al-Din Muhammad Khwarazmi captured and killed the last Ghurid ruler of Ghor, bringing Ghurid rule to an end. The Khwarazmian Empire, too, later fell to the Mongol forces led by Genghis Khan. Another branch of the Ghurid family, the Kartids (Al-e Kart), later established control over a small part of the former Ghurid territories. In Herat, this dynasty ruled for approximately 140 years, from the seventh to the eighth century AH, until Timur brought its rule to an end (Hesarian, 2012a).

The Surviving Monuments of the Ghurid Dynasty

The surviving monuments and architectural remains of the Ghurid period constitute an important part of the historical and cultural heritage of the region. The remains of pre-Islamic monuments linked with the period of Fereydun Al-Sam and the Aryans also warrant further historical and archaeological investigation. During the Islamic period, various dynasties and local ruling powers, including the Al-Shansab, the Moeziya dynasty of India (the Ghulam Shahs or Mamluk period), the Shiran and Sharan Khaljis, and the Al-e Kart dynasty of Herat, contributed to the region's architectural and cultural legacy. These periods left behind numerous historical structures and monuments of considerable significance. Among the notable historical sites attributed to the Ghurid period and related dynasties are the Minaret of Jam, the historical capital of the Ghurids, Mandish Castle, Tulak Castle, Zahhak Castle, Ahangaran Castle, and Koshk Bahar in present-day Ghor; Bagh-e Eram in Zamin Dawar; Qutb Minar and the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque in Delhi; and the Grand Mosque of Herat, Ikhtiyaruddin Castle, Pul-e Malan, Takht-e Safar, and Hoz-e Malik in Herat. Other sites include the cities of Gholghola and Zahhak and Chehel Burj in Bamyan; Khisar Castle and Malkan Mosque in Farah; Ashpar Castle, Mir Hezar Castle, and Dar Castle in Faryab; and Kalvin Castle and Piwar (Fiwar) Castle in present-day Badghis. Together, these sites form an important part of the architectural and historical heritage of the Ghurid period and their dynasties (Group of Authors, 2019).

The Nature of Ghurids Literature and Culture

The Ghurid dynasty comprised two main branches, each ruling over distinct territories. The first was based in Firozkoh, where its rulers governed an independent kingdom and received the title of Sultan from the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad. They ruled between 544 to 612 AH. One of its most prominent rulers was Ala al-Din Husayn Ghuri, known as *Jahansuz* (the World Burner), who fought against Bahram Shah of Ghazni, defeated him, and

set fire to the city, reportedly burning it for seven days and nights. The second one governed Bamyan, Takharistan, and parts of central and northern Afghanistan. Historians refer to its leaders as the rulers of Bamyan or the Shahs of Takharistan. Despite the relatively short period of their political dominance, these rulers are credited with supporting scholars, poets, and scientists and encouraging intellectual and cultural activity. Their patronage contributed to dynasty's lasting reputation in the historical accounts of the period. Both the dynasties had rulers who were interested in literature, scholarship, and intellectual pursuits. As noted earlier, their courts, particularly those of Ghiyath al-Din Sam Ghuri and his brother Shahab al-Din, served as important centers of intellectual activity, attracting scholars and learned figures of the period. For instance, one member of the Ghurid court was Nizami Aruzi of Samarqand, who dedicated his work *Chahar Maqalah* (Majmaʿ al-Nawadir) to Husamuddin, a Ghurid prince. Likewise, Zikriya al-Razi, a scholar and orator of the period, was living in Herat and had strong ties with the courts of both of these two rulers. Other notable scholars included Abu Nasr Farahi, Ziauddin Heravi, and Qazi Minhaj al-Siraj Jawzjani, mentioned earlier (Ghori & Habibi Ghori, 2011).

The Ghurid rulers and princes were generally scholars, patrons of science, writers, and poets. The intellectual and cultural life of their period can be viewed as both an extension of and a continuation of certain cultural traditions established under the Ghaznavids. However, some historical accounts suggest that they were more accommodating than their Ghaznavid counterparts in their patronage of scholars and poets, irrespective of their religious affiliations. By contrast, the Ghaznavid rulers, particularly Mahmud of Ghazni, allowed religious biases to influence their patronage of poetry and literature. One account also refers to Abu Ali Sina's refusal to join his court and to the reported unfavorable treatment of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, the distinguished astronomer, mathematician, and scholar of the Islamic world, by Mahmud and his successors. Ala al-Din Husayn Ghuri Jahansuz also showed tolerance towards the Ismailis. He allowed Ismaili preachers to settle in Ghor during his reign and provided them with accommodation and positions. This practice, however, was not continued by his successors (Hesarian, 2012b).

