

## THE LAST FIGHT BETWEEN SULTAN MUHAMMAD KHWARAZM SHAH AND MONGOL ARMY

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**Abstract:** Disregarding the factors that led to the Mongols' invasion of Khwarazmshah's kingdom, Khwarazmshah's reaction to this raid and his confrontation with Mongol army needs contemplation and investigation. The historical resources indicate that Sultan had to only encounter Mongol army once upon fleeing the Mongols' grasp but there is no clear-cut information as to when and where the battle took place. The present article is seeking to make use of a descriptive-analytical method based on questioning the extant data so as to, meanwhile elaborating the way Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah faced the Mongols' raid, deal with the qualities of the only battle he had with Mongol army and come up with a more vivid clarification of its place and time to the maximum possible extent.

The present study shows that, although Sultan Muhammad retreated, in fear of Mongol army, city to city from Mesopotamia to Persian Iraq, he was eventually forced to confront with Mongol army that reached Sultan's camp in September 1220 (Rajab 617 A.H.); and, though Sultan could escape the arena, his army was completely murdered. It has to be mentioned against the claims of the researchers who realize the battle as having happened on Malayer Plain that it occurred on Farahan Plain (Dhulfabad Region).

**Keywords:** Khwarazmshahs, Mongols' invasion, Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah, Persian Iraq, Farahan, Dhulfabad.

### INTRODUCTION

The story of Mongols' assault and the weird reaction of Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah to this attack is more familiar than being in need of recounting. As soon as Mongol army approached the eastern borders of Khwarazmshah territory, Sultan Muhammad, subject to numerous factors that are not going to be dealt with herein, commenced retreating in lieu of fighting back. He moved from Samarqand to Balkh in the south of Oxus and then to Nishapur and, in his pass through the various cities, he despaired the people's morale through giving lectures on Mongols' courage and cruelty and forbidding them from fighting back. From the other side, Chingiz Khan, being aware of the internal status of his kingdom as well as his disputes with TerkenKhatun and the heads of Qipchaq and more instigation of the discrepancies pushed Khwarazmshah more and more to the corner. After the conquering of Samarqand during early 1220, Chingiz was informed of Khwarazmshah's escape and dispatched a group of his army commanded by Jebe (Yeme) Noyan and Sübedei Bahador to chase Sultan. The Mongol missionary group crossed the Oxus in April 1220 (Safar, 617, A.H) and they were looking for Sultan's camp everywhere in a rushing manner and in order to get their hands on Sultan they were forced to leave untouched many of the regions and the fortresses that were heavily guarded

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and not easily conquerable and their sole objective was chasing Sultan. After Sultan's clearing out of Khorasan Region, his destiny became clearly ambiguous. Therefore, there are discrepancies in explication of the path Sultan took to escape and, subsequently, the path that the Mongol group travelled in pursue of Sultan and there are different notions opined in various sources. Using scrutiny over these narrations indicates that in this hot pursue, Sultan camp was once unwantedly faced with Mongol army and Sultan could barely save his own life and left his army with Mongols and this is the idea that the entire historical narrations on this escape and chase have in common. However, the way the battle happened, its final result as well as the place where it occurred are all left to be clarified and there is no consensus reached about them. Therefore, the present article intends to elucidate the quality of the battle and figure out the place it had happened through rereading and exploring and adjusting the historical narrations related to this incident and then also to make use of geographical evidences and intellectual reasoning.

The topic of the Mongols' invasion and Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah's reaction thereto has been studied by researchers for years and there are numerous pieces of writings devoted to it and many researchers have dealt with the study of Khwarazmshah's confrontation with Mongols but there are a few researches that have specified the exact locality wherein the battle had allegedly happened. As an example, Boyle and Teymouri, despite having dealt with the detailed exposition of Sultan's retreat path and its relevant incidents, have nothing to say about the place of their clash<sup>1</sup>. Barthold, who, as well, has investigated Sultan's escape path at length, only speaks of the clash location with the mentioning of antecedent narrations and makes no effort to determine the exact place the battle has happened<sup>2</sup>. Also, Abbas Eqbal, meanwhile offering a complete explication of Sultan's escape path, has mistakenly specified the battle's location in Malayer's Dowlat Abad<sup>3</sup>. The other researchers after him have accepted the narration and the same mistake has been repeatedly mentioned in their studies<sup>4</sup>. As a result of numerous number of repetitions, the issue has reserved itself a firm place in the local researches on Malayer's history and it is considered as one of the most sure historical evidences by the local writers who have used it as the foundation of their deductions<sup>5</sup>. More recently, a researcher, repeating this same claim by the aforementioned authors regarding the battle between Khwarazmshah and Mongols in Malayer Plain, has made efforts to stabilize the claim and construct it a firm scientific foundation through field studies and performing land surveys on Malayer Plain<sup>6</sup>. But, as it will be described later, the claim is so baseless that it cannot even survive scientific criticism.

### **Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah and Mongols' Invasion**

Mongols were part of the clans residing the Central Asia and they, headed by Chingiz, succeeded in dominating the entire tribes in their vicinity during the early years of 13<sup>th</sup> Century and then they conquered the northern districts of China. At

this time, the Mongol's kingdom shared borders in west with the Islamic territories that were under the reign of Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah. According to the never-ending attacks of the nomad clans from central Asia on Iran's eastern borders at the periphery of Jaxartes, it was natural that Khwarazmshah's kingdom be raided by this newly emergent nomadic government. In this time, some uncalculated behaviors by Khwarazmshah gave the Mongols their required excuse for accelerating and intensifying their assaults. Sultan's vastness of the kingdom, multiplicity of the forces and fame for numerous conquests and chivalries caused Chingiz Khan to be afraid of him and feel danger and, also, make the today's readers curious as to how did Sultan Muhammad react to Mongols' invasion?

