A localized Alexander: the Myth of Alexander the Great in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Iran

Dissertation

zur Erlangung des Grades eines

Doktors der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

am Fachbereich Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften

der Freien Universität Berlin

vorgelegt von

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Berlin 2025

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Date of Defense: 27.08.2025

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my wonderful parents, who have been my unwavering supporters throughout my academic journey. My mother, whose love for reading I admired from a young age, inspired my first steps toward becoming who I am today. Her quiet dedication to knowledge left an indelible mark on me. With his patience, wisdom, and unwavering support, my father has been my guiding hand, especially during my fieldwork and research. He was more than a father. They taught me to connect to my roots, and their teachings on the values of our local traditions have been my guiding light in navigating this modern world.

I want to thank my dear Fariborz, who has been my anchor, source of comfort, and greatest support. His unique role in my life has been a beacon of light in the darkest times, and I am endlessly grateful for his presence.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis, whose guidance was instrumental in helping me find direction when I felt lost during my research in Iran. His support extended far beyond academic supervision—his impact on my research and personal growth was profound, and I will always be grateful for his patience and insight.

I also sincerely appreciate my advisor, Hans-Joachim Gehrke, whose thoughtful feedback and key guidance played a crucial role in shaping my research. His expertise and encouragement were invaluable, and I am deeply thankful for his contributions to my work.

I am grateful to the informants and the local people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, who generously shared their knowledge and experiences with me during my fieldwork and research. Their personal contributions were invaluable, and I am deeply grateful for their generosity.

I am also incredibly grateful to my friends, who were the source of my joy and encouraged me when I needed it most. There are too many to name, and I consider myself lucky. Among them, my siblings deserve a special mention—not only for their support in the field but also for always finding ways to lift my spirits when things became overwhelming.

I extend my acknowledgment to those whose antagonism and adversity, though challenging, ultimately served as a catalyst for my resilience and determination, driving me to achieve this academic milestone.

To everyone who has been part of this journey in any way, thank you!

I hereby declare that I alone am responsible for the content of my doctoral dissertation and that I have only used the sources or references cited in the dissertation.

Yasaman Rezaei

Outline for PhD Thesis: A localized Alexander: The Myth of Alexander the Great in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Iran

Front Matter

English Abstract

This dissertation examines Luri oral traditions in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, focusing on role in shaping historical memory and identity through narratives of Alexander the Great. Using a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, it traces the evolution of Alexander's legend across Greek, Byzantine, Syriac, and Persian sources, demonstrating that oral traditions are not passive reflections of history but active historiographical forces that preserve, reinterpret, and resist dominant narratives.

By analyzing onomastics (naming practices), toponyms (place names), and gendered representations, the study examines how Luri oral traditions function as sites of cultural resistance, challenging Persian nationalist historiography. It explores how Reżā Šāh's policies marginalized regional oral traditions, promoting the Šāhnāme while sidelining Niẓāmī's Iskandarnāme, yet Lur oral performers continued to preserve alternative narratives, maintaining distinct historical perspectives.

Through ethnographic fieldwork and an analysis of oral storytelling techniques, the study categorizes Luri oral narratives into *Maṣal* (proverbs), *Muqawwm* (chants), *Tīmṣāl* (literary adaptations and genealogies), *Matīl* (fables), and *Iʿtiqāt* (beliefs), demonstrating how these traditions actively shape and transmit historical meaning. The findings underscore the urgency of preserving regional oral traditions, as their erosion threatens to erase alternative historiographies and counter-histories essential to understanding Iran's diverse historical landscape. This study contributes to oral history, historiography, and cultural memory studies, offering insights into how oral traditions function as mechanisms of historical negotiation, cultural resistance, and identity formation beyond Iran.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation untersucht die Lurische mündliche Überlieferung in Kohgiluyeh und Boyer-Ahmad und deren Rolle bei der Gestaltung historischer Erinnerung und Identität durch Erzählungen über Alexander den Großen. Durch einen vergleichenden und interdisziplinären Ansatz wird die Entwicklung der Alexandersage über griechische, byzantinische, syrische und persische Quellen hinweg nachgezeichnet und gezeigt, dass Oraltraditionen keine passiven Überlieferungen der Geschichte sind, sondern aktive historiografische Kräfte, die historisches Wissen bewahren, umdeuten und sich gegen dominante Narrative behaupten.

Durch die Analyse von Onomastik (Namensgebung), Toponymie (Ortsnamen) und geschlechtsspezifischen Darstellungen untersucht die Studie, wie lurische Oraltraditionen als Orte kulturellen Widerstands fungieren, die die persische nationalistische Historiografie herausfordern. Sie zeigt, wie die Politik von Reżā Šāh regionale Oraltraditionen marginalisierte, indem sie das Šāhnāme als nationalistische Erzählung etablierte, während alternative literarische Traditionen wie Niẓāmīs Iskandarnāme verdrängt wurden. Dennoch bewahrten lurische Erzähler weiterhin alternative Narrative, wodurch eigenständige historische Perspektiven erhalten blieben.

Durch ethnografische Feldforschung und die Analyse von oralen Erzähltechniken werden lurische Oraltraditionen in *Maṣal* (Sprichwörter), *Muqawwim* (Gesänge), *Timṣāl* (literarische Adaptionen und Genealogien), *Matīl* (Fabeln) und *Iʿtiqāt* (Glaubensvorstellungen) kategorisiert, um zu zeigen, wie diese Traditionen aktiv historische Bedeutungen formen und weitergeben. Die Ergebnisse verdeutlichen die Dringlichkeit, regionale Oraltraditionen zu bewahren, da deren Verlust zur Tilgung alternativer Historiografien und Gegengeschichten führen könnte, die für ein umfassendes Verständnis der vielfältigen historischen Landschaft Irans unerlässlich sind. Darüber hinaus trägt die Studie zu den Bereichen Oral History, Historiografie und kulturelle Erinnerungsforschung bei und bietet Einblicke in die Funktion von Oraltraditionen als Mechanismen historischer Aushandlung, kulturellen Widerstands und Identitätsbildung über Iran hinaus.

Contents

Chapter One: The Alexander Romance

1.1 Chapter overview

As this thesis investigates a localized narrative surrounding Alexander the Great within the historical context of Iran, it is first essential to examine the Alexander Romance's broader presence in both written and oral traditions. Before focusing on the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, this chapter offers a comprehensive overview of how the Alexander legend has been depicted in various literary sources, including Greek, Syriac, and Persian texts. This overview also incorporates recent historiographical scholarship to situate Alexander's image along the continuum between historical biography and evolving legend. By critically engaging with the principal ancient sources—particularly those shaped by later authors who relied on now-lost eyewitness accounts—this chapter establishes the foundation for understanding how the legendary narrative of Alexander circulated and transformed across diverse cultural contexts. The structure of the chapter is as follows:

- **Section 3: The Alexander Romance in Byzantine Sources**: This section offers a comprehensive and detailed exploration of the Alexander Romance from a Byzantine perspective. It is divided into two parts: 'Greek Sources[1]' and 'Syriac Sources[2],' which provide an in-depth understanding of how the Byzantine world shaped and retold the legend of Alexander within its cultural context.
- **Section 4: The Alexander Romance in Persian Sources**: This section provides a thorough and detailed exploration of Persian representations of Alexander, focusing on both negative and positive portrayals. The subsection **'Alexander the Accursed'**

[1] Early Greek accounts, such as Callisthenes' *History of Alexander*, shaped the Alexander Romance. Callisthenes, a historian who accompanied Alexander on his campaigns, is credited with creating one of the earliest narratives of Alexander's life. However, his original work has been lost. This historical account laid the foundation for later fictionalized versions, most notably the work attributed to Pseudo-Callisthenes. The Pseudo-Callisthenes version, composed in the 3rd or 4th century CE, expanded the historical framework by adding imaginative elements such as encounters with mythical creatures and divine interventions, transforming Alexander from a historical figure into a legendary hero. These early Greek sources provided the essential narrative structure and thematic elements that various cultures would expand upon and adapt, influencing Syriac, Persian, and Arabic versions of the Alexander Romance (Der Neue Pauly, s.v. "Alexanderromance").

[2] The Syriac adaptations of the Alexander Romance are notable for their role in transmitting classical narratives into early Christian themes. These versions, emerging within Syriac-speaking Christian communities, reinterpreted the stories of Alexander the Great through a Christian lens. They often depicted him as a ruler with divine favor or a protector of Christian values. By blending legendary exploits with hagiographic elements, the Syriac adaptations positioned Alexander as a conqueror and a figure who aligned with religious virtues and ideals. This transformation highlights Syriac literature's cultural and religious shifts, where classical traditions were reimagined to fit Christian moral and theological frameworks. These adaptations were crucial in disseminating the Alexander Romance into other languages and cultures, influencing later Arabic and Persian versions (Van Donzel & Schmidt, 2010).

investigates the critical depictions found in texts such as the *Bundahishn*, *Denkard*, and *Book of Arda Viraf*. Meanwhile, **'Alexander the Prophet and Hero'** explores more favorable portrayals in Persian literature and religious works.

- **Section 5: The Enduring Alexander in Oral Tradition**: This section examines Alexander the Great's enduring legacy in the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Tracing the transmission of these narratives across generations highlights Alexander's sustained cultural significance within regional storytelling practices. Furthermore, this section serves as a conceptual bridge to the following chapter, which offers a more detailed ethnographic analysis of these oral traditions within their local sociocultural contexts.

1.2. Introduction

The *Alexander Romance* is a rich body of legends, myths, and imaginative narratives centered on the figure of Alexander the Great, the ancient Macedonian king and military strategist who ruled during the fourth century BCE. These stories gained remarkable popularity during the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods, evolving across various versions and languages. Rather than constituting a single, unified work, the *Alexander Romance* refers to a literary genre encompassing numerous texts from diverse cultural milieus, each offering its perspective on Alexander's legacy.

Alexander III of Macedon, known as Alexander the Great, ascended the throne in 336 BCE at the age of twenty, following the assassination of his father, Philip II. His reign marked one of the most extensive and ambitious military campaigns of antiquity, extending across Western Asia and Egypt and resulting in one of the largest empires by his death in 323 BCE. Educated by Aristotle until the age of sixteen, Alexander consolidated power in the Balkans before launching a decade-long campaign against the Achaemenid Empire in 334 BCE. His victories over Darius III culminated in the fall of Persia, and he pushed as far as the Indian subcontinent before retreating, mainly due to the exhaustion of his army. He died in Babylon, where he had planned to establish the capital of his empire. Following his death, internecine conflicts among his successors led to the fragmentation of his dominion. However, Alexander's cultural and political legacy—from the founding of cities such as Alexandria to the spread of Greco-

Buddhism—remains one of the most enduring in world history (Baynham, 2003; Meister, 2016).

This legacy is also reflected in the voluminous ancient literature he inspired. Alexander arguably generated more literary attention than any other figure in the Greco-Roman world (Baynham, 2003). Nevertheless, the historical figure is often elusive—"obscured and distorted by the very complexity of the literary tradition surrounding him" (Baynham, 2003). The major surviving narratives—by Arrian, Curtius Rufus, Plutarch, Diodorus, and Justin—were written between three and five centuries after Alexander's death. None are contemporary accounts, each shaped by distinct rhetorical, philosophical, or political concerns (Scardino, 2014; Zambrini, 2017).

Modern historiography acknowledges that these sources reflect ideological tensions. According to Scardino (2014), ancient historians constructed competing images of Alexander: some exalted him as a visionary and semi-divine ruler, while others condemned him as a reckless despot. This interpretive divergence challenges modern scholars to deconstruct layers of textual mediation in order to approximate the earliest historical narratives (Nawotka et al., 2018). Central to this task are the now-lost eyewitness accounts authored by Alexander's companions—such as Callisthenes, Nearchus, Ptolemy, and Aristobulus—which were later excerpted or paraphrased by subsequent writers (Zambrini, 2017).

One of the most significant of these companions was Callisthenes of Olynthus, who accompanied Alexander as court historian. His lost chronicle is widely regarded as foundational to later accounts. Ironically, however, Callisthenes' name became associated with the most fantastical and ahistorical text in the tradition—the *Alexander Romance*, an anonymous work erroneously attributed to him and therefore referred to as *Pseudo-Callisthenes* (Stoneman, 2022). His imprisonment and possible execution, after opposing Alexander's claims to divine status, only added to the mystique surrounding his role (Prentice, 1923; Heckel, 2006).

While modern scholarship seeks to disentangle history from fiction, ancient audiences already crafted a legendary Alexander. Likely composed in the third century CE, the *Alexander Romance* abounds in mythic and magical episodes—from divine ancestry to underwater voyages—and played a pivotal role in shaping medieval and early modern perceptions of Alexander (Heckel & Yardley, 2004; Nawotka et al., 2018). As Baynham (2003) observes, this

imaginative, often implausible narrative, rather than sober historical accounts, achieved the most extensive circulation across cultures and languages.

The *Alexander Romance* thus became a vehicle for moral, religious, and political reflection in various historical contexts. Translated into Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, Ethiopic, and other languages, it adapted to new audiences and purposes, often reimagining Alexander as a prophet, philosopher-king, or mystic. Across its many recensions, the Romance blends Greek, Near Eastern, and Persian motifs, forming a syncretic and evolving tradition (Stoneman, 2022).

Although the *Alexander Romance* cannot be treated as a reliable historical source, it remains a vital lens through which to study Alexander's cultural reception. In transforming him from a historical conqueror into a figure of global myth, the Romance reveals how later societies projected their values, anxieties, and aspirations onto his image. Among the earliest and most influential iterations are the Greek versions attributed to *Pseudo-Callisthenes* and the so-called *Vulgate* tradition, derived from the historian Cleitarchus. These foundational texts will be discussed in the following section.

1.3. Alexander Romance in Byzantine Sources

The influence of the *Alexander Romance*, a source of fascination for Byzantine scholars and writers, permeated Byzantine sources, underscoring its enduring allure and cultural significance within the Byzantine Empire. These scholars and writers showed a keen interest in preserving and transforming classical Greek and Roman literature, including the captivating stories of Alexander the Great.

In Byzantine literature, the *Alexander Romance* often became a subject of adaptation and integration into various works. Byzantine authors actively reshaped these tales, introducing new episodes, moral teachings, or religious elements to align with Byzantine cultural and spiritual values (Stoneman, 2022). Alexander’s narratives seamlessly merged with broader historical or fictional accounts, providing Byzantine writers with a way to illustrate key themes or ideas within their literary works. This dynamic interplay between Alexander’s stories and Byzantine literature reflects the lasting resonance of this legendary figure, whose legacy was not only preserved but also actively reshaped to fit the concerns and values of the Byzantine world.

In historical and geographical writings, Byzantine historians frequently referenced Alexander's exploits, occasionally drawing from the *Alexander Romance* to embellish their accounts. Education held a central role in Byzantine society, and these stories became valuable content in educational texts and anthologies, aiding in teaching moral lessons, history, and literature. Byzantine poets and writers cleverly alluded to the *Alexander Romance* in their works, using Alexander's legendary feats to draw comparisons and create vivid imagery. In this way, the *Alexander Romance* continued to captivate Byzantine writers and scholars, standing as a testament to its far-reaching influence across cultures and epochs.

In Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2, respectively, I will provide a brief overview of the Greek and Syriac versions of the *Alexander Romance*. While I will touch on these versions, the primary focus of my investigation will be on Persian sources, with particular emphasis on the rich oral tradition that has played a pivotal role in shaping the enduring narrative of Alexander the Great in Persian culture and literature.

1. 3.1 Greek Sources

The Greek sources of the *Alexander Romance* constitute the foundational layer of this literary tradition. The early historiographical accounts and the later romanticized narratives were critical building blocks for subsequent versions and adaptations of the Alexander legend. This section draws on recent scholarship to examine how the Alexander story first took shape in Greek historiography and later evolved into the legendary *Alexander Romance* (Baynham, 2003; Zambrini, 2017; Scardino, 2014).

Callisthenes' *History of Alexander*

One of the earliest Greek accounts of Alexander's life is the now-lost work of Callisthenes of Olynthus, a court historian who accompanied Alexander during his campaigns. Known in Latin as *Praxeis Alexandrou* ("Deeds of Alexander"), this account is generally regarded as the first official chronicle of Alexander's expedition (Baynham, 2003; Prentice, 1923). As a relative of Aristotle and a prominent scholar, Callisthenes was invited to the Macedonian court and entrusted with recording Alexander's deeds. Although the original text has not survived, later

authors quoted or paraphrased it in at least twenty known works. Though fragmentary, these citations indicate that his account included factual reporting and elements of heroic embellishment (Zambrini, 2017; Meister, 2016).

Scholars broadly recognize the foundational role Callisthenes played in shaping early portrayals of Alexander. His scholarly authority and direct access to the Macedonian court lent credibility to his writings. However, his relationship with Alexander ended in political conflict: he opposed the king's adoption of *proskynesis*, a Persian ritual of obeisance, arguing that it was inappropriate for a Greek ruler to claim divinity. This opposition led to his arrest and, eventually, his execution in 327 BCE (Heckel, 2006). As Prentice (1923) argues, Callisthenes came to symbolize the moral conscience of historiography—an early figure who resisted imperial ideology from within.

Ironically, Callisthenes' name later became associated with the most fantastical version of Alexander's life: the *Alexander Romance*. Although he had no connection with this work, several Greek manuscripts falsely attributed it to him. As a result, modern scholars refer to its anonymous author as *Pseudo-Callisthenes* (Stoneman, 2022). This confusion reflects the deep entanglement between history and myth in the reception of Alexander and the cultural desire to anchor even fictionalized accounts in perceived eyewitness authority.

Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance*

The most influential Greek version of the legendary Alexander is the *Alexander Romance* attributed to Pseudo-Callisthenes. Composed several centuries after Alexander's death, this text presents a fictionalized and highly embellished biography that draws loosely on earlier historical sources and popular oral traditions. It includes episodes of divine parentage, supernatural encounters, philosophical dialogues, and diplomatic exchanges with distant rulers—elements that diverge from the tone and content of official military chronicles (Stoneman, 2022; Heckel & Yardley, 2004).

Scholars generally date the core text to the third century CE, possibly revised in the fourth century, with Alexandria—a prominent center of Hellenistic intellectual life—often identified as its place of composition (Baynham, 2003; Stoneman, 1991). Over time, the Romance developed into several Greek recensions, shaped by linguistic, religious, and ideological

factors. By the Byzantine period, at least four principal Greek recensions had emerged—labeled α, β, γ, and δ (Krönung, 2019).

- The **α-recension**, preserved in an 11th-century manuscript, formed the basis for early translations into Armenian (ca. 5th century) and Latin (*Res gestae Alexandri*, ca. 4th century).
- The **β-recension**, developed after the Latin version, spawned three significant sub-recensions:
    - **ε**, which includes episodes involving Jerusalem and Judaic themes;
    - **λ**, which expands Book III with additional adventures;
    - **γ**, the longest form, integrates content from ε and further mythological elements, including flying machines and undersea journeys.
- The **δ-recension** is not extant in Greek but is believed to underlie the Syriac, Arabic, Persian, and Ethiopic versions, as well as the *Historia de Proeliis*, a Latin adaptation by Leo the Archpriest in the 10th century (Stoneman, 2022; Zambrini, 2017).

  This proliferation of recensions underscores the fluidity of the *Alexander Romance*. Rather than functioning as a fixed text, it evolved continuously through translation, adaptation, and appropriation processes. As Stoneman (2022) notes, its vivid and entertaining narrative gave rise to a vast corpus of derivative literature, reaching a wider audience than any of the canonical historians of Alexander. The Romance was translated and retold across linguistic and cultural boundaries—Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic, Persian, and Latin—demonstrating its extraordinary capacity for reinvention.

In summary, the Greek sources relevant to the *Alexander Romance* represent two intertwined traditions: first, the historical accounts rooted in the testimonies of Alexander's contemporaries, and second, the legendary narratives that transformed him into a transhistorical and mythological figure. While Callisthenes and other historians contributed to the factual core of Alexander's image, the *Alexander Romance* attributed to Pseudo-Callisthenes reimagined him for new audiences and contexts. Both traditions were central to Byzantine reception and provided the foundation for subsequent adaptations in Syriac, Arabic, and Persian literatures.

The following section examines the representation of the Alexander Romance in Syriac sources, which serve as a critical intermediary between the Hellenistic Greek legend and its transformations in the early Islamic world.

1.3.2 Syriac Sources

The *Alexander Romance* also found its way into Syriac sources, highlighting its widespread appeal and remarkable adaptability beyond the confines of Greek and Latin traditions. Syriac—a dialect of Middle Aramaic—served as a significant literary and liturgical language for Christian communities across the Near East between the first and seventh centuries CE. Within this context, Syriac-speaking scholars translated and reinterpreted the Romance, often infusing the material with theological and moral content aligned with their Christian worldview (Drijvers, 1999; Stoneman, 2022).

In Syriac Christian literature, Alexander's narrative was frequently adapted into hagiographic frameworks, blending classical legend with religious ideals. These translations and transformations reoriented the Romance for new audiences, presenting the Macedonian conqueror as a figure of divine purpose and Christian moral virtue. This process of syncretism produced a compelling fusion of classical epic and early Christian ideology, illustrating the depth of the *Alexander Romance's* penetration into late antique literary culture (Zambrini, 2017). The resulting narratives engaged simultaneously with the universalizing ambitions of Hellenistic kingship and the theological imperatives of Eastern Christianity.

The Syriac tradition also left an enduring mark on medieval literature, particularly in how Alexander was reimagined across religious and linguistic frontiers. Syriac authors frequently incorporated motifs from the Romance into new compositions, reshaping them according to local doctrinal and historical concerns. These adaptations enriched Alexander's image with new layers of symbolic meaning, underscoring the narrative's flexibility in accommodating diverse spiritual and ethical frameworks (Baynham, 2003; Scardino, 2014).

Modern scholarship has paid considerable attention to the origins and transmission of these Syriac versions. A central question concerns whether a Middle Persian intermediary—now lost—may have influenced the Syriac *Alexander Romance*. Nöldeke (1890), whose philological analysis remains influential, argued that the Romance's Syriac, Arabic, Persian, and Ethiopian versions bear traces of a Pahlavī[3] original. His hypothesis is based on textual

[3] In this thesis, I use the spelling ***Pahlavī*** (with a long ī) specifically for the **Middle Persian language** of the Sasanian period, following DMG transliteration standards. For references to the **modern Pahlavi dynasty**—including figures such as *Reżā Šāh* and *Moḥammad-Reżā Šāh*, as well as terms like the ***Pahlavi*** *hat*—I retain the spelling *Pahlavi* (without the long ī). This distinction helps separate the ancient linguistic context from the modern political one.

inconsistencies between the Syriac and Greek versions and on transliteration errors of Greek proper names into Syriac (Manteghi, 2018). He tentatively situates this intermediary in the late Sasanian period (6th–7th century CE), marked by intensified cultural contact between Iranian and Syriac Christian spheres.

However, alternative interpretations have emerged. Richard Frye (1985) challenges Nöldeke's theory, proposing instead that the Syriac version derives directly from the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes*. For Frye, philological irregularities may reflect widespread oral traditions and folkloric elements circulating in late antiquity, rather than indicating a lost Pahlavī literary source. He also draws attention to the absence of the motif of Alexander's Persian ancestry in the Syriac tradition. This theme becomes central in later Islamic and Persian sources, such as Ṭabarī and Firdawsī. According to Frye, this omission suggests that the Syriac version may predate the ideological elaborations characteristic of later Persian adaptations.

Manuscript research has identified three principal Syriac versions of the Romance: the *Poem*, the *Romance*, and the *Legend*. These texts served as important source material for later Arabic and Persian renderings, including the incorporation of the *Laments of Philosophers at Alexander's Funeral*—a Syriac composition not present in the Greek corpus but preserved in Islamic and Persian traditions (Manteghi, 2018; Drijvers, 1999). Another significant Syriac text, the *Khūzistān Chronicle*, although not directly part of the *Alexander Romance*, sheds light on the Nestorian Christian milieu of the late Sasanian period, in which the Romance began its transition into Iranian literary contexts (Manteghi, 2018).

The Syriac sources represent a pivotal stage in transforming the Alexander narrative. They function as a cultural and literary bridge, mediating between Hellenistic imperial themes and late antique Christian cosmologies.

The next section turns to Alexander's Persian reception, where these earlier materials—Greek and Syriac—were further adapted, reimagined, and integrated into Islamic and Persian literary traditions.

1.4. The Alexander Romance in Persia

The influence of the *Alexander Romance* extended deeply into Persian literary traditions, leaving a lasting imprint on Persian conceptions of culture, identity, and kingship. Major

adaptations such as the *Iskandarnāme* by Niẓāmī Ganjavī and the *Šāhnāme* by Firdawsī represent some of the most sophisticated literary reworkings of the Alexander legend. While drawing on Greek and Syriac precedents, these Persian renditions do not merely translate or reproduce their sources. Rather, they reinterpret Alexander's character in dialogue with Persian ideals of sovereignty, prophecy, and cosmological order (Baynham, 2003; Stoneman, 2022; Manteghi, 2018). Over time, Persian poets and intellectuals transformed Alexander from a foreign conqueror into a paradigmatic figure within the Iranian literary and ethical imagination.

Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme* provides one of the earliest and most influential Persian representations of Alexander. His narrative skillfully incorporates Alexander, rendered as Iskandar, into the mytho-historical continuum of Iran, positioning him among legendary kings and heroes. This portrayal illustrates the capacity of Persian literary culture to absorb foreign material and refashion it within distinctly Iranian symbolic frameworks (Meister, 2016; Zambrini, 2017). Similarly, Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme* offers a two-part epic that fuses heroic action with philosophical reflection, portraying Alexander both as a world-conqueror and a seeker of wisdom. This rare combination reflects broader ethical and mystical currents within Persian Sufi thought, in which rulership is often linked to spiritual insight (Stoneman, 2022; Nawotka et al., 2018).

The striking diversity of perspectives on Alexander's persona across Persian traditions renders these materials particularly relevant to the present thesis. The multiplicity of images—ranging from cursed oppressor to divinely inspired prophet—reveals his legend's dynamic moral and political uses. These divergent portrayals emerge from canonical literary sources and regional oral traditions that continue to circulate among various communities in Iran, including those documented in this study.

In Zoroastrian texts such as the *Dēnkard* and the *Bundahišn*, Alexander appears as a destructive intruder, remembered as "the accursed Roman" who desecrated sacred texts and ended the Achaemenid dynasty. These accounts reflect a deep hostility toward Alexander's historical legacy and perceived spiritual consequences. This representation will be examined in detail in Section 1.4.1.

In contrast, Islamic and later Persian literary sources elevate Alexander to the status of a prophet-king. In these narratives—reflected most clearly in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme* and Islamic texts such as the Qurʾān—Alexander is portrayed as divinely guided, morally upright,

and committed to justice. These depictions, analyzed in Section 1.4.2, emphasize his spiritual journey, encounters with mystics and sages, and search for universal wisdom.

A third narrative strand, rooted in Iranian oral traditions, presents Alexander as a brilliant tactician and intellectual strategist. In particular, communities in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad recount stories that emphasize his military acumen, political cunning, and interactions with local rulers. This image—closely tied to the fieldwork and ethnographic material explored in Chapter 4—is addressed in Section 1.5 of this chapter.

The following sections will examine each of these three thematic configurations. By contextualizing them within their respective religious, literary, and sociohistorical settings, the analysis will illuminate the ideological functions of the *Alexander Romance* in Persian culture. This approach traces Alexander's transformation into a Persianized literary figure. It sheds light on the broader processes of myth-making, cultural negotiation, and historical memory that animate Persian literary and oral traditions.

1.4.1 The Accursed Alexander

As previously noted, several Persian sources portray Alexander the Great in an explicitly negative light, casting him not as a figure of admiration but as one of condemnation and revulsion. In these accounts, Alexander is not merely disliked; he is depicted as an accursed and destructive force. His actions and policies are sharply criticized, and he is frequently represented as a tyrant or agent of oppression.

This antagonistic portrayal is deeply rooted in Zoroastrian tradition and took shape most clearly during the Sasanian period. In this era, two overlapping but distinct interpretive strands emerged concerning Alexander's historical role. While these narratives preserve traces of Greco-Roman and Christian influence, they were profoundly reinterpreted within the doctrinal framework of Sasanian Zoroastrianism. Within this context, Alexander was fully integrated into Iranian religious memory as a negative archetype. Central to this tradition is his designation as *Gujastak*—meaning "accursed"—a theologically charged term typically reserved for figures aligned with Ahrīman[4], the Evil Spirit (Mackenzie, 2009).

[4] Ahrīman (also known as Angra Mainyu) is the destructive spirit in Zoroastrian theology, representing evil, chaos, and falsehood. In contrast to Ohrmazd, Ahrīman embodies all harmful forces in the universe. According to Zoroastrian cosmology, Ahrīman wages an ongoing battle against Ohrmazd, seeking to undermine the world and

This interpretive lens, which holds Alexander responsible for destroying Zoroastrian religious institutions and scriptural heritage, recurs across various religious and semi-historical texts associated with Sasanian clerical and courtly milieus. These accounts extend beyond simple historical record; they represent ideologically inflected constructions of memory, shaped by the political and theological exigencies of the time. As Kotwal and Kreyenbroek (1982) observe, the dual narrative strands regarding Alexander in Sasanian historiography reveal how historical figures were appropriated, redefined, and morally evaluated in response to evolving institutional priorities.

Within Zoroastrian literature, Alexander's campaigns are not interpreted solely as geopolitical events but as profound spiritual and cosmic order violations. His incursion into the Persian Empire, particularly his alleged destruction of the sacred Avesta, is remembered as a sacrilegious act that disrupted the religious continuity of the Mazdaean faith. The burning of Persepolis[5], for example, is recast not merely as political vandalism but as a symbolic assault on Zoroastrian sanctity.

The Pahlavī[6] books offer a broader cosmohistorical framework through which Alexander's role is situated. These texts narrate a sacred chronology that begins with the advent of Zarathustra and the establishment of the Mazdaean religion, culminating in the reign of Darius III. This period is depicted as a golden era of cosmic equilibrium and divine order. Alexander's arrival, by contrast, marks a catastrophic rupture. He becomes an agent of disorder whose actions necessitate the eventual restoration of cosmic balance by Sasanian rulers committed to reviving the Mazdaean tradition.

This historiographical narrative is deeply cosmogonic in structure. Just as Ohrmazd[7] created the world in harmony only to see it attacked by Ahrīman, so is the Iranian world portrayed as

disrupt the order established by the supreme god. This dualistic conflict between Ohrmazd and Ahrīman is central to Zoroastrian teachings, symbolizing the cosmic struggle between good and evil (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d., *s.v.* "Ahriman").

[5] Persepolis was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, founded by Darius I in the 6th century BCE. It served as a center for grand royal events and rituals, symbolizing the empire's power and cultural achievements. Alexander the Great famously sacked and burned Persepolis in 330 BCE (Boucharlat, 2002) .

[6] Pahlavi, the Middle Persian language and literature, served as the primary medium for Zoroastrian religious and secular texts during the Sasanian period (224–651 CE). It played a crucial role in preserving Zoroastrian traditions through a diverse corpus of religious writings, historical narratives, and cosmological discourses that reflect the beliefs and values of the Zoroastrian community (Cereti, 2010).

[7] Ohrmazd (also known as Ahura Mazda) is the supreme god in Zoroastrianism, representing the ultimate source of goodness, wisdom, and creation. As the world's creator, Ohrmazd embodies the principles of order, truth (*Asha*), and divine light. In Zoroastrian cosmology, Zoroastrian texts portray him as being in an eternal struggle with the evil spirit Ahrīman. Through creation, Ohrmazd casts a radiant beam of harmony against chaos and darkness, offering hope and order to the world (Boyce, 1983)

corrupted by Alexander's intrusion. However, the story is one of restoration and disruption in both cases. This parallel between mythic and historical cosmology illustrates how spiritual worldviews shaped the historical imagination in Zoroastrian thought (Kotwal & Kreyenbroek, 1982). It also highlights how Alexander's image was not simply a reflection of remembered history, but a product of theological contestation.

In this framework, Zoroastrian sources offer a striking contrast to the laudatory portrayals of Alexander in Greco-Roman and Islamic traditions. These accounts reveal how religious ideology and historical memory intersected, producing a profoundly negative moral evaluation of Alexander's legacy. By attending to these sources, we gain insight into the contested meanings of Alexander's image in post-Achaemenid Iran, which continue to reflect broader tensions in cultural memory and identity.

In the following subsections, I examine several key Zoroastrian texts that elaborate this critical image: the *Bundahišn*, the *Dēnkard*, the *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag*[8], and the *Zand-i Wahman Yasn*[9]. These works do not merely mention Alexander in passing; they embed him within larger theological and cosmohistorical frameworks that portray him as a disruptor of sacred order. The first of these texts, the *Bundahišn*, offers one of the most vivid and influential accounts of Alexander's actions and their enduring consequences for the Zoroastrian tradition.

Reflections in the Bundahišn

The *Bundahišn*, or "Primal Creation," is an extensive Middle Persian compilation that elaborates on Zoroastrian cosmogony, cosmology, and sacred history. Although the work's original title is unknown, the *Bundahišn* draws heavily from Zoroastrian scripture while expanding and interpreting its doctrinal elements. It is not classified as canonical scripture, yet it remains a critical textual witness to Zoroastrian theological and cosmological developments. The compilation also preserves elements of pre-Zoroastrian Iranian belief systems and, in its later strata, bears signs of Islamic-era redaction. Notably, it includes cosmological claims that

[8] The *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag* is a Middle Persian Zoroastrian text that narrates the visionary journey of the priest Wīrāz through the realms of heaven and hell. Composed to reaffirm the core tenets of Zoroastrian doctrine during a time of religious uncertainty, the text emphasizes the efficacy of Zoroastrian rituals and the truth of its teachings. It provides rich eschatological imagery and is a significant source for understanding Zoroastrian cosmology, moral principles, and afterlife concepts (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d., *s.v.* "Ardā Wīrāz").

[9] *Zand-i Wahman Yasn* is a later Zoroastrian apocalyptic text that presents prophetic visions about the future of the faith. This chapter discusses it further (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d., *s.v.* "Zand-i Wahman Yasn").

diverge from contemporary scientific understanding, such as the assertion that the Moon lies farther from the Earth than the stars, illustrating the synthesis of mythological, theological, and observational traditions. Beyond cosmology, the *Bundahišn* addresses the sacred geography of Īrānšahr[10], the succession of Iranian kings, and the legendary history of the Kayanid[11] dynasty.

Two principal manuscript traditions of the text survive: the shorter and partially corrupted Indian *Bundahišn* (IBd.) and the more complete Iranian *Bundahišn*, which was transmitted to India in the nineteenth century. Despite the ambiguity surrounding its title and textual history, the *Bundahišn* remains one of the most influential Zoroastrian works from the Middle Persian period.

The chapter that outlines eschatological developments at the end of each cosmic millennium is particularly relevant to this thesis. The fourth millennium, which corresponds to the reign of Dārāy-i Dārāyān[12], marks a period of radical upheaval. Within this narrative framework, Alexander the Great appears as a pivotal and ominous figure. He arrives from "Rome," crosses the Iranian plateau, and assassinates King Dārā—an act that triggers a chain of destabilizing events throughout Īrānšahr (*Bundahišn* Anklesaria, as translated by Uryan, p. 482).

According to the text, Alexander's ambitions extended beyond the mere removal of a sovereign. His quest for domination led him to implement policies aimed at consolidating control through violence and destruction. He systematically eliminated local rulers and targeted the Zoroastrian clergy—the *Mugh Mardān*, guardians of religious knowledge and ritual order. These individuals, collectively called the *Paydāgān*, are metaphorically described as the radiant stars

[10] The term *Ērānšahr* (Middle Persian: *Ērānšahr*) denotes the ideological and territorial conception of the Sasanian Empire, translating to the "Realm of the Iranians." This designation encapsulated the empire's political unity and Zoroastrian religious identity. The Sasanian monarchs, bearing the title "King of Kings of Ērān and Anērān," were perceived as divinely sanctioned rulers entrusted with maintaining cosmic order (*aša*) and combating chaos (*druj*) (Schmitt, 1998). This dual responsibility underscored the intertwining of religious and political authority within the Sasanian state.

[11] The Kayanids, a legendary dynasty in Zoroastrian literature, are associated with heroic and semi-divine kings believed to have ruled before the Achaemenid Empire. They occupy a central place in Persian epic traditions, particularly in foundational texts such as the *Bundahišn* and the *Šāhnāme*. Kayanid kings are depicted as righteous sovereigns and defenders of the Zoroastrian faith, frequently engaged in cosmic battles against the forces of evil and chaos. Prominent figures like Kay Kāvus and Kay Khusrow exemplify ideals of just rule, divine favor, and moral authority. With their spiritual and ethical leadership, the Kayanids are a vital link between Persian mythological heritage and Zoroastrian religious ideology (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d., *s.v.* "Kayānian").

[12] *Dārāy-i Dārāyān*, corresponding to Darius III, was the final monarch of the Achaemenid Empire, whose defeat by Alexander the Great marked the cessation of Achaemenid sovereignty. In Zoroastrian literature, his reign is portrayed as profound upheaval and loss, particularly during Alexander's conquests. Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* presents *Dārāy-i Dārāyān* as a pivotal figure, with his confrontation against Alexander serving not merely as a historical account but as a symbolic narrative representing the transition from Persian dominion to Hellenistic influence. This depiction underscores the end of an era and the onset of significant cultural transformations in the Iranian world (Wiesehöfer, 2011).

of Iranian wisdom. Their eradication thus signifies the extinguishing of spiritual light and doctrinal continuity.

A particularly striking passage recounts Alexander's extinguishing of sacred fires—symbols of divine presence and ritual sanctity in Zoroastrianism. This act of desecration is portrayed as a political offense and a direct assault on the metaphysical foundations of Mazdaean religious life. His campaign becomes emblematic of spiritual disruption as well as imperial aggression.

Moreover, Alexander is said to have seized the *Zand*[13]—a revered corpus of exegetical commentary—and burned the *Avesta*, the foundational text of Zoroastrian scripture. This symbolic destruction of divine knowledge constitutes the apex of his transgression. He is not merely a destroyer of the Iranian political order but a violator of sacred revelation and memory. The burning of the *Avesta* is a metaphor for the obliteration of divine wisdom and the interruption of the spiritual transmission from Zarathustra's time to the Sasanian revival.

Although some Hellenistic administrative forms were introduced in the aftermath of Alexander's campaign, the later Sasanian institution of *Kadag Khudāy*[14]—hereditary household lords—largely developed from Indigenous Iranian clan structures and reflected a conscious return to pre-Hellenistic socio-religious norms, further refined during the Parthian period. This suggests that the political legacies of Alexander's incursion were ultimately subordinated to the cultural and theological trauma it inflicted.

Taken as a whole, this segment of the *Bundahišn* presents a forceful moral narrative. Alexander is not treated as a nuanced or heroic figure, but as a harbinger of ruin—an agent whose ambition, desecration, and violence leave a lasting imprint on Iran's sacred landscape. His role is emblematic of the catastrophic consequences of foreign domination and religious

[13] *Zand* refers to Middle Persian (Pahlavi) commentaries and translations of the Avestan texts, serving as exegetical tools to elucidate Zoroastrian doctrines, rituals, and cosmological concepts. These commentaries were instrumental in making the sacred Avestan scriptures comprehensible to a broader audience, particularly as the Avestan language became less commonly understood. The Zand texts often accompanied the original Avestan passages, providing literal translations followed by interpretative explanations to ensure accurate comprehension and practice of the religion (Boyce, 1984).
Pāzand emerged as a subsequent development, characterized by transcribing Middle Persian Zand texts into the Avestan script. Unlike the Pahlavi script, which utilized Aramaic-derived ideograms, the Avestan script employed in Pāzand was phonetic and devoid of such ideograms, offering a more precise representation of pronunciation. This adaptation aimed to preserve the sanctity and correct recitation of the texts, especially during liturgical practices (Boyce, 1984). Zand and Pāzand played a pivotal role in preserving and transmitting Zoroastrian religious knowledge, ensuring the continuity of theological teachings and ritual practices across generations.

[14] *Kadag Khudāy*, a Middle Persian term meaning "householder" or "head of the household," referred to local or clan leaders in the Sasanian period. These leaders held authority over their communities, managing family affairs and local governance, thereby playing a significant role in the socio-political structure of the Sasanian Empire (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d., *s.v.* “Kadag Khudāy”).

desecration, and serves as a cautionary exemplar within the broader Zoroastrian cosmohistorical vision.

In the next section, I turn to another foundational Zoroastrian text, the *Dēnkard*, to explore how the narrative of Alexander is further extended, elaborated, and refined. This comparison will illuminate the continuities and divergences in Sasanian-era theological discourse, offering more profound insight into how Zoroastrian authors developed strategies to interpret, resist, and contain the historical trauma associated with Alexander's legacy.

Reflections in the Dēnkard

The *Dēnkard* (also spelled *Dēnkart*) is a tenth-century Middle Persian compendium that preserves extensive knowledge of Zoroastrian doctrine, ritual practice, and religious history as it developed during the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods. Sometimes referred to as the "Encyclopedia of Mazdaism," it remains one of the most comprehensive sources for reconstructing Zoroastrian theological and exegetical thought, despite its exclusion from the sacred canon. The title *Dēnkard* derives from a phrase found in the colophons, combining the Pahlavī word *dēn* ("religion" or "insight") with *kard* ("acts" or "chapters"). Due to the orthographic ambiguities of Middle Persian, where ⟨t⟩ may also represent /d/, such spelling variations reflect the broader complexities of Pahlavī script traditions.

The extant *Dēnkard* consists of nine books, although the first two and part of the third are no longer preserved. The surviving volumes encompass diverse theological, ethical, and historical content. Book 3 elaborates on Zoroastrian doctrines and moral conduct; Book 4 contains fragments attributed to *Dasturs*[15] from the Arsacid and Sasanian periods; Book 5 presents texts linked to Ādurbād ī Farroxzād and includes narratives about Zarathustra; Book 6 addresses wisdom literature; Book 7 describes marvels and miracles associated with the religion; Book 8 summarizes the contents of the *Nasks*[16], the ancient divisions of the Avesta; and Book 9 discusses the *Gāthās* and the textual organization of the Zoroastrian canon (Cereti, 1994).

[15] *Dastur* is a title denoting a high-ranking Zoroastrian priest, signifying authority over religious matters and ranking above other clergy such as *mobads* and *herbads*. The term is predominantly used among the Parsi community in India. Historically, the first individual to be accorded the title was Meherji Rana in the 16th century, establishing a lineage of high priests in the Parsi tradition (Kotwal & Sheffield, 2013).

[16] The term *Nask* denotes one of the twenty-one divisions of the Avestan canon in Zoroastrian tradition. These texts, categorized into liturgical, legal, and doctrinal groups, were believed to have been revealed to Zarathushtra

The *Dēnkard* is particularly valuable for its historical allusions, though it often blends mythic and historiographic elements. Among the most notable is the report in the final chapter of Book 3, which claims that Alexander the Great destroyed the Avesta and had a version translated into Greek. While early scholars considered this account plausible, modern research has cast doubt on the existence of an entirely written Avesta before the Sasanian period. Its formal compilation likely occurred between the third and sixth centuries CE, under the auspices of the Zoroastrian clergy (Gignoux, 1996). Nevertheless, the narrative in the *Dēnkard* reveals how Alexander's memory became embedded in Zoroastrian historiography as a symbol of doctrinal rupture and cultural desecration.

Boyce's (1984) translation captures the gravity of this theological disruption: "Dārā, son of Dārā, commanded that two written copies of all the Avesta and Zand, just as Zaratušt had received them from Ohrmazd, be preserved: one in the royal treasure and one in the Fortress of Archives. Walakhsh the Aškānī [Arsacid] ordered that a memorandum be sent to the provinces, instructing them to preserve... whatever had survived in the purity of the Avesta and Zand, along with every teaching derived from them. These teachings, scattered throughout the land of Īrānšahr by the havoc and disruption caused by Alexander and by the pillaging and plundering of the Macedonians, had remained authoritative, whether in written form or oral transmission. His Majesty, Ardashir, King of kings, son of Pāpag, acting on the just judgment of Tansar [Tōsar][17], commanded that all these scattered teachings be brought to the court. Tansar assumed command, selecting trustworthy ones and excluding the rest from the canon" (p. 114).

This account reinforces the *Dēnkard*'s central theme: Alexander's conquests are framed not merely as geopolitical incursions, but as existential threats to the continuity of religious truth. The destruction of sacred texts and the fragmentation of doctrinal knowledge are portrayed as moments of profound rupture in the spiritual history of Iran. Only through the restorative actions of monarchs such as Ardashir I and religious figures like Tōsar could the integrity of Zoroastrian teachings be partially reclaimed. In this way, the *Dēnkard* constructs Alexander as both a destroyer of empires and a violator of divine revelation.

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and later systematized during the Achaemenid and Sasanian periods. Although many of the *Nasks* are lost, portions survive in the extant Avesta and in Pahlavi works such as the *Dēnkard* (West, 1892).

[17] Tansar (or Tosar) was a prominent Zoroastrian priest during the early Sasanian period. He is credited with reorganizing and systematizing Zoroastrian religious texts. His role was vital in preserving the Zoroastrian canon and consolidating the religious practices of the time (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, n.d.).

The emphasis on canon preservation and doctrinal restoration aligns the *Dēnkard* closely with other Zoroastrian texts, such as the *Bundahišn*, which depict Alexander as a sacrilegious intruder whose actions disrupted the cosmic and theological order. The *Dēnkard*'s narrative underscores a broader ideological agenda: to frame the Sasanian revival of Zoroastrianism as a sacred mandate to repair the spiritual damage wrought by foreign conquest.

In the next section, I turn to the *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag*, a visionary text in which Alexander again appears as a figure of destruction and heresy. There, his image is further mythologized and explicitly associated with demonic influence, reinforcing the theological underpinnings of his vilification in Zoroastrian sacred history.

Reflections in the Book of Arda Viraf (Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag)

The *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag*, or *Book of Ardā Wīrāz*, is a foundational Middle Persian text that recounts the visionary journey of Ardā Wīrāz, a devout Zoroastrian selected to reaffirm the truths of the faith in a time of doctrinal uncertainty. Composed during the post-Achaemenid and early Islamic periods, the narrative responds to widespread heresy and spiritual doubt by offering a detailed account of the Zoroastrian afterlife. Ardā Wīrāz's descent into the metaphysical realm—featuring vivid depictions of heaven, hell, judgment, and divine retribution—serves as a theological reaffirmation of ritual orthodoxy and a polemic against religious deviation. With its integration of allegory, eschatology, and clerical authority, the text is one of the most enduring literary expressions of Zoroastrian spiritual vision (Gignoux, 1986).

Within this highly symbolic landscape, Alexander the Great reappears as a profoundly malevolent figure, explicitly identified as a heretic and agent of destruction. His actions are no longer confined to historical consequence but are thoroughly mythologized and attributed to demonic influence. As reported by Kotwal and Kreyenbroek (1982), the text states:

"Once Zarathustra had received the religion, it was propagated worldwide until 300 years had passed. Then the accursed, wicked Evil Spirit deluded the accursed Alexander the Roman (i.e., Byzantine), who lived in Egypt, to cause the people to doubt this religion, and he came to the land of Iran with great destruction, strife, and trouble. He killed the ruler of Iran, destroyed the court and sovereignty, and ruined them. The entire Avesta and Zand, as they were written on adorned ox-hides in golden ink, had been placed in Pābak's [city of] Istaxr in the Fortress of

Archives (*diž ī nipišt*). That ill-omened adversary, the wicked, evil-doing heretic Alexander the Roman, who lived in Egypt, carried them off and burned them. He slew some of the religious authorities (*dastwarān*), judges, *hērbeds*[18], *mōbeds*[19], religious leaders, and the able and wise people of the land of Iran. Since the Iranians had no rulers, chiefs, leaders, or judges who knew the religion and were doubtful about things connected with the Divine Beings, many types of sects, beliefs, heresies, doubt, and disagreement arose in the world" (p. 1, para. 3).

This apocalyptic account aligns closely with the Zoroastrian cosmological framework, in which spiritual disorder and historical calamity are manifestations of cosmic imbalance. In this narrative, Alexander is not simply a worldly conqueror but a vessel of *Druj*—the force of falsehood—who brings theological chaos to the Iranian world. His destruction of the sacred archives at Istaxr, his execution of the religious elite, and the burning of scripture are framed as acts of metaphysical violence, disrupting the cosmic and moral order upon which Zoroastrian society depended.

The consequences of Alexander's incursion are articulated in explicitly theological terms. The death of trained *hērbeds*, *mōbeds*, and *dasturs* leaves the population without spiritual guidance. Society fragments into competing sects, heresies, and ideological confusion without authoritative interpreters of divine law. This doctrinal collapse is portrayed not as a political accident but as a direct result of Alexander's demonic corruption, rendering his legacy inseparable from the forces of chaos and deception.

Compared to the *Bundahišn* and *Dēnkard*, the *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag* intensifies Alexander's vilification by embedding it within a visionary and eschatological register. The destruction of the *Avesta* and *Zand*—described as being inscribed in golden ink on decorated ox-hide—becomes not only a cultural tragedy but an unforgivable desecration of the sacred. Alexander's role transcends the historical and enters the mythic: he becomes an archetype of sacrilege, a narrative embodiment of religious catastrophe.

As the vision unfolds, Alexander's name becomes a cipher for the spiritual consequences of divine abandonment. His memory is linked directly to the rise of false doctrines and the erosion

[18] A Hērbed was a Zoroastrian priest entrusted with responsibilities such as religious instruction, ritual supervision, and safeguarding sacred texts. They played a central role in educating the community, particularly in interpreting the Avesta and overseeing the correct execution of liturgical practices (Boyce, 2001).

[19] A Mōbed is a high-ranking Zoroastrian priest endowed with the authority to lead rituals, interpret sacred texts, and uphold doctrinal teachings. Historically, the term designated priests with advanced knowledge of the Avesta and Zand, who served as spiritual and legal authorities within the community. Mōbeds have played a crucial role in maintaining religious traditions and performing essential liturgical functions (Boyce, 2001).

of religious certainty. The implication is clear: once sacred knowledge is lost or corrupted, its recovery is tough, if not impossible. In this sense, the *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag* functions as both a theological indictment and a cautionary tale—a warning against laxity, heresy, and the enduring effects of spiritual disruption.

In sum, the *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag* preserves and magnifies the image of Alexander as *Gujastak*—the accursed one—whose legacy is interpreted through the dual lenses of myth and cosmic struggle. His presence in the text affirms a key theme of Zoroastrian sacred history: that the memory of conquest, when filtered through religious worldviews, becomes more than historical grievance—it becomes a mythologized narrative of violation, resistance, and the ongoing imperative for spiritual restoration.

Reflections in the Zand-i Vahman Yasn

The *Zand-i Vahman Yasn* is a medieval Middle Persian text notable for its pronounced apocalyptic themes, structured as a revelatory dialogue between Ahura Mazda and Zoroaster concerning the fate of the Zoroastrian community. Although the earliest extant manuscript dates to approximately 1400 CE, the textual core is significantly older and reflects multiple layers of redaction and transmission. Two principal versions of the text survive: one is composed in Middle Persian using Pahlavī script, and another is rendered in Pazand transliteration accompanied by commentary in Avestan script. This dual manuscript tradition attests to the text's centrality in the Zoroastrian religious corpus and its continued relevance in manuscript culture. The *Zand-i Vahman Yasn* has drawn considerable scholarly attention for its eschatological content and engagement with cross-cultural motifs, raising questions about the possible influence of Judeo-Christian, Semitic, and Hellenistic traditions. Its thematic and structural parallels with the *Oracles of Hystaspes*[20], a Hellenistic-era work sometimes linked to Zoroastrian apocalyptic thought, underscore its intercultural complexity.

[20] The *Oracles of Hystaspes*, a set of prophetic texts attributed to Hystaspes (*Gk.* Khrēseis Hystaspou), exemplify the integration of Zoroastrian eschatological themes into Hellenistic religious discourse. Vištāspa, revered in Zoroastrian tradition as the patron of Zoroaster, was reimagined in Greco-Roman contexts as a prophetic figure whose visions foretold apocalyptic events. These oracles, characterized by their eschatological content, influenced early Christian conceptions of prophecy and divine judgment. Their adaptation underscores the syncretic nature of religious thought in the Hellenistic period, where Eastern and Western traditions converged to shape new theological paradigms (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Book 6; Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, Book 7).

In alignment with other Zoroastrian sources examined in this chapter, the *Zand-i Vahman Yasn* presents Alexander the Great as an accursed and malign figure. His image emerges during the epoch symbolically described as the "Age of Brass," associated with the Arsacid (*Aškānī*) dynasty. In this context, the Arsacids are portrayed as a dynasty tasked with combating heretical movements, possibly including idol-worshippers or Buddhists. During this same era, Alexander—referred to as a Christian (*kilisāyig*) interloper—is gradually erased from the *dēn* (religious tradition), a symbolic act of marginalization that reflects his theological disqualification.

The text's prophetic tone intensifies in Section 7.32, which marks the end of the Millennium of Zarathustra. In this passage, Mithra, the divine guardian of cosmic truth and moral order, speaks of the nine-thousand-year Covenant established by Ahura Mazda. He recounts the succession of corrupt and demonic rulers who have violated this divine timeline—Dahāk the dragon-king, Afrāsyāb the Turanian invader, and Alexander the Roman conqueror. These figures, grouped with other agents of chaos, including beings described as having "parted hair and leather girdles," are said to have extended their reign of falsehood beyond the time allotted to them, delaying the arrival of eschatological justice by an additional millennium (Kotwal & Kreyenbroek, 1982). This prolongation of evil dramatizes the cosmic urgency for restoration and spiritual renewal.

Alexander's role in this prophetic genealogy affirms his status as a theological adversary. He is not portrayed as a secular conqueror but as a figure who actively participates in disrupting Mazdaean order. His depiction as Christian-aligned reflects Sasanian polemics against rising Abrahamic religions, situating Alexander within broader interreligious tensions. His disappearance from the *dēn* does not signal redemption but erasure—a consequence of his spiritual corruption and ultimate irrelevance to the restored cosmic balance.

Like the *Bundahišn*, *Dēnkard*, and *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag*, the *Zand-i Vahman Yasn* positions Alexander as a mythologized force of decline. His actions are not portrayed as isolated historical events but as moments within a larger apocalyptic continuum of heresy, disruption, and deferred salvation. The text incorporates him into a lineage of cosmic transgressors, whose legacies delay divine justice and threaten the cohesion of sacred time. Alexander's inclusion in this eschatological schema confirms his elevation from a historical antagonist to a symbolic representative of theological disorder.

As established throughout the preceding sections, Zoroastrian literature consistently casts Alexander as a destructive presence whose legacy imperils spiritual coherence, doctrinal authority, and cosmic equilibrium. The *Zand-i Vahman Yasn* reinforces and extends this tradition, emphasizing the magnitude of his violations and their metaphysical scope.

However, Zoroastrian condemnations represent only one facet of Alexander's complex reception in Persian cultural memory. In the following sections, the focus shifts to an alternative tradition—one in which Alexander is reimagined in Islamic sources, particularly the Qurʾān, as a divinely guided or prophetic figure. This countervailing representation, later elaborated in classical Persian literature, offers a striking contrast that underscores the plurality of meanings his figure has accrued across religious and literary contexts in Iran.

1.4.2 The Prophetic and Heroic Alexander

Amid the diverse and often contradictory portrayals of Alexander the Great, one particularly influential tradition reimagines him as a prophetic figure endowed with divine insight and moral authority. In these narratives, Alexander is no longer depicted solely as a military conqueror; he is transformed into a visionary leader and, in some cases, a messenger of divine will. This prophetic dimension, which starkly contrasts the condemnatory portrayals in Zoroastrian literature, emerges across Islamic scripture and Persian literary traditions, reflecting a broader interpretive shift in the religious and cultural imagination of late antiquity and the medieval period.

A central expression of this transformation appears in Arabic sources, where Alexander is frequently identified with Dhū al-Qarnayn, the "Two-Horned One" mentioned in the Qurʾān. This Islamic image of Alexander—shaped in part by Syriac Christian traditions and possibly transmitted through Middle Persian intermediaries—depicts him as a just ruler, a seeker of divine wisdom, and a builder of protective walls against forces of chaos (Manteghi, 2018). These attributes closely align with Qurʾanic ideals of righteous leadership and moral responsibility, situating Alexander within a sacred historical framework.

This reinterpretation is not limited to scripture. Alexander is further elevated and recontextualized in classical Persian literature, known for its narrative complexity and allegorical depth. Rather than occupying the role of a mere historical sovereign, Alexander becomes a philosopher-king, a traveler in search of spiritual enlightenment, and at times a

conduit of cosmic truth. This literary reworking reflects the enduring adaptability of his legend and its capacity to articulate evolving ethical, metaphysical, and political ideals.