Although their rule lasted for a relatively short period, their cultural and intellectual contributions extended beyond their time in power. According to Ghori and Habibi Ghori (2011), following the reigns of Mahmud Ghazni, Sultan Ibrahim, and Sanjar of the Seljuqs, the intellectual life of Khorasan gradually declined. The Ghurids once again kept the torch of knowledge burning in Ghor. However, this flourishing was short-lived, as even Ala al-Din Muhammad Khwarazm Shah, the most powerful ruler of his time, failed to defend Khorasan against the Mongol invasion led by Genghis Khan, resulting in the decline of intellectual life in the region (Ghori and Habibi Ghori, 2011). During the Ghurid golden period, the spread of Islam went hand in hand with the expansion of classical Farsi-Dari language and literature beyond Khorasan, reaching northern India and Delhi. After the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids carried forward India's seven-century-old Persian literary and linguistic tradition. As Hesarian (2012b) points out, this period also saw the rise of a new civilization known as the Khorasani-Indian civilization.

A branch of the Ghurid dynasty settled in India. Its descendants, known as the Guris, are currently living near the Qutb Minar in Delhi. Referring to Jawaharlal Nehru's observations, Abed Heydari writes that the arrival of Islam brought significant changes to Indian society and contributed to the revival of cultural and artistic life. He further notes that Indian art, which had been in decline, experienced a revival in northern India as artists and masters drew inspiration from new ideas introduced into society." He also emphasizes the Ghurids' contribution to this development, placing their role second only to that of the Ghaznavids in the spread of these influences in India (Heydari, 2014).

During this period, the centers of Farsi-Dari language and literature were no longer confined to Khorasan but had also spread to India, Sindh, Transoxiana, and other regions. In India, Mahmud Ghaznavi played an important role in promoting Islam and advancing Farsi-Dari language and culture. However, he and

his successors benefited more from India's material wealth than from its intellectual and cultural resources. When the Ghurids turned their attention to India under the leadership of Shahab al-Din, the people of the region were already somewhat familiar with Islam and Farsi-Dari literature. This familiarity enabled them to benefit more from India's intellectual and cultural resources than from its material wealth. The efforts of the Ghaznavids, Ghurids, and later the Timurids were among the factors that helped the language remain influential in India for nearly 700 years. During this period, the Indian style *(Sabk-e Hindi)*, one of the distinctive styles of Farsi-Dari literature, also emerged and developed in the region, contributing signicantly to the growth and flourishing of the Farsi-Dari language and literature (Mahmood, 2007).

Farsi Prose in the Ghurid Era

The prose of the Ghurid period shared many features with that of the Ghaznavid and Seljuk eras. These three dynasties ruled during the same period, each sought to conquer the territories of the others. As a result, their political, social, and cultural conditions had much in common. Writers of the period produced valuable works on a wide range of subjects, including religion, history, philosophy, science, mysticism, literature, and the arts. Although most of the works written by historians of this era were in Arabic, Farsi-Dari was also growing and flourishing. Scholars, intellectuals, and writers contributed to this development by producing numerous works in various fields of knowledge. The Ghurid conquests further helped spread language (Farsi) and literature as far as Delhi and northern India. During this period, Farsi-Dari prose reached a remarkable level of eloquence and refinement and gradually moved beyond its earlier, simpler form and developed into a more elaborate and ornate style, largely influenced by Arabic. As Arabic was widely read and highly regarded among educated readers, its influence on Farsi-Dari prose and poetry became increasingly evident, particularly through the growing use of Arabic vocabulary (Hesarian, 2012b).

Prominent Writers of the Ghurids Era

The period of independent Ghurid rulers began with Sultan Ala al-Din Ghuri in 543 AH, and continued until the reign of Ala al-Din Muhammad Ghori, who was overthrown by Muhammad Khwarazm Shah in 612 AH. The dynasty's independent rule lasted approximately 68 years, a relatively short period compared with those of Khorasani dynasties. Despite this brief duration, however this era nurtured many writers and scholars who left behind a considerable body of literary and scholarly works in both Arabic and Farsi. The following section introduces some of its most prominent writers of the period and their works (Hesarian, 2012b).

Aruzi Samarqandi and Chahar Maqala

Abul Hasan Nizamuddin, also known as Najmuddin Ahmad, son of Omar and Ali Samarqandi, is better known as Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi. As several of his contemporaries shared the same name, he is commonly referred to by this full name to distinguish him from them (Browne, 2007). He was one of the prominent writers and poets of the sixth century AH. He served at the court of the Ghurid kings of the Shansabani dynasty. In 550 AH, he wrote his famous work, *Majma' al-Nawadir*, also known as *Chahar Maqala*, dedicating it to one of the princes of this dynasty. He was forty-five years old at time of its composition (Hesarian, 2012b). His writing was characterized by fluency and simplicity, as evident in the four essays that make up the book. In addition to his literary and poetic abilities, he was also knowledgeable in medicine and astronomy. The two anecdotes at the end of the third and fourth essays further demonstrate his knowledge and practical abilities in these fields. He had studied medicine under Sheikh al-Imam Abu Ja'far ibn Muhammad. During the war between Ala al-Din Jahansuz and the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar, the former was defeated and taken prisoner by Sanjar. However, Aruzi, a companion of Sultan Ala al-Din, managed to flee to Herat, where he also treated his host's daughter. This account suggests that he possessed not only theoretical knowledge of medicine but also practical medical experience (Kohzad et al., 2004, p. 149). In fact, he owes his lasting literary reputation largely to his work *Chahar Maqala*. (Browne 2007, p. 39) considers it one of the most significant works of Farsi prose, noting:

> One of the most interesting and authoritative works of Farsi prose is *Chahar Maqala*. It has shed more light on the subject for me than any other book and has given me a glimpse into the private life of the courts of Iran and Central Asia in the twelfth century AD (sixth century AH).