The scrutinizing study of the historical resources on Mongols' invasion show that Sultan, in spite of all his apparent powerfulness and potential authority with which he has been described in the resources, did not confront Mongol army but twice. The first time was years before the Mongols' formal invasion on Khwarazmshah's territory, i.e. at the time Khwarazmshah, after making a lot of military conquests in Khorasan, Persian Iraq, Ghur and Transoxiana, was going to gain domination over Qipchaq Plain and the tribes dwelling the region at which moment Merkit clans, headed by ToqTaqan fled to the region upon their defeat by Chingiz Khan. Sultan Muhammad, as well, apparently for preventing them from entering the region, dispatched his army thereto in 1215 and was confronted with Mongol army, headed by Juchi who had come in pursue of ToqTaqan<sup>7</sup>. Despite Juchi's evasion of fight, considering his being disallowed by the Great Khan to enter a war with Khwarazmshah, the latter insisted on the fight with the Mongols based on the fact that the God has ordered the Muslims to hold up  *Jihad*  against the  *Kafir* s "un believers" and a tough war was finally provoked between them. In this battle, Sultan fell down of his horse and he nearly got killed by the Mongols and he was saved by the agility and courage of his son, Jalal al-Din. Therefore, although the battle remained with no outcome of victory or defeat due to the Mongol's retreat in the cover of the night, Sultan, bearing witness to the Mongols' bravery was intensively impressed in soul and body and he felt the fear of the Mongols deep in his heart<sup>8</sup>.

Several years later, with the acquisition of the excuses and the setting of the required grounding, the Mongol's invasion was set out and Chingiz army arrived at eastern borders of Khwarazmshah's kingdom in 1219. The most important problem of Khwarazmshah's government and the statesmen of his court was how to cope with the issue. The royal council was held up to deal with the issue and various notions were proposed for how to deal with the defense against Mongols:

1. A group, represented by Sultan Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah, believed that the entire forces should be deployed against Mongols in the eastern borders and that their way to pass over the Jaxartes has to be blocked.

2. Another group, that as Juvaini puts it “had become sophisticated in the course of their great many of their experiences and had seen a lot of good and bad things and were very thoughtful and contemplative in devising strategies”, believed that it is difficult to save Transoxiana upon the Mongols’ invasion so it is better to leave it and gather all forces at the bank of Oxus to prevent Mongols’ entry to Khorasan and the districts on the western side of Oxus.
3. Yet, there was another group that believed Oxus is not an appropriate natural position so it is better, they said, to move the forces to the mountainous regions at the periphery of Ghur and Ghazna and initiate an attack on Mongols therefrom so that they could seek refuge in India in case of defeat<sup>9</sup>.

As it is clear, the supporters of these three ideas were all agree to concentrate the whole army and commence a full-scale war against Mongols and they only disagreed to one another’s opinions regarding the way and the place the war could be started.

However, Sultan did not agree with any of the suggestions for his losing of his will to resist and combat the Mongols’ army as a result of many factors, like instability and weakness of personality, fear of the Mongols, the incongruence of his army and distrust of Sultan in his army etc. Thus, despite taking a defensive position, he divided his troops into various military garrisons and the castles of various cities in such a manner that he assigned a garrison in every city based on the degree of its importance and he himself started retreating<sup>10</sup>. Also, he apportioned sums of money for strengthening the defensive fortifications.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Sultan, quite opposite to what was deemed normal, selected scattered defense art in the form of city-to-city defense while he had not even provisioned them with the required instruments and tools.

Based thereon, after the forces were set to their positions in the cities, Sultan took the road towards the west as soon as Mongol army arrived at the eastern borders and dashed away from the eastern borders. As mentioned in the historical resources, on his recession path, Sultan gave lectures of Mongols’ violence and courage and, describing the defensive efforts as being useless against the Mongols, practically contributed to the frustration and disappointment of the people and created an atmosphere of terror and horror inside Khwarazmshah borderlines.<sup>12</sup>

According to the extant data, Mongol army was separated to three parts upon reaching Khwarazmshah’s border: a group, headed by several commanders, to Farghana, another group to Jand and Khwarazm and the third flock, under the commandship of Chingiz, went from Utrar to Bukhara thence to Samarqand<sup>13</sup>. On his pulling back, Sultan reached Nishapur where he found out that Chingiz Khan, taken over Samarqand, has dispatched an army to chase Sultan<sup>14</sup>. The chasing mission finally had its hands on Sultan in Persian Iraq and his only fight with the invaders happened there and it is the issue that is going to be discussed herein.

### **The Reflections of Sultan's Fight with Mongols in the Resources**

Sultan and his army's status went into a halo of vagueness upon his exit of Nishapur. It seems that such an ambiguity has been caused by Sultan's intentional policy meaning that Sultan announced his travelling to a destination but changed his direction in the middle of the way and moved to another destination in order to make Mongol army unable to track him. On the other hand, when Sultan enters Persian Iraq and then Mazandaran, Khorasan residents who were suffering from the thundering and crushing attacks of the Mongols were practically unaware of Sultan's fate<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, although all of the sources have reached an agreement regarding Sultan's escape and dodging confrontation with Mongol army, their reports of the quality of the pursuit and escape are dissimilar. Thus, the sources can be divided into two sets regarding the confrontation between Khwarazmshah and Mongol army:

The first set incorporates the sources having maximally succinct description of Sultan's escape of Mongol army. In this set of the sources, there is not made any reference to whether Mongol army has reached Sultan or not and whether there has been any collision between them or not. It is claimed in a short explanation that Sultan fled Nishapur and after a short while reached Mazandaran and died in an Island of Abaskun Sea. This set is most importantly represented by Ibn al-Athir, the contemporary historian, who, meanwhile confirming the story of Sultan's escape with several different narrations, posits no idea about the occurrence of dispute and battle between the fleeing Sultan and the invaders hence giving no news thereof<sup>16</sup>. Also, Vassaf, Benakati and Shabankare'ei, in spite of offering a detailed description of Sultan's escape route, have nothing to declare of the fight between them<sup>17</sup>. Ibn Ebari and Qazi Beizavi, besides taking a silent position regarding the battle, have brief explication of Sultan's story of escape even with ambiguity<sup>18</sup>. Hamdullah Mostowfi takes one more step forward and summarizes the whole adventure in the following words, "Sultan was escaping Mongol army without having any will to fight back and he took residence in Abaskun Island and died there in 1220"<sup>19</sup>. This way, it is clear that this set of the historians have preferred to keep perfectly quite regarding any collision between Sultan's camp and Mongol's army.