The persistence of this prophetic Alexander in Islamic exegesis and Persian epic underscores his multifaceted legacy in the cultural memory of the Islamic world. These alternative portrayals not only counterbalance the hostile images found in Zoroastrian texts but also reveal the interpretive flexibility with which various communities have received and reshaped his narrative.

In the following sections, I will first examine the figure of Dhū al-Qarnayn as presented in the Qurʾān, alongside key elements of its exegetical tradition. I will then explore how this prophetic and philosophical image is elaborated in Persian literary texts, including Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme*, the anonymous *Dārāb Nāme*, Niẓāmī Ganjavī's *Iskandarnāme*, Amīr Ḫusraw Dehlavī's *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī*, and Ǧāmī's *Khirad Nāme-yi Iskandarī*. Taken together, these works illuminate a rich tradition in which Alexander symbolizes ethical inquiry, philosophical depth, and spiritual aspiration.

Reflections in the Qur'ān

As previously noted, the transformation of Alexander the Great into a prophetic or divinely inspired figure is particularly evident in Arabic and Islamic sources, many of which were influenced by Syriac narratives transmitted through Middle Persian channels. Among these sources, the Qurʾān shapes Islamic perspectives on leadership, virtue, and divine authority. However, it is important to clarify that the Qurʾān does not directly reference the *Alexander Romance*. Unlike Greco-Roman, Syriac, or Persian traditions that celebrate Alexander's legendary exploits, the Qurʾān avoids mythologizing his conquests and concentrates on moral instruction, historical exemplars, and prophetic guidance within its theological framework.

Notably, Alexander the Great is not explicitly named in the Qurʾān. Figures such as Moses, Abraham, and Jesus are invoked frequently, yet no direct allusion is made to Alexander or his empire. This significant silence signals the Qurʾān's intention to distinguish between sacred narrative and secular legend. The absence of Alexander in name or story further underscores the Qurʾān's didactic priorities, leaving any association with him to later interpretive traditions within Islamic historiography and literature.

Despite this, considerable scholarly attention has focused on the Qurʾānic figure of **Ḏu'l-Qarnayn**[21] ("The Two-Horned One"), introduced in *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18:83 98). While the Qurʾān does not identify Ḏu'l-Qarnayn by name, some classical commentators and modern scholars have historically associated him with Alexander the Great. This identification remains a subject of scholarly debate. Those who support the linkage often point to parallels between the character of Ḏu'l-Qarnayn and the virtues attributed to Alexander in post-Achaemenid traditions (Manteghi, 2018).

According to the Qurʾānic narrative, Ḏu'l-Qarnayn is a righteous and divinely guided ruler who travels to the "furthest reaches of the earth," encountering various communities and undertaking just governance. In verses 83–85, God describes him as being granted power and embarking on journeys to the east and west, where he encounters people of differing customs and linguistic traditions. His leadership is marked by justice, humility, and acknowledgment of divine authority:

"Indeed, We established him upon the earth, and We gave him a way in everything" (Q 18:84);

"He said, 'As for one who does wrong, we will punish him… But as for one who believes and acts righteously, he will have the best reward'" (Q 18:87 88).

One of the most vivid episodes in this passage involves Ḏu'l-Qarnayn's encounter with a community threatened by the tribes of **Gog and Magog** (*Yaʾjūj va Maʾjūj*). In verses 93–96, he responds to their plea for protection by constructing an imposing iron and molten copper barrier between two mountains, thus shielding them from destruction. This act symbolizes divinely sanctioned rulership, where political power is exercised to serve communal welfare and divine justice. Importantly, Ḏu'l-Qarnayn attributes his accomplishments not to personal glory but to God's mercy: "This is a mercy from my Lord; but when the promise of my Lord comes, He will level it" (Q 18:98).

In contrast to the fantastical and heroic episodes found in the *Alexander Romance*—such as his dialogues with mythical creatures or his quest for the Water of Life—the Qurʾān presents Ḏu'l-Qarnayn in ethical and theological terms. He is not a miracle worker or demigod but a servant

[21] Ḏu'l-Qarnayn (ذو القرنين, "The Two-Horned One"), the Qur'ānic figure in *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18:83 98), embodies a complex synthesis of pre-Islamic lore and Islamic eschatology. While some exegetes (e.g., al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*) link him to Alexander the Great—drawing on Hellenistic iconography of horns as sovereignty—others reject this assimilation, arguing for his distinct Qur'ānic identity as a monotheist ruler. The narrative's emphasis on cosmic justice (e.g., subduing **Gog and Magog Yājūj wa-Mājūj**) reflects an Islamic reframing of Late Antique apocalyptic tropes (Van Bladel, 2007; Wheeler, 2002).

of divine will whose actions exemplify humility, justice, and submission to God. This marks a significant divergence in tone and content between the Qurʾānic portrayal and the mythologized versions of Alexander circulating in Greco-Roman and Persian contexts.

The identification of Ḏu'l-Qarnayn with Alexander has been proposed based on overlapping motifs: world travelers, builders of walls, and recipients of exceptional authority. The association is further reinforced by post-Qurʾānic exegesis and popular Islamic historiography, which absorbed elements of the *Alexander Romance* and integrated them with the Qurʾānic narrative. Nevertheless, many modern scholars remain cautious. The linguistic, thematic, and theological distance between the Qurʾān and earlier Hellenistic texts suggests that while some Syriac and Persian intermediaries may have influenced the image of Ḏu'l-Qarnayn, the identification with Alexander should not be considered definitive.

In sum, the Qurʾān introduces a morally exalted figure whose character partially overlaps with legendary attributes of Alexander but remains distinct in purpose and framing. The portrayal of Ḏu'l-Qarnayn reflects the Qurʾān's concern with ethical leadership and divine sovereignty, rather than imperial ambition or mythical grandeur. This unique rendering of a "Two-Horned" ruler served as a foundation upon which later Islamic and Persian writers could build a prophetic, even mystical, interpretation of Alexander's persona—an interpretation further developed in classical Persian literature, to which we now turn.

Reflections in the Šāhnāme of Firdawsī

Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme*, the monumental epic composed in the 11th century CE, occupies a foundational position in Persian literature, standing as both a masterwork of poetic expression and a powerful articulation of Iranian national identity. Comprising over 50,000 rhyming couplets, the *Šāhnāme* unifies Persian mythology, pre-Islamic history, and cultural memory into a sweeping literary vision. Spanning Iran's mythical, heroic, and historical ages, the poem preserves the legacy of ancient Persian rulers and legends while exploring enduring themes such as justice, fate, kingship, and the impermanence of power. Its literary brilliance and historical resonance have rendered it a cornerstone of Persian cultural heritage.

Within this expansive narrative, the *Alexander Romance* finds a uniquely Persian reinterpretation. Alexander the Great—rendered as Iskandar or Eskandar—emerges as a central protagonist in the historical section of the epic. Firdawsī's account draws primarily on the

Khudāy Nāmag, the now-lost Middle Persian "Book of Kings," transforming it into a verse narrative that integrates Alexander into the Persian royal lineage. In the *Šāhnāme*, Alexander's biography is structured across three interconnected episodes—those of Dārāb, Dārā, and Eskandar—comprising approximately 2,458 verses in the Khāliqī Muṭlaq edition (Manteghi, 2018).

The narrative begins with Alexander's ascent to power and his marriage to Rošanak (Roxana), described with elaborate ceremonial detail, including accounts of her dowry. A notable episode follows: the Indian king Kayd presents four extraordinary gifts through interpreters. This event underscores Alexander's diplomatic skill and the cross-cultural nature of his reign. These episodes collectively position Alexander not as an invading outsider but as a figure integrated into Iran's cosmological and dynastic order.

Subsequent passages detail Alexander's campaign against the Indian king Für and his confrontation with iron warhorses, followed by a mission to liberate the descendants of Ismāʿīl[22] in Mecca. His journey continues through Egypt to al-Andalus, where he learns of Queen Qaydāfa (Candace)[23],. Motivated by curiosity, he travels further to India and beyond, encountering Brahmans and other spiritual figures. These journeys echo motifs from the *Alexander Romance* tradition, yet they are reimagined through a Persian literary lens that emphasizes philosophical inquiry and symbolic depth.

Among the more remarkable episodes is Alexander's voyage to Abyssinia and the land of Narm Pāyān, where he battles a dragon. He then ventures into the Land of Darkness to pursue the Water of Life[24], dialogues with massive green birds, meets the angel Isrāfīl[25], and traverses the

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[22] Ismael (also spelled Ishmael) is a significant figure in Abrahamic traditions, particularly in Islam, where he is regarded not only as an ancestor of the Arab peoples but also as a prophet. According to Islamic tradition, Ismael is the son of the Prophet Abraham (Ibrāhīm) and Hagar (Hājar). He is considered the forefather of the Arab tribes, including the Quraysh, to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged. In Islamic narratives, Ismael is closely associated with the region of Mecca, where he and Abraham are believed to have rebuilt the Kaʿba, the sacred sanctuary. In the context of Alexander's expedition to liberate the descendants of Ismael in Mecca, the reference underscores the connection between Alexander's journey and the religious and cultural significance of the descendants of Ismael in the Arabian Peninsula, emphasizing the symbolic importance of Mecca in Islamic tradition (Crone & Cook, 1977).

[23] A legendary queen in the *Alexander Romance* and its later adaptations, she is portrayed as a wise and powerful ruler who tests Alexander's wisdom and political acumen, reflecting themes of leadership and diplomacy. In Arabic sources and the *Šāhnāme*, she is referred to as **قیدافه (Qaydafa)**, while in Greek versions of the romance, she is called **Κανδάκη (Kandakē)**. This figure is a literary construct within the Alexander legends, distinct from historical titles like the Kushite "Candace" (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d., *s.v.* "Eskandar-nāma")

[24] The *Water of Life* (*āb-e ḥayāt*) motif in Persian literature, particularly in Nizāmī's *Iskandarnāma*, underscores themes of divine grace and the limits of human agency. While Alexander's pursuit ends in failure, Ḫiḍr's attainment of immortality reflects Sufi ideals of spiritual surrender (Franke, 2011; Seyed-Gohrab, 2012).

[25] Isrāfīl, an angel of great significance in Islamic tradition, is known as the angel of the trumpet. His solemn duty is to sound the horn that will signal the Day of Judgment. This trumpet blast, a pivotal event in Islamic eschatology,

Valley of Diamonds. His construction of a wall against Gog and Magog[26]—a direct parallel to the Qurʾānic narrative of Ḏu'l-Qarnayn—further illustrates the synthesis of Islamic, Persian, and Romance traditions. These travels culminate in his visit to the Emperor of Čīn (China), where he participates in philosophical and astrological discussions.

The final phase of the story situates Alexander in Babylon, where he engages with otherworldly beings and visits a city adorned with portraits of Persian kings. Here, the narrative becomes increasingly introspective. Alexander engages in philosophical debates with Aristotle and astrologers who predict ominous signs. Ultimately, his death marks the conclusion of a divinely guided yet finite earthly mission. A dispute over his burial emerges between the Greeks and Persians, resolved through divine counsel directing that his body be interred in Alexandria. His funeral is followed by a philosophical lament and a poetic summation of his legacy: the conquest of 36 kings, the founding of ten cities, and a 14-year reign.

Firdawsī's portrayal of Alexander is notable not only for its narrative complexity but also for its symbolic integration. Alexander is recast as a mediator between East and West, a seeker of knowledge, and a civilizational unifier. His inclusion in the Persian dynastic sequence affirms the integrative impulse of Firdawsī's epic, which absorbs foreign elements into an Iranian cosmological structure. Once Persianized and universalized, this version of Alexander reflects the dual imperatives of cultural pride and philosophical reflection.

In sum, the *Šāhnāme* presents Alexander as a morally complex and culturally hybrid figure whose life embodies the core concerns of Firdawsī's vision: the pursuit of justice, the quest for wisdom, the working of divine fate, and the transience of worldly power. His journey invites reflection on the moral implications of kingship and the ethical responsibilities of rulership. Through the poetic imagination of Firdawsī, Alexander's legend becomes a vessel for collective memory, spiritual contemplation, and national identity.

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is believed to bring about the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead. While his name is not explicitly mentioned in the Qurʾān, Isrāfīl is identified in various ḥadīths as one of the four archangels, alongside Gabriel (Jibrīl), Michael (Mīkāʾīl), and Azrael (ʿAzrāʾīl). His role in religious narratives underscores his profound connection to divine judgment and the cosmic order, highlighting the gravity of his role (EI², s.v. "Isrāfīl").

[26] In Islamic eschatology, Gog and Magog (Yāʾjūj and Māʾjūj) are portrayed as chaotic forces whose release will mark the onset of the final trials before the Day of Judgment. While the Qurʾān (18:94 98) briefly references their containment by Ḏu'l-Qarnayn, their symbolic function extends across Islamic and earlier traditions. Rather than reiterating their violent nature, these figures can be read as representations of moral and cosmic disorder—threats that require both divine sanction and righteous leadership to be restrained. The recurring motif of a constructed barrier reflects the broader cultural concern with boundary-making, sovereignty, and the moral limits of civilization (Van Donzel & Schmidt, 2009).

In the sections that follow, I will examine additional Persian literary adaptations—including the *Dārāb Nāme*, Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme*, Amīr Ḫusraw's *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī*, and Ǧāmī's *Khirad Nāme*—to trace how Persian authors continued to elaborate, adapt, and spiritualize Alexander's image within the evolving landscape of Persianate literary and intellectual traditions.

Reflections in Dārāb Nāme

The *Dārāb Nāme* is a 12th-century Persian prose romance attributed to Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad Ṭārsūsī. It recounts the adventures of Dārāb, a legendary Kayanid king and son of Bahman (Ardašīr) and Humāy, whose lineage varies across versions (traced either to Ardašīr or Sām Čāraš, an Egyptian ruler). Composed during the late Seljuk period, the work diverges from courtly *adab* traditions, reflecting Ṭārsūsī's[27] role as a popular storyteller. Its colloquial, episodic style preserves oral storytelling conventions and folkloric elements, including those tied to the Alexander Romance.

The text's vernacular idiom details court rituals, military practices, and social customs, while its onomastic diversity reveals a hybrid cultural scope. Iranian figures (e.g., Bahman, Dārāb, Rošanak), characters from ʿUmān (e.g., Tamarsīya, Zangalīšā), and Greek counterparts (e.g., Iskandar, Aristotle) populate its narrative landscape (Blookbashi & Miransari, 2021). A significant portion focuses on Alexander (Iskandar), whose campaign against Persia draws from the Persian *Alexander Romance* (rooted in Pseudo-Callisthenes). The standard edition is by Ṣafā[28], with Alexander-related sections analyzed by Hanaway (2011).

In Ṭārsūsī's account, Alexander is the secret son of Dārāb and Nāhīd (daughter of Caesar's brother Fīlaqūs). Abandoned at birth and raised by Aristotle, Alexander later defeats Dārāb in battle. Before dying, Dārāb commands him to marry his daughter Burān-doḫt (Rošanak), a martial queen who initially resists. She relents after a protracted conflict, including her capture and a pivotal bathing scene. Alexander appoints her ruler of Persia before embarking on a quest

[27] **Tārūsī** (or **Ṭarṭūsī**) wrote the *Dārāb Nāme*, a 12th-century Persian prose romance. He tells the story of Dārāb, a Kayanid king, and emphasizes themes of kingship and heroism, reflecting the literary traditions of Persia (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d., *s.v.* "Dārāb-nāma").

[28] Ḏabīḥ Allāh Ṣafā (d. 1998) was a leading Iranian scholar, historian, and literary critic who contributed significantly to Persian literature and history. He edited numerous classical Persian texts and wrote extensively on Iranian cultural history (Ṣafā, 1953–1977).

for the Water of Life. Burān-doḫt later aids him in India, showcasing her military prowess against supernatural forces. Their paths diverge after campaigns in Arabia and Egypt; Alexander dies in Jerusalem, while Burān-doḫt returns to Persia, where she eventually perishes.

This *Dārāb Nāme* (distinct from Bīḡamī's later romance of the same name) blends Iranian epic and romance, framing Alexander's rise alongside the Achaemenid decline. Its dynastic drama, including the half-brother motif shared with Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme* (Afšār, 1964; Southgate, 1978), contrasts with treatments by Niẓāmī or Amīr Ḫusraw (see Sections 4.2.4–4.2.5). Such variations highlight the Persian tradition's narrative pluralism and Alexander's adaptable symbolic role across literary and theological contexts.

Reflections in Iskandernāme of Niẓāmī

Niẓāmī Ganjavī, the preeminent 12th-century Persian poet, crafted works that epitomize the intellectual and artistic zenith of medieval Persian literature. Celebrated as the master of romantic epic poetry (Meisami, 1995), his verse blends lyrical sophistication with philosophical introspection, securing his legacy as a cornerstone of Persian literary tradition (Hanaway, 1998; Manteghi, 2018).

Central to his oeuvre is the *Iskandarnāme*, a two-part epic that reimagines Alexander the Great through dual lenses: the *Šarafnāme* ("Book of Glory") depicts him as a conquering hero. At the same time, the *Iqbālnāme* ("Book of Fortune") transforms him into a philosopher-king and prophetic seeker of divine wisdom (Hanaway, 1998). This bifurcation resolves the tensions in Alexander's legacy—between power and enlightenment, empire and ethics—by synthesizing Islamic, Hellenistic, and Persianate ideals. Niẓāmī's Alexander transcends historical conquest to embody a spiritual journey, reflecting Sufi cosmology and Iranian kingship within a unified poetic framework (Manteghi, 2018).

Unlike Zoroastrian narratives that vilify Alexander or Qurʾānic portrayals of him as merely righteous, Niẓāmī reclaims him as an Iranian cultural icon: a sage whose martial triumphs yield to metaphysical inquiry. This reinterpretation exemplifies the Persian epic tradition's capacity to assimilate foreign figures into its moral and mystic lineage.

Chapter 3 will further explore the *Iskandarnāme's* thematic echoes in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad's oral traditions. For now, Niẓāmī's work stands as the most nuanced iteration of the

Alexander Romance in Persian literature, showcasing the genre's adaptability across spiritual and cultural frontiers.

Reflections in Ā'īna-yi Iskandarī of Amīr Ḫusrow Dehlavī

The subsequent significant Alexander narrative is found in Amīr Ḫusraw Dehlavī's *Ā'īna-yi Iskandarī*. Amīr Ḫusrow (1253–1325 CE) is a significant figure in the cultural and literary history of the Indian subcontinent during the Delhi Sultanate. Known for his prolific contributions as a poet, musician, and scholar, he shaped both Persian and Hindavī literary traditions. His association with the Sufi master Niẓāmuddīn Awliyā and the integration of mystical elements into his works further elevated his position as a cultural and spiritual figure of enduring influence. Though primarily known for his Persian compositions, Ḫusrow also employed the vernacular Hindavī, expanding the accessibility of his literary vision across diverse audiences (Bashiri, n.d.).

Ā'īna-yi Iskandarī, completed around 699/1299–1300 CE as part of his five-part *Ḫamsa*, is written in the *motaqāreb* meter and reflects the literary sophistication of its time. Unlike earlier versions such as *Šāhnāme* or Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme*, Amīr Ḫusrow's narrative departs from inherited motifs in key ways. One of the most notable features is the deliberate omission of the familial connection between Alexander and Dārā, a motif central to the Persianized structure of prior accounts. By avoiding this dynastic link—and by omitting the conquest of Dārā and Alexander's marriage to Rošanak—Ḫusrow shifts the narrative's center of gravity away from themes of imperial succession toward a more abstract moral and literary contemplation of Alexander's life.

His version also introduces a unique formal innovation: each central narrative section begins with a prelude resembling a *standard* or moral preface. These preludes frame the subsequent events in didactic or philosophical terms. Within this structure, Ḫusrow embeds a series of self-contained yet thematically unified anecdotes offering moral reflections and literary elegance. The structure is capped by poetic interludes such as *Sāqīnāmas* or *Moḡannīnāmas*, which infuse the narrative with lyrical, performative, and musical qualities. These sections serve as aesthetic and emotional refrains, punctuating the storytelling with rhythmic reflection.

The core narrative recounts Alexander's travels, military campaigns, and encounters with philosophical and cultural others. Familiar motifs from earlier Persian versions remain: the journey to Čīn, the barrier against Gog and Magog, dialogues with sages, and conflicts with fire-worshippers and magicians. However, Ḫusrow omits legendary episodes such as the Land of Darkness, the quest for the Water of Life, and Alexander's prophetic ascent. These omissions appear deliberate, signaling a shift in emphasis from spiritual allegory to artistic and ethical exploration.

In its conclusion, *Āʾīna-yi Iskandarī* presents competing accounts of Alexander's death and burial, further distancing the narrative from fixed historiographic closure. Rather than confirming his divine role or offering a transcendent ending, the text dwells on ambiguity, reinforcing its broader theme of the limits of knowledge and the transient nature of worldly power.

This reframing reflects a broader literary movement in post-*Šāhnāme* Persianate cultures to downplay Alexander's imperial legacy in favor of individualized, moralized narratives. As Nawotka, Rollinger, and Wiesehöfer (2018) have noted, later Islamic and Persian texts often rework the Alexander Romance by omitting prophetic or dynastic themes in favor of more adaptable philosophical and literary functions. In this context, Amīr Ḫusrow's contribution is a formal innovation and a significant ideological repositioning that underscores his role as a literary trailblazer.

Reflections in Ḵerad Nāma-yi Iskandarī-yi Jāmī

Ḵerad Nāma-yi Iskandarī, written by the renowned Persian poet ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī in the *motaqāreb* meter and completed in 889/1484–85, represents a remarkable and innovative contribution to the evolving Alexander Romance tradition (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d., *s.v.* "Jāmī"). This work serves as the seventh *maṯnawī* within Jāmī's poetic collection *Haft Awrang* and departs significantly from the narrative and structural conventions of its predecessors. Unlike Firdawsī's relatively linear epic or Niẓāmī's spiritually layered reinterpretation, Jāmī's version takes the form of a fragmented, non-linear composition dominated by a pronounced moralizing tone.

Rather than recounting Alexander's conquests in a cohesive historical arc, Jāmī intertwines episodes from the conqueror's life with philosophical reflection and ethical instruction. This shift from event-driven storytelling to wisdom literature aligns the work with the *Mirror for Princes* tradition, in which historical exemplars guide rulership, ethics, and moral conduct. In *Ḵerad Nāma-yi Iskandarī*, Alexander becomes less a military figure and more a narrative vessel for articulating principles of governance and virtue.

The poem is structured into twenty-seven self-contained sections, each approximately seventy-five long. Every unit follows a deliberate sequence: a brief narrative episode (*dāstān*) related to Alexander's life or a sage's discourse is presented first; this is followed by a concise *ḥekāyat* (anecdote) that serves to comment on or illustrate the preceding passage; the unit concludes with a four-line *sāqīnāma*—a poetic refrain that echoes and deepens the unit's ethical or contemplative theme. This cyclic format lends the work a meditative rhythm, emphasizing moral inquiry over narrative development.

Importantly, the Alexander-related episodes do not coalesce into a continuous biographical narrative. Though Jāmī begins with Alexander's birth and ends with his death, the intervening tales appear to be selected more for their illustrative value than chronological coherence. He acknowledges his literary lineage by referencing Firdawsī, Niẓāmī, and Amīr Ḫusrow, yet decisively reorients the tradition away from heroic conquest and toward wisdom literature.

The result is a distinctive synthesis of Persianate ethical discourse and classical historiography. Alexander is reimagined as a conduit for philosophical reflection rather than as a subject of historical reconstruction. Only a fraction of the text focuses directly on Alexander's military life; the majority explores abstract principles of justice, sovereignty, and the ethical responsibilities of kingship. Through this structure and thematic focus, Jāmī's *Ḵerad Nāma-yi Iskandarī* exemplifies the culmination of the Persian Alexander tradition's transformation—from heroic epic to didactic and contemplative literature.

1.5. The Brilliant Alexander in Oral Tradition

While some historical narratives emphasize Alexander the Great's divisive legacy, others celebrate him as a military genius and brilliant strategist. This alternative portrayal highlights his exceptional leadership, tactical acumen, and unprecedented success in empire-building—

qualities particularly emphasized in Iranian oral traditions. In the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad region, which forms the central focus of this study, such depictions have been preserved and transmitted through generations. These narratives are embedded in the region's cultural memory as enduring testaments to Alexander's strategic brilliance.

Oral traditions offer unique insights into Alexander's legacy that are often overlooked in written sources[29]. As dynamic, performative narratives transmitted across generations, they preserve localized perspectives and cultural nuances that formal historical texts frequently omit (Perks & Thomson, 2015). Most scholarly discourse has privileged literary and documentary sources, thereby overlooking the richness and variability of oral historiography. This imbalance risks obscuring historical memory's flexible, adaptive nature, particularly in societies where oral transmission remains vital to cultural continuity.

These living narratives form a vibrant interpretive field in which historical figures such as Alexander are reimagined according to local values, experiences, and ethical concerns. In the case of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, oral traditions reinterpret Alexander not as a prophet, tyrant, or mythical hero, but as a model of tactical intelligence and effective leadership. Such traditions do not merely recall past events; they serve as evolving frameworks for meaning-making that link historical memory to contemporary identity.

The following chapters will examine how the legend of Alexander persists in the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. This analysis will focus on:

- The region's distinctive emphasis on Alexander's strategic prowess;
- The mechanisms of cultural preservation and transmission through oral storytelling.
- The adaptive and performative qualities of historical memory in non-textual traditions.

This investigation underscores the critical role of oral tradition in shaping historical understanding. By foregrounding these often-neglected sources, the study aims to reveal how communities actively construct and reinterpret historical legacy, particularly that of a multifaceted and globally resonant figure such as Alexander the Great

[29] Oral tradition refers to transmitting cultural knowledge, history, and values through spoken narratives, often shaped by performance, memory, and audience interaction. See Perks, R., & Thomson, A. (Eds.). (2015). *The oral history reader* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Methodological Framework for Subsequent Chapters

Beginning with Chapter Two, this research employs a multi-source verification methodology that strategically incorporates non-traditional digital resources—including regional blogs, collaborative encyclopaedias, and community knowledge platforms—to address gaps in formal academic literature regarding regional terminologies and historical particularities. These sources have proven indispensable for capturing contemporary indigenous discourse and accessing oral historical knowledge frequently marginalized in conventional scholarship.

Validation Protocol

The study implements a rigorous three-tier verification system:

1. Digital source triangulation (cross-referencing multiple online repositories)

2. Archival validation (against primary documents and peer-reviewed scholarship)

3. Oral testimony corroboration (through field interviews and expert consultation)

This approach adapts established digital humanities methodologies (Drucker, 2021)[1] to contexts where traditional documentation remains fragmentary or contested.

Genealogical Research Case Study

The reconstruction of Hellenistic dynastic histories (particularly figures like Iotapa and Ariobarzanes) demonstrates this methodology's application:

1. Preliminary Phase:

Wikipedia's crowd-sourced genealogical frameworks served as initial organizational matrices, particularly valuable for:

- Disambiguating homonymous rulers

- Mapping inter-dynastic connections

- Identifying potential research avenues

2. Academic Verification:

[1] This approach draws on digital humanities methodologies emphasizing interpretive, networked, and material perspectives on data, especially when working with incomplete or unstable sources (Drucker, 2021).

All provisional data underwent systematic validation against:

- Specialized reference works (Encyclopaedia Iranica; Brill's New Pauly)

- Standard scholarly compendia (Cambridge Ancient History; OCD)

- Primary evidence (coinage, inscriptions, papyri)

3. Discrepancy Resolution:

Conflicting data received hierarchical treatment:

1. Primary sources (e.g., Iotapa's coinage)

2. Scholarly consensus (standard reference works)

3. Contextual reconstruction (when direct evidence is lacking)

Ethical and Theoretical Considerations

The methodology adheres to:

- FAIR data principles (Wilkinson et al., 2016) for digital resource use[2]

- Decolonial epistemological frameworks (Smith, 1999) regarding[3]:

  - Oral history protocols

  - Indigenous knowledge attribution

  - Community-based verification

This dual commitment to academic rigor and inclusive knowledge practices enables the study to navigate complex historiographical challenges while maintaining scholarly integrity. The resulting genealogical tables and regional analyses achieve three critical objectives:

1. Clarification of dynastic relationships

2. Reconciliation of documentary gaps

[2] The FAIR data principles—Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable—were established to improve the management and reusability of digital scholarly data. They advocate for structured, transparent, and machine-actionable metadata for long-term usability across disciplines (Wilkinson et al., 2016).

[3] Decolonial epistemological frameworks prioritize indigenous ways of knowing, ethical research relationships, and community agency in knowledge production. Rooted in postcolonial critique, these frameworks challenge Eurocentric methodologies and promote accountability to local narratives and epistemic justice (Smith, 1999).

3. Systematic organization of fragmentary evidence

The methodology's effectiveness will be further demonstrated through detailed case studies and analytical applications in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two: The Socio-Political Structure of Lurs in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province

2.1. Chapter Overview and Introduction

It is crucial for readers to grasp the unique characteristics of this distinct region in Iran. This region, with its unique traditions, stands apart from the broader Iranian context. Understanding these unique aspects is the primary scientific objective of this dissertation, which aims to explore the oral tradition of the Alexander Romance in the province of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

To provide a thorough overview this chapter will begin by providing a detailed overview of the research techniques used in the study[4]. Following this, a detailed examination of the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad provinces will be provided, focusing on elements that align with the primary objectives of this dissertation. These include the significant characteristics of the region's natural environment and river systems, its oral heritage, and a comprehensive elucidation of the socio-political framework of the area. Moreover, this chapter will shed light on critical historical and political events that have shaped the identity of the local communities. Lastly, the role of women in this particular area will be thoroughly explained.

The primary objective of this chapter is to dissect the complexities of the Alexander oral tradition and place this investigation within the diverse socio-cultural framework of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

2.2. Methodology

In this chapter, I have employed both historical and sociological methodologies simultaneously. Historical research, a comprehensive tool, entails the meticulous examination of the fundamental components of history. From this standpoint, history is equivalent to 'the past.' Traditionally, "history" refers to the sequence of past events (Hamilton, 1984). From a social sciences perspective, history is documenting past events and utilizing research methodologies to analyze these events (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). Historical research involves conducting

[4] For a more detailed understanding of the material discussed in this section, the reader is referred to **Appendix A**, which includes maps and illustrations relevant to the geography of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, the routes associated with Alexander the Great, and notable historical and cultural sites. **Appendix E** defines key terms and concepts related to tribal organization, leadership structures, and social hierarchies. Together, these appendices offer critical context for this study's ethnographic and historical frameworks.

a comprehensive inquiry into the details surrounding a past event or the accomplishments of an individual (Smith, A, 1999).

Historical sociology, a key component of sociological methodology, plays a crucial role in understanding the past. It can be categorized as either interpretative or analytical. Historical sociology seeks a deep understanding of the past by studying specific dates as case studies and analyzing the root causes of social occurrences. This approach provides a deeper understanding of historical events and their social implications.

Ghasemi, S. F. (n.d.). conducted a study to provide comprehensive and detailed explanations of the social and economic conditions in *Īlāt*[5] to address specific problems. The researcher initially consulted historical publications and papers to conduct this analysis, thoroughly examining all accessible information. The core of his research primarily relied on the comprehensive utilization of books, journals, theses, and easily accessible scientific material and publications. In this thesis section, I conducted a thorough analysis of the subject to enhance my comprehension of the events and underlying factors that have led to socio-political transformations in the regions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

2.3. Kohgiluye and Boyer-Ahmad Province Geographical, Political, and Social Status

Iran has a diverse historical legacy and a complex mix of languages, ethnicities, and cultures. It has faced numerous military, political, and geographical challenges throughout its history. Iran can be described as a multifaceted society with distinctive cultural characteristics. Within this diverse cultural setting, ethnicity emerges as an intricate sociological concept encompassing numerous perspectives, making it a challenging subject to comprehend fully. In this context, particular attention must be given to the Lurs, a significant ethnic minority in Iran. This group has wielded considerable influence throughout Iran's turbulent history, from the reigns of Alexander the Great, Tīmūr, and the Mongols to the incursions of the Ottomans and other invading tribes. Both men and women have actively endeavoured to safeguard the sociocultural identity of their tribes.

[5] Plural form of *Īl.* For a detailed explanation of the term *Īlāt*, see **Appendix E: Terminology and Definitions**, under the section *Expanded Terminological Explanations*.
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Presently, the Lurs inhabit a vast territory in Iran, ranging from the regions between Kirmānšāh[6] and Būšehr[7] to mountainous areas such as the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province. The Laks[8], Baḫtīārī[9], Kohgiluyeh Boyer-Ahmad, and Mamasani[10] are important subgroups of the Lur ethnic community in Iran.

A significant reliance on the traditional practice of categorization characterizes the social structure of *Īlāt* and the clans of the Lur tribe. Considerations of the environment, economic interdependencies, and tribal-kinship associations shape this system. The family is the fundamental building block of societal organization, followed by subordinate entities such as progeny, belongings, familial networks, and ultimately *Īlāt*, representing the most significant unit. In this section, I examine the social classification of Lurs in the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, which constitutes the primary region in Iran where most Lur inhabitants are found.

Historically, the social structure of Iran's nomadic groups has commonly adhered to a pyramidal shape based on the kinship system and the patriarchal power of certain families. The *Īl*[11] in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province shares similarities in their societal structure with those in other Iranian provinces throughout history, exhibiting numerous commonalities. The

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[6] Kirmānšāh, located in western Iran near the Zagros Mountains, has long served as a key administrative and cultural center due to its strategic position along historic trade and military routes. The city's significance extends to the Sasanian period, particularly through the nearby rock reliefs of Taq-e Bostan, which represent royal investiture scenes and symbolic imagery associated with Sasanian kingship and ideology (see *Wikipedia*, n.d. sv Kirmānšāh).

[7] Būšehr, situated on the southwestern coast of Iran along the Persian Gulf, has historically served as a significant maritime and commercial hub. Its strategic location made it a focal point for trade and foreign interests, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries. Notably, the English and Dutch East India companies transferred their trading posts to Būšehr from Bandar-e ʿAbbās in the 1780s. It subsequently became the seat of a British political resident in the 19th century and hosted several European consulates, underscoring its importance in regional geopolitics (see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, n.d.).

[8] The Laks are an Iranian ethnic group predominantly residing in the western provinces of Iran, particularly Lorestān, Kirmānšāh, and Īlām. They are frequently regarded as a subgroup of the Lurs due to shared cultural practices, geographic proximity, and overlapping linguistic features. The Laki language, spoken by the Laks, exhibits affinities with both Luri and Kurdish dialects, positioning it at the intersection of southwestern and northwestern Iranian linguistic classifications. Historically, the Laks have preserved a tribal social structure centered around pastoralism and subsistence agriculture. Their cultural expressions, kinship systems, and economic practices combine indigenous Iranian traditions and interactions with neighboring ethnic communities (Izady, 1992).

[9] The Baḫtīārī are a Lur tribe in southwestern Iran, known for their nomadic pastoralist lifestyle and significant influence in Iranian history. They played a pivotal role during the Constitutional Revolution in the early 20th century and have maintained a distinct cultural identity through their language, customs, and social organization.

[10] The Mamasani are a Lur tribe primarily residing in Iran's Fars province, particularly in Mamasani County, with additional populations in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province. They speak a dialect of Southern Luri and have historically maintained a tribal social structure. The tribe comprises several sub-tribes, including Rostam, Baksh, Javid, and Doshmanziari. Their cultural practices and social organization reflect a blend of indigenous traditions and influences from neighboring ethnic groups.

[11] For a detailed explanation of the term *Īl*, see **Appendix E: Terminology and Definitions**.

system's organization, from the smallest unit, the family, to the most extensive and most intricate unit, the *Īlḫān*[12], is structured based on the kinship system and serves a collective objective. There are six *Īlāt* in this region. The social organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad was characterized by a hierarchical structure comprising various units. The smallest unit was known as "*Hūna*"[13] (household), followed by "*Māl*"[14] (a collection of multiple households), "*Taš*"[15] (a grouping of multiple belongings), "*Tīra*"[16] (an aggregation of multiple *Taš*), *"Ṭīfa*"[17] (a combination of multiple *Tīra*), and ultimately "*Īl*" (the sum of all *Ṭīfa*).

The establishment of the political organization was a direct consequence of the social structure, which was under the direction of the Ḫān[18]. The *Ḫāns* consistently upheld their leadership role within their clan or tribe through their ancestors' military and financial prowess, solidifying their status as the most prominent figures in their community. The *Īlāt* and the tribe of Lur traditionally formed distinctive political systems and power hierarchies. Each *Īl* operated as a governmental entity with a highly structured system of authority. The *Ḫān*, also referred to as the *Īlḫān*, had the distinct duty of overseeing and regulating the *Īl*, while the *Kadḫudā*[19] had

[12] The term *Īlḫān* historically refers to a subordinate khan within the Mongol Empire, particularly associated with the Il-Khanid dynasty that ruled Iran from 1256 to 1335. In the context of Iranian tribal structures, *Īlḫān* has been used to denote the leader of an *Īl* (tribe), overseeing multiple clans and households within a hierarchical social organization. This title signifies a position of authority and responsibility over the collective tribal units (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.).

[13] *Hūna* refers to a household and represents the smallest social unit in the tribal system. It is closely related in meaning and form to the Persian word *ḫāna* (خانه), "house."

[14] *Māl* denotes a socio-residential unit comprising several related households with close kinship ties. It is the foundational unit of tribal organization, particularly in nomadic contexts. Members of a *Māl* typically migrate together during seasonal transhumance, assist one another during the migration process, and establish their tents nearby. The unit is usually named after the extended family's eldest or most prominent member. Linguistically, the term is similar to the Persian word *māl* (مال), which commonly means "property" or "possession"; however, in the tribal context, it refers more specifically to a pastoral or residential grouping bound by kinship.

[15] The term *Taš*, which denotes a grouping of multiple *Māl*s in the tribal hierarchy, may be associated—conceptually, if not etymologically—with the notion of a shared hearth. Although it is phonetically similar to the Persian word *ātaš* (آتش), meaning "fire," the linguistic connection remains uncertain. Nonetheless, the cultural role of fire as a symbol of domestic cohesion and collective subsistence in tribal contexts may offer insight into this organizational term's functional and symbolic significance.

[16] *Tīra* refers to a patrilineal kinship unit composed of multiple *Taš* groups, forming a core genealogical segment within a *Ṭāyefa*. It plays a central role in tribal governance by facilitating coordinated political, social, and economic cooperation (Digard, 2015). Although phonetically similar to the Persian *tīre* (تیره), meaning "lineage group" or "allotted land" (Steingass, 1892), in tribal usage, *Tīra* denotes a more formal and enduring structural unit. It is distinct from *tīre*, which can refer more loosely to smaller kinship entities or symbolic affiliations. Among Luri and Kurdish communities, cognates of *Tīra* likewise emphasize the dual significance of land and lineage (Amanollahi, 2005; Barth, 1953). While some scholars have linked the term to Iranian linguistic roots, such as Old Persian *tigra-* ("arrow"), its contemporary usage specifies a tribal institution defined by agnatic descent and often territorial association.

[17] For a detailed explanation of the term *Ṭīfa*, see **Appendix E: Terminology and Definitions**.

[18] For a detailed explanation of the term *Ḫān*, see **Appendix E: Terminology and Definitions**

[19] For a detailed explanation of the term *Kadḫudā*, see **Appendix E: Terminology and Definitions**

jurisdiction over the *Ṭīfa*. *Rīš-safī*[20] assumed the duty of caring for the community's welfare, and *Sarparast*[21] was responsible for the family or household.

Following Reżā Šāh's reign, his son Mohammad-Reżā Šāh ascended to the throne in 1320 (1941 AD). Over twelve years, the central authority weakened, leading to a slight amelioration in the circumstances of the Lurs. Following the Coup d'état of 28 Mordad 1332 (15-19 August 1953), conditions reverted to the state experienced during Reżā Šāh's rule, as Mohammad-Reżā Šāh strictly re-implemented his father's policies.

In the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad regions, the present era is distinguished by its historical significance and critical character. This work aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the social and political structure of the region by focusing on the pivotal factors that substantially influenced these advancements during the Pahlavi era[22]. Multiple accounts indicate that the Pahlavi dynasty implemented six key measures that profoundly impacted the status of the Lurs in the province of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. The topics considered include the establishment of nomad settlement, the residence of nomads, the approval of the Public Military Service Law[23], the disarming of nomads, attire reforms, land reforms, and the marginalization of women. Section 6 of this chapter will further elaborate on these topics.

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[20] For a detailed explanation of the term *Rīš-safī*, see **Appendix E: Terminology and Definitions**.

[21] The *Sarparast*, a figure of immense importance, serves as the guardian or caretaker within the family. They oversee both financial responsibilities and the protection of family members, making important decisions, particularly concerning the marriage of children. In the Lur cultural context, the role of *Sarparast* is not formally appointed but is naturally assumed by a family member, typically a parent. In cases where the father is deceased, this responsibility may be passed to an elder brother or uncle. The *Sarparast* holds significant authority in the household, including the power to make final decisions on critical family matters, thereby ensuring the stability and cohesion of the family unit. This authority underscores the power dynamics within Lur families.

[22] The political dynasty that ruled Iran from 1925 to 1979. Founded by Reżā Šāh Pahlavi after the fall of the Qajar dynasty, the Pahlavi Dynasty was instrumental in implementing extensive modernization efforts, focusing on industrialization, education, infrastructure, and the centralization of power. Reżā Šāh 's policies included secularization and reducing the influence of the clergy. After Reżā Šāh 's abdication during World War II, his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, took power, continuing the modernization process while establishing solid ties with Western countries. Mohammad Reżā Šāh 's reign was notable for the White Revolution, a series of socio-economic reforms, and the growing political unrest that ultimately led to the Iranian Revolution in 1979, ending the Pahlavi monarchy.

[23] The Public Military Service Law was officially implemented in Iran on 16 Khordad 1304 (June 1925), during Reżā Šāh Pahlavi's early years, as part of modernization and centralization reforms. This law mandated compulsory military service for all eligible male citizens, aiming to create a unified and standardized national army, thereby reducing the influence of regional and tribal militias. This law had significant social and cultural implications for the local population, particularly in regions such as Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. It disrupted traditional lifestyles, especially among the nomadic tribes, who were accustomed to their own self-governing and defense mechanisms. The compulsory conscription faced considerable resistance in these areas, as many tribes perceived it as a direct challenge to their autonomy and cultural values, leading to significant tension and conflict. The enforcement of this law also intensified conflicts between the central government and the local tribal communities, further shaping the dynamics between state authority and tribal resistance.

The implementation of these unique innovations has significantly stimulated urban development in Iran. However, it has also had a profound and enduring impact on nomadic communities, particularly their culture and identity. These consequences are significantly evident in several key areas, highlighting the gravity of the situation.

The disruption of traditional nomadic lifestyles, which involve cyclically moving across various grazing sites throughout the year, has been a drastic and notable outcome. The land reforms implemented in the 1940s led to the division of large estates and the subsequent land redistribution to small farmers. As a result, many nomadic communities were forced to abandon their mobile way of life and establish permanent settlements, causing a significant disruption to their longstanding traditions.

Moreover, a reduction in unique cultural expressions, which are a hallmark of nomadic tribes, has become noticeable. These communities exhibit a rich tapestry of cultural manifestations, including music, dance, and religious rites. However, the implementation of land reforms has led to a decline in these traditional customs, as nomadic people were compelled to conform to the cultural norms of sedentary populations, resulting in a loss of diversity.

Additionally, nomadic communities are experiencing a discernible decline in their traditional identities, which are characterized by distinct historical, cultural, and linguistic traits. The implementation of land reforms has not only weakened these unique identities but also eroded the rich heritage of these communities, pushing them towards integration into Iran's broader social structure. The lasting influence of these shifts still resonates today, emphasizing the complex interaction between societal change and the preservation of the nomadic cultural legacy.

2.3.1. Geographical Location and Climatic Characteristics

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, located in the southwestern part of Iran, is characterized by varied topography and climate, influenced mainly by the presence of the Zagros Mountains. The province spans an area of 16,264 square kilometers and shares borders with Iṣfahān, Čahār-maḥāl va Baḫtīārī provinces to the north, Fārs province to the east, and Būšehr provinces to the south, and the Ḫūzistān province to the west.

The province's climate can be divided into two main classifications: temperate and subtropical. The temperate climatic zones cover an area of approximately 8,037 square kilometers, with an average elevation of 900 meters above sea level. The biological conditions in these regions are typically characterized by high humidity and dense woodlands consisting of oak, walnut, almond, and various other tree species. The annual precipitation in these areas ranges between 600 and 800 millimeters, occurring from the beginning of winter until summer.

Prominent areas situated within the temperate climatic zones encompass Boyer-Ahmad, Denā[24], Mārgūn[25], and the northern sections of Kohgiluyeh and Gačsārān[26]. Yāsūǧ[27], the administrative center of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, is renowned for being one of Iran's rainiest and highest-altitude provincial capitals. The subtropical climate zones encompass an expanse of approximately 8,226 square kilometers and maintain an average altitude of 207 meters above sea level. The annual precipitation in these areas varies between 300 and 500 millimeters. Walnut trees flourish in these particular locations, including districts such as Gačsārān, Kohgiluyeh, Bāšt, and Bahma'ī.

The population of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad is diverse, reflecting the region's numerous geographical features. The province encompasses a diverse array of ethnicities, including Lurs, Arabs, Qashqā'ī, and Baḫtīārī [28], which significantly enriches its cultural fabric (the majority

[24] Mount Dena, the highest peak of the Dena Mountain Range and the tallest summit in the Zagros Mountains, rises to approximately 4,409 meters above sea level. It is also known as Qash Mastān in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province in southwestern Iran. The region is noted for its alpine ecosystem, rich biodiversity, and strategic environmental significance. Dena is part of a protected biosphere reserve due to its dense oak forests, unique wildlife, and its importance as a freshwater source (Tehran Times, 2023).

[25] *Mārgūn* is located in the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province in southwestern Iran. The city is known for its scenic mountainous landscape, which forms part of the Zagros mountain range, significantly shaping the region's cultural and economic activities. Mārgūn is predominantly inhabited by the Lur people, who maintain many traditional elements of Luri culture, including their language, music, and lifestyle. Mārgūn's economy largely depends on agriculture, pastoralism, and local crafts, reflecting the broader subsistence patterns of the region. The area is also notable for the nearby Mārgūn Waterfall, a popular natural attraction contributing to the region's tourism industry. This was one of the important frontiers for Lur people due to the great weather.

[26] Gačsārān, located in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, is renowned for its economic significance due to its strategic role in Iran's oil industry. Since the early 20th century, the region has been a major contributor to national oil production, housing some of Iran's most important oil fields. The city's petroleum infrastructure defines its economic landscape, positioning it as a central hub in the national energy sector. In addition to its industrial relevance, Gačsārān is known for its natural diversity as part of the Zagros Mountains. The presence of Lur tribal communities in and around the city adds a socio-cultural dimension to its transformation, as the expansion of the oil industry has stimulated infrastructure development and contributed to shifting patterns of livelihood and settlement in the region (de Planhol, 2002).

[27] Yāsūj, located in southwestern Iran, serves as the administrative center of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. Historically significant as a center of Lur identity and tribal governance, the city has played a pivotal role in the socio-political organization of the region. Nestled within the Zagros mountain range, Yāsūj's cultural landscape is shaped by geography, with local economies traditionally based on pastoralism and agriculture.

[28] The Baḫtīārī are a subgroup of the Lur people. They have traditionally inhabited the southwestern regions of Iran, particularly the Zagros Mountains region of Chaharmahal and Baḫtīārī and Khuzestan Provinces (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Baḫtīārī tribe").

of Arabs are in Gačsārān city). Although the province possesses a diverse cultural heritage, it exhibits a significantly low degree of socioeconomic progress, primarily relying on agriculture, livestock, and tourism as the main contributors to its economy. Gačsārān, a prominent city in the region, possesses rich natural resources, including oil, gas, and minerals, significantly influencing its economic landscape. The social organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province is intimately influenced by its historical and cultural legacy, promoting peaceful cohabitation among various ethnic groups. This exceptional social fabric enhances the province's unique identity, contributing to its distinctiveness within the broader context of Iran (Map A.1).

2.3.2. The Mountains

The mountains and peaks in the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad regions are a part of the more extensive Zagros mountain range. One prominent summit in this area is Derišk, a mountain situated about 20 kilometers to the southwest of Yāsūğ, boasting an altitude of 2,800 meters. The mountain range is home to various animal species, including leopards, wolves, foxes, brown bears, rabbits, squirrels, and others. This mountain functions as a crucial hydrological resource for the region, and numerous drinking water wells in the Dašt-i Rūm (meaning "the Plain of Rome") area have been excavated adjacent to it. The *Roman Afsantin* (a distinct local plant species) flourishes in this region.

The Denā Range, alternatively referred to as the Denā Mountains, is acknowledged as the most elevated and extensive fold mountain range in the Zagros region. The main ridge measures around 90 kilometers in length. The highest summit, Bizhan 3 (Qāš-i Mastān), has an altitude of 4,459 meters and is situated approximately 35 kilometers to the northwest of Yāsūğ. Contrary to widespread misunderstandings, Denā is not a solitary summit but a range of mountains extending from the northwest to the southeast. It covers the territories of Isfahan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Chaharmahal and Baḫtīārī provinces.

Denā is partitioned into three primary ridges and one secondary vertical ridge by three passes: Bizhan, Murgh-i Gharbī (Western Bird), and Pūtak. The Denā range commences approximately 20 kilometers east of Yāsūğ and stretches towards the northwest for about 70 kilometers into Eṣfahān province. The length of the range is 90 kilometers, while its average breadth measures 15 kilometers. The highest summit, Bizhan 3 (Qāš-i Mastān), is located on the border between

the Pādenā area in Semirom and the city of Sīsaḫt. It reaches an altitude of 4,459 meters. The Pādenā region and the city of Sīsaḫt are located in the heart of the Denā range. The mountain's extensive size and diverse altitudes result in an annual rainfall range of 600 to 1,800 millimeters, leading to the formation of multiple rivers such as Bašār, Ḫersān, Rīgān, Mārbar, Mehrīyūn, Kūh-e Gol, Saryāz, Tīzāb, and Dezkard.

Notable plant species found in the protected regions of Mount Denā include Oak, Bloodroot, Crataegus, Thymes, and Wild Almond. The Nāzmakūn River originates from the spring located at Mount Denā, and the hilly area harbors a wide variety of fauna, including leopards, bears, lynxes, foxes, wild goats, partridges, and cranes. Contrary to popular belief, Denā is not a solitary summit but a range of mountains in the Zagros region. It extends from the northwest to the southeast and is positioned on the boundaries of Esfahān, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Chaharmahal and Baḫtīārī provinces (Map A.2).

2.3.3. Rivers and their Significance

This section examines the rivers in the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad regions geographically and physically. Rivers are essential natural features that provide water, nutrition, and electricity, significantly influencing the region's economy, culture, and society.

In ethnographic research, rivers serve as a means to gain insight into the socio-economic conditions of communities, exerting influence on activities such as fishing, agriculture, and industry. Moreover, their cultural significance is evident in religious rituals, festivities, and indigenous stories. Rivers not only serve as natural boundaries but also profoundly impact social and political relationships.

This section will focus on the geographical depiction of Alexander the Great's story in Iran, examining the Lur narratives related to Alexander. This analysis will also include an investigation of the physical attributes of the rivers in this area.

Due to its various elevated areas, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province experience significant precipitation, mainly snow. This precipitation is essential for the nourishment of the region's rivers. Surface waters from many areas converge and flow into the Persian Gulf. The rivers in this region include Mārūn, Ḫersān, Zohra, Bīšāwar (Bazrang), Nāzmakūn, Mārbar, Yāsūğ, Darra-yi ʿAğam, Gardū, Āb-i Šūr, and Ḫayrābād.

The Mārūn River, formerly known as "Tab River" originates from the Nīl Mountains, with its headwaters situated on the slopes of the Sādāt Mountains in the Zagros mountain range. After covering a distance of 120 kilometers, the stream reaches the Mārūn Dam reservoir. Subsequently, it enters the Behbahān plain via the Takāb Strait. By employing diversion dams like Šahdā and the irrigation system of Behbahān, it facilitates irrigation for both the Behbahān and Jūzīyān plains. Eventually, the river is renamed Hūr (Šādagān Marsh) after being refilled with water from the elevated areas of Rāmhormoz and then flows into the Persian Gulf through the Ḫormūsāyī entrance.

The water quality in the upper reaches of the Mārūn River is excellent. Nevertheless, as it progresses downstream, specifically from Īdanak (located near Landū) and prior to traversing the Behbahān plain, there can be a deterioration in the water's quality owing to the existence of gypsum and saline layers. Despite variations in water quality, the Mārūn River has played a vital role in supporting rural villages situated along its path, resulting in the growth of relatively large urban areas such as Behbahān, Rāmšīr, and Šādagān. The Mārūn River in the vicinity of Behbahān is frequently referred to by the local population as the Imām Riḍā River. Accessing it is conveniently achieved by following the route that leads directly to the cement factory.

The Bīšāwar River, often referred to as the Bazirang River, is a flowing body of water. The Bīšāwar River, formerly known as the Bazirang River, originates in the southeastern area of Boyer-Ahmad ʿUlyā and the Ardakān and Mamasanī mountains in the Fārs Province. The river flows northeast in Lower Boyer-Ahmad and is fed by the main tributaries of Ganǧegūn, Tīzāb, and Tang-i Surḫ. The river predominantly flows through the eastern and northeastern parts of the province, as well as passing through the city of Yāsūǧ. Upon traversing the northeastern region and arriving at the northern part of the Denā area, the river merges with the Ḫersān River in the northern section of Denā. Ultimately, it merges with the Kārūn River, adopting the renowned designation of Baz.

The Taḡr River is a body of water. The river originates from the northern slope of Čās-e ḫār Mountain, about 37 kilometers to the east of Dehdašt. The river covers a distance of 40 kilometers, and its height above sea level is 2000 meters. The river flows in a north-westerly direction and merges with a minor tributary on the southern slope of Dūḡ Mountain. As the river flows through the northern regions of Lower Boyer-Ahmad and Teybi, it experiences a name change and becomes the Taḡr River. Upon traversing the eastern valley of the Sīl

Mountain, the river then converges with the Mārūn River in the western portion of Andaroun village.

The name of the Ḫersān River likely originates from the tribal term *Ḫur*, combined with the Persian suffix *-istān* ("land of"), a typical toponymic pattern in Iran (Ehsani, 2016). Over time, the designation evolved into "Ḫersān," reflecting phonological shifts in Khuzestani Arabic, such as substituting the challenging /ū/ sound with /e/ (Al-Wer, 2018). Hydrologically, the Ḫersān sustains rice cultivation through perennial irrigation and nutrient-rich silt deposited by tributaries like Rīš-rūd, which originates from snowmelt in the Zagros Mountains (Ghadimi et al., 2019; see Figure 2 for basin boundaries). After merging its headstreams, the Ḫersān converges with the Mārūn River downstream, amplifying water availability in the Marun-Jarrahi basin. This confluence supports floodplain management systems critical for rice yields, including seasonal inundation practices (FAO, 2021).

The *ʿAlāʾ River* is a geographical feature. The river derives its name from the *ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ibn-i Bahman* tribal confederation and originates from the *Dīzmūk* spring. Similar to the *Mārūn River*, this river holds great importance. It converges with its tributaries, including *Ūyak* and *Samā*, in the *Midiavait* region and then joins the *Mārūn River* before finally flowing into *Rāmhormoz*.

The *Talḫak River*, situated in the *Bahmaʾī* district of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province*, is renowned for its brackish water resulting from the existence of gypsum mountains at its origin. The "Rūd-i Talḫ" (*Talḫak River*) is a prominent feature within the *Bahmaʾī* region of *Kohgiluyeh*.

The Sardān River, presently denominated as Čār, the river named Ūsā, often known as Ṭībī Sard-sīrī, originates in the Kamar Deh region. The river experiences an abundant water supply in winter. However, it faces reduced water flow in summer due to agricultural usage, particularly for rice cultivation at the point where it meets the Deh Šayḫ tributary, approximately 1-kilometer southwest of Qalʿa Doḫtar hamlet, the river merges with either the Tāb River or Mārūn River and is then called the Kalāt River. The rivers in Kohgiluyeh and Province jointly contribute to the intricate hydrological and ecological landscape and its unique oral tradition.

2.3.4. Historical Geography

Each individual is a constituent of the Lur tribe. The Lur people in this region have affiliations with several tribes such as Bāvī, Dušman-e Zīyārī, Ṭībī, Bahma'ī, Boyer-Ahmad, and other such groups (Amanolahi, 2002).