This book, as its name suggests, has four parts:

1. On the nature of secretarial work.
2. On the nature of the science of poetry and the competence of the poet.
3. On the nature of astronomy and the astrologer's skill in this field.
4. On the nature of medicine and guidance, and their respective qualities.

One of the most valuable features of *Chahar Maqala* is the way the author approaches each of its four subjects. At the beginning of each essay, he outlines the qualities and skills required of those working in the respective fields of secretarial writing, poetry, astronomy, and medicine. He then develops each subject throughout the essay, illustrating his explanations with anecdotes about the lives and experiences of prominent scholars and literary figures. These accounts make the book an important source of biographical information about a wide range of scholars and men of letters (Hesarian, 2012b).

Muhammad Awfi and Lubab al-Bab

Nur al-Din Muhammad Awfi Bukhari was among the prominent writers and scholars of the late sixth and early seventh centuries AH. Historical sources refer to him by various titles, including Jalaluddin and Sadiduddin Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Bukhari. Some accounts also trace the name Awfi to Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, a prominent companion of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), whose name Awfi is believed to have been adopted by the family (Tughyan Sakai, 2019). Awfi came from a scholarly family in Transoxiana and was born and initially educated in Bukhara. He later travelled across Khorasan, Transoxiana, and India, studied under prominent scholars and established connections with royal courts. He became known as a preacher and orator and established close relations with royal courts, where he enjoyed the patronage of rulers. Among the scholars he met was Sheikh Majduddin Baghdadi, a renowned mystic, from whom he personally heard several poems that he later included in his well-known work, *Lubab al-Bab* (Hesarian, 2012b). He was also knowledgeable in medicine and served at the court of Sultan Nasiruddin Qabacha in Lahore. He wrote *Lubab al-Bab* in honor of the Sultan's minister, Ayn al-Mulk Fakhruddin Husayn al-Ash'ari. The account also associates the completion of this work with the year 625 AH, although the exact historical circumstances surrounding this date require verification. After al-Ash'ari's defeat by Iltutmish in 625 AH, Awafi entered the Sultan's service and became one of his courtiers. During this period, he dedicated another major work, *Jawami al-Hikayat wa Lawami al-Riwayat*, to his minister, Nizam al-Mulk Muhammad Junaidi. Awfi also translated Al-*Faraj ba'd al-Shidda* by Qadi Abu Ali Muhsin al-Tanukhi, from Arabic into Farsi-Dari. In composing *Jawami al-Hikayat*, he drew on many of the stories in *Al-Faraj ba'd al-Shidda*. In *Lubab al-Bab,* he presents the biographies of poets alongside samples of their poetry. Although the work does not offer much new information, its historical significance has secured it a prominent place among works of Farsi literature (Sayes, 2014). He composed the book in 627 AH and dedicated it to Fakhr al-Din al-Ash'ari, the minister of Sultan Nasir al-Din Qabacha. The book covers the biographies of poets from the earliest period up to Awfi's own time. It consists of two volumes. The first contains biographical accounts of prominent speakers, kings, emirs, ministers, and scholars, while the second is devoted specifically to poets and writers. This second volume includes descriptions and biographical accounts of 169 poets (Ghori & Habibi Ghori, 2011).

Muhammad Mubarak Shah

Muhammad Mubarak Shah, son of Mansur ibn Sa'id, was also known by the titles Mubarak Shah and Fakhr-i Mudabbir. He was one of the prominent writers of the late sixth and early seventh centuries AH and is regarded as one of the most accomplished scholars of the Ghurid period. His family had served the Ghaznavid rulers and continued to serve the Ghurids after them. Mubarak Shah served Sultan Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam, the renowned Ghurid ruler (d. 602 AH), for some time before entering the service of Qutb al-Din Aibak (d. 607 AH). His ancestors were also learned men who enjoyed the respect and favor of rulers and prominent figures of their time. It is worth noting that the he should not be confused with another figure, Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shah, a poet from Merve Rud. He was also a scholar, political figure, and accomplished writer, who served as a minister and secretary at the court of Sultan Ala al-Din and later at the court of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Ghuri. He produced several works in both prose and poetry, most of which deal with historical and military subjects (Ghori and Habibi Ghori, 2011). His prose works are *Adab al-Harb wa al-Shaja'ah*, *Bahr al-Ansab*, *Adab al-Muluk*, and *Kifayat al-Muluk*.