The second set encompasses the sources that have provided an account of the exact path travelled by Khwarazmshah from Nishapur to Abaskun and the fight between Sultan's army and the spurring Mongol army via concentrating on Khwarazmshah's behaviors. In a short report, Jowzjani points out that "Sultan moved further inland from Nishapur to Mazandaran and camped at the verge of Tamisheh valley at which time Mongol army reached it abruptly and he managed to flee and rush it to the mountain and left behind mountains after mountains till he arrived at Mazandaran ...<sup>20</sup>" Yet, he corrects himself by stating somewhere else that Mongol army, having captured Nishapur, "marched towards Tabaristan and Mazandaran in pursue of Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah and Sultan had

camped on the brink of Tamisheh valley on the road to Mazandaran at which time Mongol army reached him suddenly. Sultan had Atsiz, the chamberlain, under his protection and assigned him to the main unit of the army and ordered him to move the army towards Damghan and ]Persian[ Iraq and he himself fled to Mazandaran's mountains and too residence in an island near the sea".<sup>21</sup>

Juvaini, as well, presents a detailed report of Sultan Muhammad's escape from Nishapur towards Ray thence to Farzin fortress and finally to Qarun castle and believes that it was at this time that Sultan's army faced the Mongol troopers after which Sultan was the only one who managed to survive the battle and could barely get to Gilan thence to Mazandaran<sup>22</sup>. Rashid al-Din Fazlullah and Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, as well, have offered an exact copy and summary of Juvaini's report<sup>23</sup>. Shihab al-Din Nasawi also makes a reference to Sultan's escape from Nishapur to Hamadan and only describes the clash between Sultan's army and Mongol's army and that Sultan was the only person who survived it and fled to Gilan thence to Mazandaran<sup>24</sup>. Also, his here and there and brief mentioning of the statuses of Khwarazmshah's offspring<sup>25</sup> perfectly confirms the accuracy of Juvaini's report.

In the new course of the studies, some researchers have presented brief summary of Sultan's escape of the Mongol's grasp but no mentioning is made of the likely fight between Sultan's army and the Mongols in such a way that Sanders, meanwhile pointing to Mongols' conquers and their pursue of Sultan to Nishapur, states that the army "chased him to Ray and Hamadan. They lost his track in Hamadan. The runway Sultan could arrive at Abaskun in the Caspian Sea"<sup>26</sup>. Besides explicating the Mongols' overtake of Nishapur, Spuler states that "Hamadan to which Khwarazmshah had sought refuge was surrendered to Jebe. At this time, Sübedei conquered Qazvin. Khwarazmshah, as well, escaped to an island in Caspian Sea"<sup>27</sup>. Grousset, offering a succinct explication of Sultan's pursue, states that Mongol army entered Persian Iraq in pursue of Sultan and after capturing Ray, "they dashed towards Hamadan and arrived at a place adjacent to Qarun and Muhammad was nearly captured by them but he again managed to run away"<sup>28</sup>. Shirin Bayani, presenting an odd summary, only points to Sultan's escape and his being pursued by the Mongol mission from town to town and from province to province and informs of Sultan's flee to Mazandaran all of a sudden without recounting his escape route or mentioning the events that might have happened in this course<sup>29</sup>. On the contrary, another group of the researchers have extensively evaluated Sultan's recession path, Barthold, Boyle, Teymouri and Eqbal whose explanation of their reports was mentioned above are amongst this latter group.

### **Explanation of Sultan's Combat with Mongol Army**

There is a discrepancy as to how Sultan engaged with Mongol army quite the same way that there was found no consensus concerning Sultan's escape route. Jowzjani states that he does not accept Sultan's escape route and believes that Sultan fled

from Nishapur to Tamisheh and it was there that he was attacked by the Mongols and he himself went further inland to the mountainous regions of Mazandaran while assigning his army, commanded by Atsiz, the chamberlain, to fight with the Mongols and they, after a period of resistance, fled to Persian Iraq and chased by Mongol army and killed therein<sup>30</sup>. But, Juvaini has presented a detailed exposition of Sultan's retreat to Ray and Persian Iraq. Based thereon, Sultan, after running away from Khorasan and knowing that the Mongols are after him, went to Ray and then to Iraq and took position in Farzin fortress<sup>31</sup>. Roknuldin, Sultan's son, who had been appointed to the governorship of the region beforehand, came to serve Sultan in Farzin with thirty thousand military troops and "on the same day, Sultan dispatched Ghiath al-Din and his mother along with the other fellows of the harem to Qarun castle so as to be close to Taj al-Din Tuqan"<sup>32</sup>.

In Farzin Castle, Sultan again started consulting about how to defend against the Mongols. The region's native elders and commanders believed that a camp should be set up in the foothills of Oshtorankuh and Chapalaq plain and make use of Oshtorankuh's valleys and peaks as a natural barrack and fence against the Mongols. Sultan went from Farzin to the foothills of Oshtorankuh and, after closely examining the mountain, did not accept their ideas at which time Hezarsaf, the governor of the major Lor, entered and suggested that they have to go to the lesser Lor kingdom and set defensive barricades in Taku (Balu) strait within a distance from Fars to the major Lor and fight back the Mongols. This suggestion was also rejected by him for such an excuse that Hezarsaf wishes to take revenge on Atabak, the Fars's governor<sup>33</sup>. At this time, they suddenly were informed of the news of Mongol army's pass through Ray and their march forward towards the west. Mongol army, as well, heard in Ray that Sultan has moved to Hamadan.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, they were logically divided into two parts: a group went to Qazvin and another to Hamadan. Before engaging, Sultan sent his wives and properties to Qarun castle in the southern foothill of Alburz so it is natural to imagine that Sübedei, Bahador, would have intended to approach the castle through Qazvin. Sultan became distressed upon hearing the news that caused his camp to become splashed. Sultan hurriedly dashed towards Qarun castle but he had to face Mongol army half way thereto<sup>35</sup>. According to Nasawi, Sultan's troopers were more than twenty thousand at this time<sup>36</sup> and, of course, it is claimed by Juvaini that Sultan's son, Rokn al-Din, came to serve him with thirty thousand troops when he had arrived at Farzin castle<sup>37</sup>. Therefore, Sultan had not been outnumbered by the Mongols but because he had been astounded in fear of the Mongols, he managed to anonymously escape the arena, while his horse had been shot by an arrow, and left his troops to be killed by the Mongols<sup>38</sup>. Emad al-mulk Sawi was also inter alia those who were killed in this battle along with twenty thousand soldiers. After this escape, Sultan arrived at Qarun castle accompanied by several of his close relatives but he, knowing that the enemy would come after him, exited the castle after several days and misled