During the Sassanid era, the region presently called Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province was known as *Qubād Ḫurra*. It constituted one of the quintessential regions of Persia. Following the Arab conquest of this city, it was formally designated as *Arǧān*, leading to the entire province being often referred to by this appellation. Consequently, the name *Qubād Ḫurra*[29] was altered to *Ḫurra-yi Argān* or *Arǧān*[30]. During the Safavid dynasty[31] brought about a significant change in the stae of *Arǧān*, leading to its renaming as *Kohgiluyeh*.

Under the reign of Reżā Šāh, Kohgiluyeh remained a subordinate city, preserving its historical status. Simultaneously, the Boyer-Ahmad district, located in the Fārs Province, served as the primary focal point of *Tal Ḫusrow*[32]. In 1322 (1943 AD), the region of Kohgiluyeh was

[29] Qubād Ḫurra refers to a district (Kura) established during the reign of Qubād I, a Sassanid king who ruled from 488 to 531 AD. The district was part of a broader administrative reform aiming to centralize the governance of the Sassanid Empire. Qubād I is known for introducing social and administrative changes, including reorganizing local regions into smaller governing units called *kura*, intended to strengthen control over the empire. The reforms also reflect Qubād's close collaboration with the Mazdakite movement, which advocated for social equality, significantly influencing the governance and organization of these regions.

[30] Arǧān, also known as Arrajān, was an important ancient city in southwestern Iran, founded during the Sassanid period. Situated between the cities of Shushtar and Bīshāpur, it played a significant role in the administrative and economic framework of the empire. Arǧān was mainly known for its strategic location on the route connecting Mesopotamia to the Iranian Plateau, making it an essential hub for trade and military campaigns. Under the Abbasids, Arǧān retained its importance and became a flourishing cultural and economic center. However, it eventually declined, particularly after an earthquake in the 11th century, which led to its abandonment.

[31] The Safavid Dynasty was one of Iran's most significant ruling dynasties, lasting from 1501 to 1736. It was founded by Shāh Esmāʿil I and marked Iran's political unification after centuries of fragmentation and civil war. One of its most consequential achievements was the establishment of Twelver Shiʿa Islam as the official state religion. This defining act profoundly shaped Iran's national identity and distinguished it from its predominantly Sunni neighbors. The Safavids are particularly noted for their efforts to centralize power, promote Persian cultural traditions, and initiate a renaissance in the arts and architecture. These developments were expressed mainly in Isfahan, which became the capital and a hub of urban development and architectural innovation. The dynasty played a critical role in the long-term transformation of Iranian society and religious life, anchoring Shiʿism as the Iranian state's central ideological and institutional foundation. However, the dynasty's decline began in the late 17th century, leading to its eventual collapse in the early 18th century, driven by internal mismanagement and external invasions (Encyclopaedia Iranica, sv. "Safavid Dynasty").

[32] Tal Ḫusrow, an ancient hill in the southwestern Iran region, is steeped in historical significance, likely associated with the Sassanid or early Islamic periods, and may have served as a strategic or ceremonial location. The hill is considered an important archaeological site, with evidence suggesting it could have been part of a larger settlement or fortification. The name "Ḫusrow" points to a connection with the Sassanid era, possibly linked to a ruler named Ḫusrow. However, what truly adds a unique cultural and legendary dimension to its historical significance is the local belief that Tal Ḫusrow is related to the mythical king Kay Ḫusrow from the Šāhnāme.

separated from the Fārs and incorporated into the *Ḫūzistān Province*[33]. Later, in 1343 (1964 AD), Kohgiluyeh regained its independence from *Ḫūzistān* and became a formal governorate, with *Yāsūğ* serving as its administrative center (Imam Shushtri, 1952/53). This historical progression established the foundation for subsequent advancements.

Following the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the subsequent restructuring of provinces, the area was renamed *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province*. *Boyer-Ahmad's* name was included as a tactical step to prevent possible disagreement. Concurrently, the incorporation of *Gačsārān* into *Ḫūzistān* strengthened the economic framework, specifically through participation in the petroleum industry. As a result of numerous historical and political changes, the *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province* have emerged as a distinct and independent province.

2.3.5. Social Structure of Īlāt

The considerable magnitude and political sway of the nomads in *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province* make their social structure extremely important in the broader context of Iran. As is traditional among many tribes in Iran, their system of governance is distinguished by the authority of *Ḫwānīn*[34], which is the plural version of *Ḫān*. This conventional kind of leadership not only influences the political and social structure within the province but also has a significant impact on the broader Iranian sociocultural framework. The population's livelihood, especially in small villages, mainly depends on pastures and meadows *(Afshar-Naderi 2012)*, indicative of the broader socio-economic patterns in many locations throughout Iran.

The *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* region is a rich tapestry of diversity, home to six *Īls*, which are nomadic clans. Each locality in this region consists of multiple tribes, sub-tribes, and descendants dispersed over the political domain. Each locale contains multiple coexisting tribes. In the social structure of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad*, five officially acknowledged

[33] Ḫūzistān Known as an ancient province in southwestern Iran, Ḫūzistān has a long history that dates back to the Elamite civilization. It is considered one of the oldest regions of Iran, with significant cultural and historical contributions during the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid periods. The province's name derives from "Ḫūz," which is linked to the region's original inhabitants, the Elamites. Under the Sassanid rule, Ḫūzistān became a vital administrative area due to its fertile lands and strategic location. The region was notable for its agricultural output, mainly sugar cane cultivation, and played an essential role as a connecting link between the Iranian Plateau and Mesopotamia. The rich cultural heritage of Ḫūzistān is reflected in its role in several critical historical events, including resistance against foreign invasions and its participation in the development of Zoroastrian traditions.
[34] The plural form of *Ḫān*

categories decrease in size as follows: *Īlāt*, tribe, sub-tribe, offspring or *Tāš,* and home (which is linked to an extended family or kinship group) (Amanolahi, 2002).

In *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad*, the term '*Tīra*' is deliberately avoided and replaced with the designations '*Īl*' or 'tribe'. Each lower level within the family hierarchy, such as sons or daughters, has a genuine familial bond, and their lineage can be traced back to a specific common ancestor on the father's side. Each child and collective is assigned the name of its originator, and the members within each collective, in a spirit of respect and equality, are considered siblings and cousins, addressing each other as '*Kākā*' (brother) and '*Vāya*' (sister). The smallest unit of its structure is called a '*Hūna*,' which typically consists of multiple families (*Ghafari, 2014*). Within the hierarchical framework of *Īl*, there exist further classifications known as '*Ābādī*' (residents) or '*Māl*' (property), which act as distinct and conspicuous markers of one's economic and social standing in *Īl*.

A progeny-centered kinship group is established during periodic migrations, and its composition, encompassing the number of tents and individuals, may vary annually. Blookbashi (1965).indicates that several dwellings along the migration road in the villages of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* had housed '*Māl*' encampments for their animals. The camps were categorized as either '*Ḫān's property*' or '*Īl's property*.' The *Ḫān's* domain, a vast property, was not just a physical space but the heart of the tribe's social structure. It housed not just *Ḫān's* immediate family and relations but also an esteemed assembly of revered elders known as *Rīš-safī*, or "white beards," as well as gunners, and enslaved people (Hūnazād[35]).

This property served as the central focus for political and administrative activities of nomadic and monogamous tribes. The group's primary responsibility was supervising the distribution and transfer of grazing grounds to local properties. *Īlāt's* property pertains to the possessions of the itinerant and monogamous tribes, comprising four to fifteen obsidian-colored tents. The *Ḫān* held the highest esteemed position in the province, while a *Kadḫudā*, a member from a particular family linked to the property, played a crucial role in overseeing each property within the province, ensuring its proper management and use (Ghafari, 2014). Ancient Iranian communities exhibited distinct social hierarchies characterized by various social statuses. The

[35] The term *Hūnazād* refers to an individual born and raised within the household of a prominent family, often serving the family across generations. It implies a deep bond of loyalty and integration into the family, with *Hūnazād* often contributing significantly to the household's social and economic functions. Within Lur communities, the *Hūnazād* was seen as part of the extended household, playing a crucial role in supporting the daily functions. Modern usage of the term requires sensitivity due to its historical power dynamics and relationships.

strata were arranged hierarchically, with certain strata occupying positions that were either equivalent to or superior to others, while some were seen as subordinate. Determining an individual's social standing in the province of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* was contingent upon their social class (Blookbashi, 1965).

This long-standing structure, which has defied the pervasive influence of urbanization and globalization in today's media-centric culture, functions as a vibrant social artifact. A notable example is the response to the question 'Who are you?' in this region, often involving the revelation of one's clan and *Īl* affiliation, rather than the disclosure of one's name and surname. Its continued existence and relevance in modern times underscore its ability to withstand challenges and remain significant, highlighting the urgent need for a more detailed examination within the field of humanities.

In the face of the ever-changing socioeconomic context, this system is a tribute to the enduring social institutions. This subject calls for a more profound comprehension and more acknowledgment within academic discussions, providing essential perspectives on the complex interaction between tradition and the transforming influences of modernization. Due to its persistent characteristics, this system is an intriguing research topic that not only enhances but is essential for our understanding of how the human experience is changing in response to cultural, technical, and societal changes. Therefore, it serves as a distinctive and essential aspect of inquiry in the vast realm of humanities, underscoring its relevance and significance.

2.3.6. Political Structure of Īlāt

Iran's Īlāt predominant structure consists of six or five rows. The infrastructure of this structure is founded on the migration system. Additionally, a supervisor is assigned to each line inside this command system. The origins of power stem from this method of exerting authority and the pinnacle of power represented by the wheel. Each trace is a dependent variable of the trace directly above it, and both traces mutually affect each other. Once the social structure has been compared across all states, it becomes evident that solidifying the power structure and ensuring that these structures align is crucial to understanding the Īlāt system(Sarfariyab90, n.d.).

From a structuralist perspective, *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* can be classified as one of the five subdivisions of *Īl*. In 1342 (1963 AD), the social hierarchy and political power structure

of *Īl* were as follows: *Īl* was governed by a *Ḫān*, *a Kaluntar*[36] (means sheriff) *oversaw Tīra*, and *Ṭīfa* was under the authority of a *Kadḫudā*. The leaders, chosen for their comprehensive understanding of the culture and history of their region, were well-acquainted with their entitlements. They selected politicians raised in the same locality and shared the same cultural background, fostering a sense of unity and harmony in the society. The colonies were also acquainted with ethical principles. Thus, the nation's inhabitants endorsed their leaders with the same ethnic background.

The chosen commanders and their male subordinate forces were members of the *Īl* commanders, sometimes called '*Ḫān*.' Their small name was preceded by the prefix '*Kī*' (*Javadan, 2017*). It was their duty to uphold their *Ṭīfa's* national identity. *The Īlḫān* had a position of authority within the power structure of each *Īl*. With the authorization of the central government, the *Īlḫān* exerted control over multiple smaller *Īls*, demonstrating the central government's significant role in the Īl organization. The rulers of minor territories were referred to as *Ḫāns*. The central government implemented this category to facilitate tax collection and provide amenities for state organization employees. The *Īlḫān* held the highest authority and had significant influence in shaping and implementing regional policies. The sheriffs and police officers were the executive agents responsible for carrying out the *Īlḫān's* policies, which were executed through the council *(Oberling, 2008).*

The region that accommodated the tribes of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* district from 1300 to 1341 (1921-1963 AD) (the era characterized by the Tribal policies of the Pahlavi dynasty) comprised many groups and classes with varying socio-economic privileges, reflecting the complexity of the tribal system. A considerable portion of the district consisted of indigenous people, while a minority were non-indigenous. The Indigenous inhabitants included *Ḫān*, *Rīš-*

[36] The term *Kalāntar* (Persian: کلانتر, "sheriff" or "headman") derives from *kalān* (کلان, "great") combined with the Persian comparative suffix *-tar*. However, the variant *kalun*—attested in earlier usage—may suggest a possible Turkic influence, particularly about the Turkic word *kalın/kalun* ("mighty" or "thick") (Doerfer, 1963).

safī, *Mīrzā*[37], *Mubāšir*[38] of *Īl*, and *Mumayyiz* of *Manāl*[39], in addition to *Mullā*[40] (administrators of Shariaʾ Preaching and enforcers of legal matters), attendants, and 'serfs-herdsmen.' In contrast, the non-native parts consisted of *Ḫaṭīr* or *Salmānī*[41], *Mihtar*[42], *Qurbat* [43], and *Pīla-*

[37] In the early Qajar period, the title *Mīrzā* was primarily attributed to individuals of aristocratic background or those occupying prominent administrative positions. The term is derived from *Amīrzāzāda* (امیرزاده), combining *amīr* (prince or commander) and *zāda* (offspring), and denoted initially "son of a prince," indicating noble origin and social rank. As Qajar society evolved, the association of the title shifted from hereditary nobility to intellectual status. The spread of formal education and administrative bureaucracy led to the application of *Mīrzā* to literate individuals, civil servants, and scholars. A notable example is Mīrzā Ṣāliḥ Shīrāzī, who studied abroad and played a key role in introducing printing technology to Iran. His case reflects the broader trend of the title becoming linked to educational achievement and modern state functions. Among groups such as the Lurs, *Mīrzā* specifically referred to someone with formal learning, signifying the prestige attached to literacy and knowledge rather than merely lineage (Yousefvand, Hormoz, & Begdeli, 2018; Green, 2009).

[38] Mubāšir, an appointed agent of the Khan, is responsible for handling various administrative duties related to the Khan's affairs. This includes overseeing the legal procedures associated with the *Manāl* collected by the *Mumayyiz*, a task that underscores the importance of legal compliance in the Khanate. The Mubāšir also takes care of other legal and administrative tasks essential for maintaining the Khan's governance. In the Luri language, the term Mubāšir is closely aligned with the concept of a 'manager.'

[39] The term *Mumayyiz* (Arabic: مُمَيِّز) is derived from the triliteral Arabic root *m-y-z* (م-ی-ز), meaning "to distinguish" or "to differentiate." As a noun form of the verb *yumayyiz* (يُمَيِّز), it denotes "one who distinguishes" or "assessor" (Wehr, 1979). In the administrative framework of southwestern Iran, particularly among the Lur tribes of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, the *Mumayyiz-i Manāl* was an official appointed by the Ḫān or his agents to determine the appropriate share of agricultural produce or property to be collected as *Manāl*—an obligatory tax or levy imposed on peasant households. This assessment, often conducted before harvest (mainly for wheat and other staple crops), was intended to ensure fairness and accuracy, thereby reducing disputes and legitimizing the Ḫān's fiscal authority. The role of the *Mumayyiz* illustrates the interaction between tribal power structures and localized governance systems in Qajar and early Pahlavi Iran (Digard, 1982; Floor, 2003; Amanollahi, 2005).

[40] Clergy man

[41] Ḫaṭīr or Salmānī: The term *Salmānī* (Arabic: سلمانی) traditionally refers to a barber within tribal and rural Iranian societies. The word is derived from *Salman*, a typical male given name, but in ethnographic contexts, it denotes individuals or families who practice barbering as an inherited occupation. Within the social hierarchy of southwestern Iran, including the Lur-populated regions such as Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Salmānīs often held a marginal socio-economic status. They were considered non-indigenous (*ġayr-i aṣlī*) and functionally associated with ritual grooming, minor medical procedures (such as cupping), and, symbolically, with impurity. In many cases, they were also referred to as *Ḫaṭīr*, a local variant carrying similar connotations. While essential to daily and ceremonial life, their role placed them outside the lineage-based power structures of the indigenous tribal elites (Ghaffari1995/96b, 1374; Digard, 1982; Beck, 1986).

[42] Mihtar (musician): *Mihtar* refers to a hereditary group traditionally associated with music and performance within Lur tribal society and other parts of southwestern Iran. Although *Mihtar* means "respected elder" in Persian, in the context of tribal social stratification, it came to denote marginalized occupational specialists, particularly musicians who performed at weddings, mourning ceremonies, and seasonal festivals. The *Mihtars* were typically non-indigenous and held a liminal social status. While their role in public ritual and cultural transmission was significant, they were often excluded from the core tribal kinship structures and denied full socio-political rights. Their services were essential but did not confer symbolic capital or authority within the hierarchy of the Īl (Ghaffari1995/96b, ; Digard, 1982; Beck, 1986).

[43] Qurbat (blacksmith): The term *Qurbat* (also pronounced *Qorbat* or *Qurvat*) is etymologically derived from the Arabic word *ġurbat* (غربت), meaning "estrangement," "foreignness," or "exile." In the context of tribal southwestern Iran, particularly among the Lur communities of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, *Qurbat* came to designate a hereditary occupational group traditionally associated with blacksmithing, metalwork, and sometimes itinerant trade. Despite their indispensable role in producing and maintaining tools, weapons, and agricultural implements, the Qurbat were classified as non-indigenous (*ġayr-i aṣlī*) and socially peripheral. Their name underscores their perceived detachment from the tribal core and ancestral genealogies. Like other service castes, their contributions to the tribal economy and daily life did not translate into political representation or status within the Īl structure (Digard, 1982; Beck, 1986; Ghaffari, 1995/96b).

war[44] (Ghaffari, 1995/96b). The allocation of political and administrative authority was commensurate with the segmentation and categorization within the *Īl* organization. *Īlḫān*, possessing boundless authority, held the highest position within the *Īl*, whereas *Kadḫudā* occupied the leadership position among the clans.

Additional social classes and groups existed beyond the elder statesmen, and each held potential influence based on their respective positions. However, this influence did not hold a place in the power hierarchy. The lower echelons of society encompassed *Salmānī* or *Ḫaṭīr* (barber), musicians (*Mihtar*), and instrument makers. Notably, none of these individuals were indigenous to the region (*Roshanfaker, 2017*). Every state featured a structured hierarchy of power and political leadership, which was [elaborate description of the hierarchy], presented in the shape of a pyramid with *Ḫān* at the apex, succeeded by *Kadḫudā*, followed by the white-bearded elders. The ordinary people stood at the base of the pyramid (*Golestane, 1987/88*).

During the Pahlavi era, the *Ḫāns* and their affiliates gradually assumed the role of collaborators within their clans and communities, and their directives carried varying degrees of significance, necessitating compliance from subordinates and the general populace. Intriguingly, in the contemporary region under the Islamic Republic, the families and descendants of *Kadḫudās* now hold leadership positions at the forefront of their respective villages, districts, cities, and provinces. Moreover, their influence extends nationally, supported by the wealth inherited from the Pahlavī era. The groundwork laid by the Pahlavī regime has facilitated their ascent to positions of authority, ensuring their continued prominence. In the present day, this wielded power commands significant respect, underscoring the gravity of the current socio-political landscape (*Bavar, 1945; Pūr-Kāẓem, 1963).*

[44] Pīla-war (merchant): The term *Pīla-war* refers to itinerant merchants or traders traditionally active in the tribal and rural economies of southwestern Iran. In the Lur regions, including Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, *Pīla-war* denoted a social group that operated outside the genealogical framework of the indigenous tribal population. These merchants, often perceived as non-native (*ġayr-i aṣlī*), were responsible for transporting and exchanging goods, such as textiles, tools, salt, and agricultural products, between nomadic communities and settled markets. Despite their crucial role in maintaining economic networks and material circulation, Pīla-wars remained socially marginalized and were typically excluded from positions of political authority or tribal decision-making. Their status reflected a broader pattern in which economic utility did not equate to social inclusion within the Īl's stratified structure (Digard, 1982; Beck, 1986; Ghaffari, 1995/96b).

2.4. The Evolution and Resilience of Luri Oral Tradition

A thorough grasp of the shared values and beliefs that shape a culture can be gained by investigating its oral literature. Oral traditions, the earliest form of literature, bear visible traces of ideas and values from ancient civilizations. This mode of storytelling, which has endured the entire span of human existence on Earth, is a testament to the resilience of human culture. Before the advent of written communication, individuals relied on spoken narratives to exchange knowledge and gain an understanding of their environment. Oral literature, created, preserved, and passed down by communities through verbal repetition, is a testament to this resilience. Its lack of dependence on written forms, transmitted directly from one generation to another, adds to its enduring nature. The authenticity and vitality of oral literature are maintained by repeated retelling, which allows it to adapt to changing cultural contexts by evolving organically. This dynamic quality, constantly reshaping itself to fit the needs of the culture, is a source of intrigue. Significantly, it ensures widespread accessibility to all community members in creation and reception.

Currently, nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles are rare in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, as living in cities and towns is the dominant way of life. Luri is the prevailing language, distinguished by each clan's dialect and vocabulary.

The *Luri* language in this region is at risk of becoming endangered due to various causes, which pose significant dangers to its survival and long-term existence. The primary determinant is the decreasing occurrence of conventional ways of life, worsened by the proximity to the growing oil and gas sector. The progression of human civilization and the integration of radio, television, and satellite technology have significantly transformed communication methods, including in the most isolated areas. In addition, the increasing movement of young people to surrounding urban areas in search of educational and career prospects, combined with the dominance of a unified culture and the negative social perception associated with speaking one's home language, has had a detrimental effect on the preservation of languages. However, with the collective efforts of linguists, cultural preservationists, and policymakers, the Luri language can be saved from extinction. Furthermore, the utilization of the Persian lexicon, instead of creating novel phrases for inventive ideas and terminology, aids in the progressive integration of the language into Persian.

The rural inhabitants of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province* follow a customary way of life. Their primary source of income is centered around practices such as livestock husbandry, agriculture, and gardening. The primary source of revenue for these individuals primarily comes from animal husbandry. Every family in this area functions independently as a self-governing entity, responsible for managing both the creation and utilization of products and services. The combined endeavors of males, females, and juveniles are focused on attaining the economic objectives of the family, with females assuming a prominent position in this sphere. It's important to note that men in their community would greatly benefit from assistance in handling responsibilities associated with caring for livestock and dealing with other rural affairs per their ancient conventions.

According to on-site observations, the primary agricultural activities in this region revolve around cultivating rice and vegetables. The orchards in this area specialize in cultivating apricots, apples, and mulberries, primarily emphasizing pomegranates and grapes. Female household members prepare the excess pomegranates and grapes, which are not needed for personal consumption, into goods such as raisins, pomegranate molasses, and pomegranate paste. Subsequently, these artisanal products are marketed and distributed in adjacent regions. Furthermore, any surplus chicken and eggs are sold in urban areas at a premium, reflecting the high demand and value placed on locally produced goods over commercially manufactured equivalents found in cities.

The oral tradition in *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province* has a wide range of cultural narratives, historical records, and communal values skillfully molded by succeeding generations in the region. This tradition is crucial for preserving and transmitting collective knowledge, customs, and legends, maintaining their longevity despite the constant passing of time. The language diversity, ethnic communities, and complex topography of the region have greatly influenced the distinct oral narratives that have played a key role in molding the identity and history of its residents. These anecdotes provide

- evidence of the individuals' persistent tenacity and determination,
- offering vital insights into their ancient history, rituals, beliefs, and
- the lasting influence of storytelling.

The *Lur* people in *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* heavily depend on the oral tradition, intimately integrated into everyday existence. They derive enrichment from narratives, tales,

ballads, traditional songs, and rhymes, occasionally accompanied by gloomy melodies and traditional music. These factors encapsulate the fundamental qualities of their experiences and the complex characteristics of their cultural heritage, with storytelling serving as the cornerstone of their cultural preservation.

The narratives are conveyed in various dialects of the *Luri* language, ensuring a greater level of authenticity compared to the modern spoken language. It efficiently protects the essential components of a time-honored language and its cultural nuances. The authenticity of these legends gives them a sense of reliability, conferring onto them a timeless and traditional nature. The oral tradition of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province* exemplifies how storytelling preserves and passes on knowledge, customs, and values from one generation to another. This tradition, with its liveliness and continuous development, exudes a vibrant energy that is a testament to the Lur people's dedication to their traditional legacy.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

Scholars in the humanities often use the term construction to describe the process of creating or shaping something, whether a physical structure or an abstract concept. The meaning and impact of this process vary depending on the intended interpretation. In their seminal work, Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that social actors construct reality through institutionalization and habitualization. Classical sociologists apply the concept of "social structure" across multiple areas within the social sciences. Consequently, they frequently associate structure with related notions such as pattern, system, group, institution, and organization. These concepts typically reflect ideas of logic, legal principles, and intentional action.

Radcliffe-Brown concisely described the structure of social relationships within the social network. He argued that social structure consists of a complex web of relationships, held together by a continuing system of institutions and functions that maintain unity (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). *Max Weber* defined social structure as a coherent and interrelated framework that constitutes the foundation of a particular social reality (Weber, 1978). Similarly, *Lévi-Strauss* described structure as a configuration in which the components of a system are interrelated with an underlying logic or intention (Lévi-Strauss, 1963).

A depiction of a framework is the human body, consisting of various elements operating in a coordinated manner. Within political sociology, a subfield of the social sciences, the term 'structure' refers to the arrangement of governmental power and its influence on society. The sociological approach classifies political systems according to the dynamic interplay between the government, which represents the ruling authority, and various social strata, which are the different layers or classes of society. This dynamic interplay involves the distribution of power, resources, and opportunities among these social strata. From this perspective, two criteria can be identified: The first pertains to the utilization of governmental power, particularly the structure of political authority; the second involves the magnitude of power used by the government to initiate social and economic transformations *(Bashiriyeh, 2016).* Therefore, the term 'structure' in political science often corresponds to a sociological concept. It indicates a direct relationship between power elements and the overall population, including economic variables and societal roles (Digard, 1988).

Twentieth-century social theorists widely acknowledged that social structures undergo temporal transformation. However, they have debated the precise characteristics of these changes. Some scholars have described structural transformation as cyclical, recurring in predictable patterns, whereas others have argued that social evolution follows a linear trajectory (Giddens, 1984; Nisbet, 1969). Ibn Khaldūn is considered a foundational figure in the theory of cyclical social change. Drawing on his observations of North African Arab communities in the Middle Ages, he identified two primary forms of social organization. The first emerges in desert environments with strong kinship bonds and intense social cohesion (*ʿaṣabiyya*).

In contrast, the second arises in urban contexts, marked by more complex governance and weaker communal ties (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967). According to his theory, rural tribal groups periodically conquer urban centers, establish ruling dynasties, and eventually decline as their social solidarity diminishes, thus setting the stage for another cycle of domination and collapse. In the twentieth century, theorists such as Anthony Giddens and Robert Nisbet further explored these dynamics, emphasizing the need for nuanced models of structural development within modern societies.

The decrease in scholarly attention towards the evolution of social organization in the early half of this era may be traced to external influences. The subject regained popularity after World War II, especially with the publication of *Walter Goldschmidt's* book, which thoroughly analyzed society's developmental phases of technical progress. In one of his final writings,

Parsons, examined the evolution of social organization by explicitly studying the distinction between structure and function (*Autovit & Butamore, 2012*).

The hierarchical arrangement of society predominantly characterizes the political system in modern nations. The political framework has two primary goals. The primary objective is to uphold social order and security by harnessing the acknowledged authority of the populace, while the secondary aim is to satisfy individuals' material and spiritual requirements. Hence, apart from establishing the allocation and implementation of authority, the political structure also possesses the capacity to shape the arrangement of economic, cultural, and social establishments to guarantee the satisfaction of both tangible and intangible needs. The political system possesses the jurisdiction to formally sanction and implement legislation throughout all domains of society. Therefore, the political framework has a profound and direct impact on the cultural, social, and economic framework, making our research on this subject highly relevant and applicable. Cohoon *(2017)* thoroughly examined the power dynamics in *Īl-Baḫtīārī* from the *Qajar* era to the Islamic revolution.

Their study specifically focused on this power structure's historical and sociological components. The *Baḫtīārī* people's socio-political organization exhibits a stable pattern and has experienced historical variations. The power structure of *Baḫtīārī* was unique compared to other nomadic societies, characterized by a complex system of many hierarchical levels and intricate strata. Previously, the *Ḫān* had a prominent position in the political hierarchy, and sheriffs and white beards (*Rīš-sefīdān*) actively pursued their favor.

However, the authority of the Ḫān underwent a rapid decline due to the increasing dominance of the central government, the establishment of military garrisons, and the expansion of the police apparatus. This shift in power dynamics is a significant aspect of *the Baḫtīārī* power structure[45]. In a research paper, *(Siyahpour, 2017)* analyzes the socio-political function of *Kadḫudā* in *Īl*. He observed that *Kadḫudās* were considered secondary characters among regional rulers and monarchs. *The* Ḫān's superior position in the social structure and organization of *Īl* compared to *Kadḫudā* was a key element of this changing power hierarchy. *Kadḫudā* was required to assume the role of *Ḫān* within the hierarchical framework. Contrary

[45] The Baḫtīārī , as a clan within the broader Lur ethnic group, is frequently mischaracterized as a distinct ethnic identity. The differences that distinguish the Baḫtīārī , namely their dialect and geographical presence in Khuzestan Province, do not justify treating them as separate from other Southern Lurs. Nevertheless, these distinctions have often been misinterpreted, a misconception indirectly supported by narratives within the Baḫtīārī community. This complex issue, which urgently requires a comprehensive exploration, extends beyond this dissertation's scope and would benefit from a separate, comprehensive exploration.

to the traditional categorization, certain *Kadḫudās* in *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province* were seen as having a superior social standing compared to specific local *Ḫāns*. They wielded significant authority and played a pivotal role in the promotion and deposition of the *Ḫāns*.

After the removal of *Reżā Šāh's*, the proponents of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* promptly initiated their actions. Presently, numerous tribes are initiating an attack on the military installations situated in the city of *Tal-Ḫusraw*. Consequently, government officials have been removed from their positions, and a remarkably youthful heir of a *Ḫān* has been chosen as the succeeding *Ḫān*, sparking intrigue about the potential changes he might bring. Nevertheless, the *Kadḫudās* from esteemed lineages exhibited their significant socio-political standing in the company of the formidable *Ḫāns*, confidently and unambiguously reaffirming the supremacy of their clans. In *Pourdian's (2007)* study, the author analyzed the political advancements in *īl Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* during the *Pahlavi Regime*, particularly emphasizing the government's efforts to strengthen its control. Throughout this period, a sequence of actions was implemented to suppress the uprising in *Īlāt*, explicitly focusing on opposing the *Baḫtīārī Īl* faction. The policies and activities implemented by the *Pahlavi* government have substantially influenced the political, economic, cultural, and social progress of the Iranian nomadic people, particularly in the *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* areas.

Due to its geographical qualities, *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* were considered advantageous places for the nomadic population. Strategically, this region is highly significant in Iran's geographical geography. The challenging topography of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* has sparked multiple uprisings against the central authorities. Several sociopolitical factions and adversaries of the governors took refuge in this region, making *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* the center for their efforts against the central administration.

However, it is essential to recognize that the condition of *Īlāt* during the *Qajar* era was superior to that of the *Pahlavi* era. An outstanding benefit of *Īlāt* during the *Qajar* era was the introduction of individualized identification cards for each *Īl*. These cards played a significant role in preserving their unique ethnic identity, a crucial aspect of their culture. Significant confrontations arose between the tribes and the governing administration following the *Qajar* period and the rise of the *Pahlavi* dynasty. It is undeniable that the Iranian nomadic tribes vehemently opposed the policies of *Reżā Šāh*.

2.5.1. The Establishment and Settlement of Nomads in Iran

The *Pahlavi* dynasty brought about significant changes in the social and political framework of *Īl Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad*. The governments and reigning dynasties of Iran have continually been involved in a long-lasting history of power struggles and authoritarian rule. The tribes of Iran, who mainly lived in mountainous regions, benefited from the natural barriers that made it difficult for government soldiers to carry out incursions. Throughout this period, the tribes consistently maintained a system of internal self-governance. Meanwhile, Reżā Šāh was appointed Minister of War in 1299 (1920 AD), marking the beginning of a new phase in state centralization. By the beginning of 1303 (1924 AD), *Reżā Šāh's* power grew considerably, leading to his effective selection as the army's commander by the council. In 1305 (1926 AD), he took on the magnificent monarch title and embellished his military clothing with regal diamonds *(Abrahamian, 1997).*

The objections of the indigenous tribes of Iran to the establishment of the *Pahlavi* dynasty and the character of *Reżā Šāh* were not just strong, but also significant. This social category encountered substantial hardship due to *Reżā Šāh's* policy towards nomadic communities. The *Settlement Policy of the Clans* did not enforce a complete prohibition on cattle breeding. Instead, it limited this privilege to a select few individuals who were granted permission to graze their flocks and herds on specific pastures. This policy had multiple repercussions on the residents of *Īlāt*; nevertheless, it must be recognized that the overall result was unquestionably harmful. As expected, there were multiple objections to such policies.

Interaction with the *Pahlavi* dynasty proved challenging, occurring under adverse circumstances marked by the government's expanding military power and the dynasty's significant economic and administrative capabilities. Consequently, tribal populations experienced substantial declines in numbers and productivity, mainly due to enforced sedentarization policies (Garthwaite, 2009). While precise demographic data for specific tribes such as the *Shabānkāra* during this period are scarce, it is evident that *the Policy of Settlement of Tribes* contributed to these declines (Garthwaite, 2009).

The human losses in *Šabānkāra* had a significant impact on its economic vitality, leading to a decrease in the supply of cattle products throughout the entire region (*Foran, 2017*). The output of meat, skin, leather, and dairy products saw a substantial decrease, indicating that maintaining the same quantity of domesticated animals became a challenge. The allocation of inadequate

land to *Īlāt*, coupled with the absence of financial assistance, forced a shift from a pastoral lifestyle to a more challenging monogamous one. This shift was not just a change in lifestyle, but a profound transformation that led to the exodus of the tribes' farmers to the most isolated regions. The introduction of mandatory conscription, increased taxation, efforts to disarm, and the arbitrary deployment of armed forces to civilian areas in *Īlāt* further exacerbated the preexisting challenges they faced.

The *Ḫāns* of *Qašqāʾī*[46], *Bakhtiārī*, and *Boyer-Ahmadi* and *Mamasānī* had substantial consequences due to their defiance of the government. The majority of them were banished. They were closely monitored while residing in *Tehran*. Their belongings were seized, and they were either incarcerated or sentenced to capital punishment. The remaining *Ḫāns* continued their violent operations and demonstrated their allegiance to the regime. The administration adopted a conciliatory stance towards them, incorporating them into the nation's governing body *(Pourdian, 2007).*

2.5.2. The Nomads' Residence

Under the reign of *Reżā Šāh*, a policy was implemented to build permanent settlements for nomadic individuals. In 1307 (1928 AD), the tribes of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* sought refuge in the mountains of this region due to their formidable tribal power and weaponry. In 1309 (1930 AD), they initiated turbulent uprisings to oppose *Reżā Šāh 's* policies. The primary aim of *Reżā Šāh's* actions against the tribal clans was to establish a robust law enforcement system and provide comprehensive national security in the region, immediate goals that his policies successfully achieved. In the early years of the *Pahlavi* dynasty, *Reżā Šāh* solidified his power by implementing several measures to establish a solid legal system and maintain public safety. The effectiveness of his programs and objectives played a crucial part in guaranteeing their successful execution. A ruling system must possess a significant degree of legitimacy and exercise a prominent effect on others, especially those who oppose it.

[46] The Qašqāʾī are a Turkic-speaking tribal confederacy predominantly based in southwestern Iran, especially in the Fārs province. Composed of various tribes and subtribes, their origins trace back to Turkic groups who migrated into the region, eventually consolidating under a unified political structure. Historically semi-nomadic, the Qašqāʾī maintained distinct ethnic and linguistic identities, playing a significant role in the regional politics of Iran, particularly during the Qajar and early Pahlavī periods (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Qašqāʾī Tribal Confederacy i. History").

During that era, the inhabitants and clans of *Īlāt* possessed considerable influence, exerting great authority and shaping society. Furthermore, customized programs and policies were created and implemented to benefit them (*Roshanfaker, 2017*). *Reżā Šāh* aimed to redirect the loyalty of *Īlāt* and tribes from the *Ḫāns* and sheriffs to the central government, drawing inspiration from *Atatürk* and Western civilization. Nevertheless, this endeavor was characterized by an unsuitable methodology that resulted in traffic gridlock and widespread apprehension. With the same underlying principle, he mercilessly quelled indigenous groups during the early 1300s (mid-1900s). The intervention from external sources, a significant turning point, triggered the division and reorganization of the social structure in rural and nomadic regions of Iran, underlining the gravity of the situation.

The administration raised concerns about the nomadic society and the *Īlāt* system, viewing them as obstacles to the development of contemporary Iranian society The policies implemented by *Reżā Šāh* towards the tribes had adverse effects on the tribal provincial structure, resulting in substantial and long-lasting harm *(Abrahamian, 1997).* The endorsement of intellectuals promoting modernist and European-inspired movements aimed at eradicating the rural and pastoral way of life strengthened *Reżā Šāh's* determination to repress nomadic people. This cohort of scholars upheld the conviction that adopting European-style modernism would result in development and advancement, contending that the *Īlāt* way of life exemplified a progress deficiency and required elimination.

Reżā Šāh decided to subdue the tribes, recognizing the possible danger arising from their formidable military capabilities and expertise. His objective was to restrict and govern the tribes to guarantee his authority's continual perpetuation. Nevertheless, specific *Īls* residing in the *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* districts exhibited resilience against the oppressive actions of the central government by employing various techniques. From 1300 to 1309 (1921 to 1930 AD), the *Ḫāns* and leaders of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* were involved in a range of activities, including the targeted killing of government officials and the plundering of several towns such as *Behbahān*, *Farāh-donna*, *Tang-e Čelī*, *Qalʿa-yi Golāb*, *Bayāẓ*, *Felārd*, and *Sīsaḫt*. These actions were carried out under the leadership of *Būyer Aḥmad-i ʿUlyā* (*Roshanfaker, 2017*).

Nevertheless, the central government intentionally delegated the responsibility of overseeing the native tribes to individuals who supported its objectives and actively promoted its agenda. The aim was to weaken their cultural identity, nomadic practices, traditions, and military

prowess. By fostering intergovernmental collaboration and implementing measures such as the *Disarming and Public Military Service Law*, the military and administration abstained from launching offensive actions against fellow *Īlāt* living in the *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* provinces.

2.5.3. The Nomads' Disarming

The *Pahlavi* dynasty undertook a strategic plan that involved a comprehensive disarmament campaign, with a particular focus on the tribes. This program was set in motion promptly upon *Reżā Šāh's* ascension to power. The disarmament policy was not a hasty decision, but a well-thought-out approach that encompassed urban, rural, and tribal communities. The necessity for this action was underscored by the tribes' possession of more weapons and military power than any other socioeconomic factions, including the government. The failure of the central authorities to comply made them the primary target of this program (*Roshanfekar, 2017*).

The central government's decision to disarm the tribes had profound national implications and was in line with their goal of maintaining authority. However, the tribes' historical identity was deeply rooted in the use of weapons and ammunition. The conflicts between the tribes and the central government resulted in the tragic loss of numerous innocent lives and the depletion of the nation's resources and finances. This also posed a significant threat to the safety of society's inhabitants. *Reżā Šāh's* disarmament strategies were viewed as highly effective by some, especially in addressing the challenges posed by *Īlāt* and tribes (Bāvar, 1945). Understanding the significance of firearms for the tribes is crucial, as they considered them more valuable than their own lives. The handgun played a pivotal role in shaping an individual's identity in *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad*, serving as a means of affiliation and recognition. A firearm enhanced an individual's authority and influence within the *Īlāt* and its surroundings.

The process of demilitarisation in *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* commenced with the *Tang-e Tāmorādī War* in 1309 (1930 AD). The *Tang-e Tāmorādī War* was initiated due to the opposition of the inhabitants of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* to the disarmament agenda. Prior to the conflict, the leaders of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* requested the power to establish the order in which disarmament would take place. This information can be found in the *Islamic Revolutionary Documents Centre*, document number 9027-469004 (*Roshanfakar, 2017*). Īlāt Disarming aimed to establish dominance over their military capabilities. During the

initial phase of *Reżā Šāh's* rule, his administration successfully executed strategies to disarm and resettle the nomadic tribes. The main objective of this endeavor was to reduce the excessive distribution of authority, ultimately developing a centralized power structure in the future observes that the disarmament process persisted during *Mohammad Reżā Šāh's* reign *(Pourdian, 2007).*

2.5.4. The Enactment of the Public Military Service Law

The *Pahlavi dictatorship*, driven by a steadfast commitment to national security, introduced the *Public Military Duty Law* as a key component of its initiatives. Since assuming leadership in Iran, *Reżā Šāh* had been resolute in his efforts to create a consolidated, harmonious, and efficiently structured military. However, the *Īlāt* community strongly objected to this initiative and other programs implemented by the *Pahlavi* government. Their opposition stemmed from a limited comprehension of national objectives, anxieties about the potential separation from their children, and the importance of male children's participation in animal and cattle-related tasks. Nevertheless, the *Pahlavi* maintained that establishing a well-organized military force could only be accomplished by implementing the *Public Military Service Law*. During the initial period of the *Pahlavi* dynasty, the government's military extensively depended on tribal forces. A fundamental drawback of this arrangement was the significant reliance of the central authority on the tribes.

Although aware of the circumstances and the government's demand for assistance, the provinces failed to synchronize with the central government. The central authority's primary inadequacy resulted in the tribes forming a system of self-governance and self-sufficiency, a testament to their resilience and adaptability, which the government was obliged to recognize *(Abrahamian, 1997; Pourdian, 2007).* The enactment of the *Public Military Service Law* sought to emancipate the central government from reliance on the provinces and tribes while simultaneously reducing the advantages enjoyed by the ruling elites. Participating in the public military system also included the ideals of equality and loyalty to one's homeland *(Abrahamian, 1997).*

Nevertheless, establishing such a military force necessitated an additional fundamental prerequisite: a transformation in the relationship between the populace and the ruling power. Another requirement stipulated by the *Military Service Law* was that the tribes must strictly

comply with the legal regulations established by the government. This duty must be completed regardless of any affiliations with religious, ethnic, linguistic, or other social groups. The primary responsibility of making decisions for the military services was bestowed to the central government rather than the provincial chiefs, tribes, and local authorities.

During *Reżā Pahlavi's* reign, conscription functioned to recruit men for the army while fostering a sense of national identity and affiliation between the army and the populace. However, this impact was disastrous for the nomadic population, a fact that is starkly evident in their dynamic folklore. For example:

ey xode-y bâle-y sar-ī seyl zīr-e pâ-t kon dey balâl[47]

kī dīd-e joft be-koš-en kor bey kakâ-na dey balâl

Beyrahmad yâd-om ken-īd biš-tar sar-e tang dey balâl

kī dīd-e bača lor-ī bey šâh kon-e jang dey balâl

yo kake-y men fōj zan-om yo ham se tīr-om dey balâl

xezmat-e šâh nī-kon-om ɣeyr az be-mīr-om dey balâl

(Oh, God, gaze upon us, oh Mother, my heart is heavy with sorrow mother of woe,

Who has witnessed the slaughter of both brother and boy? Oh, Mother, my heart is whole of grief mother of woe.

Remember me in *Yāsūğ*, amidst the mountains and valleys mother of woe,

Has anyone witnessed a *Lur* man challenging a king mother of woe?

Behold my brother, a warrior of unmatched strength, and my *Berthier* rifle mother of woe,

[47] The meaning of *dey balâl* is complicated. *Dey Balâl* is a distinctive vocal style specific to the southern Lurs of Iran, including the people of Kohgiluyeh Boyer-Ahmad, and the Baḫtīārī Lurs. It is often performed as separate, unconnected *rubā ʿī* verses sung sequentially, with their order depending on the singer's preference. Typically sung without instrumental accompaniment, these verses resonate through mountains, forests, and deserts, expressing a sense of longing and melancholy.
The term *Dey Balâl* frequently recurs in these songs, especially as a refrain after each couplet. *Dey* translates to "mother," its repetition conveys profound grief and helplessness. *Balâl* originally referred to roasted green wheat over a fire, symbolizing youth (the green stalk) consumed by the intensity of love's sorrow (the fire). This singing style is predominantly directed at a beloved but also reflects feelings of alienation and homesickness. Unfortunately, in contemporary discourse, *Dey Balâl* is mistakenly attributed to Shiraz, a misconception stemming from the adverse effects of centralization and urban-centric narratives.

I refuse to go to military service of the *King*, even if it costs my life mother of woe.[48]).

2.5.5. Attire Harmony

In 1307 (1928 AD), the *Pahlavi* government passed legislation in the *Council* to oversee men's attire. The *Pahlavi* government's national unity program, which encompassed *Īlāt* and tribes, was shaped by the local context of the region and the political circumstances in neighboring countries such as *Turkey* and *Afghanistan*. The dress rule, particularly the introduction of the Pahlavi hat[49], was perceived as an innovative move that garnered backing from the elite and intellectuals, both nationally and domestically. This legislation had varied effects on different states and tribes. Both the *Qašqāʾīs* and *Lurs* possessed unique tribal headgear, which served as a means of identification for them. However, these caps were forbidden during that particular period, marking a significant shift in their cultural identity.

During the uprising of 1308 (1929 AD), the *il-Qašqāʾī* faction announced one of their goals, which was to oppose the implementation of the *Clothing Union Law*. "Amid the *Tang-e Tāmorādī War*, one of their stipulations was to be granted an exemption from the mandatory use of the *Pahlavi hat*." *(Roshanfekar2017)* contended that wearing traditional clothing should not be viewed as a hindrance for tribal persons. Every tribe possesses specific garments, and this exclusive gear plays a vital role in defining their cultural identity, a heritage that they were determined to preserve. Consequently, they resisted any changes to their attire and garments specifically aimed at modifying their sense of self.

[48] The transliteration and translation of this text, as well as all subsequent Luri texts cited in this study, have been carried out by the author.

[49] The *Pahlavi hat*, a distinctive headwear, was introduced in Iran by Reżā Šāh Pahlavi in 1927. It was not just a fashion statement, but a significant part of his modernization and Westernization policies. Modeled after European-style fedoras, it symbolized a shift towards a more secular and Western-influenced dress code. The hat, with its modern and Western design, became a mandatory part of the attire for Iranian men, replacing traditional headwear such as the *kolah* and the *turban*. Its introduction was a pivotal part of a broader movement aimed at reforming cultural practices, aligning them with the Shah's vision of modernity, and diminishing the influence of religious symbols in public life. The hat, though short-lived, remains a notable symbol of the Pahlavi era's profound attempt to transform Iranian society.

2.5.6. Lands Reformations

The measures implemented by the central government under the reign of *Reżā Šāh*, a pivotal figure in Iranian history, resulted in a decline in the political power of the *Ḫāns* in the 1330s (1950s AD). The government's expanding authority in the region, particularly after the coup of 1332 (1953 AD), and the heightened consciousness of the country's population regarding political and social changes, coupled with the growing divergence of the *Kadḫodās* from the *Ḫāns*, led to a temporary decrease in the influence of *Ḫāns* in certain *Īlāt*. The *Ḫāns* faced discontent and hostility due to their association with the government, cooperation with it, and the oppressive treatment they inflicted on individuals from both factions.

By the end of the 1330s (By the end of the 1960s), the *Ḫāns'* socio-political status had significantly eroded, losing their essential position. The *Ḫāns'* opposition to the *Land Reforms Law* and their rebellion against the elimination of the feudal-lord system in the early 1340s (1960s AD) led to the eventual downfall of *Ḫāns'* power and the end of the *Īlāt* system. The enactment of the Land Reforms Law, a momentous event in Iranian history, led to significant changes, including the allocation of land to farmers and the government takeover of pastures, ultimately resulting in the liberation of many individuals from incarceration.

The enactment of the *Land Reforms Law* in a specific year had immense importance in the historical account of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmed*, leading to its designation as the "year of land reforms." This shift is considered beneficial progress from the perspective of the nomadic community. Implementing this legislation, commonly known as the "year of land reforms," was a significant deviation from conventional socio-economic structures. The social standing of the nomadic tribe was tangibly raised by the downfall of *Ḫānīn's* uprising and the subsequent land distribution among the inhabitants. This substantial shift denoted a profound cultural metamorphosis, emancipating the populace from enduring structures of subjugation and imbuing them with a sense of dominion over the territories they cultivated. The restructuring of land ownership changed economic dynamics and nurtured a deep social consciousness among the nomadic individuals, promoting enhanced community cohesion and self-reliance.

Kadḫodās, who held a lower rank than *Ḫānīn*, managed to maintain their social status and, in some cases, even achieved a more advantageous place in society. Over time, numerous *Kadḫodās* gradually separated themselves from the *Ḫāns* in anticipation of upcoming political and social changes. They formed an alliance with the government, and during the rebellions of

1341 (1962 AD) and 1342 (1963 AD), the bulk of them endorsed and cooperated with the government. After successfully quelling the uprising, the government expressed its appreciation by bestowing them many privileges. Their social and political status not only remained unchanged but saw enhancement. Implementing the *Land Reforms Law* disintegrated the highest level of the social hierarchy, represented by the *Ḫān*. This situation led to significant changes and transformations in the lower levels of the hierarchy (*Roshanfekar, 2017*).

2.5.7. Marginalisation of Nomadic Women

Since the establishment of the *Pahlavi Dynasty*, many social critics have performed thorough investigations on the role of women within the *Īlāt* of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad*. These studies provide unprecedented insights into diverse facets of social existence, encompassing tribal migration and the general way of life. The status and role of women in the *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* communities have been the subject of scrutiny. Critics have described the position and function of women in this culture and explored the broader sociopolitical role they play, which includes decision-making in the family and community, as well as their influence on cultural practices and traditions.

The women in the tribe were thought to have enjoyed many benefits that all free women highly desired. Women regularly comprised fifty percent of the *Lur* tribe's population in the *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* region and held a vital position in maintaining the stability and resilience of family and clan systems within the social structure of the clan. Their role in this aspect, as documented by *(Colliver Rice, 1987/1988),* cannot be overstated. Women in these districts are often described as having large, dark eyes, well-defined eyebrows, slender lips, and prominent chins. Nevertheless, due to the challenging way of life and severe circumstances in Iran's nomadic regions, this attractiveness tended to diminish early. The women from *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* were powerful. They substantially impacted the region's identity *(Bāvar, 1945).*

Under the significant influence of the *Council* and the upper class, it was believed that the women of *Lur* should not engage in sociopolitical activities. This belief led to the deprivation of their rights to vote or obtain a driver's license, and their societal roles were determined by the responsibilities assigned to them by the male members of the tribe. Specifically, the women

of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* were tasked with the diligent rearing of livestock to generate income for nomadic households *(Afshar-Naderi, 2012).*

Through the implementation of *Pahlavi's* policies, the social standing of *Lur* women was inevitably destined to experience substantial deterioration. *Reżā Šāh* attempted to restrict the movement of tribal women as a means of imitating *Western society*. During that time, the *Pahlavi* administration exerted control over the development of the so-called "ideal woman," directly or through various social mechanisms promoted by the media. The authorities' influence played a crucial role in shaping a narrative that depicted tribal women as having a lower position, lacking beauty, and without value. There was a purposeful attempt to diminish and underestimate the intrinsic traits and importance of Indigenous women through coordinated societal measures. The government utilized the created image of the "ideal woman" as a means to enforce a particular perception, thereby devaluing the cultural diversity and intrinsic worth of tribal femininity. This manipulation of societal ideals not only influenced the way beauty was perceived but also led to a broader socio-cultural division that marginalized and distorted the representation of tribal women in the eyes of the larger society, a cause for concern.

2.6. Conclusion

In recent decades, *Iran* has undergone substantial social, cultural, economic, military, and political changes, which have dramatically affected the traditional organization of tribal societies such as the *Lur* people. The progressive fall of tribal systems and the dwindling influence of tribes can be attributed to critical issues such as the nationalization of forests and pastures and the abandoning of traditional land arrangements. The lifestyle of nomadic tribes has seen significant changes due to the development of mechanized agriculture, modern tools and techniques in farming and transportation, higher levels of formal education, improved cultural communication, and the impact of urban and *Western* influences. These changes have led to a shift in the traditional nomadic lifestyle, which is now being compared with the structures and ways of life in metropolitan areas *(Blookbashi, 1965).*

During the *Pahlavi* era, a significant and profound change in the political and socioeconomic framework of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* took place. This era, spanning the years 1320 to

1340 (1940 to 1960 AD), saw the *Ḫān*, who occupied the highest position in the *Īl* pyramid, being ousted. However, despite being lower in the hierarchy than the *Ḫān*, the *Kadḫodās*, and the *White beards* were able to maintain their political and social standing.

Historically, *Kadḫodās* and *White-beards* served as crucial intermediaries, connecting their tribes with the *Ḫān*. However, their role has evolved, and they now act as middlemen between their *Tīreh* (tribe) and the government and local authorities. *Kadḫodās* have taken on the responsibility of managing ownership interests, receiving tax exemptions and actively collaborating with government organizations (Ghaffari, 1995/96 b).

The reforms enacted by *Reżā Šāh* aimed to strengthen and solidify his power within a centralized government system. As a result, there were primarily positive outcomes in the areas of economy, health, and occasionally in social and security aspects. The actions performed by *Reżā Šāh*, motivated by a desire to create a united and patriotic *Iran*, unintentionally caused complex issues of identity among the *Lur* tribes living in *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad*.

The diverse consequences of *Reżā Šāh's* policies unfolded as a complex web of transformations, revealing the unintended complexities of historical events. These policies impacted the economic terrain and had significant ramifications on public health and safety. The consolidation of authority sought to achieve stability and effectiveness, thereby contributing to the overall welfare of the nation. However, the benefits of these reforms in terms of social and security aspects were not always favorable, highlighting variations in their effects.

The prioritization of national unity and efforts to cultivate a shared *Iranian* identity unintentionally provoked identity conflicts within the *Lur* tribes. As the process of centralization progressed, the unique cultural and tribal characteristics of *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad* clashed with the dominant narrative of a unified *Iran*. This unintentional conflict resulted in intricacies within the cultural framework of the *Lur* tribes, prompting a sophisticated endeavor to harmonize their distinct past with the broader national narrative. The weight of these identity conflicts is palpable in the clash of cultural narratives.

Reżā Šāh's efforts to establish a more powerful central authority and create a cohesive *Iranian* national identity significantly and complexly affected the *Lur* tribes in *Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad*.

Chapter three: The Local Alexander

3.1. Introduction

"Iskandar-e Maqdūnī" is the term the residents of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad used to denote Alexander the Great, signifying "Alexander the Macedonian" in translation. Exploring the oral tradition of the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad region reveals a pronounced emphasis on Iskandar-e Maqdūnī. Passed down through numerous generations, the narratives surrounding Alexander the Great have intricately woven themselves into the fabric of local culture. Elders vividly recount these anecdotes, portraying his exploits across the land. Through this oral tradition, Alexander's legacy continues to resonate within the community, fostering a profound connection to the historical figure, Iskandar-e Maqdūnī. Such narratives warrant further academic exploration to understand their cultural implications. These legends serve as a tangible testament to Alexander's enduring significance within this region's collective memory.

This section will commence with a comprehensive introduction to the oral literature of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, detailing the methodologies employed in collecting, transcribing, and translating these stories. The objective is to identify parallels between this oral tradition and other literary works and subsequently analyze commonalities. The primary focus centers on examining the representation of Alexander in this region and on understanding how he has evolved into a respected mythological and literary figure.

By recognizing similarities and differences, this research aims to deepen our understanding of the interconnectedness of history and culture that unites human societies. Examining the portrayal of Alexander in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad provides an opportunity to investigate how oral traditions serve as conduits for the construction and comprehension of historical figures. It is evident that a society's intrinsic cultural values and beliefs profoundly affect the perpetuation and reinforcement of global legends and, conversely, how these legends shape regional narratives. This research has the potential to offer novel insights into the shared history and culture of humanity, illuminating the nuanced ways in which oral traditions influence the understanding of historical figures[1].

[1] For theoretical insights into how communities construct historical figures through oral tradition and historiography, see: *Aslı Avcı Akçalı. (2023). "Experiencing Oral History With Prospective Social Studies Teachers."* in: *The Social Studies*, 114(6), 312-329.

3.2. Examining Oral Tradition in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad

This study employs an Indigenous methodological approach to analyze the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. It centers local epistemologies and resists externally imposed categorizations. The following section outlines the theoretical foundation of this research, drawing on Mahuika's (2021) critique of non-Indigenous interpretations of oral history. His perspective is particularly relevant to the Luri context, where oral narratives intertwine history, belief, and cultural identity in ways that challenge Western binaries.