Imam Fakhruddin Razi

Fakhr al-Din Muhammad, known as Ibn Khatib al-Razi, was one of the prominent scholars, philosophers, writers, poets, and theologians of the Islamic world. He was born in 543 or 544 AH in the city of Ray. His lineage was traced to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (RA). His father, Zia al-Din Umar, was a distinguished scholar known for his mastery of oratory and preaching. This earned him the title Khatib, and that is why he became known as Ibn Khatib. He was well versed in many of the major fields of knowledge of his time, including Islamic theology, jurisprudence, medicine, mathematics, and physics. He also travelled to Khwarazm, Tamam, Varawud, and Khorasan and returned to Herat with a wealth of knowledge and learning. He studied theology under his father and philosophy under Majd al-Din al-Jili. His works, written in both Arabic and Farsi-Dari, earned widespread recognition and respect in scholarly circles throughout the Islamic world. Al-Razi followed the Ash'ari school of theology and the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence. Due to his persistent questioning and scepticism towards scholarly and philosophical matters, he was given the title of Imam al-Mushakkikin *"Imam of the Doubters"* (Hesarian, 2012b). Approximately 200 works attributed to him in Arabic and Farsi-Dari. Among his Arabic works on theology are *Nihayat al-'Uqul* (The Ultimate of Minds) and a treatise on the Mi'raj. His philosophical works include *Hikmat al-Mashriq and Sharh al-Isharat*. He also wrote *Nihayat al-I'jaz fi Dirayat al-I'jaz*, a work dealing with the eloquence and rhetorical features of the *Holy Qur'an* (Hesarian, 2012b).

Qazi Minhaj al-Sarraj Jawzjani and the Tabaghat Nasseri

Qazi Abu Amr Minhaj al-Din Uthman ibn Muhammad Siraj al-Din al-Jawzjani, better known as Minhaj al-Siraj, was one of the most prominent writers, historians, and literary figures of the Ghurid period. As his name suggests, he was originally from Jawzjan (Hesarian, 2012a). He reportedly was born in 589 AH although sources differ regarding his birthplace. Some identify it as Firozkoh, while others mention Herat or Lahore. He spent his early years in Ghor and grew up there. His family was one of the well-known families of the region, whose members held prominent scholarly and political positions at the courts of Mahmud and the Shansabani in Ghazni and Ghor (Ghori & Habibi Ghori, 2011). He received his education in the household of Ghiyath al-Din Ghuri under Malik Shah, the Sultan's sister. Information provided by Malik Shah also served as the basis for the Ghurid genealogy recorded in *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* (Nadem, 2010).

He began studying the Holy Qur'an at the age of seven under Imam Ali Ghaznavi and continued his education in Ghor, where he acquired knowledge of religious sciences and developed proficiency in both Arabic and Farsi literatures. At the age of twenty-four, he entered the service of Malik Ayn al-Din Bahram Shah, son of Taj al-Din Harb, at the court in Sistan. In 617 AH, during the Mongols attack on Tulak, he joined his maternal relatives in defending the fortress, which endured an eight-month siege. Following these events, he continued

to serve the rulers of Ghor. In 624 AH, he travelled to the regions of Sogdiana and then to Multan in India, where he gained access to the court of Nasir al-Din Qabacha. At Qabacha's command, he was appointed head of the Firuzi Madrasa in the region of Uch. When Qabacha was defeated in Sindh and his territories fell under the control of Shams al-Din Iltutmish, Minhaj al-Siraj entered Iltutmish's service and was appointed to a judicial position. He subsequently served Iltutmish and his son, Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah, in Delhi for many years, holding various religious and administrative positions, including those of judge, preacher, imam, and accountant. During the reign of Razia Sultan, daughter of Iltutmish, he went to Delhi and was appointed to teach at the Nasiriyya Madrasa. He spent the later years of his life at the court of Sultan Nasir al-Din, son of Iltutmish. In 652 AH, the Sultan honored him with the title of Sadr-i Jahan. In 658 AH, Minhaj al-Siraj penned a historical work in the Sultan's name (Hesarian, 2012b). Some of his verses are recorded in the Tazkirahs.

لب بر لب لعل دیگران خوش کردن آهنگ سر زلف مشوش کردن
امروز خوش است لیک فردا خوش نیست خود را چون خسی طعمه‌ی آتش کردن

To press one's lips against another's ruby lips in delight,
To caress tangled locks of hair in restless night.

Today is sweet, yet tomorrow may bring fright,
Like a wisp of straw, to cast oneself into the fire's bite.

Finally, he died in 660 AH in the Indian subcontinent and was buried there. As mentioned earlier, his poetry is marked by mystical themes and imagery. He was skilled in both prose and poetry. His poetry was notable for its coherence, smoothness and fluency. One example is a poem he composed in Ghazni in praise of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which is worth quoting here:

ای دهان تنگ ترا تنگ‌ها شکر شاخ نبات بر آونگ‌ها شکر
قابوس برد شکر از آن چشمه‌ی حیات آورده از خجالت آن رنگ‌ها شکر
هرگز کجا رسد به لب با حلاوتت گر قطع کرد خواهد فرسنگ‌ها شکر
با ار مزه کند از بهر هر جلاب از راه طعنه بین که خورد سنگ‌ها شکر
چون گشت لذت لب نوشینت نی‌شکر از نام خود کشیده بسی سنگ‌ها شکر
منهاج راست عرصه‌ی ملک سخن فراخ کز نعت تُست در دهن اش تُنگ‌ها شکر

(Hesarian, 2012b, p. 201)

O blessed mouth, whose sweetness none can compare
whilst Shakh-i-Nabat (rock candy) hangs humbled in despair.