the Mongols by setting out towards Baghdad and changing his route to Sarjahan (Sarchahan) Castle from there to Gilan via Sefidrud valley thence to Mazandaran<sup>39</sup>. Therefore, Sultan never deployed his army against the Mongols and did not enter any man-to-man combat with the Mongols. The thing that is mentioned in the present article as the battle between Sultan and the Mongols is the result of a temporary, abrupt and unexpected confrontation between Sultan's baffled camp and with the missionary Mongol expedition and, as put by Juvaini, Mongol army did not even know Sultan and "started throwing arrows unknowingly"<sup>40</sup>.

### **Time of the Battle**

It is not clear when the battle happened and its approximate time can only be determined. Based on the existing resources, the Mongols' army arrived at the borders of Khwarazmshah's kingdom in 1219 and infiltrated the mainland after conquering the border districts and it was during early Zelhajjeh, 616 A.H. (February 1220) that Bukhara was besieged and it collapsed on feast of Qorban (10<sup>th</sup> of Zelhajjeh 616 A.H./ 23<sup>th</sup> February), in 1220<sup>41</sup>. Thenceforth, Mongol army set out on a raid on Samarqand and, finally, on 'Ashoura, 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram, 617 A.H. (24<sup>th</sup> March, 1220) they captured the city<sup>42</sup>. Although Juvaini's account signifies that Chingiz Khan dispatched an army to chase Sultan while having Samarqand in his siege<sup>43</sup>, his dispatched army, as agreed in a consensus by the other historians, only crossed the Oxus during late Rabi' al-Awal, 617 A.H. (early June, 1220), and entered Khorasan.<sup>44</sup> This is indicative of the idea that the dispatching of the troopers in pursue of Sultan had only happened after the actualization of complete conquering of Samarqand and Chingiz's domination over the entire Transoxiana.

According to the historians, Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah who at this time was in the proximity of Balkh and Termidh and had become frustrated upon hearing the news of Bukhara and Samarqand and as put by the historian "instantly, whispered 'the God is great' four times and fastened the irrevocable divorcement letter to the corner of his kingship bride's veil in the thought that he might never turn back to it"<sup>45</sup>, commenced retreating to the west and hastily darted towards Nishapur. As mentioned by Juvaini, Sultan entered Nishapur on 12<sup>th</sup> of Safar, 617 A.H. (25<sup>th</sup> April, 1220).<sup>46</sup> Nasawi has mentioned that he stayed in Nishapur for a very short time, "he did not remain in Nishapur for more than an hour"<sup>47</sup>, but Juvaini has recorded Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> of Rabi' al-Awal, 617 A.H. (19<sup>th</sup> May 1220), as the exact day Sultan left Nishapur.<sup>48</sup> This indicates that Sultan had remained in fear and hope in Nishapur for about a month.<sup>49</sup> The Mongols found their way paved upon Sultan's exit of Nishapur and they succeeded to take over Nishapur in a short while during the early Rabi' al-Thani, 617 A.H. (June, 1220).<sup>50</sup>

As Juvaini puts it, Sultan was informed of the Mongols' entry to and domination over Nishapur when Sultan entered Ray<sup>51</sup>. Therefore, according to the time that it



takes a news to reach from Nishapur to Ray, Sultan's camp arrival at Ray could have not been occurred before the renovation of Jumadi al-Awal Month (July, 1220). Based thereon, Sultan did not stop in Ray and directly went to Farzin Castle and spent some time there on consulting how they can repel Mongol army at which time he received the news of the Mongols' domination. According to the fact that Mongol army had been one month away from Sultan's camp up to this time meaning that the Mongols arrived one month later to the place wherein Sultan had camped, it appears that the Mongol's army entrance to Ray could have not been before Jumadi al-Thani, 617 A.H. (August, 1220), especially because Mongol army had had to fight on their path from Nishapur to Ray with the people of Damghan, Semnan, Kh<sub>w</sub>ar-e Ray as well as with the people of the other regions and this must have slowed them down. Based thereupon and considering the time period Mongol army needed to move the distance between Ray to Sultan's camp in the periphery of Farzin castle, the engagement time between Sultan's camp and Mongol army is estimated one month after the downfall of Ray. Also, based on the historical texts, after Khwarazmshah's escape, Mongol mission conquered Hamadan and Qazvin and, then, with the arrival of the cold season, they, incumbently, were forced to move to winter headquarters on Moghan plain in Azerbaijan.<sup>52</sup> Based on the researches performed, Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah became very upset and sick upon receiving the news of the Qarun Castle collapse and captivation of his mother and his harem's wives and died in Shawwal, 617 A.H. (December, 1220).<sup>53</sup> Since at least a period of one month is required for the arrival of the news and sickening of Khwarazmshah to the extent that it leads to his death, it can be understood that the occupation of Qarun Castle and the other adjacent fortresses existent in the southern foothills of Alburz and at the periphery of Zanjan might have happened during the month of Sha'aban. We know that the cold season and the winter begins in Hamadan and Zanjan, as well, from mid-November because Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah's deployment of army during early fall, 1217, was rendered fruitless upon the arrival of early cold.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, matching lunar calendar with the solar calendar shows that the Ramadhan Month, in 1196, began in the mid-November which was the time that the winter stuck the region and the Mongols were forced to move to winter headquarters on Mughan Plain and spend four months there (Ramadhan, Shawal, Zel-Qa'adeh and Zel-hajjeh) and it was during this time (precisely in Zel-Qa'adeh/January and February) that they started raiding Gurjistan districts<sup>55</sup> and, of course, they returned to Azerbaijan and Persian Iraq and began murdering and plundering the cities that had initiated commotion in Safar, 618 A.H. (April 1221).<sup>56</sup>

Also, as put by Juvaini, Hamadan was conquered with no shedding of blood<sup>57</sup> at this stage hence Qazvin's massacre and pursue of Khwarazmshah's army could have not lasted more than a month. So, accepting that the Mongols' migration to Mughan winter headquarters has happened in Ramadhan 617 A.H. (November

1220), it becomes clear that the time before that (i.e. Sha'aban/October), as well, should have been spent on taming Hamadan and Qazvin and the other regions in their periphery. Based on all these evidences, it is imagined that the battle between Sultan's army and Mongol's missionary squad has happened in the interval between Jumadi al-Thani (to wit the domination on Ray) till Sha'aban corresponding to the month of Rajab, 617 A.H. (September 1220).