3.2.1. Theoretical Framework: Mahuika's Indigenous Perspective

The assertion made by Nepia Mahuika in his work *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition* (2021) that indigenous oral histories and traditions cannot be fully defined by non-indigenous individuals, is central to this study. Mahuika argues that oral traditions are deeply tied to indigenous communities' cultural and historical identity, and their interpretation must privilege insider perspectives to avoid the distortions of external, often Western, frameworks (Mahuika, 2021, p.14). This research supports Mahuika's claim, as attempts to categorize Luri oral traditions using global, predominantly Western paradigms have proven inadequate. For instance, the fluidity between *timṣāl* (literary interpretations) and *iʿtiqāt* (beliefs) defies conventional distinctions between "myth" and "history" (Ong 1982). By adopting Mahuika's framework, this study seeks to develop an interpretation of Luri oral traditions that reflects the community's understanding of its cultural heritage.

According to Mahuika (2021), insiders' perception of oral tradition within the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad regions forms a crucial element of Indigenous identity. It serves as the mechanism for transmitting their historical narrative. Indigenous communities often view oral history and tradition as overlapping and interchangeable rather than distinct disciplines. However, in international discourse and literature, there is a marked tendency to consider oral history and oral tradition as two different areas of study, differing in method, form, and practice.

Mahuika argues that non-Indigenous peoples cannot adequately define Indigenous oral histories and traditions (Mahuika, 2021) [2].

3.2.2. Categorization of Oral Traditions in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad

Based on extensive investigations into the oral tradition of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, the following preliminary classification is proposed. This scientific inquiry requires independent exploration to develop further understanding.

Currently, and following Mahuika's framework, the categories of oral tradition in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad are as follows: **Maṣal** (proverbs), **Muqawwim** (chants), **Timṣāl** (literary interpretations and genealogies), **Matīl** (fable), and **Iʿtiqāt** (beliefs). These categories serve as an initial framework that remains open for refinement through further research.

Maṣal(مَثَل):

Proverbs, concise and rational expressions, riddles, or *rubāʿī* verses[3] hold significant cultural importance among the people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Women play a crucial role in this cultural tradition, often engaging in the spontaneous improvisation of *rubāʿī* verses. This impromptu creative expression serves various functions: humor, complaints, teasing, and more. Occasionally, the initial stanza or poem may be repeated while the individual uniquely crafts subsequent content, showcasing the empowerment and contribution of women in these cultural practices.

Muqawwim(مُقَوِّم):

The cultural heritage of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad is enriched by a substantial presence of diverse songs and melodies characterized by rhythmic recurrence. With their rhythmic recurrence, these chants are not just a part of various cultural practices, such as rituals,

[2] For a detailed discussion on the contrasts between Western and indigenous perspectives of oral history, see: *Jan Vansina: "Oral Tradition as History," University of Wisconsin Press* (1985). Vansina's work provides an insightful critique of the Western conceptualization of oral history, elaborating on how it often diverges significantly from indigenous approaches to knowledge transmission. Readers may refer to either Vansina or Mahuika for an in-depth exploration of these differing perspectives.

[3] Rubāʿī refers to a form of Persian quatrain composed of four lines. It is known for its concise, expressive nature and often carries moral, philosophical, or humorous themes. This form of poetry is significant in the cultural context of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad as it facilitates spontaneous, improvised expression among individuals, especially during social gatherings.

ceremonies, occupational songs, and the narrative tradition, but also a powerful method for preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge, beliefs, and values across generations. This emphasis on the role of chants makes the audience feel the continuity and richness of the cultural heritage of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

Timṣāl(تِمْثَال):

Distinctive literary interpretations in this category represent Persian literary masterpieces translated into the Luri language. These works have been altered by incorporating elements of Luri culture, such as the *Luri Epic of Love and Loss*, and adding more local narratives, with the *Shāhnāmeh* being a prominent example. Additionally, side stories related to these literary masterpieces are not part of the original works. Genealogies within this context provide narratives detailing familial or tribal lineage, recounting the histories of actual historical figures and fictional literary ones, thereby enriching the historical tapestry of the community. This category includes actual historical events and fictional narratives, each of which plays a crucial role in the oral culture of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. These components are intricately connected, often overlapping and blending seamlessly. It is posited that heroic tales can be classified within this branch of oral tradition specific to the region under study.

Matīl(مَتیل):

Matīl refers to short narratives, presented in prose and verse, that impart moral or instructive lessons. These narratives, commonly featuring animals as characters, are characterized by their brevity, educational content, and conversational tone. The narrative flow, typically driven by dialogues between characters, makes these fables accessible and relevant in imparting moral lessons to the audience.

Iʿtiqāt(اعتقات):

Iʿtiqāt represents the fundamental principles of a person's or a community's worldview, forming an inseparable aspect from cultural and spiritual perspectives. For example, beliefs involving spirits and fairies coexist with prohibitions against hunting animals, emphasizing deep respect for nature, running water, and bread. Additionally, a special reverence for the land and the importance of firearms is often expressed through narratives of real-life experiences,

which are not perceived as mere stories but as realities. The critical element in identifying this category of oral traditions is the conviction among native people that these ideas are entirely accurate and are neither fictional nor exaggerated. It is suggested that oral history could be classified within this branch of oral tradition as specific to the region under study.

Given the fluid and overlapping boundaries among these distinct categories, it is necessary to systematically categorize the oral traditions associated with *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī* and determine their alignment with specific categories within the prevalent oral traditions of this region. An example of such overlaps is the belief held by particular individuals that *Kay Ḫosrow* from the *Shāhnāmeh* resides in a cave within their geographic domain. This belief, which falls under the categories of **Iʿtiqāt** (belief) and **Timṣāl** (literary interpretations and genealogies), is not just a narrative but a cultural marker, encompassing both literary reinterpretations and genealogical narratives. Some individuals claim direct lineage to *Kay Ḫosrow*[4], thus intricately interweaving the narrative with genealogical elements.

Based on extensive investigations, the oral traditions associated with *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī* can be classified into three primary categories: **Maṣal**, **Iʿtiqāt**, and **Timṣāl**. Notably, **Timṣāl** emerges as the most prominent category. For instance, only one rare example of a *rubāʿī* has been collected, which falls under the **Maṣal** category. In contrast, numerous stories and side stories detailing the native hero's resistance against *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī*, his death, his courageous sister, his lover, and related narratives are categorized under **Timṣāl**. Additionally, the beliefs integral to this context, which are not captured through textual representation but remain prevalent in the community, will be classified under **Iʿtiqāt**. Part 4 of this chapter will comprehensively present these components, titled *Compilation of Textual Materials*.

[4] *Kay Ḫosrow* is a legendary figure in Persian mythology, often depicted as a heroic king and a symbol of wisdom and justice. He is believed to have ruled during the mythical era of the *Pišdādīān* dynasty, preceding the historical period of Iranian kingship. *Kay Ḫosrow* is prominently featured in Firdawsī's epic poem, the *Shāhnāmeh*, where he is portrayed as a wise and benevolent ruler who embarks on various quests and battles against adversaries to protect his kingdom and uphold righteousness. His character embodies idealized virtues and is a cultural archetype representing the quintessential Persian monarch.

3.2.3. Linguistic and Etymological Analysis of Key Categories

The categories proposed here—*Maṣal*, *Muqawwim*, *Timṣāl*, *Matīl*, and *Iʿtiqāt*[5]—are not merely functional classifications but linguistic artifacts of the region's historical interactions with Arabic, Persian, and Syriac cultures. Their etymologies reveal layers of cross-cultural exchange often overlooked in mainstream scholarship.

Maṣal (مَثَل):

- **Etymology**: Maṣal [mæˈsæl] deriveds from Arabic *mathal* (مَثَل, "proverb"), adapted into Luri via Persian intermediary forms. The shift from Arabic *mathal* ([ˈmaθal]) to Luri *maṣal* ([mæˈsæl]) reflects a regional phonological tendency to simplify interdental consonants (*the* → *s*) (Windfuhr 2009: 45). This aligns with broader patterns in Luri phonology, where Arabic loanwords undergo systematic phonetic naturalization (*Farhang-e Dehkhodā*, s.v. "مَثَل").
- **Cultural Significance**: The improvisational *rubāʿī* verses, predominantly composed by women, exemplify how Luri oral traditions subvert the static "proverb" archetype of Arabic *mathal*, instead privileging dynamic, context-specific creativity.

Muqawwim (مُقَوِّم):

- **Etymology**: Muqawwim [muˈqawwɪm] is from Arabic *qawwama* [qawˈwama] (قَوَّمَ, "to rectify" or "to chant rhythmically"). In Luri, the term's semantic focus shifts to rhythmic chants used in rituals, suggesting a retention of the root's association with structured repetition (Thackston, 2001, p. 89).
- **Function**: These chants encode agricultural calendars and ancestral knowledge, demonstrating how Arabic-derived terminology serves as a vehicle for pre-Islamic Luri cultural memory.

Timṣāl (تِمْثَال):

- **Etymology**: Arabic *timthāl* (تِمْثَال, "effigy" or "representation"), pronounced [timˈθaːl] repurposed in Luri to denote literary adaptations that localize Persian epics

[5] While the younger generation commonly pronounces this term as *Iʿtiqād* (اعتقاد), older speakers—who constitute the primary sources of this research—use the pronunciation *Iʿtiqāt* (اعتقات). This variation reflects historical linguistic shifts and phonetic patterns within the region.

(e.g., *Shāhnāmeh*). The term's evolution mirrors the process of *cultural translation*, where Persian narratives are "re-sculpted" (*timthāl*) to reflect Luri's identity (Pagliaro, 1960, p. 33).

- **Case Study**: Claims of lineage to *Kay Ḫosrow* (*Shāhnāmeh*) illustrate how *Timṣāl* bridges myth and genealogy, transforming literary figures into ancestral totems.

Matīl (مَتیل):

- **Etymology**: **Contested Origins**:
    - *Arabic Hypothesis*: From *mithāl* (مِثَال, "example"), pronounced [miˈθaːl] though the /t/ in Luri *Matīl* ([mæˈtiːl]) deviates from Classical Arabic */th/ (cf. Iraqi Arabic dialects where /th/ → /t/; Van Ess 1938: 72).
- *Syriac Hypothesis*: From *matil* (ܡܬܠ, "fable"), pronounced [mɑˈtil] a term prevalent in Syriac Christian homiletic traditions (Brockelmann, 1928, p. 197), the etymology aligns with the tribe's historical roots in Iraq's Jazira, a region with a Syriac linguistic substrate. Oral accounts asserting the tribe's non-Persian origins further support this connection.
- **Implications**: If Syriac-derived, *Matīl* challenges the assumed Persian-Arabic binary in Luri lexicography, suggesting a tripartite linguistic heritage (Syriac-Arabic-Persian)[6].

Iʿtiqāt (اعتقات):

- **Etymology**: The term *Iʿtiqāt* [iʕtiˈqɑːt] (اعتقات) in Luri originates from the Arabic *iʿtiqād* [iʕtiqɑːd] (اعتقاد, “belief” or “conviction”), which itself derives from the root *ʿaqada* (عقد, “to bind, to affirm”). In the process of phonological adaptation to Luri[7], the final *d* sound in *iʿtiqād* shifted to *t*, aligning with the phonetic patterns of the language. In Luri, *Iʿtiqāt* has undergone semantic specialization, explicitly referring to

[6] The linguistic ambiguity of *Matīl* reflects the hybrid identity of Luri culture, shaped by the interplay of Arabic, Persian, and Syriac influences. This complexity underscores the region's historical position as a cultural crossroads, where external elements are reinterpreted and integrated within a distinct Luri framework.
This case study highlights how Luri oral traditions resist simplistic categorization within singular linguistic or cultural paradigms, such as Persian or Arabic. Aligning with Mahuika's argument, these traditions can only be fully understood within their unique cultural and historical contexts, characterized by syncretism and multiplicity. This perspective captures the intricate nature of Luri oral traditions and affirms their role in preserving a dynamic and resilient cultural identity.

[7] The shift from /d/ to /t/ is a well-documented phonological process observed in various linguistic contexts, including historical sound changes like the High German consonant shift, as well as in language acquisition patterns among children. These transformations illustrate the dynamic nature of language and the systematic patterns that underlie phonological evolution (Ringe, 2006; Smith, 2018; Theobald, 2012).

deeply ingrained cultural and spiritual beliefs integral to oral traditions and collective worldviews.

- **Cultural Significance:** In Luri, *Iʿtiqāt* has undergone semantic specialization, denoting deeply ingrained cultural and spiritual beliefs integral to oral traditions and collective worldviews. This evolution reflects a process of cultural translation, wherein abstract concepts are localized to align with Luri's identity, values, and lived experiences.

3.2.4. Systemic Constraints in Etymological Reconstruction

Existing Persian and Luri lexicons frequently obscure Arabic and Syriac loanwords due to nationalist linguistic paradigms that frame Persian as a "pure" literary medium (Ahmadi 2018: 112). For instance, *Farhang-e Moʿīn* lists *Matīl* as a "dialectal variant" of Persian *matl* (مَثَل, "fable"), erasing its potential Syriac connection. To address this, this study cross-references the Dehkhoda Dictionary (*Farhang-e Dehkhodā*), which archives regional dialectal forms, with:

- **Syriac comparanda** (Macuch, 1990) to trace substrate influences.
- **Iraqi Arabic dialectology** (Van Ess, 1938) to map phonological shifts (e.g., */th/ → /t/*).

This approach reveals how Luri oral traditions function as a *contact zone* (Pratt, 1991, p. 34), where Arabic, Syriac, and Persian linguistic elements coalesce into a distinct cultural grammar.

Mahuika's (2021) argument—that Indigenous oral traditions resist external categorization—is exemplified by the fluidity of *Matīl* and *Tīmṣāl*. For instance, the *Kay Ḫosrow* narrative straddles *Iʿtiqāt* (belief) and *Tīmṣāl* (literary adaptation), defying Western typologies that separate "myth" from "history" (Ong 1982: 12). Similarly, the Syriac-Arabic duality of *Matīl* underscores the inadequacy of singular linguistic genealogies, affirming Mahuika's emphasis on insider epistemologies.

3.3. Interdisciplinary Methodologies in Oral Tradition Research

Establishing a solid methodological framework is paramount in exploring the rich tapestries of oral traditions related to *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī* in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Categorizing these narratives into **Maṣal**, **Timṣāl**, and **Iʿtiqāt**, requires a precise and systematic approach.

The foundation of this research is a thorough review of primary sources within local communities, including qualitative interviews and discussions with individuals who serve as repositories of this oral heritage. Archival exploration of historical records and relevant cultural artifacts further supports the data collection. The identification and collection of text samples and the identification of places, names, and related beliefs are facilitated through a triangulation of methods that includes ethnographic observation and participatory elements, ensuring a collaborative research process.

The following sections elaborate on the complexities inherent in these methodological approaches and provide comprehensive insights into the strategies employed to unravel the multifaceted layers of *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī's* oral legacy within this distinct cultural context.

3.3.1. Story Collection Strategies

Two primary approaches are commonly employed in field research methodologies. The first involves the researcher's physical presence in the study location, conducting direct interviews with the local population. A potential drawback of this method is the risk of the researcher being perceived as an outsider, which may lead to responses influenced by the researcher's external status. The second method involves enlisting local individuals to collect folklore and oral literature. However, this approach may be limited by the collectors' lack of specialized research expertise.

In this thesis, a hybrid approach has been adopted, combining the strengths of both methods. Leveraging the researcher's native status in the studied region, the researcher traveled to various villages, collecting and recording texts and evidence relevant to the study. This approach allowed for direct engagement with the community while drawing on local knowledge and expertise.

Identifying informants willing to share relevant information proved challenging due to the sensitive nature of the narratives surrounding Iskandar-e Maqdūnī's trajectory and their connection to illicit treasure excavation activities in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, which carry stringent legal repercussions. While recording primary materials, deliberate efforts were made to minimize any influence that could alter the topics discussed. The researcher's role was limited to soliciting necessary information and validating the speaker's dialect, ensuring the narratives remained authentic and encouraging continued participation.

Participants in the field research were informed of the researcher's intent to collect texts, and in many cases, their expectations for sharing information were positively fulfilled. The interviewees were chosen from older age groups to ensure proximity to ancient traditions. For journeys aimed at elucidating Iskandar-e Maqdūnī's passage through the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad region, a team of local guides, elderly residents, and a professional photographer was assembled. Their contributions are acknowledged in the relevant sections.

The informants in this study, comprising twelve men and seven women, reflect prevailing cultural norms. Men are more prominently engaged in public storytelling, often emphasizing leadership, governance, and philosophy themes. In contrast, women's narratives focus on nature, family, and resilience. The informants' ages range from 48 to 110 years, with an average age of 77, highlighting their role as custodians of oral traditions preserved through decades of lived experience. Their narratives provide rich historical and mythical insights, contributing significantly to the region's cultural memory.

Given that most informants are illiterate, the oral transmission of these traditions takes on heightened importance, reinforcing storytelling as a vital mechanism for preserving history. Bilingual contributors, like Mr. Olmās, fluent in both Luri and Persian, play a valuable role in communication. They introduce broader regional perspectives, enriching the narrative tapestry.

3.3.2. Transliteration and Translation Processes

As the Luri language lacks a written tradition, only a few recent texts exist in verse and prose composed by contemporary Luri writers. These writings utilize the Persian alphabet to represent Luri sounds phonetically. Rather than attempting to render these works in written Luri, a decision was made to transliterate them using the system Taheri (Appendix D) and other Luri linguistic experts developed[8]. This decision, made with meticulous care, was driven by considerations beyond linguistic necessity, particularly the objective of presenting these texts in their original form to an international audience. It is important to note that this research does not primarily focus on linguistic analysis; thus, dialectal variations within the texts still need to

[8] The transliteration system used in the collected texts follows a set of transcription symbols aligned with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). **Appendix D** includes a detailed guide to these symbols and their phonetic equivalents.

be addressed. However, for enhanced linguistic analysis, the components of each word have been separated by hyphens in the transcription.

The translation method employed is text-based, relying directly on the selected texts. Although this feature may occasionally present challenges in terms of content comprehension and may slightly affect textual cohesion, the absence of explicitness is characteristic of oral and everyday texts, which inherently require interpretation and the insider's perspective. Briefly, explanations of cultural nuances have been included where necessary to reduce ambiguity. After each text, additional clarifications are provided to help readers who may be unfamiliar with the cultural and social contexts of the Luri people better understand these aspects. Throughout the recording of raw materials, strict confidentiality was maintained, ensuring no unauthorized alterations were made to the texts. Subsequently, similar elements were introduced and examined in other texts for comparative purposes.

3.4. Compilation of Textual Materials

These field trips yielded a wealth of textual materials, though the number of stories collected varied. While some repetition was inevitable, the most complete versions were meticulously selected for presentation. The use of group interviews, which proved invaluable, fostered a collaborative dynamic. Participants often complemented each other's recollections, filling in gaps and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the narratives. This sense of community and shared storytelling tradition made the audience feel included in the research, further enriching the collected materials.

Prioritizing narrators with detailed recollections was crucial to the quality of the gathered data. Additionally, cross-referencing stories with known versions or variations involved a systematic comparison of the narratives with existing records or other narrators' accounts. This process helped to identify and rectify any missing details or inconsistencies, ensuring that the collected texts were as accurate and complete as possible.

Due to the topic's sensitive nature and its connection to illegal activities, names and locations were omitted to protect contributors and respect the privacy of the communities involved. Nevertheless, the resulting corpus of texts invites readers to explore a fascinating segment of

the region's oral tradition, providing a glimpse into the enduring power of storytelling within the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad communities[9].

3.4.1. Maṣal: The Essence of Proverbial Wisdom

Maṣals in Kohgiluye and Boyer-Ahmad, including **rubāʿī** verses, hold notable cultural significance. These artistic manifestations frequently exhibit a recurrent initial stanza or verse, succeeded by distinctive content intricately fashioned by the author. Furthermore, a discernible alignment with **Timṣāl** is observed in certain sections. Regarding Alexander the Great, my investigation has revealed solely two instances that can be classified within the **Maṣal** genre[10].

Text A

Mrs. Bāgom Jān[11], 86 years old, from Fath village; housewife. Speaks only Luri[12].

sar-om dard ī-ken-e sar-band bī-yâr-īd ṭabīb va molk-e Eskandar[13] bī-yâr-īd

tabīb va molk-e Eskandar[14] na-bū-ye dafen az bâɣče-ye delbar[15] bī-yâr-īd

[9] For the global classification of folktales, see **Appendix C**, which outlines the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) index and its thematic categorization.
[10] It is important to remember that these terms, while they have equivalents in Persian, carry distinct meanings in the Luri language. The nuances and cultural contexts embedded in their Luri usage often diverge from those of their Persian counterparts, reflecting the unique linguistic and cultural identity of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.
[11] Some of the names are pseudonyms at the request of the interviewees
[12] In this doctoral study, Yasaman Rezaei conducted all interviews and was also responsible for the design and execution of the research.
[13] "Molk-e Eskandar" (Land of Alexander) refers to the land associated with Alexander the Great (*Iskandar-e Maqdūnī*). In Luri's oral tradition, the land of Alexander symbolizes a realm of advanced knowledge, healing, and power, reflecting the profound respect for Alexander's legacy within the cultural imagination of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.
[14] "Tabīb va molk-e Eskandar" (Doctor from the land of Alexander) refers to the belief in Luri oral tradition that Alexander the Great (*Iskandar-e Maqdūnī*) and his realm are associated with wisdom, advanced knowledge, and the occurrence of extraordinary or supernatural events. In this context, the phrase implies seeking a doctor of exceptional skill or miraculous ability, reflecting the cultural reverence for Alexander as a figure tied to healing and remarkable phenomena.
[15] "Dafen az bāq-če-ye del-bar" (Shroud from the garden of my love) refers to a poetic and symbolic expression in Luri oral tradition. It conveys the deep emotional connection between love and mortality. The "garden of my love" signifies beauty and intimacy, while the "shroud" symbolizes the final separation through death, blending themes of love, loss, and longing common in Luri storytelling.

English Translation

I have a headache bring me a headscarf bring a doctor from the land of Alexander

If there is not a doctor from Alexander's land bring shroud from the garden of my love

This quatrain explores multiple interconnected themes. The first hemistich underscores a traditional headache remedy: tying a band around the head. The second hemistich evokes summoning a doctor from the Land of Alexander, a realm often associated in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad with wisdom, healing, and extraordinary phenomena. This part reflects the expectation of unparalleled medical expertise and the symbolic reverence for Alexander's mythical legacy in Luri oral tradition.

The reference to the "garden of my love" in the final hemistich adds a layer of poetic intensity, intertwining themes of affection, devotion, and the mystical. In the absence of external solutions, solace or closure might be sought within profoundly personal and emotional spaces.

Notably, similar versions of this quatrain appear in Afghan and Tajik traditions, where linguistic and regional variations are present but do not significantly alter the underlying thematic structure. The motifs embedded in this verse—headache as a metaphor for distress, the doctor as a figure of wisdom, and the shroud as a symbol of finality—are recurrent in various oral and literary traditions. In particular, the reference to the shroud (*kafan*) holds significant cultural and poetic weight across Persianate and broader Central Asian literary contexts, where it frequently conveys themes of mortality, sacrifice, and spiritual resignation.

In Afghan poetic traditions, particularly in *landay*—a form of oral poetry historically composed and recited by Pashtun women—the shroud is often invoked as a symbol of loss and devotion. One such *landay* states: *"My beloved sacrificed himself for our country, I sew his shroud with my hair"* (Bansal, n.d.). Here, preparing the shroud becomes an intimate expression of grief and fidelity, underscoring the region's deeply personal dimension of mourning practices. Such imagery aligns with broader Persianate conventions, in which the shroud often represents the inescapability of fate and the transcendence of worldly suffering.

Similarly, in Tajik poetry, the shroud symbolism is frequently employed in reflections on the human condition, particularly in relation to historical trauma and existential contemplation. Contemporary Tajik poetry often uses this motif to explore themes of impermanence, cultural

identity, and collective memory (Unnes Journal, n.d.). The recurrence of the shroud across these traditions suggests a shared literary and philosophical framework in which death is not merely an endpoint but a transformative passage, often intertwined with themes of love, loss, and metaphysical continuity.

Within this broader intertextual and cultural framework, the quatrain under analysis situates itself within a longstanding tradition of poetic symbolism. The appeal to a doctor from the *Land of Alexander* reflects a perception of wisdom and healing associated with Alexander the Great in various oral traditions, particularly in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, where his legend has been integrated into local folklore. In the absence of a physician of such stature, the subsequent invocation of the shroud suggests an acceptance of mortality, echoing similar structures found in Afghan and Tajik poetic traditions. Thus, while regional and linguistic differences exist, the underlying thematic elements demonstrate a remarkable continuity across these cultural spheres.

Next is a proverb I have heard repeatedly in Kohgiluye and Boyer-Ahmad. It is a common proverb:

Text B

This proverb, commonly repeated in the region, reflects the collective wisdom of the community:

"Bī pīl ma-ro bāzār, jen ī-zan-et agar Eskander bū-ē."

English Translation:

"Do not go to the market without money. A jinn will possess you even if you are Alexander the Great."

This proverb serves as a cautionary reminder about the importance of being prepared and self-reliant. It underscores the idea that engaging in commercial transactions—or any endeavor—without adequate resources can lead to failure or misfortune, regardless of one's status or power. The phrase "even if you are Alexander the Great" reflects the symbolic role of

Alexander (*Iskandar-e Maqdūnī*) in Luri oral tradition as a figure of immense power and wisdom. His inclusion in this proverb emphasizes that even the most extraordinary individuals are vulnerable without practical resources like money. The mention of being "possessed by a jinn" adds a layer of mystical caution, aligning with folkloric warnings standard in Luri culture, where interactions with the supernatural are deeply embedded in everyday life.

In my investigation, I have not encountered additional instances of Alexander the Great appearing in the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province that I can classify under *Maṣal*. I will now transition to the analysis of the next group of texts.

3.4.2. *Iʿtiqāt*: A Realm of Beliefs

Drawing from interviews with indigenous individuals in the **Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad** region, this section illuminates the intricate tapestry of beliefs interwoven with cultural and spiritual frameworks. These beliefs, integral to individual worldviews, reflect profound connections to nature and ancestral traditions. For instance, narratives reveal a deep reverence for the spiritual realm alongside a staunch opposition to animal hunting—particularly the killing of female animals, which is believed to bring misfortune[16]. This perspective underscores the symbiotic relationship between humans and the natural world.

Moreover, these oral traditions emphasize a unique reverence for the land and firearms, with both respected as akin to **mothers** or **beloveds**[17]. These beliefs are deeply rooted in authentic experiences that challenge conventional perceptions and reflect the cultural values of the community. Embedded within these narratives is a resolute conviction among Indigenous communities in the absolute truth of these beliefs, transcending mere fiction.

Through these collected texts, we gain invaluable insights into the beliefs and perspectives of the **Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad** region. They provide firsthand accounts of spiritual reverence, the sacredness of nature, and profound respect for land and firearms. This rich tapestry of traditions allows us to understand the cultural and spiritual frameworks shaping

[16] In Luri culture, the prohibition against killing female animals stems from a belief in maintaining harmony with nature and respecting animals' reproductive roles, which ensures the sustainability of natural resources.
[17] The reverence for the land and firearms in Luri culture reflects their deep symbolic significance. Firearms, in particular, are venerated as tools for self-defense and as markers of tribal identity and autonomy. This respect is rooted in the historical and cultural context of the mountainous terrain of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, where preserving independence and safeguarding the community have been essential aspects of life.

Indigenous worldviews. By analyzing these texts, we can discern which stories have been selected, repeated, and endured and contemplate the reasons behind their preservation.

Ultimately, these texts bridge cultural divides and foster greater appreciation for the diversity of human experience. They serve as vital resources for researchers, educators, and policymakers[18], promoting cultural understanding and respect for indigenous knowledge systems while offering a glimpse into the enduring traditions of **Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad**.

Text C

Mr. Moḫtar, 67 years old, illiterate, from Dehdasht; farmer. Speaks only Luri.

Eskandar kor xubū bī. māli bâhuš bī. kho sī hamī bī ke tar-es Irân-ī-yal-a šēkas bī-ye. uso kâr va kasī na-yâšt. ī-lēš tâ hama zamin-al-e xo-š-a dâšt-a bū. faqat bâyat-ī va-š pīl be-δâd-ī. xo xân-al-e xomōn-am hamī kâr-e-šu bī. har kī zamī xoš-a ī-kešt. uso sām vō-n-am va-š ī-dâ. Irân-ī-yal-a dus dâšt. zīna-y asl-ī-š ke kor va-š dâšt Irân-ī bī. dūn-es četō bey vasâyel-al jang-ī kâr ken-e. sī ham yo eškāhs si Irân-ī-yal ōma.

English Translation

Alexander was a bright boy who wanted to conquer Iranian armies[19]. He would not hurt anyone during his sovereignty and would let people have their own lands; they only had to pay him his share, like our Ḫāns used to do. Everyone could farm their own lands but had to give him his share. He liked Iranians. His endeared and favourite wife, with whom he had a son, was Iranian. He knew how to work with war equipment, and that's why Iranians were defeated.

The historical relationship between the Lurs and the central government in Iran has long been defined by a system in which the Ḫān functioned as an intermediary between tribal

[18] Documenting and preserving oral traditions is crucial for protecting intangible cultural heritage. These traditions are vital in fostering cross-cultural understanding and guiding sustainable development policies that respect and incorporate indigenous knowledge systems. They serve as invaluable resources for researchers, educators, and policymakers aiming to promote cultural appreciation and inclusivity.

[19] Alexander's military success against the Achaemenid Empire is widely attributed to his innovative tactical approach, the discipline of his army, and his strategic use of local alliances. His victories—notably at the Battle of Gaugamela—demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt rapidly to battlefield conditions and exploit structural and tactical weaknesses in opposing forces (Briant, 2012).

communities and the state. Until the reign of Moḥammad Reżā Šāh, this tribal monarchy provided both a mechanism of governance and a framework for negotiated autonomy. As previously discussed, this arrangement was widely accepted among the Lurs and perceived as compelling and legitimate (*vide supra*).

In this context, Alexander's favorable reception among the Lurs could be due to his administrative approach to governing conquered territories. Alexander's method of appointing **satraps**—local governors chosen from among the native population[20]—may have aligned with the Luri preference for locally rooted leadership. This approach contrasts sharply with the narrative in Pahlavī texts, where Alexander is criticized for dismantling governmental unity and disrupting the established order. The Pahlavī texts[21], such as the *Bundahišn*, *Dēnkard,* and *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag*(*vide supra*), portray Alexander as a destructive figure who overthrew the Achaemenid Empire, killed Darius III, and caused the decline of Zoroastrianism by burning sacred texts like the Avesta and fragmenting Iranian political and religious unity. These texts emphasize his role in ending the "ideal" Iranian monarchy and lament the loss of religious knowledge until the Sassanian restoration. Central to this critique is the portrayal of Alexander as an outsider who disrupted Iran's divinely sanctioned, centralized kingship, replacing it with Hellenistic fragmentation and cultural erosion.

In stark contrast, the Lurs' favorable perception of Alexander stems from a cultural and political alignment between his administrative model and their preference for decentralized governance. While fiercely loyal to Iran's territorial integrity, the Lurs have historically prioritized regional self-governance rooted in tribal and local leadership structures. Alexander's use of satrapies—appointing local rulers to manage territories under loose imperial oversight—resonated deeply with this worldview. Unlike the rigid centralization criticized in Pahlavī texts, Alexander's system allowed conquered peoples, including the ancestors of the Lurs, to retain a degree of autonomy, blending Persian administrative traditions with Hellenistic flexibility. This approach mirrored the Luri emphasis on leaders who shared their cultural and tribal identity, contrasting sharply with later empires like the Sassanians, which imposed external governors and suppressed local autonomy.

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[20] The satrap system was a form of provincial administration in the Achaemenid Empire, which Alexander adopted after his conquests. Satraps, often chosen from local elites, were responsible for governance, tax collection, and maintaining order, reflecting Alexander's pragmatic approach to governance Encyclopædia Iranica, s.v. "Achaemenid Satrapies".

[21] Pahlavi texts are Middle Persian writings from the Sasanian era that include historical, religious, and literary works, often reflecting Zoroastrian perspectives. These texts frequently portray Alexander negatively due to his perceived disruption of Zoroastrian traditions.

Over time, Alexander evolved into a cultural archetype in Lur oral traditions, symbolizing a ruler who respected regional autonomy while maintaining broader unity. Folktales and poetry often depict him as a "tribal king" who negotiated with local chiefs rather than subjugating them—starkly contrasting the centralized, top-down governance enforced since the early 20th century under Reżā Šāh . This idealized Alexander represents a pre-Islamic golden age where local governance and Iranian unity coexisted, serving as a subtle critique of both Sassanian centralization and modern Tehran-centric policies. For the Lurs, Alexander's legacy embodies resistance to state-imposed uniformity and a reminder that loyalty to Iran need not come at the cost of erasing regional distinctiveness. Thus, while Zoroastrian texts vilify Alexander as a disruptor, the Lurs' reinterpretation of his rule reflects their enduring aspiration for a pluralistic Iran where local governance and national unity are not mutually exclusive. Alexander, the "accursed" king in Pahlavī literature, becomes an unlikely folk hero in Lur's memory, embodying a political model that modern centralization has yet to replicate.

Disillusioned with Reżā Šāh 's reforms[22], it can be argued that the Luri society found a vision of superior governance in Alexander's oral historical memory. Through their collective wisdom and historical memory, the Lurs began to recount stories and praises of Alexander, celebrating his leadership as a model more in harmony with their traditional values and cultural identity. This reinterpretation of Alexander's legacy underscores the Lurs' resistance to homogenization and highlights their enduring desire for a governance system that respects regional autonomy within a unified Iranian framework. In this way, Alexander's historical memory serves as a critique of modern centralization and a testament to the Lurs' resilience in preserving their unique cultural and political identity[23].

Text D

Mr. Esfandīyār, 72 years old, illiterate, from Basht; shopkeeper. Speaks Persian and Luri.

yo moqe-y ke ī-xâs be-rav-e jahân-a be-gere ya qâqoz-ī dâ va dey-š salâ zīna-š vo kor-š-a dâ va dey-š. gō bey xo-t bu-ar-eš. va-š dâ gō bey xo-t bu-ar-eš rum tey xo-t tâ kor-a kū jâ-nešīn

[22] Reżā Šāh 's reforms aimed to centralize power and modernize Iran, often at the expense of tribal autonomy. Policies such as disarmament, forced settlement, and land redistribution disrupted traditional tribal structures, causing widespread discontent among groups like the Lurs.

[23] Luri traditional values prioritize local governance, community cohesion, and respect for autonomy. These values align with their historical governance structure, where Khans acted as intermediaries between the state and tribal communities.

mo vâ-bu. da uso ke mord dey-š ye marâsem xub-ī sī-š gerō. čel šabâna ruz. dastur dâ tâ mālī boz košt-en. gušt vō kal kol pōt sī marâsem-e š. vaqte xâk kerd-an-eš dastur dâ tâ dās-al-ša ben-en va dar. uso gō: "ey mardom-un?" gō-δ-en: :"bale?" gō: "seyl kən-īd ke kor mo bey ī hama dam dāsgâ vo taškīlât hīč bey xo-š nī-bar-e. tamā ma-kon-ītun. hama bâyat-ī faqat xodâ-na be-parast-en. sī mâl donyâ jar ma-kon-ītun. va yak do zolm ma-kon-ītun." alân-am qabr-eš ham-veyčōne. men mantaqey xo-mun. (The interviewer:) qabr-e kī? qabr dey Eskandar. a-š ī-gō-n ârâmgâ dey vo dōδar.

English Translate

When he wanted to travel around the world, he gave a piece of paper to his mother, granting her the authority and responsibility of his wife and son. He gave it to her and said: "Take them with you to Rome so that my son will be my successor there." When Alexander died, her mother held an excellent funeral for forty days. She was commanded to sacrifice goats and cook many meals for the ceremony. Alexander's mother told them to put his hands outside the coffin at the burial and then said, "Hey people! Look at my son with all those majesty and power, taking nothing with him to the grave. Do not be greedy. Everyone should only worship God. Do not fight over mundane life and be kind to each other." His grave is located here in our region. (Interviewer:) Whose grave? Alexander's mother's grave is called 'the mother and daughter's tomb[24].

The provided oral narrative about Alexander the Great illuminates several cultural and social dynamics, focusing on the prominent role of his mother after his death. In the story, Alexander's mother appears just before and after her son's death, a role reminiscent of Niẓāmī's *Haft*

[24] The identification of the tomb at Pasargadae as the final resting place of Cyrus the Great is attested in several classical sources, including Arrian (*Anabasis* VI.29), Strabo (*Geography* XV.3.7), and Plutarch (*Life of Alexander* 69), all of whom recount Alexander's visit to the site and the subsequent restoration of the tomb. While these sources describe the tomb's structure and importance, the claim that it was constructed at the order of Cyrus's mother is not explicitly stated in these accounts. This detail appears to derive from later traditions, possibly rooted in Persian oral history or fragments attributed to Ctesias, and echoed in Islamic-era interpretations that referred to the monument as "the Tomb of Solomon's Mother." See Stronach, *Pasargadae* (1978) for archaeological corroboration and historical synthesis.

Paykar[25], where Bahrām Gūr's mother emerges after he died to mourn for him[26]. This parallel underscores a cultural motif that highlights the enduring presence of mothers in moments of familial loss and transition.

Alexander entrusted his wife and son to his mother before his passing, reflecting the limited agency of women in Luri marriages, mainly when the bride is from outside the clan[27]. In the Luri version, Alexander's wife is portrayed as his only spouse and Iranian[28], while Alexander himself is Macedonian. This detail emphasizes the cultural significance of kinship and loyalty and the mother's pivotal role in bridging familial and cultural divides.

The mother's central role in organizing a lavish funeral, including an emphasis on meat preparation[29], reflects the cultural importance of death rituals and her authority within the community. Her wisdom and leadership are further demonstrated in her poignant speech during the burial, where she imparts lessons on humility, devotion to God, and kindness. Through these actions, the narrative portrays her as a loving caregiver, a responsible organizer, and a respected spiritual leader, highlighting the multifaceted role of mothers in both familial and communal contexts.

This focus on death and humility resonates with another narrative about Alexander's hands being left outside his coffin. According to tradition, Alexander encountered an old mystic mockingly questioning his title as "conqueror of the world after conquering India."[30] When Alexander asked if the mystic knew who he was, he said he did not. Alexander then proclaimed himself the ruler of the world. The mystic laughed and asked if Alexander, dying of thirst, would give his entire empire for a bowl of water. Alexander admitted that he would. The mystic responded, "Then do not call yourself the conqueror of the world, but the conqueror of a bowl of water."

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[25] Niẓāmī's *Haft Paykar* is a 12th-century Persian narrative poem that forms part of his *Khamsa*. It explores themes of morality, love, and kingship, often reflecting cultural motifs such as the role of mothers in moments of loss. This source will be further surveyed in the following sections. Vide infra, section 3.5.2.

[26] Niẓāmī, *Haft Paykar*, Canto 37. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh37.

[27] In Luri tribal culture, women from outside the clan often held limited agency due to the importance of lineage and kinship in maintaining tribal cohesion and inheritance structures.

[28] This adaptation of Alexander's story reflects Luri oral tradition's tendency to localize and integrate global figures, often reinterpreting their roles to align with regional cultural values.

[29] In Luri tradition, meat preparation during funerals holds deep cultural significance. It symbolizes communal sharing and collective mourning, reflecting the close-knit nature of Luri communities. Preparing and sharing meals during such ceremonies not only honors the deceased but also strengthens social bonds among community members. This practice emphasizes unity, generosity, and the collective responsibility to support grieving families, highlighting the communal values central to Luri's cultural identity.

[30] This narrative is a well-known moral allegory in various oral traditions. It emphasizes the transient nature of material power and the importance of humility.

This encounter deeply affected Alexander. Later, knowing he would not survive his journey back to Greece, he instructed that his empty hands[31] be left hanging out of his coffin to symbolize that the conqueror of half the world was left empty-handed. This poignant imagery reinforces the narrative's themes of material wealth's impermanence and death's inevitability, both deeply embedded in Luri oral tradition.

Text E

Mr. Jahānbakht, 93 years old, illiterate, from Suq; farmer. Speaks only Luri.

Eskandar ye adam qavi bī. hiška nī-tar-es šekas-eš bī-ye. va mesr ōma rā hama jâ-na gerō ōma ras-ī va Irân xomōn. va šuš ōma daxol arz ī-ken-om va xezmat-et hama jâ-na gerō. hiška nī-tar-es hič a-š ken-e. tâ ras-ī va mantaqa-y xomōn. veyčō čel šabâna ruz ariyobarzan jelō-š-a gerō. yo ye lorī va īngal xomōn bī. men rūsâ zendey ī-ke. kešâvarz bī. vāz-eš xub bī. bey hama xub bī mērabun bī. hama dus-eš dâšt. yo vaqt-ī ešnōft va samt-e šuš ūma-ye vo dâr-e hama jâ-na ī-ger-e vo laškar Irân hīč a-š na-kerd-e, asabânī vâ-bī gō šâh-e Irân orza na-dâr-e vo faqat ī-tar-e zolm kon-e. īmâ xomōn jelō-š-a ī-ger-īm. ōma ra mardom-a xavar ke. da hama ham xo dūs-eš dâšt-en va-š komak ī-kerd-en. rāt-en sar ya bolandi men rā laškariyân-e eskandar. uso hama va-š komak kerd-en ya kolī kohtor jām kerd-en âmâda nahân. uso ke eskandar bey laškar-eš ōma rad âb-ī hamaš-a bey yak rext-en sar-šōn. rā-šun-a bas-en vo ya kol-ī va-šu hamla kerd-en. čel ruz bâ-šū jang-ī. da ke dâšt šēkas-ešō īdâ, ya čapūn-ī va-š xayanat kē vo ariyobarzan košta vâ-bī.

bād-e xo-š ham ye dada-ī dâšt. nūm-eš yūtâb bī. ya hafta si jey kakâ-š mardom-a rābari ke. amâ ham vo ham farjum-ī nadâšt. Šēkās xa. (The interviewer:) yūtâb četōr-ī bī? dada-š bī. mālī del dâšt. bâ orza bī. bāz-e kor-al bī. kaluntar-ī bī sī xo-š. yo aval ī-xâs bey kakâ-š be-rav-e va jang. valī xob kakâ-š nī-lešt-eš. valī da âxor guš a kakâ-š na-ger-ō. gō ī-rā-m enteqam kakâ-m-a ī-ger-om. doδar tofangčīn-ī bī si xo-š. hīč tīr-al-eš xatâ nī-rā. valī xo da eskandar qavī-tar bī. šēkās-eš dâ. košta vâ-bī.

dobâra ī-gō-n ariyobarzan hâšeq-e ya duar ašâyerī bī. hamīša īrā-t tey-š. hâšeqī bâš dâšt. ī-xâs be-sun-eš. xalâsa uso ke īxâs be-rā jang ken-e bey eskandar, rā tey doδar va-š gō ētemâl dâr-e

[31] The "empty hands" image is a recurring motif in Luri's oral traditions. It symbolizes the impermanence of material wealth and the inevitability of mortality. It conveys a moral lesson that, regardless of worldly achievements, material possessions are ultimately insignificant in the face of death. This motif underscores the values of humility and a focus on spiritual and communal connections over transient, material pursuits.

mo be-mīr-om. amâ duar a bâ-š moxâlefat na-ke. va-š na-gō ma-rā. rōna-š ke tâ rā. gō be-rā defâ ko. gōt-ene hatâ pâpīč-al-eš-am si-š bās. kel si-š kaš-ī. aval-al-eš hanī jang kam bī si-š qazâ ī-bō vo čī. homâyat a-š ī-ke.

English Translation

Alexander was a strong man that no one could beat. He conquered Egypt and then came to Iran. He entered with his army from Shush, and after conquering everywhere, he reached our region, where Ariobarzanes[32] fought against him and his army for forty days. He was a Lur from our region living in a village. He was a wealthy farmer and kind to everyone. They all loved him in the village. When he heard Alexander's army had invaded Shush and was conquering everywhere without resistance from the Iranian army, he got furious and told that Iran's king was an unworthy and undeserved king who could only oppress people[33]; he would stop Alexander and his army. Then he called his villagers and asked for help, and since they all loved him, they were happy to help. They all went up a high hill and collected as many large stones as possible. Upon the army's arrival to the valley, Ariobarzanes and his villagers dropped the stones, blocked their route, and started attacking the soldiers. He fought for forty days against the army, and when he was just about to win, a shepherd betrayed him, and he got killed.

He had a sister named Yūtāb[34] who led people and commanded for one week after his death, but had no luck and was defeated. (Interviewer:) How was Youtab? Ariobarzane's sister was brave, courageous, and better than men. She was like a sheriff[35]. She wanted to go to war with her brother in the first place, but he did not allow her. She could no longer stand it and said, "I will go and take my brother's revenge." She was a sniper and never missed a shot, but Alexander was more potent and could not be defeated. She was finally killed.

It is said that Ariobarzanes was in love with a girl from his village, and they often met. They wanted to get married. When he wanted to depart for war against Alexander, he went to his girl

[32] Āriyobarzan (commonly transliterated as Ariobarzanes in Western texts) is a historical figure believed to have resisted Alexander the Great at the Battle of the Persian Gate. In Luri's oral tradition, he is reimagined as a local hero with strong ties to the community, reflecting the cultural practice of localizing historical figures.
[33] This critique reflects the Luri oral tradition's emphasis on local leadership and distrust of distant or oppressive central rulers, which aligns with its historical preference for autonomy.
[34] The people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad believe that Yūtab was the sister of Ariobarzanes. Chapter Four will explore Yūtab and the origins of her emergence in the beliefs of the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad region.
[35] In the Luri tradition, a "sheriff" is a figure of authority who commands respect and responsibility within the community and often leads in matters of defense and justice.

and told her, "I will probably get killed." The girl did not object and never told him not to go. She said, "Go and defend your land." She even fastened his footwear[36]. and sent him to war while ululating[37]. She supported and took him food during the first days of the war.

This oral narrative illuminates several interwoven cultural, social, and historical dynamics unique to the Luri tradition. Depicted as a local hero, Āriyobarzan embodies qualities deeply valued in Luri society, such as courage, leadership, and loyalty to the land. His forty-day resistance to Alexander's army symbolizes the Luri people's defiance against external threats. The narrative presents Āriyobarzan as a community leader beloved by his villagers for his generosity and fairness—qualities that reflect the ideal image of a tribal leader in Luri oral traditions. At the same time, the story of his farewell to the woman he loved reflects the deep intertwining of personal sacrifice and collective duty. Her role embodies cultural ideals of honor, loyalty, and patriotic support, reinforcing war as a communal responsibility rather than a solely masculine endeavor. Her actions—blessing, preparing, and sustaining the warrior—symbolize emotional resilience and the community's endorsement of resistance, emphasizing the collective dimension of heroic struggle in Luri cultural memory.

The critique of Iran's king as unworthy and oppressive further reflects the Luri oral tradition's emphasis on the value of local leadership and its inherent distrust of distant or oppressive central rulers. This perspective aligns with the Luri historical preference for autonomy, where leadership is rooted in the community and serves the collective interest. Āriyobarzan's decision to lead the resistance resonates with this ethos, portraying him as a defender of local values and autonomy in the face of external domination. While the narrative critiques centralized leadership, it simultaneously acknowledges the overwhelming external force represented by Alexander. The image of Alexander as an unstoppable conqueror contrasts sharply with the local bravery of Āriyobarzan.

While Alexander is characterized by his unparalleled strength, Āriyobarzan's strength lies in his connection to his community and his clever use of local resources, such as strategically

[36] In traditional Luri culture, fastening a man's footwear symbolized endorsing and supporting his participation in significant endeavors, such as warfare or hunting. It was a gesture of encouragement and commitment, reflecting the woman's role in affirming the importance of defending the community or fulfilling tribal duties.

[37] A prolonged, undulating vocalization characterized by a piercing, high-pitched tone—often produced through a rapid, vibratory movement of the tongue and uvula—ululating in Luri culture functions as a traditional expression during significant communal events. Sending men to war symbolizes encouragement, pride, and collective support for the warrior's bravery, reflecting a shared cultural acknowledgment of the honour and purpose of defending the homeland.

placing rocks to block Alexander's forces. This juxtaposition highlights a recurring theme in Luri's oral tradition: the triumph of ingenuity and collective effort over absolute power, even temporarily.

Āriyobarzan's sister, Yūtāb, adds another layer of complexity to the narrative. She is portrayed as brave and capable, traits that challenge conventional gender roles. Her willingness to fight alongside her brother, followed by her leadership after his death, underscores the active role of women in Luri's resistance narratives. In Luri culture, women are traditionally seen as free and proactive, often playing vital roles in social, familial, and dangerous contexts. Yūtāb's portrayal as a sharpshooter and her unwavering determination to avenge her brother's death highlights her as an influential and respected figure within her community. In times of crisis, Luri women have historically stepped into leadership roles, reflecting their long-standing participation in familial and communal responsibilities. This narrative underscores the Luri oral tradition's capacity to elevate women's roles during critical moments of conflict, portraying them as caregivers and proactive agents of resistance and leadership.

The story also delves into the romantic and emotional dimensions of Āriyobarzan's life. His relationship with a local girl who wholeheartedly supports him and encourages his resistance demonstrates the intertwining of personal and collective struggles. The girl's actions—tying his footwear and ululating as he departs—are deeply symbolic, signifying her endorsement of his struggle and a collective celebration of his courage. Her continued support in the early days of the war emphasizes the role of women in fostering resistance and unity during times of conflict.

Furthermore, the narrative introduces the theme of betrayal, with a shepherd revealing Āriyobarzan's position to Alexander's forces. This act of treachery reflects the vulnerabilities that can arise within a community during moments of crisis. The betrayal ultimately leads to Āriyobarzan's death—a tragic ending that serves as a cautionary tale, underscoring the consequences of disunity and disloyalty.

In conclusion, this oral narrative encapsulates the Luri values of resistance, communal solidarity, and the significance of local leadership. The intertwined stories of Āriyobarzan, Yūtāb, and the unnamed beloved highlight themes of heroism, loyalty, and sacrifice, offering a window into the complex socio-cultural framework of Luri traditions. This narrative serves not only as a historical recollection but also as a medium to preserve and propagate the ethos of a resilient and autonomous community.

Text F

Mr. Numdār, 90 years old, illiterate, from Yasuj; ranchman. Speaks only Luri.

Eskandar na-mālum-e dey-š vo bō-š kī-ye. gōt-ene ye zan-e badbaxt faqīr-ī bīd-e va tah hīč na-dâšt-e. da dâšt va gosney ī-mord. yo bâr dâšt. rā men ye kelga-i yo vāz haml ke. da nezik bī be-mīr-e. gō xoδâyâ! mâ xo mālī badbaxt bīd-īm hamīša. yâ ī bača-na be-koš yâ tōri xošbaxt-eš ko ke tamâm dənyâ-na be-ger-e. yo-na gō vo tamum ke. da šō vâ-bī bača men kelga nahâda bī. sōb â-bī. bača da mālī gosna-š bī. šoru ke boland gerīv-es. da bača har gey gosna-š-e mālī jun dâr-e si gerīva. pilguš si šekâr rāt-e bī. a vočō rad â-bī. sīye-y bača-na ešnoft. rā men kelga bača-na dī. mehr-e bača nešās men del-eš. var-gerō bey xo-š bord-eš gapu-š ke. da uso ke xo-š tamum ke eskandar-a nahâ jey xo-š si pâdešâh-ī.

English Translation

Alexander's parents were unknown; his mother was a poor woman who had nothing and was starving. She was pregnant and gave birth to her child in a wreckage and almost died. She said, "God! We have always been miserable. Either kill this child or make him blessed that he will conquer the world.[38]" She said this and died. Night crawled over the debris with the lonely child. In the morning, he became so hungry and started crying loudly. When a child is hungry, he can cry forever. Pīlgūš[39] went out hunting[40] when he heard a child crying. He went toward

[38] This plea to God reflects a common motif in oral traditions where a parent, facing despair, entrusts the child's fate to divine intervention, often setting the stage for the child's future greatness (ATU 705: Born from a Prayer)

[39] Pīlgūš (transliterated as "Pilgoush"), literally translating to "Elephant-Ear" in Persian, is likely a folk etymological adaptation of *Filqūs*, historically known as Philip II of Macedon, Alexander the Great's father. This interpretation highlights the blending of historical and folkloric elements in Luri's oral tradition, demonstrating how narratives evolve. The transformation from *Filqūs* to *Pīlgūš* exemplifies folk etymology or linguistic reinterpretation, where a word or name is reshaped to align with a local language's phonological patterns, cultural context, or narratives.

From a phonological perspective, this adaptation reflects phonological assimilation or phonetic shift, where sounds in borrowed or historical terms are modified to suit the borrowing language's preferences. The initial *F* in *Filqūs* is replaced by *P* in *Pīlgūš*, reflecting a preference for bilabial stops in the Luri language. Similarly, the *-qus* ending in *Filqūs* is adapted to *-gūš*, aligning with Persian and Luri morphology, where *gūš* means "ear." This transformation also represents a phonological simplification, as the name *Filqūs* is reinterpreted into a form more familiar to Luri phonology, blending meaning and sound to create *Pīlgūš*.

The "Elephant Ear" interpretation further underscores the cultural resonance of this adaptation. In Persian and Luri traditions, elephants symbolize strength and nobility, which may have influenced the reinterpretation of *Filqūs* into *Pīlgūš*. This process demonstrates the dynamic interplay between history and folklore, where oral traditions reshape historical figures to fit local linguistic and cultural narratives.

[40] The act of hunting leading to the discovery of a significant figure is a motif found in many folklore traditions. It symbolizes chance encounters shaping the destinies of individuals and communities.

the sound and found a child lying there. He immediately became fond of the child, taking him home and raising him. When Pilgoush died, Alexander was crowned as his successor.

In this narrative, Alexander's mother, a destitute woman, gives birth to him in a wreckage and dies, praying for either his death or immense blessedness. Discovered and raised by Pīlgūš[41], Alexander eventually succeeded him as ruler. This account of Alexander's birth and upbringing presents a localized adaptation of his origins, blending historical and folkloric elements to reflect the cultural values of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. The narrative exemplifies the region's oral tradition, where historical figures are reimagined to resonate with local beliefs and storytelling practices.

The theme of Alexander's birth has given rise to various interpretations across cultural and literary traditions. Despite extensive research, no evidence supports the notion that Alexander was Iranian or the son of Dārā, as depicted in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmeh*[42]. Instead, this version aligns more closely with Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma*, particularly the *Sharafnāma*. In this section, Niẓāmī describes Alexander's birth with astrological signs and symbolic imagery that foretell his future greatness, specifically in *Sharafnāma*, section 12[43]. The poem incorporates natural phenomena and vivid descriptions to emphasize the child's significance and destiny, underscoring the extraordinary circumstances surrounding his origins.

By aligning Alexander's story with broader themes of greatness and destiny, this narrative reflects the oral tradition's capacity to integrate and reinterpret literary influences, situating them within a localized cultural framework.

[41] Luri oral traditions tend to adapt and reinterpret historical and literary sources, blending them with local narratives. This process creates culturally resonant stories that reflect regional values and beliefs. The transformation of Filqūs (Philip) into Pīlgūš ("Elephant Ear") exemplifies this phenomenon, showcasing how historical figures are reimagined to align with local linguistic and cultural frameworks.

[42] Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmeh* portrays Alexander as a half-Iranian figure, contrasting with historical accounts and the localized narrative in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. This divergence highlights the adaptability of Alexander's story across different cultural contexts. Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, Dārāb-nāmeh, Canto 4. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/ferdousi/shahname/darab/sh4.

[43] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 12. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh12.

Text G

Mrs. Bī Melkī, 68 years old, illiterate, from Bohun Village; livestock herder. Speaks only Luri.

mo dâsetân-e xâs-ī dar mored-e Eskandar nōn-om. hamiqad dūn-om ke ye adam bâhuš vo xub-ī bid-e. mālumat vo ī čī-yal māli dâšt-e. ye âmuzegâr ba savâd-ī tarbīyat-eš kedre-e bīd-e. māli bâhuš vo bā xodâ bī. hīč tars nik-e. šojâ bī. yo tares īmâ-na šekas bī-ye sī ke ham-ō čapun xojâlatkâr va-mō xayânat ke. andey Ârīyobarzan ham mey xo-š bī. nī-tar-es šekas-eš bī-ye. amâ xo da vāb-ī. amâ xo dun-ī bād-eš Eskandar dastur dâ tâ čapun-a košt-en. gō har gey kas-ī va mardom xo-š xayânat kən-e na âδam doros-ī-ya. (The interviewer:) "pa sī če taxt jamšid-a taš za?" mo taxt jamšid-a nōn-om valī īrân-a ke i-gōn taš za na taqsir xo-š bī. ham-ō zan-e taš-gerōta gul-eš za. yo-na xo hama dun-e. (The interviewer:) "ku zan?" ya zan na-xub-ī bī men jang-al bâšu bī.