Sugar draws its sweetness from thy fount of life,
Yet loses all its hues before thy beauty's light.

What could approach thy lips in sweetness rare?
Though sugar travels miles, none could compare.

Though Jallab draws its sweetness from sugar's grace,
See how the stones of taunt are hurled in its face.

Thy honeyed lips are sweet as sugarcane,

Yet sugar bears the stones of its own name.

Minhaj, the realm of speech lies wide and free,

Jars of sugar fill his tongue in praise of thee.

Tabghat Nasseri

This work covers historical events from the creation of humankind to 657 AH. It focuses mainly on the history of Islamic dynasties in the Indian subcontinent, while also documenting the Ghaznavid period and the Mongol rule, including firsthand events by the author. The historical events are presented in a systematic and coherent manner (Ghori & Habibi Ghori, 2011b). As one of the major Farsi-Dari historical sources of the seventh century AH, it provides valuable information on the decline of the Ghaznavids and the Ghurid courts in Sindh and India. It also offers an overview of world history, with particular attention to the rulers of Ghor, alongside accounts of the Ghaznavids and Genghis Khan's invasion of Khorasan and the subsequent decline of the region. The book is organized into 23 sections, each devoted to a particular category of historical figures or groups, including prophets, kings, and caliphs (Hesarian, 2012a).

Poetry and Poets in the Ghurids Era

The Ghurid dynasty is considered one of the most poetry-loving dynasties in the region as several rulers and princes, including Sultan Ala al-Din Jahansuz, were known for their poetic interests and literary contributions. Evidence of the literary activity of the period can be found in several important Farsi sources, such as *Chahar Maqala*, *Lubab al-Albab*, and *Tabaghat-i Naṣiri*. Surviving fragments, collections, and divans from poets provide further evidence of the extent of literary activity during this period. Although the available sources point to a considerable number of poets and literary figures, much of their written heritage has been lost, particularly during the Mongol invasions. Among the poets of the period were Sultan Ala al-Din Jahansuz, Sultan Razia Ghori, Mubarak Shah, Muhammad Farqadi, Moinuddin Chishti, Jabali Gharjistani, Rabi'i Foshanji, Amir Husayn Heravi, and Emami Heravi. They were connected with different literary and political centers, including the Ghurid court in Firozkoh, the court of the Kart dynasty in Herat, and the Tughlaq court in India. Their works reflect the geographical reach and cultural influence of Farsi-Dari literature across Ghor, Herat, Khorasan, and the Indian subcontinent, especially Lahore and Delhi (Hesarian, 2012a).

Ala al-Din Husayn Ghuri

The establishment of Ghurid rule as a major political power dates back to the reign of Ala al-Din Husayn Jahansuz. He consolidated Ghurid sovereignty and secured the dynasty's political independence. In addition to his political and military acumen, he was also a man of letter. Before attacking Ghazni, he sent the following verses to the chief justice of Ghazni:

اعضای ممالک جهان را بدنم جوینده‌ی خصم خویش و لشکر شکنم
گر غزنین را از بیخ و بن بر نکنم پس من نه حسین بن حسین حسنم

(Zhobal, 2009, p. 150)

I shall make the realms of the world my own,
A seeker of foes, a breaker of armies, known.

If I fail to raze Ghazni to its very core,
Then Husayn, son of Husayn, son of Hasan, I am no more.

The following ghazal is also an example of his poetic nature:

جهان داند که سلطان جهانم چراغ دوده‌ی عباسیانم
علاءالدین حسین بن حسینم که باقی باد ملک جاودانم
چو بر گلگونه‌ی دولت نشینم یکی باشد زمین و آسمانم
امل مصرع زن گرد سپاهم اجل بازیگر نوک سنانم
همه عالم بگیرم چون سکندر به شهری شهی دیگر نشانم

بر آن بودم که با اوباش غزنین چو رود نیل جوی خون برانم
ولیکن گنده پیرانند و طفلان شفاعت می‌کند بخت جوانم
ببخشیدم بدیشان جان ایشان که بادا جان‌شان پیوند جانم

(Jawzjani, 2012b, p. 361)

The world knows I am the Sultan of the world,
The Abbasid beacon, its light unfurled.

I am Ala al-Din Husayn*, son of Husayn.*

May my eternal kingdom forever remain.

When I ascend the throne of Fortune's reign,
Earth and heaven become one domain.

Hope hails my legions with a song of might,
Death dances on my spear point in the fight.

Like Alexander, I would claim the world entire,
And crown a different king in every city I acquire.

I swore that Ghazni's rabble soon would know,
How rivers of blood like the Nile would flows

Yet aged men and children moved my heart,
My youthful fortune bade me sheath my dart.

I spared their lives and let them go free,
May their lives be joined in kinship with me.