### **The Place of the Battle**

Jowzjani states that the battle has happened in Tamisheh but the narration cannot be for granted because he has himself doubted the authenticity thereof. Juvaini presents an exposition of Sultan's escape from Farzin castle to Qarun castle but does not make any reference to a precise name as the battlefield. Nasawi knows the battle has happened in Dowlat Abad meadow, a district in Hamadan<sup>58</sup>. In two other places, he reminds of the battle as "Farzin event" or "Tatar's raid on Farzin"<sup>59</sup>. The later researchers, as well, have dealt with the determination of the battlefield based on Nasawi's account. Quoting Nasawi, Barthold realizes the battle has happened in Dowlat Abad but fails to match the battlefield with the today's localities<sup>60</sup>. It is only Abbas Eqbal who, meanwhile quoting Nasawi, knows the battlefield as matching with Malayer's Dowlat Abad<sup>61</sup> and the other researchers after him (especially the local history scholars) have repeated this same finding hence made incorrect deductions<sup>62</sup>.

Normally, before making any effort for determining the battlefield, one should have come to an understanding of the geographical locations mentioned in the narrations pertinent to Sultan's escape. As it was mentioned earlier, two geographical names form the central core of the narrations on Sultan's escape: one is Farzin Castle and the other is Qarun Castle. Based on the narration, Sultan firstly fled to Farzin Castle and dispatched his wives and children to Qarun Castle and, then, he himself endeavored to dash towards Qarun castle upon being informed of Mongol army's approach thereto. So, first of all, we should find out where these fortresses are located. Some orientalists, not being aware of any spot as Farzin Castle and imagining that the name is the altered form of Qazvin, have interchangeably used Qazvin for Farzin<sup>63</sup>. But, reference to the geographical texts indicates that there has been a locality on the mountains that has been given various names such as "Farzin (or Farjin, Farhin, Parchin and Barjin)"<sup>64</sup>. The spot is a castle in the vicinity (and/or even, in other words, at the gate) of Karaj-e-Abu-Dulaf.<sup>65</sup> With the demolition of Karaj in sixth century and after that and domination of the slaves and Atabaks on the affairs of Saljuqi kingdom, Farzin Castle found more importance and it was thenceforth used in the texts. Nowadays, it is located in the vicinity of Shazand in two close villages, named Farr and Hesar and their hills and ancient remnants therein are the relics of Farzin Castle.

Unfortunately, the historical and geographical resources extant on the issue have no information about Qarun Castle. Judging about the structural appearance of the name, Muhammad Qazvini imagines that the castle should have been on Qarin mountains and then concludes that the Qarin Mounts are located on the mountain range between Ray, Tabarestan and Damghan (or, in more precise terms, part of the Alburz mountain range wherein Damavand Peak is situated)<sup>66</sup>. But, according to Juvaini's narration (and in confirmation of Nasawi's report), it is clear that Qarun Castle has been close to the region in which Sultan was defeated and Sultan, despite his horse being wounded, could manage to get there. If Qarun Castle was at the periphery of Damavand, Sultan could have not reached it. Also, it is clear that sultan made a lot of efforts and struggled so much to get to the northern foothills of Alburz and he spent a day in Qarun Castle and, then, he chose several guides and a number of horses to leave the castle and pretended he was going to Baghdad but a little later he changed his path and in lieu of Baghdad went to Sarchahan thence, after seven days, to Gilan and then Mazandaran<sup>67</sup>.

If Qarun was on the northeastern side of Ray, to wit in the proximity of Damavand, Sultan could directly go to Mazandaran and it was not necessary for him to go towards Baghdad and then show up in Gilan. Also, it is narrated that Sultan, after misleading the Mongols, went to Sarchahan (Sarjahan) castle, which, according to Mostowfi, "was a castle on a mountain stretched along Taromein some five miles to the eastside of Sultaniyeh"<sup>68</sup>. Therefore, Sultan's fear of Mongols and their perseverance for arresting Sultan did not allow him to get so far away from Qarun Castle and it is clear, in this way, that Qarun Castle has been situated on the southern foothills of Alburz somewhere close to Sarchahan. The extant evidences indicate that there have been a great many of castles on the southern foothills of Alburz and in the northern side of Qazvin and Zanjan in such a way that Mostowfi, in his description of Taromain, has mentioned the name of five districts the center and throne of each has been a castle like Ferdows castle, Taj castle and Shemiran castle<sup>69</sup>. So, it seems that Qarun Castle, as well, has been one of the many fortresses on the southern plates of Alburz, somewhere in the northern side of Zanjan, about and in the vicinity of Sefidrud valley. Nowadays, there is a village in Tarom-e-Sofla region called Qarkhoon that might be possibly connected to Qarun Castle.