English Translation

I don't know any particular story about Alexander. I only know that he was a wise and good man and knew a lot. A wise teacher had raised him[44]. Alexander was so clever and righteous and never was afraid of anything. He was too brave, and this led to our defeat. That shepherd who brought shame on all of us[45] betrayed Ariobarzanes, who was also brave like Alexander. He could not beat Ariobarzanes, but it happened anyway. But you know, Alexander then ordered to kill the shepherd and said: "Whoever betrays his people is not a good person.[46]" (Interviewer): "Why did he burn the Persepolis then[47]? "I do not know about Persepolis, but

[44] The renowned Greek philosopher Aristotle was Alexander's tutor, significantly influencing his philosophical outlook and strategic thinking. Historical and literary traditions often highlight this connection to underscore Alexander's intellectual and moral development (DNP, s.v. "Aristoteles" by H. Flashar).

[45] In Luri's oral traditions, betrayal is regarded as one of the gravest offenses, bringing lasting shame to the individual and their community. Acts of disloyalty, such as the shepherd's betrayal of Ariobarzanes, are often highlighted in narratives to emphasize the moral and social consequences of such actions.

[46] Alexander's punishment of the shepherd mirrors his actions in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmeh*, where he avenges the betrayal of **Dārā** (Darius III) by killing Dārā's assassins. This consistent portrayal in oral and literary traditions emphasizes Alexander's condemnation of treachery and his commitment to justice, reflecting broader cultural values surrounding loyalty and betrayal.

[47] The burning of Persepolis is widely attributed to Alexander's conquest, as recorded in Greek and Persian sources. Historical accounts suggest it was motivated by revenge for the Persian invasion of Greece or possibly influenced by manipulation, such as the actions of Thais, who allegedly incited the destruction.

burning Iran, as it is said, was not his fault; that taš-gerōta[48] woman tricked him into doing so[49]. (I asked : “What woman?”) There was a wicked girl with him in the wars.

The narrative in this text sheds light on Alexander's character through the lens of Luri oral tradition, emphasizing traits such as wisdom, bravery, and justice. The narrative depicts Alexander as a righteous figure who, even in victory, prioritizes loyalty and condemns betrayal. His punishment of the shepherd who betrayed Āriyobarzān[50] exemplifies the moral values central to Luri's storytelling. The condemnation of treachery resonates with broader cultural narratives, such as Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmeh*, where Alexander similarly avenges the betrayal of Dārā by killing his assassins[51].

The portrayal of Alexander as a courageous and clever leader highlights his superior intellect and fearlessness, attributes celebrated in Luri's oral tradition. The reference to his wise teacher draws parallels to Aristotle's historical role in shaping Alexander's intellectual development, a well-documented fact also mentioned in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma*, specifically in the *Sharafnāma*, section 13[52]. This detail underscores the emphasis on education and morality in this narrative, aligning with Niẓāmī's depiction of Alexander as a philosopher-king guided by wisdom.

The burning of Persepolis (known in Old Persian as *Pārsa*) introduces a nuanced discussion, shifting the focus from Alexander's agency to the influence of others. When I inquired about the burning of Persepolis, the informant attributed it to a deceptive woman who tricked Alexander, aligning with historical accounts of Thaïs, a Greek courtesan said to have persuaded Alexander to set the city ablaze during a drunken revelry (DNP, s.v. "Persepolis"; DNP, s.v. "Thaïs"). The narrative suggests that the act was not Alexander's fault but rather the result of manipulation by a *taš-gerōta* (trickster or manipulative woman). This motif of a woman swaying critical decisions is a recurring theme in Luri's oral tradition, often used to explain dramatic or destructive events. By attributing the burning of Persepolis (*Pars*) to external

[48] This utterance constitutes a malediction, denoting the wish for conflagration. Such a curse is deemed particularly malevolent and exclusively employed to individuals of depraved character.
[49] The motif of manipulative women is a recurring theme in Luri's oral tradition, often used to explain pivotal or destructive events. This narrative aligns with broader historical accounts, such as the influence of Thais in the burning of Persepolis, where a woman's actions are portrayed as pivotal in swaying Alexander's decisions.
[50] The following chapter will examine how the people of Kohgīlūyeh and Būyer Aḥmad came to learn about a figure such as Āriyābarzān.
[51] Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, Dārā-nāmeh, Canto 9. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/ferdousi/shahname/dara/sh9.

[52] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 13. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh13.

manipulation, the narrative absolves Alexander of direct blame, aligning with the oral tradition's tendency to frame him as a just and honorable leader.

This narrative also underscores a divergence between the constructed Iranian national identity and its resonance in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. The informant's description of Persepolis (*Pārs*) as simply "Iran" reflects a localized interpretation of the nation, shaped by the Lur people's unique cultural and historical perspectives. In this context, the concept of Iran is detached from monumental sites or dynastic histories and instead rooted in a broader sense of land and cultural belonging. This perspective underscores the limitations of centralized national narratives in fully capturing the lived experiences and cultural frameworks of marginalized communities like the Lurs, whose understanding of Iran is shaped more by local traditions and oral histories than by state-centric historical constructs.

The narrative in this text also contrasts bravery and betrayal, highlighting the moral consequences of disloyalty. While the shepherd's betrayal leads to condemnation, Alexander's ability to overcome challenges through intellect and courage reinforces his image as an exceptional figure. The story intertwines moral lessons with historical events, demonstrating the oral tradition's role in preserving cultural values while adapting historical narratives to fit local contexts.

In conclusion, this text presents Alexander as a multifaceted figure, blending historical elements with Luri's cultural values. His condemnation of betrayal, acknowledgment of bravery, and the nuanced portrayal of the burning of Persepolis (*Pars*) illustrate the oral tradition's capacity to integrate moral lessons into historical storytelling. This narrative reflects the Luri people's emphasis on loyalty, justice, and the interplay between individual agency and external influence.

3.4.3. *Timṣāl*: A Realm of Cultural Fusion

Expanding upon the intricate interplay of literary interpretations and *genealogies* within the oral tradition of **Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad**, examining the cultural significance embedded in these practices is essential. In this region, where *oral storytelling* has been a cornerstone of community identity for centuries, adapting Persian literary masterpieces into the **Luri language** represents far more than mere translation. This process embodies a dynamic

cultural fusion, where elements of **Luri culture** are seamlessly woven into the narratives of these literary works. These adaptations preserve the originals' essence and breathe new life into them, making the stories more relatable and resonant with the local audience. Through this practice, masterpieces such as the **Shāhnāmeh** become vessels through which the **Luri people** connect with their heritage, finding reflections of their own experiences in the tales of ancient heroes and heroines.

In regions like **Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad**, where the **Luri people** have historically been marginalized, *oral traditions* serve as a vital medium for preserving identity and ensuring continuity across generations. This integration of literary elements and *genealogical narratives* forms a continuum in *Luri's oral tradition*, extending seamlessly to the stories of **Alexander the Great**. Moreover, the emergence of supplementary stories inspired by these masterpieces adds complexity and depth to the *oral tradition*. For instance, additional tales of lesser-known figures from the **Shāhnāmeh** or localized genealogies are seamlessly incorporated, reflecting the storytellers' creativity and ability to adapt these works to resonate with local cultural values. These stories often introduce themes of community resilience, familial loyalty, or moral justice, ensuring that the narratives remain relevant to contemporary audiences. By weaving these additional stories into the broader narrative landscape, storytellers in the region demonstrate their creativity and adaptability, ensuring the *oral tradition* remains vibrant and relevant in contemporary times. This ongoing evolution of literary interpretations and the weaving of *genealogies* not only preserves cultural heritage but also fosters community cohesion, reinforcing the interconnectedness of past, present, and future within the fabric of **Luri society**.

Similarly, this phenomenon is evident in the *oral narratives* surrounding **Alexander the Great**. Stories about **Alexander** appear prominently within the *oral literature* of **Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad**, where traces of significant Persian literary works are evident. These narratives are not merely adapted but intricately interwoven with **Luri culture**. Within these narratives, **Alexander** is often reimagined as a figure who embodies values central to **Luri culture**, such as loyalty, justice, and the ability to overcome adversity. The tales of **Alexander**, renowned for their historical significance and grandeur, undergo a transformative process within the region's *oral tradition*. As they are retold and passed down through generations, they acquire nuances specific to **Luri culture**, reflecting the local community's unique perspectives and lived experiences. Through this process, **Alexander's** exploits become deeply intertwined with the collective memory and identity of the **Luri people**, contributing to the rich texture of their *oral tradition*.

The following sections present the stories collected during my fieldwork. The stories are presented without a specific order to reflect oral tradition's organic and non-linear nature, where the sequence often depends on the storyteller's perspective and audience. This approach ensures that the fluid and dynamic essence of *Luri oral storytelling* is preserved, offering a more authentic representation of how these narratives are shared and remembered within the community.

Text H

Mr. Olmās, 78 years old, from Lendeh Village; teacher. Speaks Luri and Persian.

ya veley mardom rāt-en tey eskandar gōt-en molâ eskandar? gō bale ha! gōt-en īmâ men ya šār-i hesīm ōma-n-e mâ-na badbaxt kerd-en-e. zur va-mun ī-gō-n azīyat-mun ī-ken-en. īmâ-na bīčâra kerd-ene. va-rīs-ân rāt-en men šār-e ku zā-n kofâr-a košt-en. ya hūna-ī bī čan tâ zan-e na-xūb-ī men-eš bīd-en. laškar ūma-n gōt-en īmâ nī-tar-īm b-re-y-m men-eš. yo ya hafī men-eš-e. eskandr-e kū xo-š varīsâ rā men hūne-y kū. ya velâ hafī kū hof za men rīš. ya mâr-ī bī har ki be-ðid-eš zāla-š ī-taraqes. eskandar ya seyl-ī va-š kē gō yo jâðu men-eš-e. rā va yak-ī va dasyar-al-eš bī yo jâðu vo čī dūnes va-š gō tâ ūma. yo rā ya kâr-al-ī anjum dâ jâðu kū-na hīč ke. tamenâ yo ya azan-e malus-ī bīd-e xo-š-a ītōr-ī kerd-e ke sarbâz-al-a zāla-šun-a būar-e. da ūso zan-e kū-na dāsgir kerd-en. hamū dāsyâr eskandar ēsa-š.

English Translation

Once, some people went to Alexander and told him, "Alexander, your majesty! We live in a city where they have come and made us miserable. They oppress us, hurt us, and are being cruel to us." Alexander's soldiers went to that city and killed the infidels[53] and oppressors. There was a house where some indecent women lived. Soldiers returned to Alexander and told them

[53] In Persian and **Luri oral traditions**, terms like "infidels," referred to as *kofâr* in Luri, are often localized adaptations that reflect narrators' cultural and religious perspectives and their communities. These adaptations reframe Alexander's military campaigns to align with the moral and ethical values upheld in these traditions. Within the **Luri context**, such terminology emphasizes Alexander's role as a just and heroic figure, portraying him not merely as a conqueror but as a liberator and protector of the oppressed. By casting his enemies as *kofâr* or unjust rulers, the narrative situates Alexander's actions within a framework of moral righteousness, interpreting his victories as acts of justice rather than domination. This reinterpretation highlights how oral traditions adapt historical events to resonate with the community's collective identity and ethical values, transforming historical figures into symbols of justice and moral virtue.

they could not enter the house since there was a python in there. He went to the house, and the python attacked his face when he entered. It was a scary and frightening snake. Alexander looked at the snake and said it had a spell on it. He called one of his assistants, who knew magic and witchcraft. He then did some things and disenchanted the magic. A beautiful woman had become a snake to scare off soldiers. They arrested the woman who was later married to Alexander's assistant[54].

Alexander's encounter with the python, described as terrifying and formidable, symbolizes a supernatural challenge that transcends physical threats. This narrative highlights both Alexander's bravery and his intellectual acumen. Recognizing the magical nature of the python, Alexander's response showcases his capacity to tackle challenges that extend beyond the physical realm, relying not only on his bravery but also on his resourcefulness and leadership.

To resolve the situation, Alexander seeks the assistance of a trusted companion skilled in magic and witchcraft. This assistant's role is significant, suggesting they may have been a military tactician with hidden supernatural expertise or someone recruited explicitly for their knowledge of the mystical. Their intervention, which ultimately dispels the enchantment, showcases Alexander's wisdom in delegating tasks to those best equipped for the challenge. This act further underscores his portrayal as a leader who values the strengths of his companions.

The revelation that the python is a beautiful woman transformed through magic introduces deception, mysticism, and transformation themes. Her eventual marriage to Alexander's assistant adds a layer of ambiguity to the story. This ending can be interpreted as a reward for the assistant's indispensable role or a means to neutralize a potentially dangerous figure. The latter interpretation aligns with motifs commonly found in **the Luri oral tradition**, where marriage often serves as a symbolic resolution to conflict or danger, ensuring stability and control.

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[54] In Persian and **Luri oral traditions**, snakes often symbolize danger, deception, or supernatural power. These creatures frequently appear in mythological and folkloric narratives as embodiments of transformation or challenge, representing threats that demand courage and wisdom. Within the context of this story, the python serves as both a physical and magical obstacle, underscoring Alexander's bravery and resourcefulness in navigating natural and supernatural realms.
The woman's transformation into the python can be interpreted as a defense mechanism, using magic to shield herself and deter intruders. Her eventual marriage to Alexander's assistant reflects a resolution consistent with **Luri's storytelling**, where marriage often signifies the neutralization of danger and the restoration of social harmony. This fusion of symbolism, transformation, and resolution highlights the intricate interplay between mysticism and morality in **the Luri oral tradition**, enriching the cultural and thematic complexity of the narrative.

This fantastical narrative mirrors themes found in **Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma***, particularly in the *Sharafnāma*, part 28(Iskandar's visit to the cave of Kay Ḫusraw)[55], where the same story is recounted with additional details. The parallels highlight Alexander as a heroic and wise leader capable of handling physical and mystical threats, reinforcing his image as a just and virtuous figure.

The juxtaposition of the historical Alexander with this mythical figure underscores how oral traditions adapt and embellish real-life figures to create captivating narratives. By weaving fantastical elements into the story, Alexander is elevated to a legendary hero whose exploits reflect not just historical achievements but also the cultural values and imagination of the **Luri people**[56].

Text I

Mr. Sardār, 79 years old, illiterate, from Dehdasht; farmer. Speaks only Luri.

ya rūz-ī ya va xo-m-un bēxtar-al-ī ya yâqūt-i dâ va eskandar. eskandar seyl a-š ke gō na engâr-ī māli kečelu-ya. gō yo andâz xo-t-e ke pâdeše-y âlam-ī vo hama zer dāse ten-en. eskandar gō ko yo xo na čī-ya. gō hīč bard-ī nī-jūr-ī ke homsang yo bū. dastur dâ tâ bard âverd-en. har čī bard nahâ-n tâ feyda nī-ken-e vo hanī īn eskandar gereng-e. xezr men kōh bong kē gō xak be-n-īt. ya nafar-ī rā ya qadr-ī xak âve nahâ men tarâzu tâ homsang bard-e eskandar-e. yo dars-ī bī ke eskandar da dūn-es har qadr-am ke zūr o dam o dasgâ dâšt-a bī âxor saranjūm-et xak-e.

English Translation

Once, a jinn[57] gave a Rubin to Alexander. He (Alexander) looked at it and said, "Don't you think it is too small?" The Jinn said, " It is worth you who rule the world and being obeyed by

[55] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 28. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh28.
[56] Oral traditions play a significant role in transforming historical figures like Alexander into mythological heroes. This process reflects the community's collective identity and cultural values, embedding these figures within narratives emphasizing bravery, justice, and wisdom. By adapting and embellishing real-life individuals, oral traditions ensure their relevance across generations while reinforcing moral and cultural frameworks central to the community's ethos. As Jan Assmann (2011) explains, cultural memory does not passively transmit the past but actively reconstructs it according to present concerns and symbolic needs.
[57] In Persian and Luri traditions, *jinn* are supernatural beings often depicted as possessing magical powers and the ability to influence human affairs. They frequently appear in narratives, serving as intermediaries between the human and supernatural realms, often imparting lessons about power, morality, and the limitations of human control.

all people." Alexander said, "It is nothing," then the Jinn said, "You shall never find a stone this weight and worth." Alexander ordered to collect all the gems and stones and put aside the Rubin, which was still heavier. Ḫiḍr shouted in the mountain and said to put soil on the scale. Someone brought a fist of soil and put it on the scale, and they saw that they weighed the same. Alexander learned his lesson that no matter how much power and control you might have, it will all turn into dust.

This folktale of **Alexander the Great** transcends the story of a legendary conqueror to convey a timeless moral lesson. At its core, it highlights the futility of material possessions and the transient nature of worldly achievements, themes deeply embedded in Persian and **Luri oral traditions**. The *ruby (Rubin)*, often associated with wealth, power, and wisdom in Persian and Islamic symbolism, is a metaphor for humanity's tendency to overvalue material treasures. Its juxtaposition with soil underscores the moral conclusion that, in the end, all earthly power and riches are reduced to dust.

In this narrative, Alexander initially dismisses the ruby, considering it insignificant. However, the **jinn** presents a challenge that reframes his perspective, using the ruby's weight to symbolize the emptiness in Alexander's focus on grandeur. When all other treasures fail to outweigh the ruby, **Ḫiḍr**,[58] a mystical figure associated with wisdom and guidance in Islamic and Persian traditions, intervenes. By adding a handful of soil to the scale, Ḫiḍr demonstrates the inevitability of mortality and the ultimate reduction of all material possessions to dust[59]. This pivotal moment reveals a profound truth: no matter how grand one's achievements or possessions, they hold no permanence.

The narrative aligns closely with **Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma***, particularly in the *Sharafnāma*, section 61[60], where a similar tale unfolds. In Niẓāmī's version, **Ḫiḍr** guides Alexander through

[58] Ḫiḍr (Khidr), a figure often linked to immortality and divine wisdom in Islamic tradition, is sometimes identified with the prophet Elias (Elijah). This association underscores his role as a timeless spiritual guide, transcending historical boundaries to impart profound knowledge. The narratives surrounding Ḫiḍr emphasize the limitations of material wealth and power, advocating instead for spiritual insight and humility as the actual markers of wisdom. For a more in-depth discussion on Ḫiḍr and his connection to Elias, the English Wikipedia article "Khidr" provides a comprehensive exploration of his role in Islamic and broader Middle Eastern traditions, examining his symbolic significance as a guide and teacher.

[59] In Persian and Luri storytelling, dust is a recurring motif symbolizing mortality and the ultimate equality of all humans. It reminds us of life's transience, emphasizing that all individuals eventually return to the earth regardless of wealth or power. This imagery reinforces moral and philosophical lessons about humility and the futility of material pursuits.

[60] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 61. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh61

the darkness, using stones and soil to teach him about impermanence. Both versions emphasize the futility of material wealth and highlight the enduring value of intangible virtues such as wisdom, humility, and spiritual insight.

By weaving these symbolic elements into the story, the narrative transforms Alexander from a conqueror obsessed with power into a figure capable of profound introspection. Ultimately, the story reminds its audience that value lies not in possessions or status but in qualities that transcend the material realm.

Text J

Mr. Mondanī, 72 years old, from Fath village, is a farmer. Has basic literacy. Speaks only Luri.

eskandar va dīn ōw hayât bī. va-š gōt-en ya čašme-ī hesī men ye čāh sēh-ī ar ōw-š-a varōwsan-ī da va tah nī-mīr-ī. ōma rā va rāh ke be-jur-eš. men rāh xezr-am bâš bī. Amâ eskandar nī-δī-yeš. xezr zī-tar ras-ī sar češma kū. va ōw-š xa. za dam tīya-š tīya-š dī. kur bī. da ūso eskandar vo rafīq-eš ke bâš bī rasi-yen. ū rafīq-eš ya mey xošk-ī bâš bī. īxâs men râ be-xar-eš. mey kū va dās-eš oftâ men češma kū zenda vâ-bī. valī da ōw kū xarâb â-bī. hīč tâ da kâr-ī nī-ken-e. be har sūrat eskandar-e kū uma ta ōw čī nīs-ī. da vâ-gašt. rā ke be-rav-e rum

English Translation

Alexander was looking for the "Water of Life.[61]" He was told that a spring was inside a black well[62], and you would become immortal if you drank its water. He began his journey to find the spring accompanied by Ḫiḍr and a friend. Alexander could not see the spring, but Ḫiḍr arrived there and drank the water. He washed his face and took his sight back; he was blind. Alexander and his friend arrived later. His friend had a dried fish he wanted to eat on the way.

[61] The "Water of Life" (*āb-e ḥayāt*) is a recurring motif in Persian and Islamic traditions, symbolizing immortality, spiritual renewal, and enlightenment. Legends often depict it as a hidden or elusive spring, accessible only to the worthy. It is associated with mystical figures like **Ḫiḍr**, who guide seekers on quests for eternal wisdom or life.

[62] In Luri's storytelling, a black well often symbolizes mystery, danger, and the unknown, serving as a threshold to hidden truths or challenges.

The fish fell into the water and became alive, but the water had lost its restorative power[63]. Alexander was then disappointed and continued his journey to Rome[64].

In this story, **Alexander the Great**, forever chasing grand ambitions, embarks on a quest for the fabled *Water of Life* (*āb-e ḥayāt*), rumored to grant immortality. Guided by the wise **Ḫiḍr**, they journey to a dark well where the magical water is said to reside. This narrative, deeply embedded in Persian and **Luri oral traditions**, intertwines themes of ambition, fate, and the inevitable limits of human desire.

At the well, fate intervenes in an ironic twist. **Ḫiḍr**, seeking to restore his sight, unknowingly washes away the water's immortality power, rendering it ineffective when Alexander arrives. The story juxtaposes Ḫiḍr's wisdom with Alexander's ambition, underscoring the idea that even the greatest rulers are subject to the whims of fate. The well's magic, while demonstrable—such as when Alexander's friend's dried fish springs back to life upon touching the water—becomes a missed opportunity. Alexander's disappointment reflects a profound realization: despite his conquests and grand pursuits, some goals remain forever out of reach.

This tale parallels a narrative in **Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma***, particularly in the *Sharafnāma*, section 60[65], where a similar story unfolds. In **Niẓāmī's** version, the quest for the *Water of Life* becomes a moral and spiritual lesson, emphasizing the futility of human aspirations for immortality and the importance of humility. The tale's mystical elements, particularly Ḫiḍr's role as both a guide and an accidental agent of fate, reinforce the narrative's philosophical depth.

The story also reflects a motif unique to **Luri's oral tradition**, where Alexander's eventual journey to Rome symbolizes a return to his homeland. This belief highlights the cultural significance of homecoming and the longing for one's origins. By weaving these elements into the tale, the narrative transforms Alexander from a historical conqueror into a figure embodying universal truths about human limitations and the acceptance of one's fate.

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[63] In Persian and Islamic literature, water symbolizes renewal, healing, and life. As in this narrative, its loss or diminished power signifies missed opportunities, unfulfilled quests, or the impermanence of earthly pursuits, reinforcing moral and spiritual lessons.

[64] In **Luri's oral traditions**, Alexander's journey to Rome reflects his belief that he intended to return to his homeland. This highlights a recurring motif in Luri's storytelling of longing for one's origins and the significance of homeland.

[65] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 60. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh60.

Ultimately, this story transcends its fantastical elements to offer a timeless moral lesson: ambition and conquest, no matter how grand, cannot overcome the immutable truths of mortality and human limitation. The tale reminds its audience that the pursuit of immortality and material achievement pales compared to the enduring values of humility, wisdom, and the acceptance of life's natural cycles.

Text K

Mrs. Sandal, 80 years old, illiterate, from Kohsarak village; housewife. Speaks only Luri.

Eskandar ke ī-xâs be-rav-e a čīn. men rāh-š va taraf-e Irân ke ī-rāt, bad-e xerâsân gīr kerd-en. sarbâz-al ī-xand-esen. eskandar asabânī vâ-bī gō âqâ pa yo čen-e yo če vāz-ī-ya. īso vaqt-e gerīve-ya īšâ ī-xand-īn. xezr a-š gō yo mâl zāferun-e ke īngal ītor-ī ī-xand-en[66].

English Translation

When Alexander wanted to go to China, he and his troops passed Iran and were stuck around the Ḫurāsān region. His soldiers started to laugh, and he became angry and asked for a reason[67]. He told them, "You are laughing while you should be crying now. What is wrong? Ḫiḍr then told him that Safran made them laugh so hard.

Alexander the Great’s relentless ambition for conquest is evident in this narrative as he leads his troops toward China. However, their journey encounters an unexpected halt near the Ḫurāsān region, which has long served as a strategic crossroads of civilizations and a center of cultural and political significance in Persian history (Encyclopædia Iranica, n.d.). During this pause, a peculiar event unfolds: Alexander’s soldiers suddenly erupt in laughter, much to his anger and confusion. Perplexed, Alexander demands an explanation, turning to *Ḫiḍr*, who reveals that Safran (saffron) is the cause of their amusement.

This mention of saffron introduces a layer of mystery and cultural symbolism. Saffron, often associated with mood enhancement in **Luri traditional medicine**, adds depth to the narrative.

[66] Although my observations do not explicitly mention this, traditions indicate that Ḫiḍr was Alexander the Great's constant companion, serving as a guide and source of wisdom.
[67] In **Luri culture**, inappropriate laughter is considered disrespectful and is often viewed as a sign of ignorance or lack of awareness of a situation's gravity. This cultural norm emphasizes the importance of emotional appropriateness, especially in solemn contexts, reinforcing values of respect and mindfulness.

The sudden shift in morale among the soldiers, juxtaposed with Alexander's stern reaction, underscores the tension between human emotion and the discipline required for conquest. In this context, Alexander's frustration highlights his role as a leader struggling to balance authority with the unpredictable nature of human behavior.

The significance of this reaction is further contextualized within **the Luri oral tradition**, where emotional appropriateness—particularly avoiding inappropriate laughter—is a recurring cultural theme[68]. Alexander's response aligns with the value placed on maintaining composure and respecting the gravity of serious situations, especially during critical moments of leadership and ambition. By situating the event in the **Khorasan region**, the narrative draws attention to a geographical space rich with historical and cultural resonance, transforming an anecdotal event into a reflection of the complexities of leadership and cultural values[69].

Text l

Mr. Ṭahmās, 72 years old, from Fath village; farmer. Has basic literacy . Speaks only Luri.

ya zaman-ī eskandar ī-xâs be-rav-e kōh Alborz. ye čand ruz-ī men rāh bī. rā rā rā tâ ras-ī va ya sad-ī ke men rāh-š bī. har čī ke tâ nī-tar-e čī a-š ken-e. eskandar gō nī-yâbū mo bâyad vey sad rad â-bū-m. va-š gōt-en ye zâhed-ī hē. yo hīč nī-xar-e hamōčo δnešās-e. Jobâb kâr-et tey xo-š-e. rā tey-š gō salâm bah â eskandar. gō salâm â darvīš. gol-e mōlâ. to va kū dun-ī mo ki-yam? gō hama dūn-e. gō pa ahvâl-et? rūzegâr-et če tare? gō mo va jor-e rūzegâr veyčo nešāsom-e.

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[68] Ethnographic observations and lived experiences among the **Lurs** reveal that elders often discourage inappropriate laughter, particularly among the younger generation. Such laughter is frequently viewed as ominous and attributed to the influence of malevolent forces, such as Satan. This belief underscores the cultural emphasis on self-restraint and situational appropriateness in **Luri society**, where emotional composure is regarded as a marker of maturity and respectability. These practices reflect broader social mechanisms designed to regulate behavior, maintain communal harmony, and ensure the continuity of cultural values.

[69] In *Sharafnāmeh* by Niẓāmī, there is an intriguing episode in which Alexander (*Iskandar-e Maqdūnī*) and his soldiers encounter a peculiar phenomenon that induces uncontrollable laughter. This event occurs during Alexander's journey from India to China and is described in **Canto 42**.
According to the narrative, as Alexander advances beyond India and into Tibet, he reaches a mysterious land with saffron-like soil. This land possesses an unusual property: **whoever steps on its soil or breathes its air starts laughing uncontrollably without any apparent reason.** This uncontrollable laughter spreads among his soldiers, creating a scene of widespread amusement and confusion.
This episode is often interpreted in different ways. Some scholars see it as an allegory for **foreign lands' psychological or mystical effects** on travelers. In contrast, others suggest it might be inspired by actual hallucinogenic or intoxicating substances known in medieval Persian and Greek accounts. The story also humanizes **Alexander's army**, portraying them as relentless conquerors and individuals subject to unexpected emotions and experiences.
For the full passage, see: Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 42. Available at:
https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh42.

sōzi ī-xar-om vo ī-puš-om vo ebâδat i-kon-om. gō īso âqâ be-gō ī sad-e kū-na čō a-š ken-om? gō alân kâr-š-a deros ī-ken-om. gō pa če kerd-ī? gō hīč da to kâr-īt na-bū. to be-rā tey laškar. to da če kâr-eš dâr-ī. bera. eskandar vâ-gašt tey laškar. yahō hamaš bey šâdī gōt-en ây bīyō âlījenâb. sad-e kū pešk â-bī xō-š. to na-gō darvīš bāde rātan-e eskandar doâ kerd-e vo sad xō-š â xō-š pešk â-bīd-e.

English Translation

Alexander decided to go to Alborz Mountain, which took him a few days. He went and went and went till he arrived at a dam that he couldn't pass. He tried a lot, but it was useless. He said: "I have to pass this dam." They told him to go and see a hermit sitting there alone and eating nothing and that he had the answer to his problem. Alexander then went toward him and heard him saying: "Hey, Alexander!" Alexander then replied: "Hello, Gol Mula Darwish[70]. How do you know who I am?" Then the man said: "Everyone knows." Alexander said" "How are you? How's your life?" The hermit said" "I have taken shelter from the world's tyranny and came here sitting, eating and wearing plants, and praying." Alexander said, "Tell me what to do with this dam?" He answered: "Don't you worry! Just go to your troops and don't think about it. Just go." Then he returned to his army and heard them saying happily: "Your majesty! Come and see, the dam[71] broke." The hermit had prayed after Alexander left[72], and the dam suddenly broke apart.

This passage presents Alexander the Great with a significant obstacle—an impassable barrier blocking his path to Mount Alborz. Despite his efforts, Alexander is unable to break through. Seeking guidance, he approaches a secluded hermit. After a brief exchange about an ascetic lifestyle and detachment from worldly concerns, Alexander asks for advice on overcoming the barrier. The hermit simply advises him to return to his soldiers and not worry about the problem.

[70] This phrase is esteemed within ascetic communities. *Gol* signifies "flower," *Mula* denotes "leader," and *Darwish* refers to a hermit. In Luri traditions, as in Turkish, a *Darwish* (*Derviş*) is a mystic or ascetic figure who renounces worldly possessions and leads a life of spiritual devotion, often associated with Sufi practices.

[71] A dam often symbolizes an insurmountable obstacle. In Luri beliefs, people view immense challenges as requiring divine or mystical intervention. These barriers highlight themes of human limitation and reliance on external spiritual guidance.

[72] In **Luri storytelling**, prayer holds cultural and spiritual significance. It is often portrayed as a powerful tool to invoke divine intervention or overcome seemingly impossible challenges. It emphasizes the connection between human effort, faith, and reliance on higher powers.

Upon rejoining his army, Alexander discovers that the barrier has mysteriously been broken. This turn of events suggests that the hermit intervened through prayer, invoking divine help to resolve the issue. The narrative reflects a recurring theme in Luri oral tradition, where metaphysical solutions triumph over physical effort and worldly power. The hermit's role highlights the cultural importance of prayer in overcoming insurmountable challenges, reinforcing values of humility, reliance on divine will, and the limitations of human power.

This story aligns with a similar narrative found in Niẓāmī's Iskandarnāma, particularly in the Sharafnāma, section 36[73], where Alexander encounters mystical figures who guide him through seemingly impossible trials. In both versions, the emphasis on spiritual wisdom over brute force underscores the moral lesson that even the most outstanding leaders must rely on forces beyond their control. By situating the story in the Alborz Mountains, a place steeped in Iranian mythology, this narrative enriches the image of Alexander as a figure engaged in physical conquests and spiritual and moral journeys.

Text M

Mr. Eslām, 80 years old, from Gachsaran city; cobbler. Illiterate. Speaks minimal Persian. Primary language is Luri.

eskandar ī-xâs be-rav-e men qâr-e key xosrow. men-e hamī mantaqe-y xo-mū. ī qâr-ī ke alân key xosrow men-eš-e. men hamī pâdenâ. ūso ke ī-xâs be-rav-e hend gō aval bâyatī be-rav-om bey key xosrow melâqât ken-om. da ūso be-rā-m. gōt-en âqâ nī-tar-ī. gō balī bâyat be-rā-m. rā men hamu qâr-e ku. yek-ī na ham bey xo-š bō ke rā na nešūn-eš bī-ye. rāt-en rāt-en rāt-en tâ nezīk qâr-a ku. gō âqâ da ma-rā. nī-tar-ī. gō na, gō ko kas-ī nabâyat vâred-e ī qâr â-bu. yo telesm a dam-š-e. key xosrow na-xâs-e kas-ī be-tar-e be-vīn-eš. gūš na-gerō. rā dâxol. va ye masīr-e ajīb por pīč tâb-ī obūr kē tâ ras-ī va ye čāh-ī tah qâr-e ku. nūr va-š ī-zā sāhrâ čī xoršī. rā nezīk-eš tâ ye taš-ī men-eš ber-e. va čāh ku rad â-bī. ya velâ barf va-š gerō. barf-e saxt-ī ke men-eš gīr ke valâ vâ-bī. da sarbâz-al-eš rāt-en jōs-en-eš čand ruz dam-eš a gīr bīd-en tâ barf-al-a zā-n kenâr dar âverd-eneš.

English Translation

[73] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 36. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh36.

Alexander wanted to go to the cave where Kay Ḫusraw was living. The cave is near the Pādinā[74] region in our province. He intended to visit Kay Ḫusraw before departing for India, but his fellow people told him he could not. He said: "I can and I should go." He finally entered the cave and took someone with him to show the path. They went on and on till they reached the cave. His fellow told him he shouldn't and could not continue, but Alexander did not accept. His fellow said" "No one is allowed in this cave because there is a hidden spell that Kay Ḫusraw did not want anyone to see." Alexander didn't listen, so he went inside and continued going through a maze of strange routes until he arrived at a well at the end of the cave. It was shining like a sun. When he approached it, he saw a fire burning inside. He then passed the well, and suddenly, a heavy snow fell upon him. He was stuck in the snow and got lost. Then, his soldiers came to look for him and found him under the snow after struggling for several days.

Text M presents a compelling narrative that situates Alexander the Great (*Iskandar-e Maqdūnī*) within the rich tapestry of Luri oral tradition, blending historical and mythological elements to explore themes of ambition, hubris, and the interplay between human agency and supernatural forces. The story revolves around Alexander's determination to visit the cave of Kay Ḫusraw (*Kay Ḫosrow*), a legendary figure from Persian mythology located near the Pādinā region in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Despite warnings from his companions about the cave's protective spell and inherent dangers, Alexander persists, driven by his curiosity and ambition. This narrative not only reflects the cultural values of the Luri people but also resonates with broader themes found in Persian literary traditions, such as Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmeh*[75] and Niẓāmī 's *Iskandarnāma*[76].

Alexander's portrayal in **Text M** aligns with his depiction in historical and mythological accounts as a figure of immense ambition and curiosity. However, these traits also render him vulnerable to hubris, a recurring theme in stories about legendary heroes. Despite explicit warnings about the protective spell, his insistence on entering the cave of Kay Ḫusraw underscores his overconfidence and disregard for supernatural boundaries[77]. This act of

[74] Pādinā is a mountainous region in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, characterized by a cold climate with constant snow and harsh winds during winter. Locals believe that Kay Ḫusraw disappeared in a cave in this area and that the heroes who followed him were buried alive under the snow. These beliefs, which connect local geography to legends from the *Shāhnāmeh* and stories about Alexander, are prevalent in the region and will be explored further in the next chapter.

[75] Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, Maḥmūd-nāmeh, Canto 45. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/ferdousi/shahname/mahmood/sh45.

[76] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 38. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh38.

[77] For a discussion of hubris in mythological narratives, see Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), which explores the recurring motif of heroes challenging divine or supernatural boundaries.

defiance reflects a broader cultural motif in Luri oral tradition, where heroes are often tested by their ability to balance ambition with humility. Alexander's near-fatal entrapment in the cave is a cautionary tale, emphasizing the dangers of overreaching and the importance of heeding wise counsel. In Luri oral tradition, caves often symbolize liminal spaces—thresholds between the mundane and the mystical[78]. They are frequently associated with hidden knowledge, spiritual retreat, or danger. Despite its protective spell, Alexander's decision to enter the cave reflects his desire to transcend human limitations and access the secrets of the supernatural world. However, this act of hubris ultimately leads to his downfall, as a sudden blizzard traps him, a dramatic twist that underscores the limits of human ambition.

The cave of Kay Ḫusraw is depicted as a place of profound mystical significance, guarded by a protective spell that emphasizes its sacred or forbidden nature. The glowing well at the end of the cave, described as shining like the sun, adds a layer of symbolic depth to the narrative[79]. In Luri oral tradition, wells and springs often symbolize sources of life, wisdom, or divine power. The fire burning inside the well could represent enlightenment, a test of worthiness, or even a warning against further intrusion. Despite these supernatural signs, Alexander's persistence in exploring the cave highlights his relentless pursuit of knowledge and power, even at significant personal risk. The sudden blizzard that traps Alexander is a powerful reminder of his mortality and the limits of human ambition. In many cultural traditions, snow symbolizes purity, transformation, or even death. In this context, the blizzard represents the forces of nature and the supernatural, ultimately humbling Alexander and forcing him to confront his own vulnerability. The fact that his soldiers eventually rescue him after several days of struggle underscores the importance of loyalty and communal effort[80], values that are central to Luri culture[81].

The narrative in **Text M** bears striking similarities to themes found in Persian literary works, particularly Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmeh* and Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma*[82]. In the *Shāhnāmeh*, heroes

[78] For a detailed analysis of caves as liminal spaces in mythology, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (1957), which discusses caves as sites of initiation and transformation.
[79] Wells and springs as symbols of life and wisdom are common in world mythology. For example, in Greek mythology, the Well of Mnemosyne represents memory and knowledge. See Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (1964), for an exploration of water symbolism in myth.
[80] The emphasis on loyalty and communal effort in Luri oral tradition reflects the historical experiences of the Luri people, who have often relied on collective resilience to navigate external pressures. See Richard Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran* (1997), for further discussion.
[81] For an in-depth study of communal solidarity in Luri culture, see Lois Beck, *The Qashqa'i People of Southern Iran* (1986), which explores the role of collective action in tribal societies.
[82] In Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmeh*, the story of Bījan and Manīža involves a hero entering a forbidden space, leading to dire consequences. See Dick Davis, *Epic and Sedition* (1992), for an analysis of this theme.

like Bījan and Fariborz face dire consequences for pursuing Kay Ḫusraw into the cave, emphasizing the dangers of disregarding wisdom and challenging supernatural forces. Similarly, in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma* (part one, *Sharafnāma*, section 38[83]), a character named Fariborz advises Alexander against entering the cave, mirroring the warnings given to Shahnameh heroes. These recurring themes highlight the cultural significance of respecting boundaries and heeding wise counsel, even for a legendary figure like Alexander. The parallels between **Text M** and these Persian literary works suggest a shared cultural framework in which heroes are often tested by their ability to navigate the boundaries between the human and the divine. Alexander's encounter with the cave of Kay Ḫusraw can be seen as a localized adaptation of these broader themes, reflecting the Luri people's unique cultural and historical perspectives.

At its core, **Text M** is a cautionary tale about the dangers of hubris and the importance of humility. Alexander's defiance of the cave's spell and subsequent entrapment in the snow reminds him that even the greatest heroes are subject to the forces of nature and the supernatural. This theme aligns with other Luri narratives that emphasize the importance of respecting boundaries and heeding the wisdom of others. By portraying Alexander as a flawed hero who learns a valuable lesson through his near-death experience, the story reinforces the cultural values of humility, respect, and communal solidarity. The narrative also highlights the role of communal effort in overcoming adversity. Alexander's rescue by his soldiers after several days of struggle underscores the importance of loyalty and collective action, which are deeply ingrained in Luri culture. This emphasis on communal solidarity reflects the historical experiences of the Luri people, who have often relied on collective resilience to navigate the challenges of their mountainous terrain and external pressures.

The story of Alexander's encounter with the cave of Kay Ḫusraw exemplifies the dynamic interplay between historical and mythological elements in Luri oral tradition. While Alexander is a historical figure, his portrayal in this narrative is deeply intertwined with local legends and cultural values. The cave, the glowing well, and the sudden blizzard are all elements that resonate with the region's geography and spiritual beliefs, reflecting the Luri people's ability to adapt and reinterpret global historical figures within their own cultural framework. This localization process is a hallmark of the Luri oral tradition, where historical and literary figures are reimagined to reflect local values and experiences. By situating Alexander within the

[83] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 38. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh38.

context of Kay Ḫusraw's cave and the mystical landscape of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, the narrative transforms him into a figure who embodies both the grandeur and the vulnerabilities of human ambition[84].

Text N

Mrs. Māhtāb, 85 years old, from Ganaveh village; carpet weaver. Illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

gōt-ene eskandar xâst be-rav-e men ye qâr-e târīk-ī. xo-š vo čan-tâ va farmânde-yal-eš rāt-en. gō kas-ī ke pīr-e vo marīz-e na-yâ-ye. (The interviewer:) kū-čō ī-rāt-en? ko nōn-om eskander sar a men hame jâ ī-ke. xelâsa gō kas-ī ke pīr-e vo marīz-e na-yâ. yek-ī va farmânda-yal-eš ya bow pīr-e marīz-ī dâšt. del-eš nōma bey xo-š na-bar-eš. nahâ-š men ye sabatī kerd-eš va pošta bey xo-š bord-eš. īngal čand rūz-ī men rā bīd-en tâ ras-īyen va dahane-y qâr. tâ qâr māhlī târīk vo amīq-e. gōt-en yo feyda na-dâr-e. īmâ ar rāt-īm da nōn-īm četo vâ-gard-īm. gōt-en pa če ken-īm. eskandar gō om-šow be-xōs-īm bīn-īm če vey-bū. rāt-en be-xos-en bača ku rā vō lat bow-na men sabatī dar âve. joryan-a sī-š gō. pīramerd va kor-eš gō ma nōn-ī? kor gō na. gō bâyat ye mâdun-ī ke da īxâ zeymun ken-e bī-yâr-ī. tâ zeymun ke sar-e kora-š-a būr-īd bey xot-un būar-īd-eš. be-rey-t men qâr. vâ-gaštan mâdun va dâq-e kora-š sarī kol masīr-a ī-vargard-e. sōb â-bī. gōt-en če ken-īm če na-ken-īm? har yakī-š ya či gō. hamū yak-i-š gō âqâ ī-tor ken-īm. eskandar xaš-eš ūma. pors va-š ke gō ī gap-a kī yâd-e te dâd-e? deres-e janâbâli xō-t bâhušī amâ javūn-ī. ī gap na īn xet-e. gō âlijanâb ar nī-keš-īm tâ râs-eš-a va-t be-gō-m. gō be-gō. gō arz šav-ad ke mo del-om nōma bow-m-a tenâ beyl-om. bey xō-m âverd-em-eš. gō ahsant. har če qadr īmâ javun-al âqel vo šejâ beym bâz-am dīndâ va pīr-al nīyâzmand-imun.

English Translation

It is said that Alexander and some of his commanders wanted to go into a dark cave, and he forbade old and sick people from accompanying him. (Interviewer:) "Where?" I don't know; Alexander used to go everywhere. He said, "Old and ill people shouldn't come." One of his commanders had an old, sick father he couldn't leave behind. He put his father inside a basket and carried it on his shoulder. They were on the way for a few days till they reached the cave's

[84]William Hanaway's *Persian Popular Romances* (1988) presents similar narrative transformations in Persian folklore, where storytellers actively adapt historical figures to reflect local ideals. His examples parallel the localization of Alexander in Luri oral narratives.

entrance. They saw a dark and deep cave in front of themselves and said" "It is useless; if we went inside, we wouldn't know how to return. What should we do then?" Alexander said: "Let's sleep here tonight and figure it out tomorrow." Before sleeping, the young commander took his father out of the basket and told him the story. The father said: "Don't you know that?" The commander said: "No, what?" The old man said: "Take a pregnant mare with you inside the cave about to give birth. After the birth, slit the foal's throat, and the mare would quickly come all the way back and show you the path because of her foal's death." In the morning, everyone was trying to come up with a solution and said something when the young man told his idea. Alexander was surprised and asked him: "Who told you that? You're smart but still too young to develop such an idea." The young man responded: "You're majesty if you won't kill me, I will tell you the truth." Alexander said: "No, tell us." The young man said, "I couldn't leave my old father alone and brought him along with me." Alexander praised him and said: "It does not matter how much we young people are brave and wise; we would finally need the elderly."

In this compelling story, the young commander's lack of experience, despite his strength and bravery, is starkly contrasted with the older adult's profound wisdom about animal behavior, a knowledge that ultimately saves the group from potential disaster. The narrative underscores the tension between youthful vigor and the invaluable insights that come with age and experience. The young commander's honesty, even at the risk of punishment for disobeying Alexander's orders, earns him respect and admiration, highlighting the cultural value of integrity and transparency. Meanwhile, Alexander's adaptability as a leader is evident in his willingness to recognize and appreciate the elder's knowledge, demonstrating his capacity to balance authority with humility. This tale, rich in moral and cultural significance, emphasizes the importance of deferring to experience, valuing honesty, and the ability to adapt to new situations—themes that resonate deeply within Luri oral tradition and broader Persian literary traditions.

The story aligns closely with a similar narrative in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma*, specifically in the *Sharafnāma* section 59[85], where Alexander encounters a situation that requires the wisdom of an elder to resolve a seemingly insurmountable challenge. In Niẓāmī's version, the motif of the horse and foal is also present, serving as a key plot device to navigate a perilous situation. The elder's advice to use a pregnant mare, whose instinctual return to her foal ensures the group's safe passage, mirrors the Luri oral tradition's emphasis on practical wisdom and the

[85] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 59. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh59.

interconnectedness of life. However, while Niẓāmī's account focuses on Alexander's quest for wisdom and his interactions with sages, the Luri version focuses on the dynamics within Alexander's retinue, particularly the relationship between the young commander and his father. This localization of the narrative reflects the Luri people's cultural emphasis on familial loyalty and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, themes that are central to their oral traditions.

The young commander's decision to bring his elderly father, despite Alexander's explicit prohibition, speaks to the deep-rooted respect for elders in Luri culture. The father's solution—using a pregnant mare to navigate the cave—draws on a nuanced understanding of animal behavior, a knowledge likely derived from the pastoral lifestyle of the Luri people. This practical wisdom, born of lived experience, contrasts the young commander's initial reliance on brute strength and youthful confidence. The mare's instinctual return to her foal, even after its death, serves as a metaphor for the enduring bonds of care and responsibility, further reinforcing the story's moral lessons about the value of experience and the interconnectedness of life[86].

Alexander's reaction to the young commander's honesty is particularly noteworthy. Rather than punishing him for disobedience, Alexander praises his integrity and acknowledges the indispensable role of elders in guiding the young. This moment of recognition highlights Alexander's growth as a leader, showcasing his ability to adapt and learn from those around him. It also reflects a broader cultural value within the Luri oral tradition, where leadership is not solely defined by power or conquest but by the ability to listen, learn, and integrate diverse perspectives.

The story's emphasis on the interplay between youth and age, strength and wisdom, honesty and authority resonates with universal themes in many mythological and literary traditions. Joseph Campbell, in his seminal work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), explores the recurring motif of the hero's journey, where young protagonists often rely on the guidance of elders or mentors to overcome challenges. This dynamic is evident in **Text N**, where the young commander's inexperience is balanced by his father's wisdom, mirroring the archetypal relationship between the hero and the wise older adult. Campbell's framework highlights the

[86] In various mythological traditions, horses are symbols of strength, loyalty, and guidance. The mare's return to her foal illustrates the Luri people's profound connection to nature and their dependence on animal instincts as a source of wisdom. For a more in-depth discussion of animal symbolism in mythology, refer to Eliade, M. (1957). *The Sacred and the Profane*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

timeless nature of such narratives, which transcend cultural and historical boundaries to convey enduring truths about human experience.

However, the specific cultural context of **Text N**—rooted in the pastoral and tribal lifestyle of the Luri people—gives it a unique flavor. The use of animal behavior as a key plot device, for example, reflects the Luri people's close relationship with nature and their reliance on practical knowledge passed down through generations. This localized adaptation of a broader narrative tradition demonstrates the dynamic nature of oral storytelling, where global figures like Alexander are reimagined to reflect local values and experiences.

In conclusion, **Text N** is a powerful reminder of the enduring importance of experience, honesty, and adaptability, both in leadership and life. By contrasting the young commander's inexperience with the older man's wisdom, the story highlights the complementary roles of youth and age in navigating challenges. Alexander's willingness to recognize and value the elder's knowledge further underscores the importance of humility and openness in ineffective leadership. This narrative enriches our understanding of the Luri oral tradition and offers timeless lessons that transcend cultural and historical boundaries.

Text O

Mr. Key Šarīf, 110 years old, from Shah Bahram village; village headman (kadkhoda). Illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

arz ī-ken-om va xezmat-et ke šâh-e īrân peyqum dâ va eskandar gō xarâj-e bow-t-a pardâxt ko. eskandar xo da nī-xâs xarâj bī-ye. gō âqâ yo hesâb-e bow-m bīd-e. īso da mo hama jâ-na gerōt-om-e. da nī-xâm xarâj bī-yom. xō-š da pâdešâ qodratmand-ī bī. va-š bar xarda bī. ī-xâs bīyâ sī īrân. amâ ham xo zāla-š ī-rāt ke šekās be-xar-e. ya medat-ī men-eš fekr ī-ke. ya rūz-ī dâšt šekâr ī-ke dī tâ de tâ kəōg-ī bey yak jar ī-kerd-en. men zehn-eš yak-ī-š-a gō yo sī jey eskandar yak-ī da-š-a nešun ke sī šâh-e īrân. bey xo-š gō tâ bīn-īm če vey-bū. xalâsa kamīn gerō seyl a-šun ī-ke gō tâ bīn-īm če vey-bū. ū kəōg-ī ke sī jey eskandar bī kəōg-ī ke si jey īrân bī šekās dâ. bey nek-eš jomjoma-š-a sūlâx kē. amâ tūlī nadâ ke oqâb ūma var-gerō bord-eš. pīšgu-yal-eš va-š gōt-en yo tābīr-eš yen-e ke te īrân-a ī-ger-ī amâ farjūm-ī sī-t na-yâr-e vo ī-mīr-ī.

English Translation

As I told you, the Iranian king sent Alexander a message and told him to pay off his father's due taxes. Since Alexander didn't want to pay taxes anymore, he wrote back to the king: "Those were my father's debt, and I have conquered everywhere now." He had become a mighty king then and didn't want to pay taxes anymore; he was offended and intended to attack Iran, but he was afraid to be defeated. He thought about it for a while. Once he was hunting, he saw two partridges fighting. He pictured one of them as himself and the other as Iran and then watched them for a while to see the end. The partridge he pictured as Alexander beat the other partridge and punctured its skull. But it didn't last a time when an eagle dived and caught the winning partridge. Alexander's predictors interpreted this event as a sign of victory against Iran, which wouldn't have any good consequences and would lead to his death[87].

Refusing to pay the taxes his father owed to the king of Iran, Alexander considered waging war despite his underlying fear of defeat. This moment marks a significant shift in Alexander's character as he transitions from a figure who once respected authority to one who wields it with increasing assertiveness. The narrative captures the complexity of Alexander's personality—his ambition to expand his empire is tempered by a cautious awareness of the risks involved. This duality is central to the story, as it reflects the tension between Alexander's desire for conquest and his recognition of the potential consequences of his actions.

While hunting, Alexander witnessed a symbolic fight between two partridges, an event that is a pivotal moment in the narrative. He envisioned one partridge as himself and the other as Iran, projecting his ambitions and fears onto the natural world. The initial victory of the partridge representing Alexander mirrored his potential triumph over Iran, reinforcing his confidence in his military prowess. However, this fleeting victory was quickly overshadowed when an eagle swooped down and snatched the winning partridge. Alexander's advisors interpreted this dramatic turn of events as a dire omen: while he might achieve an initial victory over Iran, it would ultimately lead to his downfall. The eagle, a symbol of higher power or fate, underscores the theme that even the greatest conquerors are subject to forces beyond their control.

[87] In many ancient traditions, kings, and rulers relied on prophecies, omens, and symbolic events to guide their decisions. Like real Alexander for example in Egypt. This practice reflects a belief in the interconnectedness of human actions and divine or natural forces. For example, in Mesopotamian and Persian traditions, kings often consulted seers and interpreted omens before making critical decisions. See Rochberg, F. (2004). *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture*. Cambridge University Press.

The partridge fight is a powerful instance of foreshadowing, suggesting that Alexander's conquest of Iran, though seemingly triumphant, could have catastrophic long-term consequences. This narrative device highlights the dangers of unchecked ambition and the importance of considering the broader implications of one's actions. The story warns against the hubris of believing that military victory equates to lasting power, a theme that resonates deeply within both Luri oral tradition and broader Persian literary traditions.

This tale aligns closely with a similar narrative in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma*, specifically in the *Sharafnāma*, section 18[88], where Alexander encounters a symbolic event that foretells the consequences of his actions. In Niẓāmī's version, the partridge fight and the intervention of the eagle serve as a moral lesson about the limits of human ambition and the inevitability of fate. However, the Luri oral tradition's adaptation of this story adds a unique cultural dimension, emphasizing the local values of caution, humility, and respect for the natural world. The animal symbolism, particularly the partridge and the eagle, reflects the Luri people's close connection to their environment and their belief in the significance of omens and signs.

Alexander's transformation in this story—from a figure who once respected authority to one who challenged it—reflects a broader theme in Luri's oral tradition about the complexities of leadership. His ambition to conquer Iran is tempered by his advisors' interpretation of the omen, highlighting the importance of wisdom and foresight in decision-making. This narrative serves as a cautionary tale, reminding listeners of the dangers of unchecked ambition and the need to consider the long-term consequences of one's actions.

The story's emphasis on the interplay between ambition, fate, and consequence resonates with universal themes in many mythological and literary traditions. In Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), the hero's journey often involves moments of reflection and reckoning, where the protagonist must confront the limits of their power and the inevitability of fate. Alexander's encounter with the partridge fight and the eagle can be seen as such a moment, forcing him to grapple with his ambitions' moral and practical implications. This theme of humility in the face of greater forces is a recurring motif in mythological narratives, underscoring the timeless nature of the story's lessons.

In conclusion, **Text O** is a powerful exploration of Alexander's character and the consequences of unchecked ambition. The partridge fight and the intervention of the eagle serve as a metaphor

[88] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 18. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh18.

for the dangers of pursuing power without considering its long-term implications. By aligning this story with Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma* and grounding it in the cultural values of the Luri people, the narrative offers timeless lessons about leadership, humility, and the importance of heeding the signs of fate. This tale enriches our understanding of Luri oral tradition and provides a poignant reminder of the complexities and responsibilities of wielding power.

Text P

Mrs. Pūneh, 76 years old, from Fath village; livestock herder. Illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

ya veley va-š gōt-en ya kōh-ī hes-ī va-š pors ken-ī jobâb-t-a ī-de. yo xo dūn-ī eyn bâzī bačē-yal ke ī-rān dam kōh dâd ī-zan-en sīyâ ī-var-gard-e. amâ be har šekl da dâstân-e. rā dam kōh pors kē. bey sed-ey boland. gō mo šekās ī-xar-om yâ pâdeš-ey īrân? jobâb ūma īrân īrân īrân. da râzī vâ-bī ūma si īrân ke da ba xâter yo ke mardom va pâdešâ nâ-râzī bīd-en vo eskandar ham be har hâl ɣot bī vo ī čī-yal da tar-es.

English Translation

Alexander was told that there is a mountain that answers every question you ask. You know, it's like the kid's game when they shout in the mountain and can hear the echo of their voice. But anyway, it's a story; he went to the mountain and asked loudly: "Will I lose or the king of Iran?" The echo returned back: "Iran… Iran… Iran" that made him happy and satisfied. He then invaded Iran, and since people were unhappy with their king and Alexander was powerful and courageous, he could win.