Imam Sadruddin Haytham

Imam Sadruddin Haytham was among the most eloquent scholars of the Karramiyya. After Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Sam embraced the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence following a dream, Imam addressed him in the following verses:

در خراسان جواجه گونه شافعی بسیار بود بر در هر خسروی ای خسرو صاحب نشان
لیک اندر هفت کشور پادشاه شافعی بهترک معلوم کن تا هیچ کس دارد نشان
ور کسی گوید خلیفه شافعی مذهب بود حاش لله هیچ زیرک را نباشد این گمان
مذهب عباس را اندر خلافت بی خلاف حاجتی نبود مخالف ذکر این معنی بدان
کی کند هرگز خلیفه جز به عباس اقتدا کی سزد هرگز (خلاف) جد و عم زان خاندان
پس تو بار چون پدر را خواستی کردن خلاف چون نرفتی بر شعار و راه دیگر خسروان
تا چو هرکس با امام اهل خیزد روز حشر تو در این تقلید خود تنها بمانی جاودان
شافعی و بو حنیفه والله این خواهند گفت خوب نبود بی سبب زان در بدین، زین در بدان

(Jawzjani, 2012b, p. 371)

In Khorasan, many claim the Shafi'i way,
At every king's door, such claims hold sway.

Across the seven realms, name one king known,
Who held the Shafi'i faith and wore a crown.

And should one claim the Caliph followed that creed,
God forbid! No wise man would believe such a deed.

The Abbasid claim to the Caliphate faced no stain,
No need to raise opposing claims in vain.

When did a Caliph ever follow other than Abbas?
How could he oppose the forefather and uncle of his house?

Why, then, O king, oppose your father's way,
And shun the path that other kings obey?

Lest, when all rise with their Imams on Judgment Day,
You stand alone, having followed your own way.

By God, both Shafi'i and Bu Hanifa would say:
Without cause, do not leave one path for another way.

After that, he sent these verses to the Sultan, urging him to return. He also sent him a message from Nishapur, and the Sultan returned.

Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi

Nizami Aruzi, whose biography was discussed earlier, refers to his poetry in the second article of *Chahar Maqala*, where he speaks highly of his poetic abilities. He cites five verses composed spontaneously at the court of Qutb al-Din Husayn, the Amir of Ghur, as evidence of his poetic skill and eloquence (Hesarian, 2012b). Edward G. Browne also discusses this episode in *A Literary History of Persia*, drawing on Nizami Aruzi's account and the verses he recited.

در جهان سه نظامی‌ایم ای شاه — که جهانی ز ما به افغانند
من ورساد پیش تخت شهم — وان دو در مرو پیش سلطانند
به حقیقت که در سخن امروز — هریکی مفخر خراسانند
گرچه هم‌چون روان سخن گویند — ورچه هم‌چون خرد سخن دانند
من شرابم که شان چو دریابند — هردو از کار خود فرو مانند

(Browne, 2007, pp. 39-40)

We three are warriors, O King, of might,
The world cries out before our sight.

In Varsad, I stand before the king, beside his royal throne,

while those two in Merv attend their Sultan alone.

Indeed, in the art of words, each stands renowned,

A pride of Khurasan, whose fame resounds.

They speak with eloquence and art,

And understand each word with wisdom of the heart.

I am the wine; if they my essence knew,

They'd would abandon all they used to do.

Ahmad Kafi

Fariduzzaman Sharafuddin was another prominent poet of the Ghurid period. Although his birthplace and origins remain uncertain, historical accounts suggest that he resided in Firozkoh and headed the royal publishing office at the court of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Ghori. He was known for his eloquence and poetic skill and composed an ode in praise of the Sultan, which reads as follows:

ای گل و می را به رخسار و لب تو افتخار — چون گل می‌گون به بار آمد می گلگون بیار
شکل گل چون رنگ جام و رنگ می چون — رنگ گل هست گویی هر دو را از هم صفت ها مستعار
باغ را بی گل کجا باشد در این هنگام قدر — جام را بی می کجا باشد در این موسم قرار
گل زمی گیرد شعاع و می ز گل گیرد فر — با گل و می عیش کن بی زحمت خار و خمار
خاصه چون سلطان اعظم گل به پیش و می بدست — مطربان را خواند پیش و بنده‌گان را داد بار
سایه‌ی یزدان غیاث دین و دنیا کافتاب — زان بیاراید چمن کز رای او دارد شعار
شهریاری کافتاب از سایه اقبال او — بر سپاه سعد نحس اختران شد کام‌گار
آفتاب سایه دار است او جهان را گاه عدل — سخت نادر باشد الحق آفتاب سایه دارد
سایه پرورد است خصمش ز آفتاب تیغ او — سخت نادر باشد الحق آفتاب سایه دار

(Mowahed Rahimi, 2011, p. 3)

O rose and wine are humbled before thy face and lip,
As rosy blooms unfold, bring ruby wine to sip.

The rose resembles the goblet's hue, the wine the rose's colour,
As though each borrows from the other its beauty and its odor.

What worth has a garden where no blossoms grow?
What joy has a goblet where no wine shall flow?

Without the rose, what worth has a garden's spring?
Without the wine, what joy can a goblet bring?

The flower draws its radiance from the sun's golden hue;
The wine borrows the bloom's own brilliance—enjoy both, free from rue.