The third spot is Dowlat Abad that, according to Nasawi, has been the battlefield. It seems as if some researchers have mistakenly mentioned that the battle has happened in Malayer due to the similarity of the name "Dowlat Abad" with the governorship place in Malayer County during Qajar era but it is believed by the author that the aforesaid Dowlat Abad cannot be matched with Malayer, as the place mentioned in the abovementioned narration, for the following reasons:

First of all, the place has been named Malayer from the early Islamic centuries till Safavid era<sup>70</sup> and it is called so in the various texts to refer to the general name of an area (not a village or a city). As revised by the Qajar era historians, Muhammad

Ali Mirza Dowlatshah, the senior son of Fath Ali Shah, was the first person who had the entire western and southwestern parts of Iran under his command and he founded the premises of a city in there possibly to control the survivors of Zandiyeh dynasty in Malayer and considering his surname, i.e. Dowlatshah, the new city was named Dowlat Abad.<sup>71</sup> From that time on, the name was quickly dispersed and, besides being the center of Malayer district, it was also considered as the capital of three other villages, to wit the whole Malayer, Nahavand and Tuyserkan<sup>72</sup>. Therefore, there has not been a spot before Qajar era in Malayer named Dowlat Abad, whereas, according to Nasawi, Sultan and Mongols' battle has happened at the same time, i.e. beginning of the six or the seven hegira century when there has not been a place called Malayer's Dowlat Abad.

Another point is that, according to Nasawi, the foresaid Dowlat Abad has been a district in Hamadan at the time while, according to Mostowfi, Malayer district has been a district in Nahavand at the Ilkhanate Dynasty time and was considered one of the threefold district of the city of Nahavand<sup>73</sup>. Based on some historical evidences, Malayer was a subsidiary part of Nahavand before the Mongol period<sup>74</sup>. Moreover, the descriptions offered of Hamadan region in the historical and geographical sources belonging to pre-Mongol era are not at all indicative of Malayer's being a subsidiary thereof. According to geographers, Hamadan has been one of the largest cities of Jibal state that had been stretched from Asad Abad to Saveh and from Sisar foothills (today's Sanandaj and Bijar) to Karaj-e-Abu Dulaf and it incorporated twenty four districts<sup>75</sup>. Based on the names of these twenty four districts, it is well clear that the northern and eastern foothills of Alvand, respectively named Rustaq-e Quhpayeh (or Quhiabad) and Anarmowj, have been districts of Hamadan but the southern foothills of Alvand, encompassing Malayer and Tuyserkan, have not at all been part of Hamadan. Sharrah al-'Oliya and Sharrah al-Mianaj are mentioned in the list of Hamadan's districts<sup>76</sup> and this style of appellation indicates that there should have been another district called Sharrah al-Sofla that has not been part of Hamadan and it is, indeed, the same part of Sharrah the capital of which is currently Khundab, a district in Markazi Province<sup>77</sup> and it has been a subsidiary district of Karaj-e-Abu Dulaf. But, since the eastern area of Hamadan had been stretched to Saveh, it is clear that the northern parts of Markazi Province, to wit Farahan, have also been subsidiaries of Hamadan. Furthermore, some of the resources have explicitly enumerated Farahan as part of Hamadan or one of Hamadan's so-called *Rustaq*<sup>78</sup>. So, since Malayer has not been a subsidiary district in Hamadan at that time it could have not been the locus of the fight between Sultan and the Mongols.

As it was mentioned in explicating Khwarazmshah's escape route, Sultan was in Farzin Castle and moved towards Qarun Castle along with his sons with the intensification of the danger of Mongol army's approach. According to the fact that Farzin Castle was situated in the proximity of the today's Shazand and Qarun Castle was positioned in the northern Zanzan in the vicinity of Tarom, it is made

clear that Sultan, intending to escape from Farzin to Qarun and feeling the danger of such a fast-moving and brutal enemy as Mongols at his foot, should have not wasted any time and naturally chosen the shortest possible path, better said a direct line, so that he might get to the castle before enemy does. This is while, Malayer Plain was situated on the western side of Karaj and the direct line between Farzin to Qarun castle did not pass through it. It is evident that Sultan's pass through Malayer under such circumstances entails imagining that the fleeing Sultan elongated his path with his travelling towards the west instead of choosing a shorter path and this is not logical.

Another point is that, according to historians, Mongol army was informed of Sultan's escape towards Hamadan but their reports are devoid of any news signifying that Mongols were also aware that Sultan had been in Farzin and they have only been told that Sultan has moved towards Hamadan<sup>79</sup>. Therefore, they were immediately divided into two groups one of which rushed or, as Grousset puts it, rode at full gallop<sup>80</sup>, towards Hamadan. According to the fact that Mongol army was also in a hurry to have its hand on Sultan, they, also, should have naturally chosen the shortest and most straightforward path. Since Malayer is situated on the southern Hamadan, it is clear that the direct path, Ray-Hamadan, did not definitely pass through Malayer.

Based on these four reasons, it is ascertained that Sultan's camp and Mongol army had never met on Malayer Plain hence it has happened somewhere else. Evidently, the battlefield has to feature certain characteristics. First of all, it has to have happened east of Hamadan in which case the direct road from Ray to Hamadan could have passed through it. Secondly, it has to be in the north of Farzin so that the Farzin to Qarun road could have passed through it. Thirdly, the district must have been a subsidiary of Hamadan. Fourthly, and more importantly, the place should have been called Dowlat Abad, or something similar to it, at that time (and not today). Therefore, although, today, there are numerous places that are named Dowlat Abad, they cannot be realized as Sultan's battlefield because there is no mentioning of them in the geographical and historical texts belonging to fifth to eighth hegira century.

It becomes clear in a short glance at the geographical maps that the place featuring all these characteristics has been Farahan Plain meaning that the direct lines for travelling from Farzin to Qarun and from Ray to Hamadan intersect in Farahan Plain. Secondly, as agreed by all the geographical resources recounting the events until before the Mongols' invasion, the district has been a subsidiary of Hamadan. Thirdly, as put by Hamdullah Mostowfi, Dhulfabad (دابافلد) has been one of the largest villages of Farahan Plain and it has been also called Dowlat Abad (دابائلود) and Dulafabad (دابافلد) in substitute copies of *Nuzhat al-Qulub*<sup>81</sup>. Therefore, the author imagines that the name Dhulfabad has been misspelled in Nasawi's History, like in *Nozhat al-Qolub* and Nasawi's *DowlatAbad* must have been Dhulfabad. Guy