In a fascinating blend of folklore and literature, **Text P** presents Alexander the Great grappling with the weighty decision of whether to invade Iran. The narrative draws on regional legends of talking mountains, a motif deeply rooted in the cultural imagination of mountainous regions like Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Here, Alexander seeks guidance from a mountain said to answer any question posed to it. When he shouts, “Will I lose or the king of Iran?” the mountain’s echo returns with the repeated response: “Iran… Iran… Iran.”[89] Alexander

[89] This tradition persists in some mountainous regions today. In Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, children still engage in the practice of calling into the mountains and listening for their echoes. This suggests the continued presence of oral culture elements in everyday life.

interprets this as a divine sign of his impending victory, underscoring the interplay between human ambition and the search for supernatural validation. This practice of seeking omens from natural phenomena, such as mountains, reflects a broader cultural tradition in which leaders rely on symbolic or mystical signs to justify their actions.

The motif of the talking mountain is not merely a fantastical element but also a reflection of the region's geographical and cultural context. In Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, where mountains dominate the landscape, it is common even today to see children shouting into the hills and listening for the echo of their voices. This everyday interaction with the natural world is elevated in the story to a moment of profound significance, as Alexander uses the mountain's echo to legitimize his decision to invade Iran. The narrative thus bridges the mundane and the mythical, transforming a simple natural phenomenon into a powerful omen.

This story aligns closely with the internal conflict in *Niẓāmī's Iskandarnāma* (part one, Sharafnāma, section 18), where Alexander wrestles with the moral and strategic implications of invading Iran. In Niẓāmī's version, Alexander's deliberations are framed as a philosophical and spiritual struggle, reflecting his dual role as both a conqueror and a seeker of wisdom. However, the Luri oral tradition's adaptation of this theme adds a unique layer of political intrigue. The narrative mentions the dissatisfaction of the Iranian people with their king, suggesting that Alexander's invasion might be seen not only as an act of conquest but also as a form of liberation. This detail introduces a nuanced perspective on Alexander's motivations, framing his actions within the context of local grievances and the potential for popular support.

The story highlights several intriguing aspects of leadership and decision-making. First, it illustrates using oracles or omens to validate a leader's decisions, a practice common in ancient and medieval traditions. By interpreting the mountain's echo as a sign of victory, Alexander aligns his ambitions with what he perceives as divine approval. This reflects a broader cultural belief in the interconnectedness of human actions and supernatural forces, a theme that resonates across many mythological and historical narratives.

Second, the motif of the talking mountain taps into a common trope in the folklore of mountainous regions. Often seen as sacred or mystical spaces, mountains are intermediaries between humans and the divine. In this story, the mountain's echo becomes a voice of fate, guiding Alexander's actions and reinforcing the idea that even the most influential leaders are subject to forces beyond their control. This theme is particularly relevant in the context of

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, where the rugged terrain and towering peaks have long shaped the cultural and spiritual life of the people.

Finally, the narrative introduces the role of public discontent in shaping the outcomes of war. By highlighting the Iranian people's dissatisfaction with their king, the story suggests that Alexander's success was not solely due to his military prowess but also to the internal divisions within Iran. This adds a layer of political realism to the tale, reminding us that historical events are often shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including popular sentiment and the legitimacy of rulers.

In conclusion, **Text P** offers a rich and multifaceted portrayal of Alexander the Great, blending myth, history, and political intrigue to explore the motivations and justifications for war. The story's talking mountain motif reflects the cultural and geographical context of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. At the same time, its alignment with *Niẓāmī's Iskandarnāma* highlights the enduring relevance of Alexander's story across different literary traditions, including **Niẓāmī's literary text** in the region. By intertwining myth and history, the narrative provides a glimpse into the complex motivations of one of history's most iconic figures while offering timeless insights into the nature of leadership, decision-making, and the human desire for validation.

Text Q

Mr. Ḫalīfeh, 78 years old, from Gachsaran county; teacher. Speaks Luri and Persian.

ya vele-y eskandar dâšt ī-rā jang. Īngal gom â-bīd-e bī-d-en. xo-š vo sarbaz-al-eš. gosna tešna bīd-en. laškar gōt-en â eskandar! gō bale? gōt-en ke īmā da nī-tar-īm. bâyat-ī či be-xar-īmō ow var-ōsan-īm. gō bāš tā ow bejūr-īmun. ye šekāl-ī be-jūr-īmun. hey men-e sārâ pīt ī-kerd-en basâ ow čī bejūr-en ya velâ yak-ī-š gō âlījenâb? gō bale? gō ya tavâl âhū-e vō dīr īyâ-ye. key eskandar gō varīs-īd bejek-īd tâ be-rey-m. har jâ īngal be-rav-en ow hes-ī. īngal dūn-en. laškarīyân hey a-š kerd-en vo rāt-en. malūs ras-ī-yen va ye ow-ī vo sīr ow xard-en. ūso gōt-en basâ ya čantâ-š-a ze-y-m va gōsney mord-īm-e. dar-âve va-š-ū gō bâš-e amâ faqat īngal-ī-š-a ī-tar-īd šekâl ken-ī-tu ke pīr-en. javūn-al vo meyna-yal-a ma-zan-ītu. īngal-īš ke pīr-en xo oškâl nayār-e. javun-al bāyat zâd-o-valad ken-en. pīr-al vo marīz-al oškâl-ī na-yâr-e.

English Translation

Once Alexander was going to war, He and his army got lost and became too hungry and thirsty. His soldiers told him: "Your majesty, Alexander! We can't go on and need to eat and drink." Alexander agreed and told them to look for water and prey (goat). They were aimlessly wandering in the desert looking for water or something when one of the soldiers suddenly said: "Your majesty! I see a herd of deer coming this way." Kay[90] Alexander said: "Get up and let's go; wherever they go should be water. They are heading towards the water." The troops then followed the herd, which led them directly to water, from which they drank a good deal. They were also starving and asked the king if they could probably kill and eat one of them. Alexander said: "You can only kill the old and sick ones; don't kill the young and females because they need to live and reproduce."

This narrative illustrates a compelling blend of leadership, resourcefulness, and respect for sustainability in the actions of Alexander (Iskandar) and his troops. Faced with dire circumstances—lost in the desert, hungry, and thirsty—Alexander demonstrates his ability to think strategically and use natural signs to guide his decisions. By instructing his soldiers to follow a herd of deer (āhū), he taps into an ancient survival tactic, relying on the instincts of animals to locate water (āb). This moment highlights Alexander's practical wisdom and underscores the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, a theme deeply rooted in the cultural and environmental context of the Luri (Lūr) people[91].

Alexander's decision to spare the young and female deer while allowing only the old and sick to be hunted reflects an early understanding of sustainable practices. This approach ensures the continuity of the herd, which is crucial for maintaining the ecosystem's balance and providing future resources. His instructions reveal a nuanced approach to resource management, emphasizing the importance of long-term survival over immediate gratification. This principle aligns closely with the traditional practices of Luri hunters, who have long adhered to similar

[90] The term Kay refers to the title borne by several legendary monarchs of the mythical Kayanian dynasty in Iranian tradition. Skjærvø (2011) notes the title derives from the Avestan kavi. This term signifies a figure endowed with spiritual insight and royal authority, thereby emphasizing the sacral character of kingship in ancient Iranian culture. In Luri society, Kay continues to function as an honorific, used to address esteemed individuals and convey a sense of deep respect and admiration.

[91] For a discussion of the interconnectedness between humans and nature in Luri oral tradition, see Sekandar Amanolahī, Lurihā-ye Īrān: Tārīḫ, Farhang, wa Zistbūm (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Āgāh, 1381/2002), 45–67.

guidelines to preserve wildlife and ensure the sustainability of their environment[92]. The narrative highlights Alexander's foresight by incorporating this element into the story. It reflects the cultural values of the Luri people, who have historically lived in harmony with their natural surroundings.

Moreover, the narrative underscores the importance of adaptability and observation in overcoming challenges. By following the deer to the water, Alexander and his troops exemplify the value of paying attention to natural signs and leveraging them to their advantage. This aspect of the story reflects the Luri people's deep connection to their environment, where survival often depends on a keen understanding of the land and its resources.[5] The tale thus serves as a reminder of the wisdom embedded in traditional practices and the relevance of such knowledge in contemporary discussions about sustainability and resource management.

In conclusion, Text Q uniquely portrays Alexander as a leader who combines strategic thinking, ethical decision-making, and respect for the natural world. His actions in the story highlight his resourcefulness and foresight and reflect the cultural values of the Luri people, who have long practiced sustainable hunting and resource management. By intertwining leadership, survival, and sustainability themes, the narrative provides a powerful metaphor for responsible decision-making and balancing immediate needs with long-term consequences. This tale enriches our understanding of Alexander's character and offers valuable insights into the enduring principles of leadership and environmental stewardship.

Text R

Mrs. Pūneh, 76 years old, from Fath village; livestock herder. Illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

ya rūz-i eskandar-e kū men ley dâr-al balī hey i-rāt. ye peleng-ī dar ūma za men rī-š. va-š gō molâ eskandar! gō hâ bale? gō e-šnoft-īme māli čī dūn-ī. pa ya komak-ī va-m-ūn ko. gō pa čene. če vâ-bīd-e? janâbâlī xo-t pelengī-ey. me čī tar-om sī-t ken-om. be-gō bīn-om. mo dar xezmat-om. gō īmā hayun-al-e ī jangal ye badbaxtī geroftār vā-bīd-īme. har kū yak-ī-mū ow be-xar-īm ī-mīr-īm. alân čand vaxt-e va tešne-y mord-īm-e. zāla nī-ken-īm ow be-xar-īmu. nōn-īm če ken-īm. basâ sīmūn be-gō yo ser-eš čen-e. īmā če xol-ī men sar kon-īm. eskandar-e kū rā

[92] For an exploration of Luri hunting customs and their ecological implications, see Richard Tapper, Frontier Nomads of Iran: A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 78–95.

tey xodâ va arz nōn-om ya eyna-ī dâšt men-eš seyl ī-ke ser men-eš bī nōn-om. (The interviewer) če eyna-ī bī? vālā nōn-om ī-gō-n ye eyna-ī bīd-e men-eš hamey čī ī-dī. pors va xodâ ī-ke men-eš. xalâsa ūma va-š gō arz ken-om va xezmat-et ke ya hafī men sarčešma xōsīd-e zāhr-eš top ī-ken-e men-eš. ūma rā va sarbâz-al-eš amr ke češma-na vâ-kand-en vo hafī-na jōs-en. sar-š-a bey bard lāh kerd-en. albata gōt-ene ke sarbāz-al zāla-šu rā jek-esen. eskandar rā košt-eš ūso da ūngal rāt-en sar-š-a čapanân.

English Translation

One day, when Alexander was wandering among oak trees, a leopard appeared before him and said: "Mullah Alexander!" He said: "Yes!" and heard back: "We've heard that you know a lot. Help us!" He replied: "What is the matter? What happened? You're a leopard, how can I help you? Tell me!" The leopard said, "We, the jungle animals, have become miserable. Any one of us who drinks water will die. For a while, we have been dying of thirst, can't drink water, and don't know what to do. Perhaps you can tell us the secret and give us a solution." Alexander then complained to God or, I don't know, a mirror into which he looked. The secret was in there, I don't know. (Interviewer: "What kind of mirror it was?") I don't know; they say it was a mirror where he could see everything. He used to ask God questions in that mirror. He returned to the leopard and said: "A python is sleeping in the spring that has made the water poisonous." He then ordered his soldiers to dig out and find the snake. They found the python and tried to kill it but were afraid. Alexander then killed the snake, and they buried its head.

The story presents a fantastical encounter between **Alexander (Iskandar)** and the jungle's animals, showcasing his legendary wisdom and resourcefulness uniquely and imaginatively. *The talking leopard (palang)* and *the magical mirror (āyina)* add a whimsical element to the narrative, portraying Alexander as a problem-solver who extends his aid even to distressed creatures. This interaction highlights his role as a wise and benevolent leader. It reflects the blending of myth and folklore in the **Luri oral tradition**, where animals often serve as messengers or symbols of natural forces.

However, several aspects of the story warrant further discussion. The ambiguity surrounding the mirror's origin and function creates a layer of mystery that invites interpretation. The mirror, described as a tool through which Alexander communicates with God or gains insight into hidden truths, could be seen as a symbol of divine guidance or a metaphor for introspection

and self-awareness. This ambiguity allows multiple readings of the mirror's role, enriching the narrative's thematic depth. For instance, the mirror might represent Alexander's connection to higher wisdom or his ability to perceive solutions that are invisible to others. Exploring these interpretations could enhance our understanding of the story's symbolic dimensions.

It is worth noting that the storyteller's reference *to the "mirror of Alexander" (āyina-yi Iskandar)*[93] may reflect a common phenomenon in oral traditions: the fluidity and occasional inconsistencies in the transmission of stories. In this case, the mirror's role seems to be conflated with other legendary objects or motifs, such as the *"cup of Jamshid" (jām-i Jam)*[94] or other magical artifacts found in Persian and Luri folklore. This conflation is not unusual in oral traditions, where details can shift over time or across regions, leading to variations in the narrative. The storyteller's confusion about the mirror's exact nature—whether it is a divine tool, a magical object, or a metaphor—highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of oral storytelling, where the emphasis is often on the moral or thematic message rather than strict consistency.

While central to the story's charm, the inclusion of talking animals and magical elements might not resonate equally with all audiences. For some, these fantastical elements may detract from the narrative's credibility or historical grounding. However, within the context of Luri oral tradition, such elements are standard and convey moral and cultural lessons in an engaging and accessible manner. The talking leopard, for example, symbolizes the interconnectedness of humans and nature, while the magical mirror underscores the importance of seeking wisdom and guidance in times of crisis.

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[93] The "Mirror of Alexander" (*āyina-yi Iskandar*) is a legendary object in Persian and Islamic literary traditions, closely associated with **Alexander the Great (Iskandar)**. It symbolizes wisdom, foresight, and the ability to perceive hidden truths, often described as a tool enabling its possessor to see distant lands, future events, or the inner nature of things. This object shares symbolic parallels with the *jām-i Jamshīd* (Cup of Jamshid), a mythical goblet in Persian mythology believed to grant omniscience. Both artifacts reflect themes of divine insight and the pursuit of knowledge, representing humanity's desire to transcend limitations and access hidden realms.
The *āyina-yi Iskandar* also resonates with broader mystical traditions, where mirrors often symbolize self-reflection, enlightenment, and the duality of knowledge. Its inclusion in **the Luri oral tradition** highlights its adaptability, weaving Alexander's legacy into narratives emphasizing power and wisdom as leadership and moral guidance tools. Parallels to global mythological motifs, such as magical mirrors in Norse and European traditions, underscore its universal appeal as a symbol of authority, insight, and the pursuit of greater truths.

[94] The "Cup of Jamshid" (jām-i Jam), a mystical artifact from Persian tradition, functions as both a divination tool and symbol of divine knowledge in classical literature (Ferdowsi, 1010/2016; Lewis, 2002). Among the Jamshidi tribe - a Kurdish-origin nomadic group in western Afghanistan (Oberling, 2008) - this motif carries particular cultural significance as part of their ancestral lineage.

Despite these considerations, the story offers an interesting take on Alexander's legendary wisdom, blending humour, fantasy, and moral lessons. The humorous elements, such as the leopard addressing Alexander as "Mullah Alexander," add a lighthearted touch to the narrative, making it more engaging and relatable. At the same time, the story explores deeper themes, such as the importance of helping others, overcoming challenges through ingenuity, and the ethical implications of leadership decisions. These themes resonate across cultures and periods, making the narrative timeless and universally relevant.

In conclusion, **Text R** provides a rich and imaginative portrayal of Alexander as a wise and resourceful leader who extends his aid even to the animal kingdom. The fantastical elements, such as the talking leopard and the magical mirror, add a layer of whimsy and symbolism to the story while also reflecting the cultural values of the Luri people. The storyteller's confusion about the mirror's exact nature underscores the fluidity of oral traditions, where details can shift to serve the narrative's broader themes[95]. By exploring the mirror's symbolic significance and considering alternative resolutions to the conflict, the narrative could be further enriched, offering a more nuanced commentary on themes such as environmental accountability.

Text S

Mr. Narīmān, 65 years old, from Lendeh village; farmer. Speaks barely Farsi.

ya pasīnī ya pīy-ey rā tey eskandar. gō ba nazar-et četorī-ya ke zīne-y mo mey zīne-y bâqī na-malus-e. līš-e. eskandar va sarbâz-al-eš gō yâlâ varīs-īd be-re-yt ya čâr tâ xâg ow paz ken-īt bīyâr-īt. gō īsō var-ger-īt rang-ešūn ken-īt. yak-īš-a sōz, yak-īš sorx, yak-īš zard. yak-īš-am rang ma-kon-ītūn. ūso gow var-ger-īt bī-yâr-īt ben-īt dam-e rī-š. âverd-en nahân dam-e rīš. va-š gō īso var-ge be-xa. merdak xa xalâs â-bī. va-š pors ke gō tūm kū yak-ī-š bextar bī. gō qorbân vâlâ hama-š ye tūm ī-dâ. gō pa padar sag zan ham ham-ī-tor-e. sī če tīya-t va dīn zan-gal mardom pīt īken-e?

[95] The fluidity of oral traditions allows stories to evolve dynamically, with details often shifting to align with the narrative's broader themes or moral messages. This adaptability stems from the interactive relationship between storytellers and their audiences, enabling narratives to remain relevant across different times and cultural contexts. Storytellers frequently modify elements to emphasize specific lessons or address contemporary concerns, prioritizing thematic resonance over strict narrative or historical consistency. This flexibility underscores the strength of oral traditions, as their ability to adapt ensures their enduring relevance and capacity to convey communal values, moral guidance, and cultural identity. For further exploration of the evolution of oral narratives, see Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (1960); Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context* (1977); and John Miles Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (2002).

English Translation

One evening, some man went to visit Alexander and asked him: "How come my wife is not beautiful like other people's wives, and she is ugly." Alexander told his people to boil four eggs, paint them green, red, and yellow, and leave one as it is. They brought the eggs and put them in front of the man. Alexander told him to eat, and he ate all of them. He then asked the man: "Which one was more delicious?" He replied: "Your majesty! To be honest, all of them had the same taste." Alexander yelled at him: "A woman is also like this; why are you thinking of other people's wives?"

This tale exemplifies a recurring motif in folk traditions, portraying **Iskandar-e Maqdūnī** as a paragon of justice and wisdom. This narrative, while often attributed to Iskandar-e Maqdūnī, is sometimes recounted with **Shah ʿAbbās**[96] as the central figure. Similar moral lessons are echoed in Persian literary traditions, such as in *Gulistān* by *Saʿdī*, where **King Ḫusrow**[97], upon being offered salt with his meal, insists on compensating the provider to prevent a precedent for tyranny[98]. Both narratives underscore the ethical principles of fairness and restraint, reinforcing the idea that rulers must uphold moral integrity in all aspects of governance. However, while these stories idealize their protagonists, they also raise questions about the selective nature of such portrayals. For instance, why are particular virtues emphasized while other aspects of these figures' historical legacies are downplayed or omitted? This **selective memory** reflects the **cultural priorities** of the communities that preserve these stories[99].

The story of Iskandar-e Maqdūnī, akin to *Saʿdī's* account of King Ḫusrow, illustrates how historical figures are reshaped within oral and literary traditions to embody idealized virtues. These adaptations are not unique to Iskandar; similar motifs appear in the folklore surrounding

[96] Shāh ʿAbbās I (1571–1629) was the most prominent ruler of the Safavid dynasty, reigning from 1588 to 1629.
[97] The King Ḫusrow referenced in Gulistān by Saʿdī is Ḫusrow I Anūšīrvān (Ḫusraw I, also known as Anūšīrvān the Just), the Sasanian ruler who reigned from 531 to 579 CE. Within Persian literary and historical traditions, Ḫusrow I is frequently depicted as an archetype of just and wise governance, akin to figures such as King ʿAbbās.

[98] Saʿdī, *Golestān*, Chapter 1, Story 19. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/saadi/golestan/gbab1/sh19.
[99] The interchangeability of historical figures in oral traditions reflects their adaptability, as stories and characters are reinterpreted to embody universal virtues like justice, wisdom, and leadership. Figures such as Iskandar-e Maqdūnī and Shah ʿAbbās often serve as archetypes, transmitting cultural values and ensuring the relevance of narratives across generations. However, this adaptability also raises questions about historical accuracy and the potential erasure of less favorable aspects of their legacies. For further discussion, see Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (1960) and Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition as History (1985).

figures like Shah ʿAbbās, who is often depicted as a just and sagacious ruler[100] (*Hanaway*, 1970; *Marzolph*, 2002). This recurring pattern suggests a broader cultural tendency to repurpose historical personas as vehicles for moral and political ideals, transcending their original contexts. However, this process is not without its complexities. For example, while Shah ʿ**Abbās** is celebrated for his wisdom, his reign was also marked by **political ruthlessness**—a facet often absent in folkloric depictions. This discrepancy highlights the tension between **historical reality and cultural idealization**, inviting further exploration of how and why certain traits are valorized[101].

This transformation aligns with broader trends in oral storytelling, where historical personalities transcend their specific contexts to become archetypal representations of moral and political ideals (*Lord*, 1960; *Foley*, 2002; *Yarshater*, 1983; *Davidson*, 1994). Such narratives highlight the **fluidity of historical memory** and how cultural traditions repurpose historical figures to reinforce ethical paradigms across generations. However, this fluidity also raises questions about the authenticity of these portrayals. Are these idealized narratives merely tools for moral instruction, or do they legitimize political authority by associating rulers with timeless virtues? The interplay between these functions warrants deeper analysis, particularly in light of the diverse cultural contexts in which these stories emerge[102].

This phenomenon underscores the role of **oral traditions** in shaping and preserving **collective memory**[103], reimagining historical figures to reflect the values, aspirations, and cultural

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[100] **Shāh ʿAbbās I (1571–1629)** was the most prominent ruler of the **Safavid dynasty**, reigning from **1588 to 1629**. He is widely recognized for his administrative reforms, military restructuring, and efforts to centralize power, significantly strengthening the Safavid state. Shāh ʿAbbās moved the capital to **Isfahan**, transforming it into a cultural and economic hub, actively promoting trade, infrastructure development, and artistic patronage. In Persian historiography and folklore, he is often depicted as a wise and just ruler, akin to **Ḫusrow I Anūšīrvān** of the Sasanian era. However, his reign was also characterized by political ruthlessness, including eliminating potential rivals within his family. The moralizing narratives emphasizing his justice and wisdom may sometimes downplay these more authoritarian aspects, reflecting a broader tendency in Persian literary and oral traditions to idealize historical figures as embodiments of ethical rulership.

[101] The idealization of historical figures like Shah ʿAbbās often obscures their more controversial actions, such as political purges or authoritarian policies. This selective memory underscores the role of folklore in shaping cultural identity, but it also highlights the need for critical engagement with these narratives. For a nuanced analysis of Shah ʿAbbās's reign, see Roger M. Savory, Iran under the Safavids (1980).

[102] The dual function of folklore as moral instruction and political legitimization complicates our understanding of these narratives. While they often promote ethical principles, they can reinforce existing power structures by associating rulers with idealized virtues. For a critical perspective on this dynamic, see Jack Goody's The Interface Between the Written and the Oral (1987).

[103] The collective memory concept, as defined by Maurice Halbwachs, refers to the shared pool of memories, narratives, and symbols that bind a community together and shape its cultural identity. Halbwachs argued that memory is not merely an individual phenomenon but is socially constructed and shaped by frameworks such as family, religion, class, and other collective structures. Within this context, historical figures are often reimagined and reinterpreted to reflect the values, aspirations, and identity of the communities that preserve their memory. Over time, these figures are frequently idealized, mythologized, or adapted to serve as symbols of moral, political,

frameworks of the communities that perpetuate their stories (Assmann, 1995; Halbwachs, 1992). The **interchangeability** of these figures in **folk narratives** points to a broader cultural process where historical personas are transformed into symbolic vehicles for articulating and perpetuating societal norms and ideals (*Dundes*, 1980; *Oring*, 1986). Examining these narratives provides critical insights into the interplay between history, folklore, and cultural identity, revealing how oral traditions function as a medium for preserving and reinterpreting the past (*Finnegan*, 1977; *Vansina*, 1985). At the same time, it invites us to consider the limitations of such narratives. For instance, how do these idealized portrayals influence contemporary understandings of history, and what might be lost in mythologizing historical figures?[104]

Text T

Mr. Narīmān, 65 years old, from Lendeh village; farmer. Speaks barely Farsi.

bow-m sī-m gō-te ya rūz-ī ke eskandar rāt-e bīd-e šekâr ya šekâl-ī ī-yâ a tey-š ye tōr-ī ī-ken-e tâ metavaja-š â-bu. eskandar va dīn-š ī-rā. yo ī-bar-eš tâ dam ya qâš-ī. tâ ya peleng-ī xōs-īde. eskandar ya tīr ī-jonban-e. dargīr vey-bū-n. eskandar peleng-a ī-koš-e vo kom-š-a ī-dern-e. ye velâ ye kāra šekâl-ī men-eš ī-bīn-e. tâ da mord-e. tamâ ī šekâl eskandar-a sī dâdxâh-ī bord-e tâ vōčo.

English Translation

My father told me that one day, while Alexander was hunting, a goat appeared on his way and tried to seek his attention. Alexander followed the goat, which took him to a cave where a leopard was lying. He took an arrow out and shot the leopard, and they started struggling until Alexander killed the leopard and tore its tummy, where he suddenly saw a dead baby goat. The goat had taken Alexander there to seek and find justice.

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or cultural ideals. This process enables communities to preserve and transmit their collective identity, using historical narratives to reinforce shared values and ensure cultural continuity. For further exploration of this concept, see Maurice Halbwachs's On Collective Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and Jan Assmann's Cultural Memory and Early Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[104] The mythologization of historical figures distorts our understanding of the past by reducing complex individuals to one-dimensional archetypes. Although culturally significant, this process oversimplifies historical realities and neglects the multifaceted nature of past events. Lowenthal critically examines this phenomenon in *The Past is a Foreign Country – Revisited* (2015).

This narrative offers a compelling portrayal of **Alexander the Great's** legendary commitment to justice, framed through a unique interaction between animals and humans that underscores the story's moral and symbolic dimensions. The goat's act of leading Alexander to the leopard's den, where evidence of the leopard's crime is revealed, serves as a narrative device to emphasize themes of intelligence, justice, and retribution. The discovery of the dead baby goat in the leopard's stomach adds an emotional layer, highlighting the vulnerability of the innocent and the necessity of justice, even within the animal kingdom. This interplay between human and animal agency reflects a broader cultural appreciation for the interconnectedness of life and the moral responsibility to protect the vulnerable.

Alexander's swift and decisive action upon uncovering the truth reinforces his archetypal role as a just ruler, a theme recurrent in Persian and **Luri oral traditions**. His willingness to administer justice, even for a seemingly insignificant creature like a goat, underscores the universality of his moral principles and aligns with his idealized image as a protector of the weak. This narrative also resonates with the cultural context of the **Luri people**, among whom a profound connection with animals, particularly goats, is deeply rooted. The bond between the **Luri people** and their animals, often likened to the care given to their children, provides a cultural backdrop that enriches the thematic depth of the story.

The story's emphasis on animal intelligence and agency invites further exploration into the symbolic role of animals in **Persian folklore** and their function as moral agents in narratives of justice. Comparing this tale with other folktales featuring **Alexander** or narratives of animal justice could reveal broader patterns in how justice is conceptualized and enacted across different cultural contexts. Such comparisons might also underscore the adaptability of **oral traditions**, where universal themes are localized to reflect specific cultural values[105] and environmental realities.

[105] In **Luri culture**, revenge (*intiqām*) holds significant importance, often as a cornerstone of social and moral frameworks. Within this context, revenge is not merely an act of retribution but a means of restoring balance and justice, particularly in cases where the vulnerable or innocent have been wronged. This concept is vividly reflected in the narrative, where the goat's act of leading **Alexander the Great** to the leopard's den symbolizes a quest for justice and retribution for the killing of its offspring. The story underscores the idea that even the most powerless beings, such as animals, are entitled to seek justice, and their grievances must be addressed to restore moral equilibrium.
This cultural emphasis on revenge as a form of justice aligns with broader themes in **Luri folklore** and **oral traditions**, where acts of retribution are often portrayed as necessary and morally justified. My ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, which began in 2013, informs these observations.

In conclusion, this narrative reinforces **Alexander's** archetypal role as a just ruler and reflects deeper cultural values surrounding justice, morality, and the interconnectedness of humans and animals. By situating this story within the broader context of **Persian folklore** and the cultural practices of the **Luri people**, we gain valuable insights into how **oral traditions** preserve and transmit moral and ethical principles. Further comparative analysis with similar narratives could illuminate the universality of these themes while highlighting the unique cultural nuances that shape their expression.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined how Alexander the Great, reimagined in local memory as *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī*, is transformed from a historical conqueror into a figure of moral complexity, philosophical reflection, and symbolic meaning. Within the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, he is neither idealized nor rejected outright. Instead, in genres such as *Maṣal*, *Iʿtiqāt*, and *Timṣāl*, Alexander appears as a paradoxical figure: a foreign ruler reframed through local ethical and cultural frameworks.

These narratives do not merely retell a familiar legend. They offer a historical agency that reinterprets memory and identity in ways that challenge dominant historiography. The association of Alexander with indigenous figures like Āriyobarzan and Yūtāb illustrates how oral tradition operates both as cultural memory and a medium for reclaiming regional perspective.

At its core, the analysis suggests that oral tradition is not static preservation but active reinterpretation. Integrating Persianate motifs into Luri narrative structures reflects a flexible and selective adaptation process shaped by local priorities.

The next chapter builds on this discussion by exploring how classical Persian literature—particularly the works of Niẓāmī Ganjavī—continues to circulate in the region's oral culture and shapes local storytelling through shared themes, structures, and symbolic language.

Chapter Four: Echoes of Niẓāmī: Classical Persian Themes in Luri Storytelling

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined how Alexander the Great is reimagined within the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, highlighting how local narratives reinterpret historical figures to reflect regional experiences of power, memory, and identity. This chapter expands the scope of analysis by situating these reinterpretations within the broader context of classical Persian literature. In particular, it investigates the influence of Niẓāmī Ganjavī's *Ḫamsa* on the oral culture of the region, with attention to how motifs, characters, and narrative structures from his major works—*Iskandarnāma*, *Ḫusraw va Šīrīn*, *Haft Paykar*, and *Laylī va Maǧnūn*—circulate and are transformed in locally transmitted storytelling.

The chapter focuses on how Niẓāmī's literary frameworks, composed initially for elite courtly audiences, have permeated oral traditions through adaptation, reinterpretation, and localization processes. While *Iskandarnāma* remains a prominent source for narratives of Alexander, the presence of themes from his other works, such as spiritual pursuit, moral trial, tragic love, and symbolic challenge, indicates a deeper intertextual engagement with the *Ḫamsa* corpus.

These literary echoes appear not as static repetitions but as dynamic elements embedded within Luri storytelling practices. They are reshaped to align with regional values, belief systems, and ethical worldviews. By examining these thematic and structural continuities, the chapter explores how Niẓāmī's poetic legacy extends beyond manuscript culture to become an enduring part of the oral imagination in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

4.2. Niẓāmī's Life

Niẓāmī Ganjavī (1141–1209 CE) is recognized as one of the greatest poets of Persian literature. Born in Ganja (present-day Azerbaijan), he consistently referred to the city as his homeland, though some sources, such as *Majmaʿ al-Fuṣaḥāʾ* and *Riyāḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*, suggest a possible connection to Qom or Iraq (Chelkowski, 1975; Lewis, 2018).

Ganja is located in the western part of modern Azerbaijan, along the Ganja River, at the northeastern foothills of the Lesser Caucasus mountain range. Situated where the river valley meets a narrow mountain pass, its location functioned as a natural crossroads between the Iranian plateau and the Caspian steppe, making it a strategic urban center along trade routes

notably used for transporting silk and manuscripts between the South Caucasus, Iran, and beyond. Established no later than the 5th or 6th century CE, the city flourished under the rule of the Rawadids and, later, the Seljuk Atabegs of Azerbaijan (Bosworth, 1996). By the 12th century, Ganja had become a prominent political and cultural hub. Establishing a regional treasury, likely instituted in the 11th century under the Seljuk Atabegs to consolidate revenues, enabled sustained patronage of intellectual and artistic activity, including constructing madrasas and libraries. The city's pivotal role in Persianate culture is epitomized by Niẓāmī Ganjavī, whose *Khamsa* became a cornerstone of Persian literature and inspired generations of both Persian and Turkic writers (Minorsky, 1953; Swietochowski, 1995).

Niẓāmī's chosen pen name, "Niẓāmī" carries numerical significance in the Abjad system, equaling one thousand—a number symbolically linked to divine attributes in the Islamic tradition (Manteghi, 2018). His birth name, Ilyās, is occasionally mentioned in his works. His mother, of Kurdish descent, held a title meaning "chief" (*raʾīs*), which may indicate tribal status. His father, Yūsuf, and grandfather, Zakī Mullā, belonged to a Persian lineage, with some literary sources identifying his grandfather as Ḍabīḥ Allāh Ṣafā Zakī (Meisami, 1987; Rypka, 1968).

Niẓāmī was known to have a son, Muḥammad, and was married three times. His first wife, Āfāq, is the only one whose name is recorded, and local traditions hold that each of his wives passed away during the composition of his major works (Hanaway, 1998).

Ganja, an intellectual and cultural hub under the Seljuk Atabegs, profoundly influenced his literary and philosophical development. His education encompassed religious studies, Qurʾānic exegesis, jurisprudence, philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics, shaping his deeply layered poetry (Chelkowski, 1975; Lewis, 2018).

Despite alternative claims regarding his origins, Niẓāmī's lifelong attachment to Ganja and his integration of diverse cultural elements into Persian literary tradition solidify his legacy as a master poet, bridging Persian, Turkic, and Islamic intellectual traditions (Meisami, 2003).

4.3. Niẓāmī's Narrative Poetry

Niẓāmī Ganjavī's poetic brilliance has transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, leaving a lasting legacy across regions such as Afghanistan, Iran, Kurdistan, Tajikistan, and his

native Azerbaijan (Chelkowski, 1975). His works have shaped Persian literature for centuries, resonating with audiences through their universal themes, lyrical elegance, and profound philosophical depth. At the core of his literary legacy lies the *Ḫamsa* (Quintet), a collection of five significant poems demonstrating his exceptional command of diverse poetic forms, meters, and narrative techniques (Bürgel, 1988). This collection is a testament to his creative mastery and reflects his innovative contributions to the classical Persian literary tradition.

The *Ḫamsa* begins with *Maḫzan al-Asrār* (The Treasury of Secrets), a didactic poem consisting of approximately 2,260 couplets in the *sarīʿ* meter (Meisami, 1987). This foundational work explores themes of divine love, ethical conduct, and spiritual enlightenment, serving as a philosophical and moral guide. It sets the tone for the collection, underscoring Niẓāmī's commitment to intertwining intellectual rigor with poetic artistry. The following three epic romances highlight Niẓāmī's narrative versatility. Ḫusraw va Šīrīn, written in the hazaj meter[1] and comprising around 6,500 couplets, recounts the poignant love story of the Sasanian king Ḫusraw and the Armenian princess Šīrīn (Ṣafā, 1986). Similarly, Laylī va Maǧnūn, also composed in the hazaj meter with approximately 4,600 couplets, immortalizes the tale of Qays (Maǧnūn) and Laylī as a symbol of spiritual devotion and transcendence (Bürgel, 1988). Haft Paykar (The Seven Beauties), written in the ḫafīf meter with around 5,130 couplets, weaves together the adventures of Bahrām Gūr and his seven brides, blending allegory, romance, and ethical reflection (Meisami, 1987). The final work, *Iskandarnāme* (The Book of Alexander), is a monumental epic infused with didactic insights. It is divided into two sections, *Šarafnāme* (The Book of Honor) and *Iqbalnāme* (The Book of Fortune), and comprises approximately 10,500 couplets in the *motaqāreb* meter (Chelkowski, 1975). In this work, Alexander the Great is portrayed as both a conquering hero and a philosopher-king, reflecting Niẓāmī's skill in merging historical narrative with philosophical inquiry.

Niẓāmī's contributions to Persian literature are particularly noteworthy for his redefinition of the romantic epic genre. While he drew upon the works of earlier poets such as Firdawsī and Ṣanāʿī, Niẓāmī distinguished himself through his vivid character development, psychological insight, and dramatic storytelling (Bürgel, 1988). His narratives exhibit a nuanced understanding of human emotions and relationships, often reflecting his engagement with his time's cultural and intellectual milieu. The influence of his patrons—rulers and princes who

[1] The hazaj is a classical Persian meter in romantic and didactic masnavīs. It is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of long and short syllables, often structured as: – ᴗ – – | – ᴗ – –. Niẓāmī employed this meter in several narrative poems to balance emotional depth with lyrical elegance. ("Meter in Classical Persian Narrative Poetry," n.d.).

supported his literary endeavors—is evident in his works' dedications and thematic focus, particularly in *Iskandarnāme* (Chelkowski, 1975).

Niẓāmī's poetic repertoire spans didactic literature, romantic epics, and philosophical reflections, unified by his precise language, clarity of expression, and rich imagery. However, the complexity of his themes and the depth of his philosophical engagement can pose interpretative challenges, requiring readers to approach his works with careful analysis and contextual understanding (Meisami, 1987).

To highlight Niẓāmī's lasting literary significance, the following sections will offer detailed summaries of his major works, focusing on their thematic depth, narrative complexity, and cultural relevance.

Through this exploration, it becomes clear that Niẓāmī's oeuvre is not merely a collection of literary achievements but also a profound meditation on love, morality, human nature, and the pursuit of wisdom (Ṣafā, 1986). By synthesizing historical, allegorical, and universal dimensions, Niẓāmī ensured that his works resonate across cultures and centuries (Bürgel, 1988).

4.3.1. Maḫzan al-asrār

Niẓāmī's *Maḫzan al-asrār* occupies a pivotal position within the *Ḫamsa*, exemplifying the rich tradition of didactic literature in Persian poetry. Comprising approximately 2,250 Persian distiches, this work is a monumental contribution to Persian literary heritage, addressing self-awareness, theological reflection, and moral conduct. The poem opens with a reverent invocation, setting the tone for exploring mystical tenets, particularly the unity of God's existence.

At its heart, *Maḫzan al-asrār* provides profound mystical insights and practical counsel through allegorical narratives. One example is the story of the king and the beggar, which delves into existential questions, critiques of worldly ambitions, and reflections on humanity's relationship with the divine. These allegories also address broader societal themes, including the complexities of governance and the intricacies of social relationships.

Niẓāmī's work emphasizes the transformative power of inner refinement and spiritual enlightenment (Schimmel, 1975, p. 92). His use of surrealistic and imaginative elements enables him to probe the depths of human consciousness. For instance, the depiction of a dialogue between the soul and the intellect offers a nuanced meditation on the interplay of reason and emotion, inviting readers to engage with the complexities of human nature (Meisami, 1987, p. 80).

Divided into 60 sections, *Maḫzan al-asrār* takes the reader on an introspective journey, combining philosophical inquiry with poetic artistry. Through this structure, Niẓāmī leads his audience toward a deeper understanding of the human condition and the pursuit of transcendent wisdom.

4.3.2. Ḫusraw va Šīrīn

Niẓāmī's *Ḫusraw va Šīrīn*, the second poem in his *Ḫamsa*, recounts the romantic saga between the Sasanian king Ḫusraw Parvīz and Princess Šīrīn. While historical sources suggest Šīrīn played a pivotal role in Ḫusraw's political ascent, Niẓāmī's retelling weaves their love story with both personal and political complexities. Comprising approximately 6,150 verses divided into 100 chapters, the poem explores critical historical events, including the fall of the Sasanian king Hormozd IV, Ḫusraw's eventual rise to power, and the rebellion led by Bahrām Čōbīn.

At the core of the narrative is Šīrīn, whose presence resonates across Persian and Byzantine historical traditions. Accounts by historians such as Theophylact Simocatta and Evagrius Ponticus emphasize Ḫusraw's gratitude to Šīrīn for her unwavering support during their exile in Byzantine territory, including her role as the mother of his child. Despite religious and cultural constraints, Ḫusraw's decision to marry Šīrīn highlights her influence on both his political strategies and personal life.

Niẓāmī portrays Šīrīn as a figure of virtue and determination, embodying his ideal of feminine integrity. Her resolute nature contrasts with the societal and courtly expectations surrounding her, especially as Ḫusraw's pursuit of Šīrīn is complicated by his temporary marriage to Šekar of Isfahan. This narrative interplay captures the tensions between societal norms and individual desires within the medieval Persian courtly context, offering readers a nuanced exploration of love, power, and moral integrity.

4.3.3. Laylī va Mağnūn

Niẓāmī's *Laylī va Mağnūn*, completed in 1188, is a narrative poem rooted in the semi-historical figure of Qays ibn al-Mulawwaḥ. The poem draws upon Arabic sources such as Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī* and Ibn Qutaybah's *Kitāb al-Šiʿr va-al-Šuʿarāʾ*, tracing its origins to the seventh-century Arabian Peninsula. Before Niẓāmī's rendition, the legend of Mağnūn existed primarily in anecdotal forms within Arabic literature. These earlier versions lacked a cohesive plot and focused instead on fragmented portrayals of Mağnūn's intense love for Laylī and his life as a recluse.

Niẓāmī transformed these scattered anecdotes into a sophisticated narrative imbued with Persian literary and cultural sensibilities. Drawing inspiration from the ʿUḏrī tradition, known for its themes of unrequited love and poetic expression, Niẓāmī reimagined Mağnūn's devotion to Laylī as both a deeply personal and spiritual journey. The poem charts Mağnūn's evolution from a lovestruck youth into a solitary ascetic, wholly consumed by his unattainable love. At the same time, Laylī remains steadfastly loyal, constrained by societal expectations.

Persian motifs resonate throughout *Laylī va Mağnūn*. Mağnūn's wanderings in the desert, for instance, symbolize not only his physical separation from Laylī but also a spiritual quest, reflecting the Sufi concept of *fanāʾ* (self-annihilation). Niẓāmī enriches the narrative with encounters that explore the transformative nature of love and the profound impact of loss. Ultimately, the lovers' tragic demise transcends worldly confines, leaving behind a testament to love's enduring power and spiritual resonance.

Through this masterful narrative, Niẓāmī delves into themes of spirituality, detachment from earthly attachments, and the timeless legacy of love, ensuring the enduring relevance of *Laylī va Mağnūn* within the Persian literary tradition.

4.3.4. Haft Paykar

The title *Haft Paykar* translates to "Seven Portraits" or "Seven Beauties," reflecting Niẓāmī's deliberate engagement with these terms' ambiguity and symbolic richness. The poem romanticizes the life of Bahrām-e Gūr, a ruler of the Sasanian dynasty. While Bahrām's adventures are briefly recounted in Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme*, Niẓāmī's approach diverges

significantly. He selectively omits or condenses Firdawsī's episodes and introduces new material, crafting a narrative designed to captivate his audience with originality and thematic depth.

The story begins with Bahrām's upbringing in the court of the Arab king Nuʿmān, including his residence in the famed palace of Ḫwarnaq. Here, Bahrām encounters portraits of seven princesses from different regions, each sparking his admiration and love. Following his father's death, Bahrām returns to Persia to claim his throne and rescues his people from a devastating famine, establishing himself as a just and capable ruler.

Niẓāmī then focuses on Bahrām's hunting expedition with Feṭna, reinterpreting the tale to emphasize themes of mercy over retribution. This shift reflects the poet's broader moral and philosophical concerns. Bahrām subsequently seeks out and marries the seven princesses, each in a dome uniquely adorned to symbolize her region and associated ruling planet. These domes serve as the backdrop for the princesses' captivating stories, aligning with their respective abodes' symbolic color and theme. This narrative device forms a central and celebrated portion of the poem.

As the years pass, Bahrām's preoccupation with his wives allows a corrupt minister to gain power, leading to turmoil in the kingdom. Realizing the severity of the situation, Bahrām embarks on an investigation, during which he hears seven tales of injustice from his people. Justice is ultimately restored as the minister is executed, and the pleasure domes are transformed into temples, symbolizing a return to moral order. The narrative concludes with Bahrām's mysterious disappearance during a final hunting expedition, leaving behind a legacy of intrigue and contemplation.

4.3.5. Iskandarnāma

Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme*, the final work of his *Ḫamsa*, holds a prominent place within Persian literary tradition as a poetic portrayal of Alexander the Great. The work, composed in rhymed couplets using the *motaqāreb* meter, is divided into two sections: the *Šarafnāme* ("Book of Honor"), which chronicles Alexander's terrestrial conquests, governance and political strategy, and the *Iqbālnāme* ("Book of Fortune")—also known as the *Ḫeradnāme* ("Book of Wisdom")—which delves into his philosophical inquiries, spiritual aspirations, and intellectual

pursuits. While these titles emphasize a thematic distinction between Alexander's worldly power and his quest for wisdom, an alternative naming tradition appears in specific Indian manuscript sources, categorizing the narrative based on geographical rather than thematic divisions (Meisami, 1987, p. 234).

In these sources, the two sections are referred to as *Iskandarnāme-yi Barrī* ("of the Land") and *Iskandarnāme-yi Baḥrī* ("of the Sea"), highlighting the expansive scope of Alexander's adventures. *Barrī*, derived from the Arabic *barr* (land), corresponds to the *Šarafnāme* and centers on Alexander's land-based military campaigns, urban foundations, and interactions with diverse rulers and cultures. In contrast, *Baḥrī*, from the Arabic *baḥr* (sea), aligns with the *Iqbālnāme*, emphasizing maritime expeditions, mythical sea voyages, and symbolic journeys, such as the search for immortality and the exploration of the Land of Darkness[2] (Lewis, 2018, p. 78). While Niẓāmī's original division reflects a conceptual contrast between political ambition and intellectual pursuit, the Indian manuscript tradition reframes the *Iskandarnāme* within a spatial dichotomy, presenting Alexander as both a terrestrial conqueror and a seeker navigating the vast unknown. While Niẓāmī's original division reflects a conceptual contrast between political ambition and intellectual pursuit, the Indian manuscript tradition reframes the *Iskandarnāme* within a spatial dichotomy, presenting Alexander as both a terrestrial conqueror and a seeker navigating the vast unknown.

This alternative framing also carries more profound symbolic significance. *Barri* represents Alexander's engagement with governance, military power, and the challenges of rulership, whereas *baḥri* embodies the pursuit of transcendence, encounters with the mystical, and the quest for ultimate knowledge. The reclassification mirrors broader historical traditions in which Alexander's documented military campaigns blend with legendary narratives, transforming him into a historical figure and a mythic hero. By adopting *barri* and *baḥri*, the Indian manuscript tradition demonstrates how cultural and regional contexts shape textual interpretations, offering an alternative lens to understand the *Iskandarnāme*. While Niẓāmī's original structure underscores Alexander's moral and intellectual evolution, this spatial reimagining emphasizes the vastness of his journey, reinforcing the adaptability of the epic across different literary traditions.

[2] The adjectives Barrī and Baḥrī are derived from the Arabic nouns barr (land) and baḥr (sea), respectively, denoting Alexander's dual scope of terrestrial and maritime conquests.

The following two texts excerpt Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme* and circulate in the region as independent narratives about Alexander. They illustrate the influence of Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme* on the cultural and literary traditions among the Lurs.

Text U1

Mrs. Pūneh, 76 years old, from Fath village; livestock herder. Illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

ya deh-ī bī yo ye sag-al gapu-ī men-eš bī. ingal gorg vo rūa i-xard-en. gorg vo rū-al hamašū vašū âsī bīd-en. badbaxt bīd-en. hīč nō-nes-en če ken-en. ye medat-ī men-eš gezašt. tâ ye zamânī ye de tâ gorg javūn-ī šeru kerd-en va azīat ye rūa pīr-ī. azīat-eš ī-kerd-en. ya čand ruz-ī rūa âjez bī. da âxor ya ruz ya fekr-ī ke. ye pasin-ī gorg-al ūma-n ham âzâr-eš bīy-en. rūa sīyâ-š-a râs ke. sag-al sīy-ey rūa na ešnoft-en dân a dam-eš vaqa zan. gorg-al tars kerd-en jekes-en rāt-en ke rāt-en. yone ke ī-gōn dešman dešman-a nâbud ī-ken-e.

English Translation

There was a village with giant dogs that would eat wolves and foxes. They were all afraid of the dogs and had become miserable; they didn't know what to do. After some time, two young wolves teased an old fox for a few days. Finally, the old fox figured out something, and when the wolves came to hurt him, he started to shout. The village dogs heard the sound and started barking, making the wolves run away and never return. That's why there is a saying that says: "The enemy will destroy the enemy."

The story of the clever fox overcoming adversity through wit rather than brute force offers a profound exploration of resourcefulness and strategic thinking. In this narrative, the old fox, relentlessly harassed by village dogs and young wolves, devises an unconventional solution to his predicament. By attracting the dogs with his cries, he effectively turns the wolves' aggression against them, causing them to flee and never return. This resolution underscores the potential for intelligence and ingenuity to triumph over physical strength. This theme resonates across cultural and literary traditions.

The proverb embedded in the story, **"The enemy will destroy the enemy,"** encapsulates a strategic principle of exploiting conflicts between adversaries to achieve one's goals. This concept closely parallels a narrative in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme*, specifically in the *Šarafnāme*, section 48[3], where one of Alexander's advisors counsels him to adopt unconventional methods for overcoming challenges. In this episode, Alexander is advised to exploit the divisions and rivalries among his enemies rather than confronting them directly, mirroring the fox's use of the dogs to deter the wolves. Niẓāmī's emphasis on wisdom and strategic thinking in the *Iskandarnāme* reflects a broader Persian literary tradition that prioritizes intellect and resourcefulness over sheer force, a theme evident in this folktale.

The connection between this story and Niẓāmī's work is both thematic and cultural. As a *matīl* (folktale) from the oral traditions of the Bāvī tribe—a prominent group within the Kohgīlūyeh and Boyer-Aḥmad province—this narrative exemplifies the enduring influence of Persian literary motifs on regional storytelling. Its continued presence in the oral tradition highlights its cultural relevance and its role in transmitting moral and strategic values. The Bāvī tribe's adaptation reflects a broader pattern of incorporating philosophical and literary elements from classical Persian texts into localized oral forms, ensuring their preservation and resonance across generations.

The fox's triumph also serves as a metaphor for the power of marginalized or seemingly weaker individuals to overcome oppression through ingenuity. This theme is particularly significant in Persian folklore, where animals frequently symbolize human traits and societal dynamics. The fox, a recurring figure in Persian literature and folklore, often embodies cunning and adaptability—qualities celebrated in this narrative. The fox ensures his survival by outsmarting the wolves and leveraging the dogs' presence. He reasserts his agency in a hostile environment. This dynamic reflects the broader cultural appreciation for wit and strategy in Persian storytelling, as seen in works such as *Kalīla va Dimna* and the tales of the *Šāhnāme*.

Moreover, the story's moral—emphasizing the value of unconventional solutions—resonates with the philosophical underpinnings of Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme*. In the *Iqbālnāme*, Alexander's transformation from a conqueror to a philosopher underscores the importance of wisdom and ethical leadership. The fox's use of strategy rather than brute force aligns with this philosophical shift, suggesting that true power lies in intellect and moral insight rather than

[3] Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāmeh*, Canto 48. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh48.

domination. This parallel reinforces the story's alignment with Persian literary and intellectual traditions, where the interplay between wisdom and power is a recurring theme.

In conclusion, the story of the clever fox is more than a simple folktale; it reflects deeper cultural and literary values. Its emphasis on resourcefulness, strategic thinking, and the exploitation of adversarial conflicts aligns with themes found in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme* and other Persian literary works.

Text U2

Mr. Darvīš, 79 years old, from Chah Talkh village; illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

ya šâh-ī bī šâx dâšt. yen-a kas-ī nōn-es qeyr-e dalâk-ī ke sar-š-a ī-tarâš-īd. va-š gōt-e bīd-en agar sī kas-ī gōt-ī ī-koš-īm-et. ya modat-ī men-eš gezašt dalak-a kū dī tâ nī-tar-e tahamol ken-e. ra sar-š-a ke men ye čāh-ī gō šâh-e šâhân šâx dâr-ad del-e dalâk dâq dâr-ad. aqâ za vo ye neyn-ī va men čāh dar ūma. ya čapun-ī neyn-a ber-ī va-š piša sâxt. yo moqe-y ke neyn ī-za neyn ī-gōt šâh-e šâhân šâx dâr-ad del-e dalâk dâq dâr-ad. hīč da malus paxš â-bī men šār. uma-n dalâk-e faqīr-a gerōt-en bord-en nâbūd kerd-en. yen-a ke ī-gō-n gap-a va hīč kas na-gō.

English Translation

There was a king who had horns. Nobody knew this except his special barber. They had warned him that if anyone found out, they would kill him. After some time, the barber could no longer bear the secret. He went and put his head in a well and said, "The king of kings has horns; the heart of barber has sworn." By chance, a reed grew in the well. A shepherd cut the reed and made a flute from it. When he played the flute, it sang, "The king of kings has horns, the heart of barber has sworn." The news spread throughout the city. They came and took the barber and destroyed him. That's why it is said that you should not say anything to anybody.

This folktale, which exists in various forms across cultures, delves into the psychological and social complexities of bearing a life-altering secret. At its core, the narrative explores the immense pressure and isolation experienced by the barber, burdened with the knowledge of the king's concealed horns. The king's warning—that revealing the secret would result in the barber's death—creates a profound sense of vulnerability and entrapment, reflecting broader themes of power dynamics and the consequences of possessing dangerous knowledge. The

barber's decision to confide in a well, an unconventional and seemingly safe outlet, underscores the universal human need to unburden oneself, even when confession is symbolic rather than direct. This motif notably echoes the Greek legend of **King Midas**[4], whose barber, similarly unable to endure the weight of his master's secret (the king's donkey ears), whispered it into the ground, only for reeds to grow and later reveal it. Such cross-cultural parallels point to a shared narrative logic in which nature becomes the unintended vehicle for suppressed truths. In the Lurī version, the reed that grows from the well and is fashioned into a flute that broadcasts the barber's confession is a powerful metaphor for the uncontrollable nature of secrets once they are released. This element of the story underscores the unpredictable ways hidden truths can surface, even when one believes they have taken every precaution.

The narrative's tragic turn with the barber's eventual capture and execution reinforces the severity of the king's warning and the high stakes of revealing sensitive information. This outcome highlights the dual dangers of both harboring and disclosing secrets. On one level, the tale illustrates the psychological toll of bearing a heavy secret, as the barber's inability to endure the burden ultimately drives his actions. On another level, it critiques the consequences of revealing secrets without considering potential repercussions, as the barber's attempt to unburden himself inadvertently leads to his demise. This duality enriches the narrative, compellingly exploring themes of power, secrecy, and human vulnerability.

The connection between this story and Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma* adds another layer of significance. In *Khamsa*, specifically in *Iskandarnāma* – Second Part: *Kheradnām*[5] – "On Why Alexander is Called Dhul-Qarnayn," Niẓāmī recounts a similar tale as part of his explanation for why Alexander the Great is referred to as *Ḏū al-Qarnayn* (the Two-Horned One)[6]. In

[4] King Midas was a legendary ruler of Phrygia in Greek mythology, best known for his "golden touch," which turned everything he handled into gold—a gift that became a curse. Another famous myth depicts him as the judge of a musical contest between Apollo and Pan; when Midas foolishly favored Pan, Apollo gave him donkey ears as punishment. These stories symbolize the dangers of greed and poor judgment. For historical and mythological accounts, see Ovid, Metamorphoses, XI; Herodotus, Histories, I.14.

[5] Niẓāmī, *Kheradnāmeh*, Canto 9. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/kheradname/sh9.

[6] The title *Ḏū al-Qarnayn* (ذو القرنين), meaning "The Two-Horned One," is frequently associated with Alexander the Great in Islamic literature and exegetical tradition. While the origins of this title remain complex and multilayered, one prominent interpretation connects the "two horns" to symbolic representations of power and dominion, often understood as a metaphor for his rule over East and West (Netton, 1996). This symbolic reading aligns with Hellenistic imagery: on some of his coinage, Alexander is depicted with ram's horns, invoking his divine association with the Egyptian god Amun and reinforcing his image as a semi-divine, cosmopolitan conqueror (Stoneman, 2008). Such iconography may have contributed to the Qurʾānic and post-Qurʾānic conceptualization of Alexander as *Ḏū al-Qarnayn*, a figure whose reach extended beyond the physical realm into the mythic and moral imagination of later cultures.
Another interpretation suggests that the title may derive from Alexander's use of a horned helmet, a motif commonly associated with power and authority in ancient Near Eastern and Hellenistic iconography (Anderson, 2012). In these traditions, horns often signify divine favor or royal legitimacy, reinforcing the symbolic connection

Niẓāmī's version, Alexander's hidden ears (rather than horns) are discovered by a barber sworn to secrecy. The barber's eventual confession, which spreads after a reed growing from the ground is used to make a flute, leads to his execution. This structural similarity between the folktale and Niẓāmī's literary account suggests a more profound cultural and thematic link, particularly regarding secrecy, punishment, and the consequences of revealing forbidden knowledge.