And lo, the Sultan sat with flowers near, a wine cup in his hand;
He summoned minstrels to his court and welcomed his servant band.

Ghiyath al-Din, the Shadow of God, shines like the sun's bright ray,
Whose will makes the land flourish in a splendid way.

A king whose justice shines like the sun, whose glory lights the sky;
He conquers stars of ill fortune, while stars of good fortune rise on high.

His foe seeks shade beneath the sun of his sword's fierce glare;
For rare indeed is such a sun, whose shadow shelters there.

Anwari Abiwardi

Ohaduddin Ali ibn Wahiduddin Muhammad (d. 583 AH), known by the title Hujjat al-Haqq, was born in Abiward. He initially wrote under the pen name Khawari but later adopted Anwari. Much of his poetry was composed at the Ghurid court in praise its rulers. The following ode praises Shahab al-Din Ghuri and Nasiruddin:

عرصه‌ی مملکت غور چه نا محدود است — که در آن عرصه چنان لشکر نا معدود است
رونق ملک سلیمان پیغمبر دارد — عرق سلطان چه عجب کز نسبت داوود است
چشم بد دور که بس منتظم است این دولت — آری این دولت را منتظمی معهود است

(Mowahed Rahimi, 2011, pp. 4-5)

How vast the realm of Ghor, how boundless its domain,
Where countless hosts stretch far across the plain.

The realm has the glory of Prophet Solomon,

And David's noble blood runs through its royal throne.

May no evil eye befall this realm, so firmly ruled;
Its order, long established, has ever flourished and bloomed.

Jabali Gharjistani

Badi'uz-Zaman Abdul-Wasi' ibn Abdul-Jami' ibn Imran ibn Rabi' Gharjistani, who died in 555 AH, was a Sayyid born in Gharjistan. In one of his poems, he refers to his origins as follows:

چرا به چشم شما من چو خاک ره خوارم — عزیز کرده‌ی پروردگار جد من است
که من ز نسل رسول خدای جبارم — نکرد باید با من با قهر جباری
که او هر آیینه گردد بگرد آزارم — رسول در دوجهان زآن کسی بیازارد

(Jabali Gharjistani, 1982, p.13)

My grandfather is dear to the Lord above;
Why, then, do you despise me, as though I were dust beneath your feet?

Do not treat me with a tyrant's wrathful hand,
For I descend from God's own Messenger's line.

The Prophet, in both worlds, would grieve to see
Anyone turn against me, seeking to harm me.

Jabali was one of the great Farsi- and Arabic-speaking poets of Khorasan. Hadi Qaza'i (2007) records his title as Farid. He also refers to himself by this title in one of his poems, as follows:

پیش از اینم فرید خوانندی — خاصه و عامه از ره‌ی تقلید
شد کنون این لقب بمن لایق — که بماندم ز خدمت تو فرید

(Jabali Gharjistani, 1982, p. 13)

Before this time, they called me "Farid" by name,
Both commoners and nobles did the same.

But now this title suits me in its truest sense,
For in thy service, I have truly earned its essence.

Khwaja Safiuddin Mahmud Wazir

During this period, Sultan Shah al-Khwarizmi led the Khitai forces into Khorasan, established his court in Marv, and began posing a threat to the Ghurid frontier. He advanced his army to *Dahan-e Shir-e Surkh* and sent an envoy to Sultan Ghiyath al-Din. He received the envoy with a formal reception and a lavish banquet. While wine was served to the envoy and the Ghurid princes, the Sultan drank red pomegranate juice and questioned his quest about Sultan Shah's situation. In response, the envoy recited the following verses:

زان شیر که با شیر دهان است مقیم شیران جهان از او هراسند عظیم
ای شیر تو یعنی سر و دندان بنمایی کاین ها همه در دهان شیرند ز بیم

That lion, though still a cub, is fierce and grand,

All lions of the world in terror at his command.

O lion, if thou bare thy head and teeth so bright,

These lions shall fall into thy jaws in fright.

Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Ghuri was troubled by this speech, until Minister Safiuddin Mahmud recited this verse:

ای شیر تو یعنی سر و دندان بنمایی وز دشمن مملکت جهان پردازیم
شیری ز دهانه گر نماید دندان دندانش به گرز در دهان اندازیم

(Mowahed Rahimi, 2011, p. 18)

On that day when we raise our banner high,
And rid the realm of foes who dare defy,
If from its den a lion bares its teeth,
With mace in hand, we smash them underneath.

Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah Ghori

Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the chief poet at the courts of Ala al-Din Jahansuz and Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Ghuri. The latter highly regarded him for his poetic talent and eloquent expression. He also composed a genealogy of the Ghurid dynasty, but unfortunately, the work has not survived. The following verses are attributed to him:

به اسلام در هیچ منبر نماند که بر روی خطیبی همی خطبه خواند
که بر آل یاسین به لفظ فصیح نکردند لعنت به وجه صریح
دیار بلندش از آن شد مصئون که از دست هر فتنه آمد برون
نرفت اندر و لعنت خاندان بدین بر هم عالم‌اش فخر دان
از جنس هرگز در او کس نگفت نه در آشکار نه اندر نهفت
مهین پادشاهان باد دین و داد بدین فخر دارند بر هر نژاد

(Mowahed Rahimi, 2011, p. 26)

At every pulpit in Islam's wide domain,
No preacher failed to speak his praise again.