LeStrange has accepted the reading of the substitute copy for no justifiable reason and knows it has been DowlatAbad and matches it with the small village that is still called DowlatAbad within the periphery of Farmahin<sup>82</sup>. But, using scrutiny in the study of the regional geography indicates that Dhulfabad is a more correct spelling of the village's name because, corresponding to the Qajar era resources, Zulfabad (دابافلزن) has been an ancient historical city built by Abu Dulaf dynasty during the 8<sup>th</sup> century and it existed till Fath Ali Shah's era<sup>83</sup>. Nowadays, the village, called Zulfabad, is still situated in the vicinity of Farmahin in Farahan region and the archaeological excavations discovered the remnants of an underground city therein<sup>84</sup>. This Dhulfabad has been close to a great lagoon, called "Chaghan Navur" which is seemingly the very today's Miqan Lagoon. In this regard, it might have been a suitable place for Sultan's recreation and hunting zone and Khwarazmshah has possibly passed through this path. According to the fact that Nasawi has attributed the great meadow on Farahan Plain to Dowlat Abad, it can be imagined that the spot had been of a great importance in the then era. As a matter of fact, Zulfabad has been more famous and it was considered an important city in the past so it can be postulated that Sultan encountered the Mongols in this same Dhulfabad (and not the small Dowlat Abad village). Based thereupon, it is completely natural to imagine that Mongol army were riding on a direct line from Ray to Hamadan and Khwarazmshah also was escaping on a direct line from Farzin to Qarun thence to Tarom and they faced each other on a meadow near Farahan's Zulfabad (dhulfabad).

## CONCLUSION

The present study indicated that despite his military power and his kingly magnificence and majesty, Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah had been drastically frightened by the news of the Mongols' invasion and lost his will to resist. Avoiding confrontation with Mongol army, he divided his army troopers to various garrisons and bases in the border towns and fled Mongol army without even the smallest engagement. Chingiz, being informed of Sultan's escape, dispatched a group of Mongol army headed by Yeme (Jebe) Noyan and Sübedei, Bahador, in Rabi' al-Awal, 1220, to chase him. The speed of Sultan's escape and Mongol army's pursue, and possibly Khwarazmshah's intentional policy, caused discrepancies regarding his escape path. Sultan received the news of Mongol army's arrival while he was consulting and planning in Farzin Castle (about the present day Sahazand) for defense and dashed from Farzin to Qarun, north of Zanjan. On his way, Sultan happened to face a group of Mongol army on a day in Rajab, 1196. The incident that is the only formal battle between Khwarazmshah and Mongol army has happened on a meadow near Dhulfabad in Farahan District and not on Malayer Plain as claimed by some researchers and the result was Sultan's army massacre. Sultan's horse was wounded and Sultan, accompanied by some of his close elites, hardly managed to escape the arena and went to Qarun Castle thence to Sarchahan castle and finally to Gilan and from there to Mazandaran.

*Footnotes*

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- 2 V. V. Barthold, "*Tukestan down to the Mongol invasion*", Translated from the original Russian by H. A. R. GIBB, (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), pp. 425-426.
- 3 Abbas Eqbal Ashtiani, the history of Mongol, (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1365/1986), pp. 39.
- 4 Including Parviz Adhka'ei, "*Farmanravayan-e Gomnam* (the anonymous kings)", (Tehran: Bonyad-e Mowqafat-e Dr. Mahmud Afshar, 1367/1988), pp. 251-252; Safizadeh, Seddiq, "*Tarikh-e Panj Hezar saleh-ye Iran*", (Tehran: Aron, 1385/ 2006), pp. 1335-1336.
- 5 Majid Zahiri, "*Tarikh-e malayer* (history of Malayer)", the author's handwritten manuscript, Malayer's Allameh Majlesi Library, (unpublished), pp. 6; Abd al-Karim Torabi, "*Malayer Shenasi* (study of Malayer)", weekly journal of *Andalib-e-Malayer*, no.26 (10 Aban 1376/ 1 November 1997), pp. 2; and, Mahmud Reza Taqavi Rad, "*Karnameh-ye Malayer*", (Tehran: Bustan-e-Quran, 1390/2011), pp. 8.
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- 8 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 105-107.
- 9 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 106-107; Boyle, pp. 306.
- 10 Nasawi, pp. 54.
- 11 Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamadani, "*Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*", ed. Bahman Karimi, (Tehran: Iqbal, 1367/1988), Vol. 1, pp. 347.
- 12 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 105-106.
- 13 See also, Juvaini, v.1, pp. 62-101.
- 14 Nasawi, pp. 64-65.
- 15 Jowzjani, v.2, pp. 109.
- 16 Ibn al-Athir, "*Al-Kamel Fi Al-Tarikh*", ed. K. J. Tornberg, (Beirut: Dar-e-Sader, 1978), v.12, pp. 369-370.
- 17 Fazlullah Ibn Abdullah Vassaf Al-Hazrah, "*Tarikh-e-Vassaf al-Hazrah*", ed. Muhammad Mahdi esfahani, (Tehran: Kewtabkhneh-ye Ibn-e Sina va Ja'afary Tabrizi, 1338/ 1959), pp. 570-571; Muhammad Ibn Ali Shabankare'ei, *Majma' Al-Ansab*, ed. Mir Hashem Mohaddes (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1363/1984), pp. 132, 240-241); Davud Ibn Muhammad Banakati, *Tarikh-e Banakati*, ed. Ja'afar Sho'ar, (Tehran, Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakhir-e Farhangi, 1378/1999), pp. 240,368.
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- 21 Jowzjani, v.2, pp. 109.
- 22 Juvaini, v.1, pp. 114-116; v.2, pp. 108-115.
- 23 Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamadani, v.1, pp. 366-369; Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, “Zafamameh”, ed. Sa’eid Mir Muhammad Sadeq and Abd al-Hossein Nava’ei, 2 vols. (Tehran: Kitābkhānih-yi Majlis-i Shūrā –yi Islāmī, 1387/2008), Vol. 1, pp. 132-137.
- 24 Nasawi, pp. 66-67.
- 25 Nasawi, pp. 94-98.
- 26 J.J. Saunders, “the history of the Mongol conquests”, (Philadelphia: university of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 59.
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- 28 René Grousset, *The empire of the Steppes*, Translated from the French by Naomi Walford, (Newjersey: Rutgers university press, 1970), pp. 243.
- 29 Shirin Bayani, *Din vA Dowlat dar Iran-e ’Ahd-e moghul*, (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1370/1991), v.1, pp. 104-105.
- 30 Jowzjani, v.1, pp. 312; v.2, pp. 109.
- 31 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 112.
- 32 Ibid, pp. 113.
- 33 Ibid, 113-114.
- 34 Juvaini, v.1, pp. 115.
- 35 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 113-114.
- 36 Nasawi, pp. 67.
- 37 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 113.
- 38 Nasawi, pp. 67 ; Juvaini, v.2, pp. 114.
- 39 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 114-115; Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamadani, v.1, pp. 368-369.
- 40 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 114.
- 41 Jowzjani, v.2, pp. 106-107; Ibn al-Athir, v.12, pp. 365.
- 42 Jowzjani, v.2, pp. 107; v.1, pp. 312; Ibn al-Athir, v.12, pp. 368.
- 43 Juvaini, v.1, pp. 113.
- 44 Jowzjani, v.2, pp. 108; Yazdi, v.1, pp. 132.
- 45 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 109.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Nasawi, pp. 66.
- 48 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 112.
- 49 Barthold believes that Nasawi’s narration is more accurate than Juvaini’s but the details mentioned in Juvaini’s account such as his reference to the exact day of Sultan’s exit as well as the interval between Sultan’s exit and the forthcoming events are all indicative of the fact that