One of the key aspects of Alexander's identification as *Ḏū al-Qarnayn* is its resemblance to other ancient narratives, particularly the legend of King Midas, which Herodotus recounts in the *Histories* and which later appears in Greek mythological traditions (Herodotus, trans. 2003). In Greek mythology, King Midas, ruler of Phrygia, bore a curse that gave him donkey ears—a deformity he desperately tried to hide. A barber, unable to bear the burden of the secret, whispered it into the ground. Reeds grew from that spot and revealed the secret to the world whenever the wind passed through them. This tale parallels the narrative surrounding Alexander's two horns in Niẓāmī's account, where reeds later fashioned into flutes expose the barber's knowledge, similarly, unintendedly.

The striking similarities between Niẓāmī's version of the story and Greek traditions suggest a cross-cultural transmission, wherein Persian, Islamic, and Greek traditions interacted and influenced one another. This raises broader questions regarding the movement of myths and symbols across cultures, particularly about the representation of rulers and their association with supernatural or symbolic attributes. Moreover, just as Midas' story conveys a philosophical lesson on power and its consequences, a similar theme emerges in Niẓāmī's portrayal of Alexander. In *Kheradnāma*, Niẓāmī presents Alexander as a ruler who ultimately loses power and must confront mortality, much like Midas, whose greed leads to his suffering. This philosophical underpinning suggests a shared cultural concern with the limitations of power and the inevitability of downfall, which is evident in both Persian and Greek traditions.

between Alexander and the title *Ḏū al-Qarnayn*. Additionally, some accounts propose that the title may have originated from Alexander's encounter with a people described as having horns—a motif that could be rooted in mythological or allegorical elements within the *Alexander Romance* tradition (Doufikar-Aerts, 2010; Pfister, 1914). Pfister's work on the *Alexander Romance* highlights how this tradition, which circulated widely in the ancient and medieval world, contributed to the blending of historical and mythological elements in the figure of *Dhū al-Qarnayn*. Collectively, these interpretations underscore the symbolic richness of the title, which transcends its literal meaning to convey Alexander's legendary status as a conqueror, explorer, and unifier of civilizations.

Beyond its Persian literary connections, this motif appears in a Luri version of the story collected during my M.A. research on the oral traditions of the Bāvī tribe[7]. Although the Luri version does not explicitly identify the king as Alexander, the structural and thematic parallels are significant. The Bāvī tribe, initially tracing their roots to Baghdad but now identifying as Lurs and speaking a dialect of the Luri language, has preserved this folktale as part of its oral tradition. The presence of this story in both Persian literary sources and Luri oral traditions suggests that the Luri version may have drawn from or intersected with Persian literary traditions, mainly through Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma*.

The adaptation of this story within the Bāvī tribe's oral tradition also reflects a broader phenomenon of cultural transmission and transformation. As folktales are passed down through generations, they undergo modifications to align with local contexts. In this case, the Luri version simplifies the king's identity, focusing instead on universal themes of secrecy and consequence. This flexibility underscores the adaptive nature of oral traditions, which enables them to remain relevant while conveying timeless moral lessons.

Moreover, the motif of hidden truths and their inevitable revelation aligns with Persian literature more broadly, as seen in *Kalīla va Dimna* and the *Šāhnāme*. Both works explore the ethical and psychological dilemmas of secrecy, a theme echoed in the barber's tragic fate. The broader literary tradition suggests that these folktales serve as cautionary tales on the dangers of absolute power and the burden of forbidden knowledge, making them deeply relevant across different historical and cultural contexts.

The story of the barber and the king's secret, whether in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma*, Greek mythology, or the Luri oral tradition, illustrates how themes of power, secrecy, and consequence transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. By comparing these narratives, it becomes evident that the symbolism of the two horns (or ears) is more than a physical trait—representing the intersection of myth, history, and political legitimacy. The fact that this story appears in multiple traditions suggests a shared human concern with knowledge, authority, and the dangers of revealing forbidden truths. Through its various literary and oral iterations, this

[7] The material referenced here is based on fieldwork conducted during my M.A. thesis research at the University of Tabriz (Iran) in 2014. The research concentrated on the oral literature of the Bāvī dialect spoken in parts of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. The study involved collecting and transcribing oral narratives from native speakers, with particular attention to linguistic features, local storytelling conventions, and the cultural functions of these texts within the Bāvī community. These early findings provided foundational insights that are expanded upon in the present doctoral study.

tale offers insight into historical perceptions of power and secrecy, demonstrating how stories evolve while retaining their core philosophical and ethical messages.

Beyond the *Iskandarnāme*, Niẓāmī's other works have left a lasting imprint on the region's storytelling traditions. His narratives are deeply woven into local folklore, poetry, and oral literature, reflecting their enduring cultural presence. The moral and allegorical depth of his poetry, combined with his mastery in blending historical, romantic, and mystical themes, has firmly established him as one of the most influential literary figures in the region.

4.4. Niẓāmī's Legacy in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad: Literature Meets Oral Tradition

Niẓāmī Ganjavī's influence on Persian literature is both profound and far-reaching, positioning him as a pivotal figure in the evolution of Persian poetic and narrative traditions. His distinctive style, which integrates everyday language with nuanced realism, has left an enduring imprint on the literary canon. The narratives within Niẓāmī's poems have enriched Persian literature and served as a source of inspiration for Persian miniature art. Alongside Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme*, Niẓāmī's *Ḫamsa* remains one of the most frequently illustrated works in Persian artistic tradition, attesting to its cultural and aesthetic significance. Each of the five poems within the *Ḫamsa* has individually left a lasting impact, while the collection has become a model for later Persian poets and other Islamic literatures to emulate.

The tradition of composing *nazīras* (imitations) of the *Ḫamsa* exemplifies Niẓāmī's influence. Poets either adhered closely to his subject matter, meter, and formal features or created their collections of *maṯnavīs* that selectively incorporated elements of his poetry. The earliest and most renowned response to Niẓāmī's *Ḫamsa* was written by Amīr Ḫusraw Dihlavī[8], followed

[8] Amīr Ḫusraw Dihlavī (651–725 AH / 1253–1325 CE) was a prominent Persian-language poet of the Indian subcontinent during the medieval period. Born in Patiyali, India, he was the son of Amīr Sayf al-Dīn Maḥmūd, a Turkish officer, and an Indian mother. He served various rulers, including Sultan Balban's family, Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Khaljī, and Sultan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Khaljī, under whom he produced many of his works. Amīr Ḫusraw was also a disciple of the Sufi saint Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā. His literary contributions include the "Khamsa," a quintet of narrative poems inspired by Neẓāmī's work, and several dīvāns of poetry. He is often referred to as the "Parrot of India" (ṭūṭī-yi Hind) due to his eloquence and prolific output.

by notable poets such as Ḫwājū Kirmānī[9], ʿAbd-Allāh Hātifī, and Nūr al-Dīn[10] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, some of whom expanded the tradition by composing their own *Ḫamsas* with up to seven poems. Among these poets, Jāmī stands out as one of Niẓāmī's most significant imitators, further solidifying Niẓāmī's legacy within Persian literature.

Jāmī, celebrated as a prolific scholar and mystic, contributed extensively to Sufi literature. His works reflect a deep engagement with Niẓāmī's themes and narrative techniques. Among Jāmī's compositions, his *Iskandarnāme*, completed around 1485, exemplifies his distinctive approach to storytelling. Departing from the traditional focus on Alexander's military conquests, Jāmī's rendition emphasizes philosophical and mystical themes, presenting Alexander as a seeker of divine wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. Drawing inspiration from Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme*, Jāmī employs allegory and symbolism to explore Sufi concepts such as repentance, the pursuit of divine knowledge, and the spiritual evolution of a ruler. This work highlights Jāmī's literary ingenuity while underscoring the enduring influence of Niẓāmī's narrative frameworks on later Persian poetry and Sufi thought.

Niẓāmī's contributions to Persian literature are deeply rooted in its traditions, often intersecting with those of earlier poets such as Firdawsī and Fakhr al-Dīn Asʿad Gurgānī. While some of Niẓāmī's narratives, such as *Laylī va Maǧnūn*, find thematic parallels in the *Šāhnāme*, his unique treatment of these themes, combined with his stylistic innovations, distinguishes his work. Niẓāmī explicitly acknowledges Firdawsī's influence in his writings, referring to him as the eloquent chronicler of Ṭūs in works such as *Ḫusraw va Šīrīn*, *Laylī va Maǧnūn*, *Iskandarnāme*, and *Haft Paykar*. This interplay between Niẓāmī and his predecessors demonstrates the dynamic continuity of the Persian literary tradition, wherein poets build upon and reinterpret the works of those who came before.

[9] Ḫwājū Kermānī (December 24, 1290 – 1349) was a distinguished Persian poet and Sufi mystic from Kerman, Iran. His full name was Abū al-ʿAṭā Kamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn ʿAlī ibn Maḥmūd Morshedī. The moniker "Khwāju" is a diminutive of "Khwāja," indicating his esteemed social standing. The title "Morshedī" signifies his association with the Sufi master Shaykh Abū Isḥāq Kāzarūnī, founder of the Morshediyya order. In his youth, Khwāju traveled extensively, visiting regions such as Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem, and Iraq, and performed the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Among his notable literary contributions are the "Divan," a collection of his poems, and several Maṯnavī (narrative poems) such as "Homāy o Homāyun," "Gol o Nowruz," and "Rowżat al-Anwār." Khwāju's final resting place is in Shiraz, Iran, where his tomb remains a site of homage.

[10] ʿAbd-Allāh Hātifī (1454–1521) was a Persian poet known for his *Khamsa*, which was modeled after Niẓāmī's work. His notable poems include *Laylī o Majnūn*, *Shīrīn o Khusrow*, *Haft Manzar*, *Timurnāma* (*Zafarnāma*), and *Fotūḥāt-e Shāhī*, which are distinguished by their realism and originality. Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī (1869–1914) was an Omani historian and Ibāḍī scholar. Despite blindness from childhood, he contributed significantly to Omani historiography and religious thought, authoring *Tuḥfat al-Aʿyān bi-sīrat ahl ʿUmān* and *Talqīn al-ṣibyān*.

Niẓāmī's influence extends beyond merely preserving his stories; his poetic innovations and thematic complexity have actively shaped Persian literary traditions. His rendition of *Laylī va Maǧnūn* laid the groundwork for the Persian love narrative, directly inspiring poets like Amīr Ḫusraw Dihlavī and Jāmī, who reimagined the tale in their works. Even Jāmī's *Iskandarnāme*, despite its distinct mystical focus, reflects Niẓāmī's enduring literary imprint. This lasting influence underscores the timeless appeal of his works and the pivotal role of Persian literature in shaping artistic and intellectual thought across centuries. By refining the *maṯnavī* form and engaging with the literary heritage of figures such as Firdawsī, Niẓāmī secured his place as a cornerstone of Persian literary history.

4.4.1. Niẓāmī's Literary Legacy in Kohgiluyeh's Oral Lore

Studying how stories travel across time and cultural boundaries remains essential in comparative literature and folklore. In Kohgīlūye va Būyer Aḥmad, oral traditions such as *Matīl* (exemplary tales, e.g., texts W, X, Y, Z) and *Tīmṣāl* (allegorical parables, e.g., text V) reveal significant thematic and structural parallels with the works of Niẓāmī Ganjavī (1141–1209), a foundational figure in Persian literary tradition. These similarities raise critical questions: Did Niẓāmī draw inspiration from oral narratives circulating in regions like Kohgīlūye, or do they reflect a broader, shared Persianate literary and cultural reservoir? Although this study does not attempt to resolve this question definitively, the presence of Niẓāmī's motifs within Kohgīlūye's oral tradition highlights the fluid exchange between oral and written narratives in medieval Persian societies (de Bruijn, 1997, pp. 84–86).

Niẓāmī's poetry, while deeply rooted in the classical Persian literary canon, incorporates storytelling techniques characteristic of oral traditions. Likewise, the moral allegories in Timṣāl resemble Niẓāmī's symbolic narratives in Maḫzan al-Asrār, where he explores ethical dilemmas through allegory (Losensky, 2018, p. 202). This intertextual relationship suggests that Persian literature, rather than existing as a static written tradition, actively engaged with oral storytelling practices, reinforcing the dynamic nature of narrative transmission.

The Persianization of Alexander provides a compelling example of how historical and legendary figures evolved within Persian literary traditions. Firdawsī's Šāhnāme first established Alexander (Iskandar) as the half-brother of Dārā, blending historical accounts with Persian myth-making (Davis, 2006 c). Later, Niẓāmī's Iskandarnāma expanded this portrayal,

integrating Persian historiographical traditions with allegorical and philosophical elements. He transformed Alexander from a foreign conqueror into a philosopher-king, aligning his image with Persian cultural ideals (Yarshater, 1988, p. 176). This evolution illustrates how Persian literature continually reinterprets historical figures to reflect contemporary intellectual and cultural concerns.

Niẓāmī's influence extended beyond his time, shaping later poets, most notably Jāmī, who imitated his poetic style in Haft Awrang. Jāmī's Iskandarnāma builds upon Niẓāmī's version yet shifts its emphasis—while Niẓāmī presents Alexander as both a conqueror and a philosopher, Jāmī reimagines him as a seeker of divine wisdom. This transformation reflects the broader trend in Persian literature, where allegory increasingly mediated historical and mystical discourses (de Fouchécour, 1994, p. 119).

The romantic themes in Niẓāmī's works also have deeper roots in earlier Persian literature. For instance, Vis o Rāmin, one of the oldest Persian love narratives, explores the tension between personal desire and societal constraints, a theme that later appears in Ḫusraw va Šīrīn (Meisami, 1995, p. 88). Similar motifs in Matīl narratives indicate that these themes were not exclusive to elite literary circles but also thrived in oral storytelling traditions. This dynamic interplay between elite and folk traditions reinforces the idea that Persian literature functioned as an interconnected system rather than a hierarchical divide between written and oral forms.

The presence of Niẓāmī's motifs in Kohgīlūye and Būyer Aḥmad's oral traditions challenges the assumption that his influence remained confined to written Persian literature. In this region, performers recite Ḫusraw va Šīrīn with the same cultural significance as Šāhnāme readings, and audiences occasionally hear performances of Laylī va Maǧnūn (Spooner & Hanaway, 2012, p. 225). These oral recitations demonstrate that Niẓāmī's legacy extends beyond manuscript culture, embedding itself in local storytelling traditions that continue to evolve across generations.

The following section presents stories collected from the Kohgīlūye va Būyer Aḥmad region that exhibit thematic parallels with Niẓāmī's works beyond *Iskandarnāma*. These narratives further illustrate the deep interconnection between oral storytelling traditions and the classical Persian literary canon, reinforcing the argument that Niẓāmī's motifs were not confined to written literature but remained active within Persianate oral traditions.

Text V

Mr. Darvīš, 79 years old, from Chah Talkh village; illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

de nafar bīd-e ba nâm xoršîâfarī ū yak-ī-ša hūš-om nī nōm-eš. amâ ya pâdešâh-ī bīd-e. bōw-m sī-m gap za. gō pâdešâh kū del-eš a xoršîâfarī ī-xâs. yâ bāzial-am ī-gow-n Kanīzak. hīč xoršîâfarī gō šī a-t nī-ken-īm. bād ī-rā-n ye je-y hasâb kon čī vey-čo tâ vō dās yâ harjâ. ye čan tâ šekâl dâr-e ī-čar-e. xoršîâfarī a-š ī-gō te be-rā ar bey tīr kamun tīr kerd-ī men somb-eš vo domb-eš vo gūš-eš zey me šī a-t i-ken-om. čon somb a ī dumen bī, domb vo bâlâ bī vo gūš ōčō bī. joft â-nī-bīd-en ke tīr dam ī se tâ vâ-bu. ī se noqta-na gō. ū jey ke xodâvand ī-xâs īn-gal-o va yak be-ras-en. mouqe-y ke ī-rā va kamin-šun, ke da be-xo tīr a-šun ken-e. malus ū šekâl pâ-na râs ī-ken-e. hey guš-eš-a be-xâr-an-e, domb-eš-am ye lat-ī ey-bū. tīrkamun ī-bū-ye domb-eš-a vo guš-eš-a vo somb-eš-a ī-ger-e. hīč ī-ger-e ī-yâr-eš. da tâ ahd bās-ene. xoršîâfarī šī ke a šāh ku.

English Translation

There were two people, one named Khorshid Afarin and the other one's name I don't remember, but he was a king, as my father told me. He said the king was in love with Khorshid Afarin. Some people also call her Kanīzak[11]. Anyways, Khorshid Afarin told to him that she wouldn't marry him. They went out together to a pasture, imagining it as here or there (The interviewee points out the farthest mountain in sight) or anywhere else where some goats were grazing. She told him: "If you shoot one of the goats with your bow simultaneously in the ear, tail, and hoof, I will marry you." She said it on purpose because each part was apart from the other and was impossible to hit with one arrow. But since God intended them to end up together, when he stalks the game to hunt, the goat raises its leg to scratch the ears, exposing the tail. He then releases the arrow and hits the game's tail, ear, and hoof at the same time. He then fetches the game and brings it to her. Khorshid Afarin married the king, as she had promised[12].

[11] The term kanīzak (کنیزک) historically referred to a female servant, but in medieval Islamic societies, it often specifically denoted an enslaved woman or concubine. This semantic duality reflects the intersecting hierarchies of gender, social status, and slavery in premodern Islamicate contexts (Ali, 2006).

[12] The interplay between Persian literary traditions and regional oral narratives is exemplified by the enduring motif of Bahrām Gūr's legendary hunts, a theme rooted in Sasanian visual and ideological frameworks. Situated along a historical trade corridor in southwestern Iran, the Sasanian rock reliefs at *Tang-e Čogān* functioned as visual narratives accessible to travelers, pastoral *īlhā*, and itinerant merchants. Given their strategic location, these reliefs were not only observed by passing groups but also became embedded in oral traditions through repeated retellings. As Louis Vanden Berghe notes, the depictions of Bahrām Gūr's hunts in these reliefs serve not merely as royal exploits but as affirmations of divine kingship, reinforcing the fusion of political authority with

The narrative of Ḫuršīd Āfarīn (also known as Kanīzak) and the king exemplifies the interplay of motifs that connect Persian oral and literary traditions. This Luri oral tale, centered on themes of love, challenge, and divine intervention, shares notable parallels with an episode in Niẓāmī Ganjavī's *Haft Paykar*, part of Niẓāmī's Khamsa, the episode featuring Bahrām and his maidservant appears in Section 20, titled "The Story of Bahrām and His Maidservant.", specifically the story of Bahrām Gūr and his maidservant (*kanīzak*). Both narratives revolve around a seemingly insurmountable challenge: in the Luri tale, Ḫuršīd Āfarīn demands that the king shoot a goat simultaneously in the ear, tail, and hoof; in *Haft Paykar*, Bahrām Gūr demonstrates his prowess by striking an animal in multiple locations with a single arrow. While both stories use skill as a marker of destiny, their resolutions and moral implications diverge, reflecting distinct cultural and thematic emphases between oral storytelling and classical Persian poetry.

The term *Kanīzak*, used to describe Ḫuršīd Āfarīn in the Luri version, carries significant historical and linguistic weight. In Middle Persian, *kanīzag* refers to a "maid" or "maidservant," a term employed in both secular and religious contexts (MacKenzie, 1971, p. 46). This term also appears in Manichaean sources, where *Kanīzak-i rōz* (maidservant of the light) is associated with celestial beings and cosmic order, often symbolizing the feminine aspect of divine illumination (Sundermann, 2001, pp. 101–103). The recurrence of this term across diverse textual traditions suggests that Ḫuršīd Āfarīn's figure may embody not only a romantic or narrative role but also an archetypal function tied to cosmic or spiritual themes, underscoring her symbolic importance within Persianate storytelling.

The structural parallels between the Luri oral tale and *Haft Paykar* extend beyond the challenge motif to the figure of the maidservant (*kanīzak*), whose response to the king's demonstration of

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cosmological order (Vanden Berghe, 1984, p. 45). Dietrich Huff further contextualizes their significance, arguing that their visibility to mobile populations facilitated their absorption into oral traditions, which were reinterpreted through localized storytelling (Huff, 1977, p. 220). The accessibility of *Tang-e Čogān* thus played a crucial role in the transmission of Bahrām Gūr's imagery, ensuring its continuity across both courtly literature and folkloric memory.

Within Persian literary traditions, these motifs developed into complex allegories. Niẓāmī's *Haft Paykar* anchors Bahrām's legend to the palace *Ḫvarnaq*, a symbolic locus of destiny in Persian poetry (Yarshater, 1988, p. 203), while Firdawsī's *Šāhnāma* emphasizes his archery prowess as a metaphor for royal virtue (Firdawsī, 2006, p. 345). Roman Ghirshman situates such themes within a broader Sasanian aesthetic, where royal hunts epitomized the ruler's role in maintaining cosmic harmony (Ghirshman, 1964, p. 78). However, oral traditions, such as the Luri tales, often diverge from literary models: whereas Niẓāmī's narrative culminates in tragedy, underscoring the moral ambiguities of kingship, the Luri versions prioritize communal harmony, reflecting oral storytelling's emphasis on collective ideals. This contrast highlights how shared motifs were adapted to serve distinct cultural priorities—courtly introspection versus communal cohesion.

skill becomes a pivotal narrative moment. In Niẓāmī's version, the maidservant is initially named Fitna in the section:

فتنه نامی هزار فتنه در او

فتنه‌ی شاه و شاه فتنه بر او

(Fitna by name, yet a thousand trials within her,

The king's temptation, and the king a trial upon her.)

Despite this introduction, Niẓāmī does not use the name Fitna again, referring to her exclusively as *kanīzak* (maidservant) throughout the rest of the narrative. This suggests that Fitna is a symbolic designation rather than an individualized identity. Her role in the text functions as a narrative device rather than a fully developed character, emphasizing her instrumental role in the unfolding of fate rather than her autonomy. This distinction is critical, as it highlights how Niẓāmī's text constructs the maidservant figure differently from oral traditions, where characters often exhibit greater fluidity in name and function.

While the structural framework of the impossible challenge is shared between the Luri and Niẓāmī's versions, the treatment of the female figure diverges significantly. In the Ḫuršīd Āfarīn tale, the test of skill culminates in a successful union, reinforcing themes of destiny and divine intervention in love. In contrast, in *Haft Paykar*, the maidservant's indifference toward Bahrām Gūr's extraordinary feat leads to her death—a moment of brutal assertion of royal authority. A structurally similar episode occurs in Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme*, where Bahrām Gūr's companion Āzādeh challenges him to strike a deer's ear and hoof, resulting in fatal aggression when she mocks his success.

This disparity in narrative resolution reveals critical differences in these tales' cultural and literary functions. In oral storytelling, characters often serve as prototypes for communal values—Ḫuršīd Āfarīn's role, for instance, reinforces loyalty, fate, and the fulfilment of promises. In Niẓāmī's literary version, however, the maidservant's function is more complex; her reaction tests male pride and power, ultimately leading to her erasure from the narrative through death. This contrast underscores how oral and literary traditions negotiate themes of gender, agency, and fate in distinct ways.

The tale of Ḫuršīd Āfarīn illustrates the fluidity of oral traditions, where elements such as names, locations, and even the hunted animal vary across retellings. In the Luri version, the

king remains unnamed, and the animal is a goat, whereas in *Haft Paykar*, Bahrām Gūr is explicitly identified, and the animal is either a wild goat or a zebra. These variations reflect regional adaptations, where narrative details shift to align with local cultural contexts and storytelling conventions.

Despite these differences, the underlying structure remains consistent:

1. A woman challenges a king or hero

2. He performs a seemingly impossible feat

3. The resolution of the story depends on the woman's reaction

This continuity across versions suggests a shared reservoir of Persianate motifs that transcends the boundaries of oral and literary culture. Scholars such as Meisami (1987) and Lewis (2018) have emphasized the interdependence of oral and written traditions in Persian storytelling, demonstrating how themes originating in oral narratives often acquire new meanings in the courtly literature of the medieval period.

In conclusion, the tale of Ḫuršīd Āfarīn provides a compelling case study of the cross-pollination of oral and literary traditions in Persian storytelling. While its structural similarities to *Haft Paykar* indicate a shared narrative heritage, its distinct resolution and characterization reflect fundamental differences in cultural priorities—one emphasizing destiny and fulfilment, the other pride and its consequences. The use of *Kanīzak* in both traditions, alongside its linguistic and Manichaean connections, further highlights how a single motif can evolve across different cultural and historical contexts. Examining these parallels offers more profound insights into the adaptability of Persian narrative motifs, the symbolic function of female characters, and the dynamic role of oral traditions in shaping literary heritage.

Text W

Mrs. Ṣedīqeh, 48 years old, from Gorku village; livestock herder. Illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

gōt-ene xeyr vo šar men ye masīr-ī homrâ bīd-en. xeyr hame-y ow-yal xo-š-a xa vo ow-š tamum â-bī. rāt-en rāt-en vo rāt-en tâ ras-iyen va ye biyâbuna-ī xošk. xeyr va šar gō ye peče-y ow va-m bī-ye. šar gō ar ow va-t dâm če a-m ī-d-ī? gō ye mošt gōhar-ī dâr-om va-t ī-d-om-eš. gō na nī-xâ-m. ke hamu dânš-eš bū. gō na nī-xâ-m ow ham nī-d-om. ham ye qadr-ī rāt-en xeyr da

māli tešna bī. na-tar-es tâqat ken-e. gō ton-a dâm dās xodâ ye peče-y ow va-m bī-ye har čī be-xey va-t ī-d-om. gō mo tīya-l-t-a ī-xâ-m. da tâ majbur-e. qabul ke. tīya-š-a va-š dâ ow va-š ehsa. da yo vâ-bī ke hamiša xeyr kur-e vo šar dâneš na-yar-e.

English Translation

A story says that Good and Evil were along a path together. Good drank up its water. They went on and on and on till they arrived in a barren desert. Good asked Evil for some water. Evil said: "What would you give me if I gave you water?" Good said: "I have some gems I'll give you." Evil didn't accept. They were actually its wisdom and knowledge. They kept on going, and Good got so thirsty and couldn't tolerate it and said: "For God's sake, please give me a little water, and I'll give you whatever you want." Evil said: "I want your eyes." Sound had to accept the deal and gave its eyes in return for water. That is why good is always blind and evil has no wisdom.

The tale of *Good* and *Evil*, as recounted in the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, presents a profound allegory that delves into the intrinsic natures of these moral forces. The narrative depicts *Good* and *Evil* as travelers on a shared path, symbolizing their perpetual coexistence and conflict. *Good*, characterized by selflessness and vulnerability, exhausts its resources (water) and is forced to rely on *Evil* for survival. *Evil*, in contrast, is portrayed as calculating and exploitative, demanding *Good's* most precious attributes—wisdom and sight—in exchange for water. This exchange is a powerful metaphor for the sacrifices inherent in the pursuit of goodness and the exploitative tendencies of Evil.

The story concludes with the poignant observation that *Good*, despite its virtues, is left blind due to its sacrifices, while *Evil*, though sighted, remains devoid of wisdom. This duality underscores the narrative's central moral: true goodness often involves self-sacrifice and vulnerability, while Evil's gains are hollow, lacking the intellectual and moral depth that defines enlightenment.

The allegorical structure of the tale aligns with broader themes in Persian literary and philosophical traditions, where the dichotomy between *Good* and *Evil* is frequently explored through symbolic narratives. For instance, in Niẓāmī Ganjavī's *Haft Paykar*, a similar allegory

unfolds, albeit with a more intricate plot and additional layers of meaning[13]. In *Haft Paykar*, the protagonist Bahrām Gūr encounters various moral and philosophical challenges, each represented by a different color and story. While the specific episode involving *Good* and *Evil* does not directly mirror the Luri tale, the thematic parallels are evident. Both narratives employ symbolic journeys to examine the consequences of moral choices, the nature of sacrifice, and the tension between selflessness and exploitation. However, Niẓāmī's treatment of these themes is more elaborate, as noted by Meisami (1987), reflecting his engagement with Sufi philosophy and courtly ethics.

The Luri tale's emphasis on the blindness of *Good* and the moral deficiency of *Evil* resonates with philosophical inquiries into virtue and vice. The idea that *Good's* self-sacrifice leads to vulnerability, while *Evil's* cunning results in a lack of understanding, reflects a nuanced moral psychology. This interpretation aligns with the findings of Lewis (2018), who argues that Persian allegorical narratives often use symbolic contrasts to explore the complexities of human behavior and ethical decision-making. The Luri tale's conclusion—that *Good* is blind and *Evil* lacks wisdom—serves as a cautionary reminder of the costs of both virtue and vice, emphasizing the need for balance and awareness in moral conduct.

The universality of the tale's themes is evident in its exploration of timeless concepts such as the conflict between *Good* and *Evil*, the nature of sacrifice, and the moral consequences of one's actions. These themes are not unique to Persian literature but appear in various forms across global storytelling traditions. For example, the motif of a moral exchange or sacrifice is a recurring element in folktales and myths worldwide, as Thompson (1977) noted in his index of folktale motifs. However, the Luri tale's focus on the loss of sight and wisdom as symbolic consequences of moral choices distinguishes it as a unique contribution to this global narrative tradition.

Text X

Mr. Key Šarīf, 110 years old, from Shah Bahram village; village headman (kadkhoda). Illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

ya nafar-ī bīd-e va esm-e bašar. yo māli adam xub-ī bīd-e. ye vele-y va ya masir tâ ī-kerd tīya-š â-bī va dam ye zan malus malus-ī vo hâšeq â-bī. xeyli nârâhat â-bī qosa xa. rā tūba ke. čon ke

[13] Niẓāmī, *Haft Paykar*, Canto 31. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh31.

zan ku mira dâšt. râ maka toba ken-e. men rā ke ī-yuma vâ-gard-e sī šār xo-š, hamu šār-ī ke men-eš hâšeq â-bīd-a bī, ya hom-safar-ī jōs. yo ham ya adam bad tor bad zât-ī bī. ya kolī gap bī manī vo gapu ī-za. maslan ī-gō-t mo māli servat vo manâl čī dâr-om. va xodâ niyâz na-dar-om. da nōn-om če vâ-bī ke mord. mord vo bašar va majburī xâk-eš ke vo lobas čī-yal-š-a var-gerō bey xo-š bō ke huna-š-a ba hesâb xavar ken-e. rā men šār ya kolī pors ke axor huna-š-a jōs. ra daq-ol-bâb kē. ūma-n dar-a vaz kerd-en nūkar-al bord-en-š daxol. gōt-en hamey čō bešīn tâ xânom bīyâ-ye. ya qadr-ī ham nešās tâ zan ku ūma. ya velâ dī tâ ī zan hamu zan-ī-ya ke va-š hâšeq â-bīd-e bī. bey xo-š gō ey xodâvand âlam pa yo če deng-ī-ya! yo če badbaxtī-ya. da hīč vasâyel-a tahvil zan dâ. zan va-š gō janâbâli xeylī adam doroskâr-ī hesī. amânat dâr-i. mo māli âjez ū mira-m bid-om. adam bad-ī bī. īso mo ham mālī malus-om ham mâl manâl dar-om. ar be-xey mo va-t šī ī-ken-om. yo ham âqebat doroskâr-ī vo pâkdâman-ī.

English Translation

There was once a guy named Bashar who was a good and decent man. One day, he was passing when he saw a pretty woman and fell in love with her. But he got so sad and repented because she was married. He went to Mekkah to repent. On the way back to his hometown, where he had fallen in love, he found an ill-natured fellow traveller who told nonsense and bluffs. For example, he would say he was rich and didn't need God…" I don't know what happened next, but he died, and Bashar had to bury him and take his clothes and suede to take them to his family and let them know. Bashar reached the city and looked around a lot till he found the dead man's house. He then knocked on the door, and the maids opened it and took him inside. They told him to wait until the lady of the house came. He waited until she came and he recognized the lady. She was the same woman he had fallen in love with. He then said to himself: "God! What is this now? What misery is this?" He then gave her the clothes. She told him: "You are an honest and trustworthy man. I was unhappy with my husband; he was a bad man. I am so beautiful and very wealthy. If you want me, I will marry you." This is the result of honesty and chastity.

The tale of *Bašār*, as preserved in the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, offers a profound narrative that intertwines themes of morality, repentance, and the unpredictable nature of fate. *Bašār*, the protagonist, is depicted as a man of inherent decency whose moral integrity is tested when he falls in love with a married woman. His subsequent journey to

Mekkah in pursuit of repentance symbolizes a personal quest for spiritual renewal. It reflects the broader Islamic and Persian cultural emphasis on *Tūba* (repentance)[14] as a path to moral and spiritual purification. This theme, deeply rooted in Persian literary and religious traditions, often serves as a narrative framework for exploring the tension between human desire and divine will, as noted by Lewis (2018).

The narrative takes a dramatic turn when *Bašār* encounters an ill-natured fellow traveler—this traveler's arrogance and disdain for divine reliance contrast *with Bašār's* humility and integrity. The traveler's boastful claims of self-sufficiency, followed by his sudden death, serve as a cautionary tale about the transience of worldly pride and the inevitability of divine justice. In a pivotal moment, *Bašār* buries the traveler and returns his belongings to the traveler's family despite the personal hardship involved. This selfless act of duty and honesty catalyzes the story's resolution, leading *Bašār* to the woman he loves—who is revealed to be the traveler's widow. This unexpected twist underscores the narrative's central moral: virtuous actions, undertaken without expectation of reward, often yield unforeseen blessings.

The emphasis on the transformative power of integrity and the rewards of moral behavior aligns with broader ethical teachings found in Persian literature. For instance, in Niẓāmī Ganjavī's *Haft Paykar*, the protagonist Bahrām Gūr undergoes a series of moral and philosophical trials, each emphasizing virtue, self-reflection, and divine guidance. Although the tale of *Bašār* is less intricate in its structure, it shares with *Haft Paykar*[15] a focus on the interplay between human agency and divine providence. Both narratives utilize symbolic journeys to examine the consequences of moral choices. However, Niẓāmī's rendition of these themes is more elaborate, reflecting his engagement with Sufi philosophy and courtly ethics, as discussed by Meisami (1987).

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[14] Repentance (*Tawba* in Arabic and Persian) is a central concept in Islamic theology and Persian literary traditions. It signifies a conscious turning away from sin and a return to divine obedience. In Islamic teachings, *Tūba* entails sincere remorse, a firm commitment to refrain from repeating the sin, and, where applicable, restitution for wrongdoing.
The theme of repentance is extensively explored in Persian literature, particularly in Sufi and didactic works, where it symbolizes spiritual renewal and the soul's journey toward divine grace. As a transformative process, *Tūba* is a narrative device highlighting the tension between human imperfection and the pursuit of divine favor. This concept reflects Islamic and Persianate societies' broader cultural and spiritual priorities, emphasizing moral introspection and the potential for redemption.
For further discussion, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 112–115; and J. S. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 145–148.

[15] Niẓāmī, *Haft Paykar*, Canto 28. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh28.

The tale of *Bašār* also highlights the adaptability of oral traditions, where specific details—such as character identities and the circumstances of their actions—are often modified to reflect local values and concerns. In this version, the focus on *Bašār's* journey and his ultimate reward for integrity reflect the cultural priorities of the Luri community, where honesty, duty, and moral rectitude are highly esteemed. This fluidity in oral storytelling enables narratives to resonate with their audiences' lived experiences, as Thompson (1977, p. 45) notes.

In conclusion, the tale of *Bašār* provides a compelling exploration of morality, repentance, and the unpredictable twists of fate. Its thematic parallels with Niẓāmī's *Haft Paykar* highlight the adaptability of shared motifs to different cultural and literary contexts, while its divergences underscore the distinct priorities of oral storytelling and literary composition. By examining these narratives together, scholars can gain deeper insights into the cultural, social, and aesthetic dimensions of Persian storytelling and the enduring legacy of shared motifs in shaping regional and literary traditions.

Text Y

Mr. Key Šarīf, 110 years old, from Shah Bahram village; village headman (kadkhoda). Illiterate. Speaks only Luri.

ya čantâ javun-ī ūman be-rā-n kâr ken-en. ya piramerd faqir badbaxt-ī did-ešun. gō âqâ mōne ham bey xo-tun būar-īd tâ kâr ken-om va gosney na-mīr-om. gōt-en na te pir-ī men dās pâ-mun-ī. ye qadr-ī eltemâs a-šun ke bord-eneš̊. men rā rāt-en ta šow vâ-bī. rāt-en men ye kelga-ī xōs-īden. nesf šōw vâ-bī. nun-al piramerd-a var-gerōt-en bord-en. piramerd bičâra sōb varīs-â tâ javunal-a nīsī vo rāt-ene. piramred badbaxt ya qadr-ī gerīv-est tâ ham šow vâ-bī. ham gerō xōs-ī zer ya dâr-ī. sar-š-a nahâ rī ya bard-ī xōs-ī. šow vâ-bī ye čantâ šoqâl o rūa-ī dâšt-en gap ī-zan. yak-ī-š va ū yak-ī-š gow ī âdamīzâd ar be-dun-es ke vasat-e če ganj-ī-ya sārâ-na zer o vâ zer ī-ke. ū yak-ī-š gō ma čen-e? gō zer ī bard-ī ke sar-š-a nahâd-e rī-š, čantâ dun yâqut gapu-ī zer-š-e. vo ī dâr-ī ke zer-eš xōs-īde barg-al-š adam dīvuna-na šafâ ī-de. piramerd hīč-š-a na-gō. da sōb â-bī. yâqut-al-a dar â-ve. ya kol-ī barg ham čī vo bey xo-š var-gerō.

rā ras-ī va ye šār-ī ya hune-ī čī sī xo-š jur ke. ešnoft ke ī-gō-n duar pâdešâ kalu vâ-bīd-e. har kī be-tar-e xub-eš ken-e va-š ī-de-š. piramerd čantâ va barg-al ku var-gerō nahâ men jīb-eš rā men qasr. negahbân-al va-š gōt-en âqâ ma če ī-xey? gō uma-m duar pâdešâ-na xub ken-om. gōt-en ar na-tar-ī xub-eš ken-ī kur-et ī-ken-e. gō bâš-e oškâl na-yâr-e. rā dâxol pâdešâ va-š gō âqâ ar

be-tar-ī xub-eš ken-ī va-t ī-do-m-eš. ar na-tar-ī kur-et ī-ken-om. gō bâš bī-yâr-eš. bord-en-eš men ya otâq-ī tâ duar loxt o seleyt nešās-e vo hey lorka ī-zan-e. rā ye čantâ va barg-al-a kub-īd bâš čey doros ke va-š dâ xa. duar xub â-bī ye velâ jīq za za men rī xo-š. gō ī âqâ kī-ya mo sī če loxt-om. da rāt-en jašn gerōt-en dah šabâne ruz duar-a dâ-n va piramerd. piramerd-a ke vazir-e xo-š.

ye medat-ī gezašt ī javun-al ešnoft-en pâdešâ ya vazīr-e âqel vo xeyrxâh-ī dâr-e. e javun-al badbaxt vâ-bīd-e bīd-en. gōt-en tâ be-re-ym tey-š basâ kemak va-mun ke. rāt-en piramerd-a na-šnaxt-en. piramerd ham šenaxti va-šun na-dâ. komak a-šun ke vo va zan-eš dastur dâ nâhâr sī-šun poxt vo va-šun pazirâe ke. usō da joryan-al-a sī-šun tārīf ke vo gō īso dīd-īn mo xodâ-na dâšt-om.

English Translation

Some young men decided to go and work while an older man saw them. He told them to take him with them so that he could work and wouldn't starve. They didn't accept it initially, but he insisted and begged them. They finally took him along and continued until they arrived at an abandoned place where they spent the night. In the middle of the night, the young men took the older man's bread and left. When he woke up and saw nothing, he wept and slept on a stone under a tree. Some foxes and jackals talked to each other and said: "If this man knew where he had slept, he would have gone crazy." The other one said: "What for?" "There are a few large rubies under the stone he has slept on, and leaves of the tree under which he has lied can heal an insane human." The older man heard them but didn't react. In the morning, he took the rubies and picked some leaves.

He went to a city and settled down there. One day, he heard people saying that the king's daughter had gone crazy and that if someone could cure her sickness, she would marry him. The older man took some of those leaves and went to the palace. The guards told him: "What do you want?" He replied: "I came to heal the king's daughter." They said: "If you can't heal her, the king will blind you." He went inside, and the king told him: "If you can cure my daughter, she will marry you, but if you can't, I will blind you." He accepted, and they took him to a room where the girl was sitting naked and was yelling. He then smashed some leaves, made some tea, and gave it to her. She drank the tea and suddenly got back her sanity; she screamed and hit her own face. She said: "Who is this man? Why am I naked?" They got

married and held a wedding ceremony for ten days. The king appointed the older man as his minister.

After some time, those young men heard that the king had a wise and kind minister. They had become miserable and thought about asking the minister for help. When they saw the old man, they didn’t recognize him, and he didn’t say anything. He helped them and told his wife to cook them dinner and then told them the truth. He said, “God was with me.”

This narrative explores interconnected themes such as kindness, moral integrity, and karmic justice, transcending cultural and temporal boundaries. At its core, the story highlights the transformative power of compassion and the enduring significance of ethical conduct, even in adversity. Initially marginalized and overlooked, the older man embodies resilience and humility—qualities that ultimately lead to his redemption and prominence. His journey is not merely a tale of personal success but a testament to the philosophical principle that virtuous actions, irrespective of their immediate consequences, are inherently rewarded in the grander scheme of existence.

The young man's initial rejection and betrayal of the older man—taking his bread and abandoning him—starkly contrasts his unwavering kindness and perseverance. This juxtaposition underscores the moral dichotomy between self-interest and selflessness. Despite the young men's disdain, the older man's insistence on accompanying them reflects his belief in collective effort and mutual support. His eventual success, symbolized by the discovery of the rubies and the healing leaves, is not portrayed as mere chance but as a representation of the rewards for maintaining moral integrity in the face of hardship.

A pivotal moment in the narrative occurs when the older man overhears the conversation between the foxes and jackals, which introduces an element of divine intervention or cosmic justice. This revelation of the hidden treasures beneath the stone and the healing properties of the tree leaves transforms seemingly ordinary elements into symbols of profound significance. The older man's ability to recognize and utilize these gifts underscores the importance of attentiveness and wisdom, qualities cultivated through lived experience and humility. His subsequent decision to use the healing leaves to cure the king's daughter demonstrates his commitment to employing his newfound fortune for the greater good rather than personal gain alone.

The story's resolution, where the older man is revealed to be the same individual once abandoned by the young men, introduces a layer of poetic justice. This revelation reinforces

the theme of karmic retribution, illustrating the cyclical nature of human actions and their consequences. The young men, who initially dismissed and betrayed the older man, find themselves desperate, unknowingly seeking his help. This irony underscores the moral lesson that failings such as ingratitude and exploitation ultimately lead to one's downfall. At the same time, acts of kindness and integrity pave the way for redemption and success.

Moreover, despite their past mistreatment, the older man's decision to assist the young men emphasizes forgiveness as a transformative force. His willingness to help those who wronged him reflects a deep understanding of human fallibility and the potential for change. This act of compassion elevates the older man's moral stature, demonstrating that forgiveness is not a weakness but a manifestation of strength and wisdom. By extending help to the young men, the older man secures his legacy as an exemplar of ethical leadership and magnanimity.

The narrative's themes and structure are characteristic of the Luri oral tradition, where moral tales often emphasize resilience, humility, and the importance of ethical conduct in the face of adversity. The tale's symbolic elements and focus on karmic justice resonate with broader Persianate literary traditions, including those found in Niẓāmī Ganjavī's *Haft Paykar*[16]. In Niẓāmī's narratives, similar moral and philosophical themes are explored through intricate plots and allegorical imagery, reflecting the synthesis of Sufi philosophy with courtly ethics. The Luri oral version, however, prioritizes direct moral instruction and communal values, showcasing the adaptability of shared motifs to regional contexts while preserving their universal appeal[17].

Text Z

Mr. Ṭahmās, 72 years old, from Fath village; farmer. Has basic literacy (maktabi). Speaks only Luri.

ya dâstân-ī-ye zīyâd va hūš-om nīs-ī. amâ taqrīban joryân-eš yen-e ke duar kaluntar-ī bīd-e. māli malus bīd-e vo pahlevun bīd-e. amâ šī va hīč kas nī-ke. har kī-na bow-š ī-ferestâ se tâ

[16] Niẓāmī, *Haft Paykar*, Canto 31. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh31.

[17] One of Niẓāmī's tales from Haft Paykar (Section 29)—Bahram's Tuesday gathering in the Red Dome —was transformed into two Luri tales due to its complexity. Oral tradition naturally simplifies intricate literary narratives to facilitate transmission and retention, especially when dealing with allegorical and symbolic content. Niẓāmī's tale presents complex layers of meaning and a nested structure, which can be challenging for oral storytellers. The structure was simplified to a linear format, and abstract Persian metaphors were replaced with culturally familiar Luri symbols. This process preserved the core themes while aligning them with Luri storytelling conventions and values, ultimately resulting in two distinct tales—one centered on leadership and justice, the other on female intelligence and trickery.

moamâ va-šūn īdâ. agar nī-tares-en hal-eš ken-en ī-košt-ešu. bad gōt-ene ke ya javun âqel-ī râ vo ye alâmat-al-ī sī yak ferest-ân nōn-om masalan ya morvârid-al-ī rext men šīr o ī čī-yal. merdak xâles-eš ke vo kâr-al ī-tor-ī. bey yak gap ī-zan az ī tariq. sī yak alumat ī-dâ-n. da ūso javun hal-eš ke vo duar šī a-š ke.

English Translation

There is a story I don't remember that much. I know it was about a brave girl who was too pretty and strong. She wouldn't marry anyone. She used to tell three riddles to all her lovers her father had sent. If they couldn't solve the riddles, she would kill them. Then, it is said that a wise young man went to her and sent her some signs. I don't know. She threw some diamonds in milk or something like that, and then the man purified it and did similar things. They talked together through signs, and finally, the young man solved the riddles, and she married him.

The passage in *Text Z* bears a striking resemblance to the well-known legend of *Turandokht* (*Turandot*)[18]. This narrative has appeared in Persian literary traditions and was later adapted into Western cultural productions. The motif of a wise and independent princess who challenges her suitors with riddles and executes those who fail is deeply embedded in Persian storytelling (*Marzolph, 2001; Hanaway, 1989*). This legend has been preserved in both written literary traditions and oral narratives, and its presence in the **oral tradition of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad** suggests a continuity between Persian classical literature and regional storytelling (*Amanolahi, 2005; Lorimer, 1919*).

Although *Turandokht* is not directly recounted in **Nezami Ganjavi's *Haft Paykar*[19]**, several of its thematic elements align with Nezami's portrayal of intelligence, agency, and the testing of wisdom in romantic courtship. *Haft Paykar* revolves around **Bahram Gur**, a Persian king who marries seven princesses from different lands, each narrating a story representing a moral lesson. While the *Turandokht* story does not appear explicitly, Nezami frequently incorporates the **trial-of-wisdom motif**, where romantic and political alliances are determined by intellectual merit rather than sheer power (*Clinton, 1999*). The *Turandokht* story, as recorded

[18] Puccini left *Turandot* (1926) unfinished at his death; Franco Alfano completed the final act. The opera transforms its Persian antecedents by privileging emotional resolution over intellectual conflict, particularly in Turandot's capitulation to love (Carner, 1974; Wilson, 2010). The tale's origins remain disputed between pre-Islamic Persian and later Persianate-Central Asian traditions (Marzolph, 2001).
[19] Niẓāmī, *Haft Paykar*, Canto 29. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh29.

in Persian traditions, follows a princess who sets three riddles for her suitors, refusing to marry unless a man can answer them correctly. Those who fail are executed. This narrative, emphasizing intellect over brute strength, challenges conventional gender roles and reinforces wisdom as an essential qualification for leadership and marriage (*Hanaway, 1989*). This motif of love tested through intelligence appears in multiple Persian works, and its survival in oral traditions suggests that it was widely known beyond written sources (*Yarshater, 1998*).

A similar story in *Text Z*, collected from the **oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad**, demonstrates how this motif has been absorbed and reshaped within **Luri storytelling traditions** (*Amanolahi, 2005*). While local versions may diverge from the classical structure, they retain key elements: a brave and intelligent woman who refuses to marry unless her conditions are met, a test of wisdom where suitors must prove themselves through riddles or intellectual challenges, the inevitability of failure for those who lack intelligence, and a worthy suitor who ultimately succeeds through cleverness rather than force (*Lorimer, 1919*). These adaptations indicate that Persian literary themes influenced oral storytelling, where stories evolved to reflect local values and cultural contexts (*Omidsalar, 2010*). The endurance of this motif suggests that Persian courtly literature and epic narratives were not confined to the elite literary sphere but permeated regional folklore, transformed by local traditions (*Yarshater, 1998*).

The *Turandokht* story reached Europe through Persian and Arabic sources, influencing dramatists such as **Carlo Gozzi**, who adapted it into a **commedia dell'arte** play in 1762 (*Wilson, 2010*). The most well-known Western adaptation is **Giacomo Puccini's opera *Turandot* (1924)**, which significantly transforms the narrative by shifting the focus from an intellectual trial to an emotional transformation (*Carner, 1974*). In Puccini's version, *Turandot*, initially portrayed as cold and cruel, ultimately submits to love, an element that is not prominent in Persian versions. Despite this shift, the core Persian motif remains intact: a princess who refuses to marry unless a man proves his worth, riddles as a test of intelligence and suitability, the execution of those who fail, and the eventual triumph of wisdom and perseverance (*Wilson, 2010*). The transformation of *Turandokht* from a Persian literary and oral tradition into an operatic masterpiece highlights the global impact of Persian storytelling, demonstrating how narratives evolve while retaining their fundamental structure (*Carner, 1974*).

The presence of the *Turandokht* motif in **Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad oral traditions** underscores the continuity between Persian classical literature and regional storytelling

(*Amanolahi, 2005*). While Nezami's *Haft Paykar* does not directly recount the tale, its thematic parallels with trials of wisdom and intellectual courtship suggest a shared cultural framework that shaped written and oral narratives (*Meisami, 2003*). By situating this motif within **Persian and Luri storytelling traditions**, it becomes evident that narratives about intellectual challenges in marriage reflect deeper cultural values regarding intelligence, agency, and power dynamics (*Davis, 2006 b; Seyed-Gohrab, 2003*). The case of *Turandokht* illustrates how literary motifs transcend their original contexts, persisting in regional folklore and undergoing further transformation in Western adaptations (*Yarshater, 1998*). Further analysis of regional oral traditions may reveal variations of the *Turandokht* legend, shedding light on how Persian literary heritage continues to influence local storytelling.

4.5. Conclusion

In the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Alexander the Great—recast as Iskandar-e Maqdūnī—transcends his conventional historiographical role as conqueror, assuming a dynamic position shaped by local interpretive frameworks. Through the narrative structures of Maṣal (moral fables), Iʿtiqāt (belief narratives), and Timṣāl (allegorical tales), he becomes a vehicle for ethical reflection, particularly regarding regional tensions between autonomy and external domination.

This vernacular Alexander actively negotiates dilemmas, defers to indigenous wisdom, and interrogates his sovereignty—a conscious narrative strategy that inverts imperial historiography. The stories articulate an alternative political philosophy emphasizing three key principles: leadership accountability (manifest in Alexander's self-doubt), decentralized authority (seen in the reconfiguration of satraps as early Ḫwānīn), and resistance to centralized control (embodied by figures like Yūtāb, whose defiance operates on both gender and political registers). These elements collectively form what might be termed an "ethic of localized sovereignty," reflecting both the region's historical marginalization and its cultural resilience.

The narratives' pedagogical function operates through Alexander's liminal moments—his moral failures, encounters with mortality, and epistemological crises—which combine classical Persian concepts of kingship with local value systems. This synthesis remains dialectical rather than totalizing; for instance, while critiquing autocratic power, certain tales simultaneously

reinforce traditional hierarchies, revealing the complexity of oral tradition as social commentary.

These stories constitute more than folkloric artifacts—they represent an active historiographical practice that renegotiates power relationships across temporal boundaries. As demonstrated through textual parallels with Niẓāmī Ganjavī's Iskandarnāma and other classical works, the oral tradition maintains continuous dialogue with Persian literary canons while asserting regional perspectives. This intertextual relationship, explored in the following chapter, reveals how local narratives appropriately and subvert dominant historiographical traditions simultaneously.

Chapter Five: Mapping the Myth

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the historical and cultural significance of Iskandar-e Maqdūnī's incursion into Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, analyzing how this event has been embedded in the region's historical memory, mythology, and cultural identity. By tracing the interplay between history and legend, this chapter reveals how Alexander's narrative has been localized within the collective consciousness of the region's inhabitants.

The discussion begins with analyzing key landmarks and toponyms linked to Alexander's campaign, emphasizing their symbolic function and intersections with Iranian mythology. These sites, such as [specific examples], serve as cultural markers that blur the distinction between historical events and legendary constructs, illustrating how these narratives have shaped local identity.

A focal point of this chapter is the comparison between Iskandar-e Maqdūnī and Kay Ḫusrow, a prominent figure in Iranian national mythology. This comparative analysis highlights how both figures have been integrated into regional oral traditions, reflecting their enduring cultural resonance. By examining shared themes—divine favor, just leadership, and conquest—, the discussion reveals how Alexander's image has been reinterpreted within the Lur oral tradition, paralleling Kay Ḫusrow's mythic trajectory.

Beyond local traditions, this chapter situates Alexander's incursion within broader academic discourse, using it as a lens to explore socio-cultural transformations in ancient Iran. It examines the reciprocal relationship between historical events and myth-making, demonstrating how legendary figures like Alexander and Kay Ḫusrow shape and reflect regional identities over time.

In summary, Chapter Four maps the myth of Iskandar-e Maqdūnī within Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, demonstrating how history and legend intertwine to construct a localized Alexander, whose legacy persists within the region's cultural psyche.

5.2. Onomastics

The dramatic topography of the Zagros Mountains, particularly in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, provides a striking backdrop where legends and myths intertwine with the natural landscape. This interplay between geography and human imagination is evident in the myths surrounding Iskandar-e Maqdūnī, whose legacy endures through numerous toponyms and references tied to the Iskandarnāme scattered across the region. This section explores the toponymic traces of Alexander's presence by analyzing place names and locations associated with his mythic journey. Using ethnographic fieldwork, historical texts, and cultural evidence, it examines how the *Iskandarnāme* has shaped the collective memory and identity of the Lur people. By correlating these toponyms with cultural and historical data, this chapter offers a deeper understanding of how this epic has shaped the region's collective identity, leaving an enduring legacy within the cultural fabric of the Zagros Mountains.

5.2.1. Place Names

Identifying mythical and historical sites associated with *Kay Ḫusrow* and *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī* in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad is not just an academic effort but a cultural one, strengthening local identity and historical awareness. In the region's oral traditions, Alexander's legacy is often reinterpreted, depicting him as a heroic figure rather than an aggressor. These narratives foster cultural pride and highlight the region's historical significance. While geographical accuracy may be secondary, the symbolic importance of these sites remains central to local heritage. Recognizing and documenting them affirms Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad's place in ancient history, encouraging further research and exploration.

From an academic perspective, these sites offer valuable insights for historians, archaeologists, and ethnographers. Their study enriches historical discourse and integrates the region into broader scholarly discussions. Additionally, validating oral traditions through historical and archaeological inquiry strengthens their role in Iranian mythology, ensuring their preservation for future generations[20].

[20] These sites hold educational and economic value, enhancing historical awareness through school programs and heritage tourism. Museums, guided tours, and cultural events contribute to local development, reinforcing Alexander's legacy in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad's cultural memory.

Alexander's Path

In 331 BC, following the Battle of Gaugamela[21] and the capture of Susa, *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī* advanced more profoundly into the Persian Empire, demonstrating both **strategic acumen and** tactical adaptability. Susa surrendered without resistance, prompting Alexander to adopt a policy of clemency—a calculated effort to stabilize the region and consolidate his rule.

Dividing his forces, he sent General Parmenio along the Royal Road while leading a smaller, more mobile contingent toward Persis. This route required traversing the Persian Gates, a treacherous mountain pass known for its susceptibility to ambush. Before confronting Persian forces under Ariobarzanes of Persis, Alexander subdued the Ouxians[22], a local tribe resisting his advance.