In clear and eloquent, unbroken speech,
No curse upon the House of Yasin did they preach.

His lofty land was kept secure and free,
Beyond the reach of every tyranny.

No curse was ever laid upon his line,
A source of pride to all his realm and time.

No man, of any lineage, spoke against his name,
Neither in open speech nor whispered words of blame.

May kings uphold both faith and justice bright,
And rise above all lineages in might.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural and literary situation of the Ghurid period. The results point to a diverse literary heritage during this period, evident in poetry, prose writings, historical accounts, and biographical works. These sources document the literary figures and intellectual activities and provide insight into Ghor's role in the wider cultural and literary history of the region.

An important part of this heritage is preserved in literary and historical works that provide information about the period. The poetry discussed in this study, together with works such as *Chahar Maqala*, *Lubab al-Bab*, and *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, illustrates the different ways in which literary and historical knowledge was recorded and preserved. These works differ in purpose and content: some provide examples of poetry and information about poets, while others preserve historical accounts and biographical material. Their value lies not only in the information each provides individually but also in the different perspectives they offer when examined together. This variety of literary evidence suggests that the heritage of this period cannot be adequately understood through poetry alone; prose writings and historical-biographical accounts are equally important to its study.

This literary heritage also extends beyond the geographical boundaries of Ghor. Several of the writers discussed in this study had connections with courts and literary centers in India and other parts of Khorasan. Their biographies and works point to a wider literary environment in which Farsi literature circulated across different political and geographical settings. This does not mean that all these figures were based in Ghor or served the Ghurid rulers throughout their careers. Rather, their inclusion helps situate Ghor within the broader literary networks of the period. Thus, the literary history of Ghor is best understood not only through literary activities within the region but also through its connections with other cultural and literary centers.

The present study also builds on earlier scholarship by examining the cultural and literary aspects of the Ghurid period within a single study. Works such as *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, *A Concise History of the Ghurids*, and *Ghor and Gharjistan* provide valuable accounts of the region's history, while *Tazkira-ye Sho'ara-ye Ghor* introduces poets and presents examples of their poetry. These publications offer important material for understanding different aspects of Ghor's historical and literary heritage. The present study draws on such historical and literary materials to examine the cultural and literary significance of the Ghurid period from a broader perspective. Its contribution lies in bringing together historical accounts, biographical information, poetry, and prose to provide a broader understanding of the cultural and literary life of the period.

However, written sources represent only one dimension of the region's cultural heritage. The Minaret of Jam and other historical monuments discussed in the study provide material evidence of its past and complement the information preserved in literary and historical texts. Although these two forms of evidence offer different perspectives, considering them together can contribute to a broader understanding of the region's heritage. For this reason, claims about the identification, dating, and historical significance of monuments require careful examination of available evidence. Similarly, interpretations of how Ghor's heritage is represented in modern publications should be evaluated in light of the evidence supporting them. This distinction is important when assessing the region's cultural heritage, as some historical and cultural claims require further evidence.

Despite the range of evidence examined, the available sources do not provide a complete picture of the cultural and literary life of the Ghurid period. Some works mentioned in historical accounts have not survived, and the surviving material does not necessarily represent the full extent of literary production at the time. Moreover, the association of a writer with a particular court or region does not, by itself, establish the extent of royal patronage or the wider influence of that writer's work. These questions require closer examination of individual texts and their historical contexts. Further research into surviving literary works, the attribution and dating of poems, and the relationships between literary figures and the courts they served could deepen our

understanding of Ghor's contribution to the Farsi-Dari literary tradition. The results of the present study therefore provide a basis for further investigation rather than a complete account of the period's cultural and literary history.

Conclusion

This study examined the cultural and literary situation of the Ghurid period, focusing on scholarly activities, poetry, prose, and the dynasty's cultural heritage. The findings indicate that the Ghurid period was marked by literary activity and scholarly engagement, reflecting Ghor's cultural significance in the history of Islamic Khorasan. The literary works and intellectual contributions in this period reveal a varied cultural environment. The writings of prominent authors, surviving poetry by Ghurid rulers and court poets, and the development of Farsi-Dari prose provide evidence of this literary activity. Moreover, the presence of Farsi-Dari literary traditions in northern India points to the wider cultural connections associated with Ghurid expansion. Historical accounts and architectural monuments also provide valuable evidence of the region's cultural heritage.

By examining historical accounts, biographical works, poetry, and prose together, this study offers a broader understanding of the cultural and literary contributions of the period. It draws attention to an important aspect of Ghurid history that has received comparatively less attention in previous studies.

However, the surviving sources may not fully capture the cultural and literary activities of the period, particularly given the loss of some literary works. Further research into surviving texts, lesser-known literary figures, and the influence of Ghurid literary traditions could provide a deeper insight into the dynasty's contribution to the cultural and literary heritage of Islamic Khorasan.

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