Juvaini's narration is more accurate and true and, unlike Barthold's idea, Nasawi's narration is ignorable for its ambiguity. That is because the term "hour" is used in Persian language and literature and in Iranians' colloquial language to refer to short time and does not necessarily mean 60 minutes. According to the fact that setting a camp by Sultan and his tendency towards having fun and amusing himself for every resting time and settlement should have taken him more than a few hours and then preparing again to move had also needed several more hours, then, in Nasawi's mind, Sultan's army could have not stopped in Nishapur.

- 50 Juvaini, v.1, pp. 114.
- 51 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 112.
- 52 Juvaini, v.1, pp. 116; Ibn al-Athir, v.12, pp. 374.
- 53 Barthold, pp. 426; Teymouri, pp. 253-254.
- 54 Rashid al-Din, v.1, pp. 341.
- 55 Ibn al-Athir, v.12, pp. 375.
- 56 Ibid, pp. 377.
- 57 Juvaini, v.1, pp. 115.
- 58 Nasawi, pp. 67.
- 59 Ibid, pp. 94&98.
- 60 Barthold, pp. 422, 425.
- 61 Eqbal Ashtiani, pp. 39.
- 62 Refer to the introduction of this same article.
- 63 Barthold, pp. 422; Grousset, pp. 243.
- 64 Abu Raja' Qomi, Tarikh al-Wuzara, ed. Muhammad Taqi DaneshPajooh, (Tehran, Mu'seseh Motale'at va Tahqiqat Farhangi, 1363/1984), pp. 137 ; Ali Ibn Soleiman al-Ravandi, "Rahat al-Sodur va Ayat al-Sorur", ed.Muhammad Eqbal (Tehran: Elmi, 1363/1984), pp. 235, 262, 287, 365 366, 367, 375-376, 379 and 484; Naseh Ibn Zafar Jurfadaqani, Tarjomeh-ye Tarikh-e Yamini, ed. Ja'afar Sho'ar (Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi, 1374/1995), pp. 431.
- 65 Shihab al-Din Abu Abdullah Yaqut al-Hamavi, Mo'jam Al-buldan, ed., F. Wustenfeld (Beirut, Dar-e-Sader, 1977), v.4, pp. 249; Hamdullah Mostowfi, "Nuzhat al-Qulub", ed. Guy Le Strange (Tehran, Donyay-e-Ketab, 1362/ 1983), pp. 69.
- 66 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 113, note.1.
- 67 Juvaini, v.2, pp. 114-115.
- 68 Mostowfi, Nuzhat al-Qulub, pp. 64.
- 69 Ibid, pp. 65.
- 70 Mojmal al-Tawarikh va al-Qisas, ed. M. Bahar (Tehran, Kolaleh Khavar,1318/1939), pp. 461; Also see, Mohsen Rahmati, "Historical Geography of Malayer in the Early Islamic Centuries", *Historical Studies of Islam* 34(1396/2017): 65-81.
- 71 Aliqoli Mirza E'tizad al-Saltaneh, Eksir al-Tawarikh, ed. Jamshid Kianfar,(Tehran: Weisman, 1370/1991), pp. 198.
- 72 Jakob, Eduard Polak, "Persian,das land und seine Bewohner Ethnographiche Schilderungen", translated to Persian by KaykavusJahandari (Tehran: Kh<sub>w</sub>arazmi,1368/1989), pp. 296; Oskar Ritter von Neidermayer, "under the scorching sun", translated to persian by Kaykavus Jahandari (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1363/1984), pp. 41 69, 384; Gholam hossein Khan Afzal al-Mulk, "Afzal Al-Tawarikh", ed. Mansureh Ettehadiyeh and Sirus Sa'advandian(Tehran:Nashr-e Tarikh-e-Iran,1361), pp. 80, 92, 100, 188 and 353.

- 73 Mostowfi, Nuzhat al-Qulub, pp. 74; Also See Mohsen Rahmati, "The transformation of Malayer's administrative and social structure from the decline of the Ilkhanids to the fall of the Safavid", Quarterly journal *History of Islam and Iran*, 27 (123), Bahar 1396/spring 2017, pp. 145-148.
- 74 See "Mojmal al-Tawarikh va al-Qisas", pp. 461.
- 75 Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Faqih Hamadani, "Mukhtasar Al-Buldan", ed. M. J. De goeje (Liden: Brill, 1885), pp. 239; Yaqut Hamavi, v.5, pp. 414.
- 76 Ibn al-Faqih Hamadani, pp. 239.
- 77 [Http://shahsavargar.blogfa.com/post/9](http://shahsavargar.blogfa.com/post/9).
- 78 Ibn al-Faqih Hamadani, pp. 239 and 245-247; Yaqut Hamavi, v.4, pp. 245-258.
- 79 Juvaini, v.1, pp. 115.
- 80 Grousset, pp. 243.
- 81 Mostowfi, Ibid, pp. 69.
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