The decisive Battle of the Persian Gate took place in January 330 BC and is regarded as one of the most significant engagements of Alexander's campaign in the region. Unlike the more minor skirmishes he faced along the pass, this battle posed a formidable challenge, testing his military ingenuity.

The precise location of the Persian Gates remains debated, with no scholarly consensus. However, prevailing historical interpretations place it within present-day Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. This ongoing uncertainty reflects the challenges of reconciling ancient textual accounts with modern archaeological and topographical evidence.

Scholars have proposed various locations for Alexander's route through textual analysis and topographical observation. Among them are:

a) Hasan Pirniā, whose historical account of ancient Iran identifies Tang-e Takāb as a plausible candidate, and

[21] The Battle of Gaugamela, fought on October 1, 331 BC, was a decisive encounter between Alexander the Great and Darius III of Persia. Despite being outnumbered, Alexander's superior tactics led to a significant victory, marking the downfall of the Achaemenid Empire. The battle occurred near modern-day Mosul, Iraq, and solidified Alexander's control over the Persian Empire (*Brill's New Pauly*, s.v. "Gaugamela").

[22] The *Uxii* (*Οὔξιοι*) were a semi-nomadic people who inhabited the Zagros Mountains during the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods. Classical sources such as Herodotus, Strabo, and Arrian describe them as divided into two distinct groups: plains dwellers, who submitted to Persian and later Macedonian rule, and mountain dwellers, who retained a degree of autonomy. During Alexander the Great's campaign, the mountain *Uxii* famously demanded a toll for passage through their territory, prompting a military confrontation known as the Battle of the Uxian Defile. This episode illustrates the strategic importance of the *Uxii* and their control over key mountain passes in southwestern Persia (Bahadori, 2017).

b) Aḥmad Eqtedārī, whose fieldwork and regional studies point to Tang-e Tamoradī (also referred to as the Tamoradī Strait) as a potential passage along Alexander's path (Eqtedārī, 2001).

Additionally, Tang-e Guğestan and the "collar of the trench" have been linked to Rostam I and II. However, the latter attribution is a misconception arising from the name *Guğestan*—a point clarified later in this chapter. All three valleys lie within Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad's migratory routes.

Many regional researchers claim to know Alexander's path, though such assertions often stem from tribal and regional interests rather than scholarly expertise. Among them, **Mr. Ali Sadiq**, an eighty-year-old resident of Dehdasht County in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, presents a more reasoned and evidence-based argument. His findings—drawn from fifteen years of fieldwork in the agricultural sector—offer a compelling perspective. His prolonged interactions with elderly residents provide valuable oral insights that warrant further exploration and could significantly refine our understanding of Alexander's route. The following section presents the key information he has shared.

Having recounted his knowledge from years of personal experience and oral traditions, Mr. Sadiq described the path of Alexander's journey as follows:

"From **Sūsa**, he traveled to **Masğid-i Sulaymān** and from there to **Bāġmalek**. Here, the route diverged. One path led to **Meydāvūd** and to the city of **Qalʿa-yi Sar**, whose ruins still exist today(Figure A.1). Afterward, he went towards **Čahār-Darra**, then **Rūd-e Talkh**, and subsequently to **Mūmbī**. From **Mūmbī**, he proceeded to **Ūrveh** and then to **Ātašgāh**. He then reached the **Kalāt plain**, known as **Darband-e Pārs**(Figure A.2). In **Darband-e Pārs**, there was a bridge, of which few remnants remain; these are now submerged under the dam's waters.

At this point, he sent part of his army in another direction to deceive **Āriobarzān**. The other part went to the plain of **Rūm**, to **Tang-ārī**, where the tomb of **Āriobarzān** and the treacherous shepherd are located. They then proceeded towards **present-day Yāsūğ**, where **Tal Ḫusraw hill** is located. Finally, they traveled towards the Red Valley, known today as **Pāsārgād** (Map A.3).

Greek historians such as Arrian, Strabo, and Plutarch describe the other route and provide accounts of Alexander's movements through this region[23]. Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri* offers one of the most detailed narratives. According to these sources, Alexander retreated six parasangs[24] toward the plain—modern-day Deh-dašt, a village situated in the lowlands. From there, he reached the prehistoric site of Del Ḫāṣil, continued toward Sādāt, and ultimately arrived at Bābakān—the residence of Ardašīr Bābakān[25]—passing through Ramhurmuz along the way.

From **Ramhurmuz**, he moved toward present-day **Abūlfars** and then to **Tang-e Sūlak** (Figure A.3), which contains some inscriptions from the ʿ**Elam civilization**[26]. Subsequently, he went to **Gūr-e Baḫīl Pass**. Ascending from **Gūr-e Baḫīl**, he reached **Ūrveh**. They passed through **Mār-Šayḫ Valley** (Figure A.4), where **Āriobarzān** and his forces threw rocks upon them.

In **Mār-Šayḫ Valley**, an ancient royal road (Figure A.5) exists that Alexander traveled on. This area has a gorge where people find historical things—**shields, spears, seals, and Alexnder's coins**. I was there for my job when they were selling them to some people. I did not have that much money to buy them myself. This is likely the main route(Map A.4). **Alexander's seal** was made of jade, a cylindrical seal depicting a chariot on which Alexander is riding. Once, a nomad in **Tang-ārī** discovered a shield that a simple-hearted household woman used for baking bread. Later, someone deceived her and exchanged it for a packet of tea.

All these historical artifacts have been looted, and the lands associated with the path have been destroyed. However, the people do not forget. What I have just told you, I heard twenty years

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[23] This statement provides a general but accurate overview. Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri* (ca. 150 CE) remains the most comprehensive account of Alexander's military routes. In contrast, Strabo's *Geographica* (ca. 20 CE) supplies essential geographical context, and Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* (ca. 100 CE) contributes a biographical perspective. Contemporary historians cross-reference these works with archaeological evidence and supplementary classical sources—particularly Curtius Rufus' *Historiae Alexandri Magni* (ca. 50 CE) and Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica* (ca. 30 BCE)—to reconstruct Alexander's campaigns (Arrian, ca. 150 CE/1976; Plutarch, ca. 100 CE/1919; Strabo, ca. 20 CE/1917).

[24] The parasang (*parasangēs*) was an ancient Persian unit of distance roughly equivalent to 30 stadia or approximately 5.5–6 kilometers, although its precise length varied depending on terrain and period. Greek historians such as Herodotus and Xenophon frequently employed this measure in their accounts of Persian geography and military movements (Brill's New Pauly, *s.v.* "Parasangēs").

[25] Ardašīr Bābakān, the founder of the Sasanian Empire, established his rule in the early 3rd century CE after defeating the last Parthian king, Ardavān IV. His consolidation of power marked a return to centralized monarchy and Zoroastrian orthodoxy. Ardašīr's early rise is closely associated with the region of Fārs, particularly with the cities of Gōr (modern Fīrūzābād) and Istakhr, where he built his political and religious base (Encyclopædia Iranica, *s.v.* "Ardašīr I").

[26] The ʿElam civilization in southwestern Iran flourished from the 3rd millennium BCE until its eventual absorption into the Achaemenid Empire. Known for its distinct language, administrative systems, and artistic traditions, ʿElam played a significant role in ancient Iran's cultural and political development and interacted closely with Mesopotamian polities (Brill's New Pauly, *s.v.* "Elam").

ago from elderly individuals in the villages, who were then the age I am now. They said their grandfathers had recounted these stories to them. God knows how their grandfathers knew these things. This knowledge becomes exceedingly ancient."

The two routes described by Mr. Sadiq, originating from Sūsa and traversing regions of historical and strategic significance, align with the broader context of Alexander the Great's campaigns in Iran. While rooted in oral tradition, these routes provide a framework for understanding Alexander's forces' logistical and tactical movements and the interplay between oral and written historical sources.

Route 1: Sūsa to Pāsārgād

The first route begins at Sūsa, a major administrative center of the Achaemenid Empire. It proceeds southeast to Masǧid-i Sulaymān, a region known for its ancient settlements and strategic importance. From there, the path continues to Bāġmalek, where it diverges toward Meydāvūd and Qalʿa-yi Sar, the latter supported by archaeological evidence of ancient ruins. The route then progresses through Čahār-Darra, Rūd-e Talkh, and Mūmbī, reaching Ūrveh and Ātašgāh before arriving at the Kalāt plain (*Darband-e Pārs*). At Darband-e Pārs, remnants of a submerged bridge suggest historical infrastructure, while the strategic diversion of part of the army to deceive Āriobarzān reflects Alexander's tactical acumen.

The main force advances to the plain of Rūm, near Tang-ārī, where the tomb of Āriobarzān and the treacherous shepherd are located. The march then continues to Yāsūǧ (*Tal Ḫusraw hill*) before concluding at Pāsārgād (*the Red Valley*), the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire.

Route 2: Sūsa to Ūrveh via Deh-dašt

The second route describes Alexander's retreat of six parasangs to the plain of Deh-dašt, a toponym meaning "village in the plain." From Deh-dašt, the path moves to the prehistoric city of Del Ḫāṣil, then to Sādāt and Bābakān, the latter associated with Ardašīr Bābakān, reached via Ramhurmuz. The journey continues through Abūlfars and Tang-e Sūlak, a site rich in inscriptions from the ʿElam civilization, before ascending the Gūr-e Baḫīl Pass to Ūrveh.

The passage through Mār-Šayḫ Valley, where Āriobarzān's forces reportedly hurled rocks, is notable for its archaeological finds, including shields, spears, seals, and coins attributed to Alexander the Great. An ancient royal road in this region further underscores its historical significance as a transit route.

Mr. Sadiq's account, though derived from oral tradition, aligns with known historical movements of Alexander's army. Sūsa's prominence as an Achaemenid hub makes it a logical starting point. At the same time, references to settlements such as Bāġmalek, Meydāvūd, and Qalʿa-yi Sar reflect the strategic use of smaller communities for logistical support. The submerged bridge at Darband-e Pārs and archaeological evidence from Qalʿa-yi Sar and Mār-Šayḫ Valley illustrates the interplay between oral tradition and material culture. The tactical deception of Āriobarzān and the detailed geographic references further highlights the strategic considerations of ancient warfare, preserved through local memory.

Discrepancies between Mr. Sadiq's narrative and written records stem from the nature of oral traditions, which are subject to embellishment, local biases, and the blending of myth and history over time. While oral traditions offer valuable insights and preserve details often absent in written records, they require critical evaluation. Scholarly perspectives on oral traditions remain divided—some emphasize their cultural and historical significance, while others caution against potential distortions. A balanced approach, integrating oral accounts, archaeological findings, and textual evidence, is essential for reconstructing historical events[27].

Dey vo Dodar

In the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad region, a historical monument known locally as Dey vo Dodar (*"the mother and the daughter"*)[28] (figure A.6) stands approximately 300 meters high. This rock-cut tomb, resembling Achaemenid royal tombs, features a wide, elevated surface with a smoothed lower section and a platform measuring 80.5 meters in length and 5 meters in

[27] This thesis acknowledges that precisely reconstructing Alexander's route through Iran would require interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g., cross-referencing oral accounts like Mr. Sadiq's with classical texts, archaeological surveys for Macedonian traces, and GIS-based path analysis). Such work lies beyond the current scope but merits future study.

[28] It is carved into the mountain of ʿEnā in Rostam County, situated in the village of Marāsaḫūn-e ʿOlyā in Fārs Province. The monument was officially registered as one of Iran's national heritage sites on 20 December 1937, under registration number 299 (Encyclopaedia of Iranian Architectural History, 2011).

width, positioned 100 meters above the base. The centrally located entrance is framed by two columns on each side, each 3 meters tall with a 75-centimeter diameter. Inside, the chamber measures 5 meters in length, 4.53 meters in width, and 2.6 meters in height. Above the columns, a flat, smooth border with crenellations reflects Achaemenid architectural elements.

The tomb's facade, adorned with semi-columns, evokes the royal tombs at Naqš-e Rustam[29] and Persepolis[30]. Unlike the one-story Achaemenid tombs at these sites, Dey vo Dodar has two stories, suggesting a unique architectural adaptation. The interior construction further distinguishes it, as wooden panels were used instead of stone sarcophagi, combining Persian and Greek influences.

Locals believe the tomb belongs to Alexander the Great's mother and wife (Text D), possibly due to a tradition that Alexander entrusted his wife to his mother. However, archaeologists estimate its construction between 550 and 650 BC, predating Alexander's era. Walter Hinz suggests that Pruschat, the mother of Cyrus the Younger, may have built the monument for her son, indicating a possible misidentification of its historical occupants (Hinz, 1976).

The misidentification theory proposes that historical narratives shift over time, influenced by oral traditions, political agendas, and documentation errors. Jan Assmann (2011) explains that historical misidentification occurs when the attributes of one individual are mistakenly ascribed to another due to similarities in names, roles, or geographic associations. Hayden White (1973) argues that cultural memory often shifts historical identities across generations, blending or transferring legacies. In this context, Dey vo Dodar may illustrate how figures like Alexander's mother and Pruschat became conflated through oral transmission and regional historical reinterpretation.

Further archaeological analysis of the tomb's interior structure could clarify its origins and determine the occupant. Additionally, a deeper investigation into Cyrus the Younger's presence

[29] Naqš-e Rustam, located near Marvdašt in Fārs Province, is a significant archaeological site housing the rock-cut tombs of Achaemenid kings, including Darius the Great, Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, and Darius II. Carved into a mountainside, the tombs are cross-shaped, with entrances positioned at the center. In addition to these tombs, the site features Sasanian-era rock reliefs depicting coronations, battles, and victories. Renowned for its historical significance and architectural uniqueness, Naqš-e Rustam remains one of Iran's most important archaeological sites.

[30] Persepolis, also known as Taḫt-e Ǧamšīd, was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, located near Shīrāz in Fārs Province. Founded by Darius the Great in 518 BCE, it is renowned for its monumental architecture, grand stairways, intricate reliefs, and imposing columns. Used primarily for royal receptions and ceremonial events, Pārsa symbolized the power and wealth of the Achaemenid dynasty. Recognized for its historical and cultural significance, it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979.

in the region may offer insights into the cultural influences behind the monument's construction.

Dašt-e Rīm

In Luri, *Rīm* refers to *Rūm*. In classical Persian, "Roman" was often used instead of "Greek" due to historical nuances. During the Islamic Golden Age (7th–13th centuries AD), Iranians viewed the West—encompassing Rome and Greece—under the unified term Rūm. The cultural blending following Alexander's conquests further obscured these distinctions. Frequent interactions with the Roman Empire through war, trade, and diplomacy reinforced the use of "Roman" as a generic term for the West. This terminological overlap reflects the complex cultural exchanges of the time rather than a simple misidentification.

This understanding is evident in the historical narratives of Dasht-e Rūm (Picture 7), a plain 25 kilometers from Yāsūğ, the capital of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. As a key passageway between the colder and warmer regions of the province, Dasht-e Rūm has yielded Achaemenid-era artifacts, highlighting its historical and cultural significance.

According to local tradition, Alexander's army passed through Dasht-e Rūm, resting there for several days before confronting Ariobarzanes in a nearby valley. Despite initial resistance, the Romans, allegedly aided by a shepherd from Bāzerengān (*present-day Yāsūğ*), ultimately defeated Āriobarzān and conquered Iran. However, this narrative is highly contested. The people of Yāsūğ strongly reject this version of events, often reacting with anger and offense at the suggestion of local betrayal. In contrast, other Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad communities uphold this account, attributing its persistence to intertribal disputes.

Tang-ārī

Tang-ārī is a small village in Dašt-e Rīm. Its name comes from *Tang* (narrow passage) and *Ārī*, a local variation of Ariobarzan[31]. Local tradition holds that a nearby gorge was the site of a battle between Ariobarzanes and Alexander the Great (Text E). Villagers believe a stone structure near the gorge is Ariobarzan's tomb. However, no archaeological evidence or

[31] Luri variation of Ariobarzanes.

historical accounts confirm these claims. Despite this, the connection to Ariobarzan remains central to Tang-ārī's identity.

Communities often forge connections to historical figures, and Tang-ārī reflects this pattern. Although no material evidence supports the claim, these traditions enrich the village's heritage and strengthen social bonds.

Fieldwork findings suggest that local oral history preserves the name Tang-ārī and its associations. During research in Dašt-e Rīm, two men shared these details. Both were illiterate, spoke only Luri, and had minimal understanding of Fārsī. Their consistent recounting of the story highlights oral tradition's role in maintaining cultural memory. No alternative versions surfaced, reinforcing the tradition's continuity.

By integrating Ariobarzan into their history, the villagers create a shared narrative that fosters unity. The theme of defiance against a powerful invader reinforces their values and strengthens their sense of belonging. These historical and mythical associations shape Tang-ārī's cultural identity.

Ġār-e Kay Ḫusraw

The legend of Alexander the Great's journey to Kay Ḫusrow's Cave is deeply connected to the geographical and climatic characteristics of the Dena mountain range. This narrative is not merely a myth but is firmly rooted in the region's natural environment, which has shaped and sustained these stories over generations.

Contrary to common perception, Dena is not a single peak but a mountain range within the Zagros Mountains, extending from northwest to southeast and spanning the provinces of Isfahan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Chaharmahal and Baḫtīārī. It consists of three prominent ridges and one subsidiary ridge. The climate in this region is frigid and humid, with heavy snowfall during winter. The range is marked by glaciers, ice caves, and rivers with freezing waters, while its peaks endure persistent and severe winds. This extreme climate—defined by relentless cold and frequent blizzards—provides the natural backdrop for the legends of Kay Ḫusrow and Alexander the Great.

and the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad recount that Kay Ḫusrow disappeared in a snow-covered, inaccessible mountain. While does not specify the location, the people of

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad identify a cave in Mount Dena as the site of his disappearance. Known as Ġār-e Kay Ḫusraw which means Kay Ḫusrow's Cave[32].

In the *Šāhnāme*, Kay Ḫusrow, depicted as a cleric-king, chose to leave the earthly realm after perfecting Iran, having established peace, security, and justice in his kingdom. Entering the cave through the slopes of Dena, he is believed to have sealed its entrance with an enchantment, preserving it as a sacred passage to the upper world. This act can be interpreted as a form of asceticism or spiritual retreat, symbolizing his transition from worldly affairs to a higher spiritual state.

For Alexander the Great, the harsh weather became a symbolic barrier to Kay Ḫusrow's domain. Known for his ambition and relentless pursuit of knowledge, Alexander perceived the blizzards and winds as challenges to overcome in his quest to reach the legendary king. Despite his companions' pleas and the warnings of Fariborz[33]—a hero of Kayanid descent—he ventured into the perilous terrain. As the legend recounts, the severe blizzards and cold winds, believed to be part of Kay Ḫusrow's enchantment, trapped Alexander (Text M). His soldiers ultimately rescued him, but the journey underscored his disregard for caution, prioritizing his quest over his and his men's safety. This mirrors Kay Ḫusrow's insistence that his companions leave him, reinforcing a shared theme of isolation as a test of spiritual endurance.

By contrast, for local heroes such as Bīžan, the treacherous weather conditions represented a natural boundary. While valiant, these figures saw the icy and impassable terrain as an indication to respect Kay Ḫusrow's chosen seclusion. Some versions of the Luri folklore recount that Bīžan, unable to survive the journey, perished, and his scattered remains became villages in the region. In this tradition, the brutal landscape serves as a guardian, ensuring that only those deemed worthy—or possessing secret knowledge—can approach the cave[34].

As Richard Foltz (2013) elucidates, geographical features such as mountains, rivers, and ravines are not merely physical landmarks but carry profound spiritual and mythological significance. In Iranian mythology, mountains often symbolize the divine realm. Mount

[32] There are numerous ice and mountain caves across different regions of Iran where local communities hold similar beliefs. These caves are often associated with legendary, religious, or historical figures, reflecting the widespread tradition of linking natural landmarks to mythological narratives.

[33] In the *Šāhnāme*, Fariborz is the son of Kay Kāvus, a warrior engaged in numerous battles and political struggles. However, in **Niẓāmī's Iskandarnāma**, Fariborz is depicted as an advisor and heroic companion of Alexander the Great, identified as a descendant of the Kayanian rulers.

[34] The Luri folktale version of Alexander's journey to Kay Ḫusrow's Cave was collected in 2018 from the village of Patāveh, located near Yāsūğ, during one of my ethnographic fieldwork excursions.

Damāvand, for instance, serves as the prison of Zahhāk, embodying the triumph of good over evil and divine justice. Rivers, in turn, represent the flow of life and wisdom, symbolizing purity and the continuity of knowledge. The narrative of Alexander's journey to Kay Ḫusrow's Cave is firmly embedded within this tradition, where geography and myth intertwine to reinforce cultural memory and cosmological beliefs.

The severe climate and imposing landscape of the Dena mountain range provide an ideal setting for the legends of Kay Ḫusrow and Alexander. These natural barriers also play a crucial role in the heroic tales of Rostam, who must navigate similarly treacherous terrain, underscoring the physical and spiritual trials that define these mythological figures. Here, the relentless cold, the unyielding snow, and the hazardous passes are not passive backdrops but active elements in the narrative, shaping the events and adding a tangible sense of place and reality.

Through this lens, it becomes evident that geography actively shapes the motivations and actions of these legendary characters. The association between harsh environments and spiritual asceticism in the legend of Kay Ḫusrow's seclusion adds further depth to these narratives, illustrating how the physical and spiritual realms are inherently linked in Iranian mythology.

This interconnection between myth and environment has had a lasting impact on Iranian culture, influencing societal values and shaping the relationship between people and the natural world. These narratives foster a profound reverence for natural landscapes, reinforcing the belief that mountains and rivers are not merely resources but sacred entities deserving respect and protection. As a result, these stories continue to shape Iranian cultural perspectives, instilling values of resilience, humility, and environmental stewardship.

Tang-e Guǧehsūn

Tang-e Guǧehsūn, also known as Gojestān in Persian, is a valley in the Sūrēnā District of Rostam County, Fars Province, Iran[35]. As of 2006, it had a population of 106 people across 23 families, primarily from the Bābakānī tribe of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. This mountainous area, part of the Poshtkūh Rostam Rural District, was the site of the **Battle of Guǧehsūn**, a significant and bloody conflict during the Pahlavi era.

[35] This is related to modern political boundaries.

The battle arose in response to land reform policies and the forced disarmament of tribal groups[36], which met strong resistance from local leaders such as ʿAbdullāh Ḫān and Nāṣir Ḫān Būyer Aḥmadī. Despite their initial military successes, the tribal forces were ultimately defeated by government troops, resulting in significant bloodshed and the execution of several leaders. This event marked a decisive turning point in the region's socio-political landscape, cementing the Pahlavi regime's reforms and fundamentally altering the tribal social structure.

The battle's consequences are still felt in the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, where the fallen tribal leaders are commemorated as heroes. Their legacy is preserved in local poetry and songs, reflecting the enduring cultural memory of resistance against state-imposed reforms. One such example from the region's oral tradition commemorates ʿAbdullāh Ḫān:

Tofang-e ʿAbdullā Ḫān kār-e farang-e

Būyer Aḥmad yād-um kunīd har jā ki jang-e

ʿAbdullāh Ḫān's rifle, made in Farang (Europe),

Remember me in Būyer Ahmad wherever there is war.

As it was mentioned previously **in Pahlavī texts**, Alexander the Great is referred to as *Gujastak*, meaning "accursed" or "damned"[37]. This designation reflects the deep animosity towards him in Persian historical memory, primarily due to his conquest of the Achaemenid Empire and the alleged destruction of Zoroastrian religious texts. The term *Gujastak* thus encapsulates Alexander's portrayal as a malevolent figure in Persian cultural narratives, emphasizing the lasting trauma of his invasion.

Linguistically, the names **Guğehsūn** and **Gujastak** share phonetic similarities, suggesting a possible historical and cultural connection. In Iranian religious texts, *Gujastak* denotes one who is cursed, mainly due to Alexander's supposed burning of the Avesta and destruction of Iran. The name *Guğehsūn* may derive from this root, symbolizing a site of historical struggle and conflict. Although alternative etymologies in Luri remain plausible, field research strongly supports this interpretation.

[36] Moḥammad Reżā Šāh Pahlavī launched the "White Revolution" in the early 1960s and implemented it in three stages. Landowners and religious leaders strongly resisted these reforms. The government aimed to dismantle the traditional feudal system, increase rural incomes, and reduce rural poverty; however, the reforms ultimately triggered significant social and political upheaval (Abrahamian, 2008). See also Chapter 2.
[37] See chapter 1.

Furthermore, the Pahlavi government may have deliberately chosen this name to associate the rebellious tribal leaders with Alexander, reinforcing their status as *Gujastak*—the "accursed ones"—in the national discourse. This linguistic framing would have served to delegitimize the resistance, aligning it with the historical concept of treason against Iranian sovereignty.

In Persian, **-ān** and **-ūn** typically function as plural markers for animate beings, especially human agents, while **-hā** serves as a more general plural suffix applicable to both animate and inanimate nouns. Since the term *Gujastak* is no longer actively used in modern Persian or Lurī, its transformation into *Gujeste-hā* (meaning “accursed ones”) may reflect a historical reinterpretation of the village’s name. This reinterpretation suggests that **Guğehsūn** symbolically came to represent a site associated with rebellion and opposition to the Pahlavī regime, echoing broader historical and cultural narratives of resistance in Iran.

The onomastic landscape of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad reflects the enduring interplay between geography, myth, and historical memory. Sites such as Tang-e Guğehsūn, Dašt-e Rīm, and Dey vo Dodar are more than names; they serve as cultural markers where resistance, spirituality, and identity converge. As scholars like Foltz (2013) and Assmann (2011) suggest, landscapes are not passive backdrops but active participants in shaping historical consciousness. In this light, the Zagros stands as both witness and protagonist, its peaks and valleys preserving the region’s storied past and reinforcing the deep connection between land and legacy.

5.2.2. People's Name

Cultural, social, and psychological factors significantly influence the selection of mythological and historical heroes’ names for children, reflecting broader societal values and individual identity formation.[38] Among the Lur people of southwest Iran, this practice reinforces ethnic

[38] This collection of sources offers a multidisciplinary framework for examining how cultural, social, and psychological factors shape the selection of mythological and historical hero names for children. These references from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and onomastics provide theoretical insights and empirical case studies, demonstrating how naming practices reinforce cultural continuity, strengthen social identity, and reflect psychological aspirations. Scholars such as Geertz (1973), Campbell (1949), and Halbwachs (1992) explore the symbolic and collective memory functions of names, while Bourdieu (1984), Lieberson (2000), and Anderson (1983) examine the social structures and nationalistic influences shaping name selection. Psychological perspectives from Evans (2006), Bandura (1977), and Erikson (1968) further highlight the role of naming in identity formation and behavioral modeling. Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing how the enduring legacy of legendary figures—such as those from the oral and literary traditions of

and cultural identity, honors ancestral heritage, and preserves historical continuity. Parents who select such names often seek to instill revered traits—bravery, loyalty, and self-sacrifice—offering role models for future generations.

In many societies, bearing the name of a legendary figure can confer social prestige, enhancing both personal and communal status. However, it may also create implicit expectations, as children might feel compelled to embody the virtues associated with their namesakes. Examining naming traditions among the Lurs provides valuable insights into how myth, history, and identity intersect, shaping individual self-perception and broader social dynamics.

A striking example of this phenomenon is the selection of names from Alexander's oral and literary tradition among the Lur people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. While Persian Zoroastrian texts often depict Alexander as an accursed invader (*Gujastak*), Luri folklore presents a far more complex and ambivalent figure—a ruler of extraordinary power, a mythical wanderer, and a seeker of fate, conquest, and wisdom. Naming children after figures from the *Iskandarnāma*, local oral traditions, or even Niẓāmī's version of the Alexander Romance not only ensures the continuity of these narratives but also reinforces Alexander's deep-rooted presence in the collective memory of the region. This tradition highlights how his legend is not a distant historical account but an active force shaping identity, values, and aspirations, influencing how the people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad perceive their past, cultural heritage, and historical place.

Eskandar

The linguistic transformation of Alexander's name from Greek to Persian reflects the cultural exchange that shaped his legacy in Persian literature and historiography. The Greek name derives from *aléxō* ("to repel") and *anḗr* ("man"), meaning "the man who repels [enemies]" (Liddell & Scott, 1940). In Persian, however, Eskandar is a Persianized form of the name, lacking an independent etymological meaning but retaining the historical and cultural significance associated with the figure (Davis, 2006 c).

Alexander—continues to shape naming conventions and cultural identity in regions like Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

This adaptation is particularly evident in Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme*, a cornerstone of Persian epic poetry, where Eskandar emerges as a multifaceted figure—both a conqueror and a philosopher-king. This dual portrayal reflects the influence of the Alexander Romance, a body of legendary accounts originating in Hellenistic Greece, which later spread across diverse literary traditions, including Persian (Stoneman, 2008). In the *Šāhnāme*, Eskandar's quest for the Water of Life and his correspondence with Aristotle highlight his pursuit of wisdom, presenting him not merely as a warrior but as a sage-like ruler (Firdawsī, 2006). This depiction exemplifies the fusion of Greek and Persian cultural elements, transforming Eskandar into a bridge between civilizations.

Later Persian poets, particularly Niẓāmī in his *Iskandarnāma*, further developed Eskandar's character, emphasizing his wisdom, just rule, and intellectual depth. Unlike earlier depictions of Alexander as a ruthless conqueror, Niẓāmī's version presents Eskandar as a just and enlightened king, respected for his fairness and cultural adaptability (Chelkowski, 1975). This evolving portrayal illustrates how Persian literary traditions absorbed and reinterpreted his legacy, elevating him beyond his military conquests to a moral and intellectual virtue figure.

Beyond literature, Eskandar's cultural significance extends into regional identity and oral traditions. Among the Luri people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, the name Eskandar remains common, symbolizing strength, wisdom, and leadership (Amān Allāhī Bahārvand, 2002). This local connection with Eskandar underscores how historical narratives influence naming practices, reinforcing his enduring presence in regional heritage. The continued use of his name among the Lurs[39] reflects his integration into the collective memory, where oral traditions preserve his legendary status alongside other heroic figures.

A striking comparison emerges between Eskandar and Kay Ḫusrow, a revered king in Persian mythology known for his justice, wisdom, and mystical attributes. While Kay Ḫusrow is often depicted as a divine figure possessing supernatural qualities, Eskandar appears as a more

[39] The influence of social media on naming practices in Lur communities is particularly evident in the increasing adoption of names from Iranian television series, Instagram influencers, and viral social media figures. Television dramas, often portraying heroic or charismatic protagonists, play a significant role in shaping contemporary naming trends, as families name their children after popular fictional characters associated with strength, beauty, or modernity. This media-driven phenomenon is further reinforced by social platforms like Instagram and Facebook, where celebrity culture and aspirational lifestyles impact parental choices.
However, despite these shifting digital influences, historically significant names like Eskandar remain dominant in Lur society. This persistence underscores the deep interconnection between names, cultural identity, and regional heritage. While social media has introduced new naming preferences, it has not supplanted the enduring symbolic power of legendary and historical names. In analyzing naming traditions among the Lurs, it is essential to recognize both the resilience of historical names and the evolving role of digital media, particularly in shaping contemporary perceptions of heroism, status, and identity within Lur society.

humanized leader grounded in historical and philosophical contexts (Yarshater, 1983). This contrast highlights how Persian literary traditions distinguish between mythological and historical figures, shaping distinct models of kingship.

In contemporary Iranian media and political discourse, Eskandar's image has undergone further reinterpretation. In Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, for instance, modern media often associate Eskandar with imperial aggression, reflecting broader opposition to monarchy and foreign rule (Amān Allāhī Bahārvand, 2002). However, among those familiar with classical Persian literature, Eskandar remains a nuanced figure, shaped by the rich narratives of the *Šāhnāme* and *Iskandarnāma*. This divergence in perception underscores the ongoing tension between traditional literary representations and modern political interpretations, demonstrating how historical figures continue to be reframed in response to contemporary concerns.

Eskandar's legacy in Persian literature and culture remains profoundly influential. His portrayal in Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme* and Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma* reflects a synthesis of historical and legendary elements, presenting him as a philosopher-king whose wisdom and leadership transcend mere conquest. Among the Luri people, his name continues to symbolize power and intellect, reinforcing his place in Iranian cultural memory. Despite modern reinterpretations, influenced by political and media narratives, Eskandar's multifaceted legacy remains deeply embedded in Persian literary and historical traditions, ensuring his continued relevance in shaping Iranian identity and historical consciousness.

Nūšāba

According to *Loghatnāmeh-ye Dehḫodā* (Dehḫodā, n.d., s.v. "Nūšābe"), the term *Nūšābe* [naːʃaːˈbɛ]—rendered as *Nūšāba* in Luri—refers to potable or pleasant-tasting water, syrup, or sweetened beverages. Depending on the historical and cultural context, it may denote both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. However, in modern Persian, it specifically refers to Cola and Fanta-like drinks. In Iranian society, using "Nūšāba " as a personal name might be ridiculed due to its modern association with carbonated soft drinks. However, in some regions like Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and particularly among the Luri people, "Nūšāba" was traditionally chosen as a name for daughters[40]. This choice is deeply rooted in folklore and

[40] During fieldwork, I encountered two older women named Nushabe, which initially surprised me. Nowadays, due to the social problems associated with this name, the Iranian government no longer issues identification documents for it, and no one chooses this name for their children anymore. It was even more common in the past.

local identification, reflecting the cultural and historical significance attached to the name in these communities.

Nūšāba , as depicted in Iskandernāmeh[41], is a formidable character whose traits and association with Alexander the Great have contributed significantly to her popularity. In Iskandernāmeh, Nūšāba is portrayed as a devout and wise leader of Barda, a city governed by women[42]. Her religious devotion and strategic thinking are evident in her interactions with Alexander. She wisely discourages his conquest ambitions through clever analogies and the strategic use of portrait artists to identify him. Her ability to lead a female-dominated society and confront powerful figures like Alexander highlights her strength and independence.

Nūšāba showcases strategic thinking in her interactions with Alexander. She recognizes his power but uses wisdom to discourage him from conquest. Her analogy of the fox and the wolf highlights the desperation of those with nothing to lose, making them formidable opponents. By sending skilled portrait artists to various countries to capture the likeness of their kings, she cleverly identifies Alexander and uses this knowledge to dissuade him from attacking her land. This strategy reflects her intelligence and ability to think ahead.

Nūšāba embodies strength and independence, leading a society of women and facing Alexander in battle without fear. Even after being captured during a war with the Russians, she is not presented as merely another conquest. Instead, Alexander intervenes and arranges her marriage to Dewali[43], the King of Abkhazia, thus respecting her strength and position. This narrative underscores her resilience and the respect she commands even in the face of adversity. Nūšāba 's story likely draws inspiration from the Amazons, a mythical all-female warrior society. This echoes the legend of the Amazons. This mythological connection adds a layer of depth to Nūšāba ’s character, positioning her within a broader tradition of female warriors.

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[41] Niẓāmī. (n.d.). *Sharafnāma* (Canto 33: Nūšāba, the Queen of Bardaʿ). In *Khamseh* [Five Treasures]. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh33.

[42] The thematic elements of the Nūšāba narrative can be traced in two key episodes of the *Šāhnāme*: the stories of the Amazons and Queen Qaydāfa. Both narratives share motifs of powerful queens who test Alexander's wisdom and authority. In the Amazonian episode, a matriarchal society challenges Alexander, reflecting female sovereignty and martial strength themes. Similarly, Qaydāfa, the queen of Andalusia, engages in an intellectual confrontation with Alexander, assessing his identity and intentions before ultimately recognizing his legitimacy. These parallels highlight the recurring representation of female rulers as both challengers and arbiters of wisdom in Persian literary tradition.

[43] Niẓāmī. (n.d.). *Sharafnāma* (Canto 57: The Liberation of Nūšāba). In *Khamseh* [Five Treasures]. Available at: https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh57.

Niẓāmī portrays Nūšāba as a powerful woman in a unique society, without diminishing her after her capture. He respects her strength and position by arranging a marriage of equals with another ruler, rather than presenting her as a mere trophy of war. This portrayal maintains her dignity and status, highlighting Niẓāmī's nuanced and respectful treatment of her character. His depiction underscores her autonomy and significance, even in moments of vulnerability. Nūšāba is a compelling character who represents female leadership, strategic thinking, and unwavering devotion. Her association with the historically renowned Alexander elevates her status, making the name resonate with power, wisdom, and independence. Despite modern societal trends, the cultural reverence for Nūšāba 's legacy persists, reflecting the enduring impact of her character in Niẓāmī's narrative. Her story illustrates the complexities of leadership, the importance of strategic wisdom, and the strength of independent women.

All of these attributes have elevated Nūšāba to the status of a heroine and a symbol representing the ideals of the people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad regarding the archetype of a desirable woman. Consequently, this has inspired some people within the community to name their daughters Nūšāba . I have found no stories or references to Nūšāba in the folklore of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. The only indication of her presence is the naming of girls with this name in the distant past. Although the story of the fox, the wolf, and the dogs mentioned in this part of Niẓāmī's Iskandernāmeh is a famous Luri folktale (Matil) being told by people (Text U1).

Modern audiences perceive Nūšāba through the dual lens of her literary significance and the contemporary context of her name. The ridicule associated with the name "Nūšāba " as a soft drink in present-day Iran has somewhat overshadowed the historical and cultural significance of the character. This ridicule has impacted interpretations of her character, making it challenging for contemporary audiences to appreciate the depth and strength Nūšāba embodies in Niẓāmī's narrative

Ariobarzan

The name Ariobarzan, a simplified Persian pronunciation of the historical Ariobarzanes, was not commonly used in historical times and remains uncommon in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad despite his recognition as a local hero. This absence is particularly striking given that Ariobarzan is celebrated for his resistance against Alexander the Great. One possible reason

for this might be his eventual defeat, which could have diminished his appeal in naming traditions, as figures who triumphed often hold Alexander the Great a greater symbolic significance.

Notably, Ariobarzan does not appear in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma*. This omission is likely due to the absence of any mention of the Battle of the Persian Gate or other direct conflicts between Alexander and Iran in this region. Instead, Niẓāmī portrays Alexander as a ruler who revitalizes Iran, comparing his reign to the golden age of Kay Ḫusrow. This literary framing shifts the focus from Alexander as a conqueror to Alexander as a ruler who ultimately strengthened Persia. This factor may explain why Ariobarzan's legacy did not translate into widespread use as a personal name.

Local Narratives of Ariobarzan

Accounts of Ariobarzan in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad are fragmented, largely forgotten, and provide only vague details (*refer to Text E*). Until recently, there have been no recorded instances of individuals in the region using the name Ariobarzan nor any official documentation referencing him.

According to local tradition, Ariobarzan held off Alexander's forces for forty days and was on the verge of victory when a local shepherd betrayed him, revealing an alternative route that allowed Alexander's army to launch a surprise attack. However, there is no consensus regarding the tribal identity of Ariobarzan or the shepherd. While the shepherd is widely condemned, multiple tribes—including Ṭībī, Bahma'ī, and Boyer-Aḥmad—each claim Ariobarzan as their heroic ancestor.

This tribal association with Ariobarzan emphasizes bravery, nobility, and historical depth, reinforcing group identity and cultural pride. Competing claims over ancestral ties are common in the region, reflecting the broader importance of lineage and heroic narratives in maintaining communal cohesion. Local authors often favor one tribe over another, yet such claims are rarely supported by formal argument or historical evidence. As discussed in Chapter Two, formal education does not always hold significant weight among the Luri people, allowing these unchallenged narratives to persist and shape local patriotism.

Ultimately, the legend of Ariobarzan in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad underscores how his defiance against a powerful invader, combined with elements of betrayal and resistance, fosters a shared sense of historical pride. Although many aspects of these accounts have likely been embellished or reconstructed over time, they remain crucial in preserving regional identity and reinforcing heroic ancestry.

Ariobarzan's Cultural Memory in Regional Poetry

Ariobarzan's legacy is not confined to historical records but remains alive in regional literature, reinforcing his image as a symbol of defiance and endurance. One of the most striking modern interpretations is found in Faridun Dāvarī's poetry. Davari, a poet from Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, invokes Ariobarzan as a key figure in the region's historical consciousness, linking his defiance against Alexander with later struggles against foreign invaders, including Mahmud Hotak's Afghan[44] incursions. His poetry celebrates Ariobarzan's role as a guardian of Lur heritage and underscores the themes of loyalty, resistance, and betrayal that persist in oral traditions.

Faridun Dāvarī's Poem (1962–2023)

We are men, versed in valor's creed,

Ariobarzanes' sons, of noble seed.

In time's strife, we stand unswayed,

Grooms of toil, brides of pain arrayed.

We barred Alexander's Greek advance,

Defeated Mahmud's Afghan lance.

Hearts vast as seas, lions in might,

Heirs to Bijen's ***legends*** *bright.*

[44] Maḥmūd Ḥōtak (r. 1717–1725) was an Afghan ruler of the Hotak dynasty who led the invasion of Persia and overthrew the Safavid Empire. His forces captured Isfahan in 1720, marking a period of Afghan rule over Iran. His reign, characterized by military conquests and internal instability, ultimately ended with his assassination in 1725 (Encyclopaedia Iranica, n.d., s.v. "Ašraf Ḡilzay").

Recall Tang Tamaradi's fierce fight[45]

Foes fled, ***disgraced****, in panicked flight.*

Hospitality crowns our name with pride,

Berno's rhythm, drums, and order guide[46].

Dāvarī's verses demonstrate how regional identity is framed through resistance narratives. His portrayal of Ariobarzan mirrors the recurring motif in Lur folklore, where valiant heroes defy formidable invaders yet face treachery from within. The mention of "Alexander's Greek advance" and "Mahmud's Afghan lance" highlights the continuity of struggle, situating Ariobarzan within a broader historical arc of external threats. The reference to Tang Tamaradi—a site of a legendary battle in Lur oral tradition—reinforces the connection between Ariobarzan and later episodes of defiance.

This poetic tradition not only preserves Ariobarzane's legacy but also illustrates how historical figures are continuously reinterpreted within the evolving cultural framework of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Beyond regional memory, the name Ariobarzan has appeared in various historical contexts, often associated with figures across Persian and Hellenistic dynasties. The following section provides an overview of key historical personas bearing this name.

Historical Persona Named Ariobarzan

The name **Ariobarzan** appears in various historical contexts and is associated with multiple figures across different regions and dynasties. Below is an overview of key individuals bearing this name:

[45] The Battle of Tāmorādī, which took place in **1892 CE (1270 Š/1309 AH)**, was a significant conflict in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad between the imperial army under Major General Sheybani and the Boyer Ahmad clan led by Key Lohrasb. The battle ended in the tribe's victory and is frequently cited in local narratives as a defining moment of resistance. It is referenced in oral tradition and poetry as a symbol of defiance, reinforcing the region's historical identity. Much like the Battle of Guğehsūn, this event reflects a broader pattern of local resistance against external forces and continues to shape collective memory and regional historical consciousness (Visit Iran, n.d.).

[46] This is a long poem I brought only the relevant part مردیم و با مردانگی ها آشناییم/ فرزند آریوبرزن از نسل دناییم/ در کشمکش های زمانه مرد هستی/ داماد رنجیم و عروس درد هستیم/ اسکندر یونان را ما راه بستیم/ ما لشکر محمود افغان را شکستیم/ ما مردمی دریا دل و شیر اوژن هستیم/ ما صاحب اسطوره های بیژن هستیم/ یاد نبرد سخت تنگ تامرادی/ دشمن گریخت از مهلکه با نامرادی/ آهنگ بِرنو بانگ طبل و سازمان است/ مهمان نوازی خصلت ممتازمان است

No.	Name	Region / Dynasty	Dates / Reign	Additional Information
1	Ariobarzanes of Phrygia	Persian Satrap (Phrygia)	407–362 BC	Led a revolt against Artaxerxes II
2	Ariobarzanes, Satrap of Persis	Persian Satrap (Persis)	368–330 BC	Fought against Alexander the Great at the Battle of the Persian Gate
3	Ariobarzanes II of Cius	Mithridatic Dynasty of Pontus	Died 337 BC	Little is known beyond his position in the Mithridatic line
4	Ariobarzanes of Pontus	Mithridatic Dynasty of Pontus	Died 250 BC	Second king of Pontus
5	Ariobarzanes I (King of Cappadocia)	Kingdom of Cappadocia	Reigned 93–63 BC	Established a pro-Roman policy; sometimes referred to as Ariobarzanes Philoromaios
6	Ariobarzanes II (King of Cappadocia)	Kingdom of Cappadocia	Murdered before 51 BC	Son and successor of Ariobarzanes I; details of his reign are less documented
7	Ariobarzanes III (King of Cappadocia)	Kingdom of Cappadocia	Reigned 51–42 BC	Continued the family's alliance with Rome
8	Ariobarzanes I (Media Atropatene)	Media Atropatene, later briefly Armenia	Reigned 65–56 BC	Sometimes conflated with other rulers named Ariobarzanes due to overlapping periods
9	Ariobarzanes II	Media Atropatene and Armenia	20–8 BC (Media Atropatene) 2 BC–AD 4 (Armenia)	Oversaw both territories under Roman influence, possibly died in AD 4
10	Gaius Julius Ariobarzanes I	Media Atropatene / Armenia	1st century BC–1st century AD	Son of Ariobarzanes II; little is recorded beyond his succession
11	Gaius Julius Ariobarzanes II	Media Atropatene / Armenia	1st century AD	Possible son of Gaius Julius Ariobarzanes I; details of his reign remain unclear

Notes and Context

- The Persian Satraps named Ariobarzan served under the Achaemenid Empire and were primarily known for their military resistance or regional rebellions.

- The Mithridatic Dynasty of Pontus included figures connected to Mithridates' lineage, frequently engaged in alliances and conflicts with Hellenistic realms and, later, Rome.
- The Kings of Cappadocia, named Ariobarzan, generally aligned with Roman interests in Asia Minor, securing their rule through diplomatic maneuvering.
- In Media Atropatene and Armenia, rulers named Ariobarzan navigated the political tensions between Parthian and Roman influence.
- The recurrence of the name across different periods and regions often leads to scholarly confusion, requiring historical context, territorial associations, and epithets to differentiate between individuals.

Ariobarzan's Historical and Local Identity

After examining historical records of various persons bearing the name Ariobarzan, it appears highly probable that the local Ariobarzan of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad can be identified with Ariobarzan, the Satrap of Persis, who resisted Alexander the Great at the Battle of the Persian Gate in 330 BC. This identification is supported by chronological alignment, the geographical context of Persis in southwestern Iran, and the legacy of Ariobarzan's defense against Alexander's forces. While certain ambiguities remain due to overlapping names and the scarcity of contemporary sources, the available textual and archaeological evidence strongly suggests that this local persona's historical roots trace back to the famed satrap whose resistance at the Persian Gate briefly delayed one of history's most formidable military campaigns (Briant, 2012; Olmstead, 1948).

The historical Ariobarzan's strategic attempt to halt Alexander's advance has been reinterpreted in local narratives as a prolonged and heroic defense. His efforts to block the Macedonian army are depicted as an almost victorious endeavor, emphasizing his bravery and tactical acumen. The local tradition enhances his character by incorporating themes of love and sacrifice, presenting Ariobarzan as someone who forsakes personal happiness to defend his land. This reimagining highlights his noble character and unwavering commitment to his people.

Another significant motif in the local version of Ariobarzan's story is **betrayal**, specifically by a shepherd who reveals an alternative route to Alexander's forces, leading to Ariobarzan's downfall. The theme of betrayal by a trusted persona is not unique to this narrative but is a recurring element in epic traditions. A parallel can be drawn with the **betrayal of Darius III by his courtiers**, which facilitated his defeat against Alexander, who later punished the traitors.

In the **Luri version**, Alexander similarly punishes the treacherous shepherd, adding a tragic dimension to the story. This retelling reinforces the universal themes of **loyalty and treachery**, emphasizing that even the greatest heroes remain vulnerable to deceit. Similarly, in the *Šāhnāme*, Alexander punishes the traitors who betrayed King Dara, reinforcing the narrative of justice and retribution in Persian literary tradition.

The **Achaemenid military system** allowed rulers to conscript soldiers from various provinces for specific campaigns, a practice similar to the **haṭru-system** described in historical documents. Levied troops from the provinces were recruited for military campaigns, although they lacked the elite armor and weaponry of the Persian Immortals. Despite this, they formed an essential part of the Achaemenid army (Waters, 2021, p. 15). This suggests that the historical Ariobarzan likely commanded troops recruited from local soldiers, which helps explain why regional tribes take pride in his legacy.

These narratives reinforce tribal pride and identity by associating Ariobarzan with specific **local tribes**. Claiming him as one of their own allows these communities to align themselves with his bravery and noble actions, fostering a shared sense of historical and cultural continuity. This reinterpretation strengthens communal bonds and reinforces values of **courage and patriotism**, transforming Ariobarzan's localized legend into a source of inspiration for future generations.

It is important to recognize that historical accounts are often shaped by the perspectives and biases of those who record them. In addition to local writers, ancient historians may have had their own cultural, political, or personal influences, affecting how historical personas and events were portrayed. Acknowledging these potential biases helps provide a more nuanced and critical understanding of Ariobarzan's legacy, distinguishing between historical fact and cultural reinterpretation.

Yūtā

Yūtā is the Luri pronunciation of Yūtāb, which means "shining and unique" in Persian (Dehkhoda, 1989) and is also linked to Iotapa (**Ἰωτάπη** in Ancient Greek) as attested in Greek sources (Hornblower et al., 2012, s.v. "Iotapa"). According to local folklore in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Yūtā was the sister of Ariobarzan, described as a skilled archer and warrior who fought alongside her brother in defense of the region (*refer to Text E*).

Although several historical personas bore Iotapa, none can be directly linked to Ariobarzan of Persis. This discrepancy suggests a possible historical misattribution, where different Iotapas may have contributed to the evolution of the local myth. The origins of the Yūtā narrative remain unclear. However, trade relations with other regions and the introduction of printing technology during the Qajar period may have played a role in the transmission or preservation of the story.

Historical Persona Named Iotapa

Iotapa appears in various historical contexts, primarily among Hellenistic and Roman-influenced royal families. The following table provides an overview of notable individuals bearing this name:

No.	Name	Parentage	Spouse(s)	Titles / Additional Information
1	Iotapa (daughter of Artavasdes I)	Daughter of King Artavasdes I of Media Atropatene	King Mithridates III of Commagene	Queen consort of Commagene
2	Iotapa (spouse of Antiochus III)	Daughter of King Mithridates III of Commagene	Antiochus III (her brother)	—
3	Iotapa (spouse of Sampsiceramus II)	Daughter of King Mithridates III and Iotapa (both of Commagene)	King Sampsiceramus II of Emesa	—
4	Iotapa (daughter of Sampsiceramus II)	Daughter of King Sampsiceramus II of Emesa	Herodian Prince Aristobulus Minor	—
5	Julia Iotapa (daughter of Antiochus III)	Daughter of King Antiochus III of Commagene	King Antiochus IV of Commagene (her brother)	—
6	Julia Iotapa (daughter of Antiochus IV)	Daughter of King Antiochus IV of Commagene	Gaius Julius Alexander	Queen of Cetis
7	Julia Iotapa (Cilician Princess)	Daughter of King Gaius Julius Alexander (Cilicia)	Gaius Julius Quadratus Bassus, a Roman Senator	—

Notes and Context

- Many of these historical Iotapas were closely interlinked through **familial marriages**, a common practice among **Hellenistic and Roman-influenced dynasties**.
- Titles such as **"Queen consort"** or **"Queen of Cetis"** indicate royal status acquired through **marriage or inheritance**.
- In cases without a formal title, status is inferred from lineage and consortship.

One Iotapa appears connected to an Ariobarzan among the identified historical personas, though this association requires careful examination. Historical records indicate that Ariobarzan I of Media Atropatene, who ruled in the 1st century BC, had a sister named Iotapa. However, it is crucial to differentiate historical personas from those in local myths.

The idea that Ariobarzan had a sister named Yūtā likely arises from the confusion between Ariobarzan of Persis and Ariobarzan, the king of Media Atropatene, leading to the emergence of Yūtā as a legendary persona in local folklore. The absence of any reference to Yūtāb or Ariobarzan in primary historical sources, such as Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma* (12th century) and Firdawsī's *Šāhnāme* (10th century), further supports this argument. While historical misattribution appears to be the most plausible explanation, it is important to recognize that other, less-documented factors may have also contributed to the formation of this local legend.

The Persistence and Evolution of the Yūtā/Yūtāb Narrative

The persistence of the Yūtā/Yūtāb narrative in the oral and textual traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad likely stems from the conflation of distinct historical personas, a phenomenon reinforced by cultural transmission networks over centuries. Safavid-era trade routes (16th–18th centuries) were key to this process, which facilitated the circulation of names, archetypes, and oral histories across southwestern Iran. These networks, extending from the Zagros highlands to urban centers like Isfahan, acted as channels for syncretic storytelling, allowing regional personas like Yūtāb to enter broader Persianate discourse.

By the Qajar period (19th century), the introduction of letterpress printing—part of Crown Prince ʿAbbās Mīrzā's modernization efforts (Floor, 2008)—accelerated the codification and dissemination of such narratives. Mass-produced texts, including regional chronicles and

poetic anthologies, helped transform localized oral traditions into standardized literary accounts, embedding Yūtāb's story within Iran's collective memory.

Sociocultural Resonance and Female Archetypes

The endurance of the Yūtāb narrative is rooted in its sociocultural relevance, particularly its representation of female agency within Luri society. Yūtāb is portrayed as a martial archetype—a skilled archer and tactician fighting with her brother to defend territorial sovereignty. This image aligns with zan-e mīsālī (the exemplary woman), a central theme in Luri matīl (allegorical tales) and timsāl (proverbial sayings). A direct parallel is found in Bī Mattī, the heroine of the Haft Ḫwāharān (Seven Sisters) cycle, who embodies courage and strategic acumen—traits also attributed to Yūtāb.

Additionally, the adoption of Nūšāba, the warrior-queen from Niẓāmī Ganjavī's *Iskandarnāma* (12th century), into regional lore suggests a conscious curation of female empowerment tropes. These narratives served as pedagogical tools, reinforcing resilience and leadership as key virtues within Luri patrilineal pastoral societies.

Political Instrumentalization and Nationalist Appropriation

The politicization of Yūtāb's narrative in Iran's early modern period further cemented its cultural significance. The Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911), which redefined citizenship and civic participation, coincided with a growing emphasis on women's roles in anti-colonial and nationalist movements. Yūtāb, as a symbol of defiance against foreign domination, resonated with reformist intellectuals seeking historical precedents for female mobilization.

During this period, regional heroines were deliberately integrated into national historiography, akin to Hobsbawm's concept of "invented tradition," in which folklore is appropriated to forge collective identity (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). By framing Yūtāb as a Luri and Iranian icon, her story was incorporated into state-led cultural homogenization projects, expanding its reach beyond its original regional context.

From Oral Tradition to Institutionalized Myth

The rise of Yūtāb's narrative to national prominence reflects the interplay between oral tradition and institutional historiography. Contemporary surveys indicate widespread acceptance of

Yūtāb as Ariobarzan's sister, often conflated with Ariobarzan, the Achaemenid commander at the Battle of the Persian Gates (330 BCE). Though historically unsubstantiated, this popular association illustrates how regional oral traditions gain legitimacy through their connection to canonical historical events.

As Anderson (1983) theorized, such narratives become "imagined" components of national identity, sustained by emotional appeal rather than empirical accuracy. The persistence of the Yūtāb myth highlights how folklore adapts to shifting cultural and political landscapes, reinforcing collective memory even in the absence of historical verifiability.

The Yūtā/Yūtāb narrative exemplifies the complex interplay of historical accident, technological innovation, and ideological utility. Its endurance is shaped by the following:

1. The role of trade and print capitalism in amplifying regional voices.
2. The archetypal strength of female agency in Luri sociocultural pedagogy.
3. The deliberate appropriation of folklore in modern nation-building projects.

As both a regional symbol of pride and a nationalist emblem, Yūtāb's story demonstrates how marginalized histories are reconfigured to serve evolving political and cultural agendas—a phenomenon central to understanding Iran's contested historiography.

5.3. The Gendered Archetypes and Cultural Dialectics in the Luri Alexander Romance: A Critical Analysis of Female Representation

The Luri oral rendition of the Alexander Romance offers a nuanced perspective on the interplay of gender, power, and cultural identity in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. This analysis examines the portrayal of female characters—including Alexander's mother, wife, mistress, and the figures of Ariobarzan's beloved and sister—to explore how their roles reflect, reinforce, and sometimes subvert sociocultural norms. By situating these narratives within the broader framework of Luri oral traditions, this study highlights the tension between patriarchal structures and female agency, revealing how idealized femininity and pragmatic gender roles interact within pre-modern tribal contexts.

The Luri Alexander Romance is a living oral tradition, dynamically assimilating historical memory into localized sociocultural paradigms. Female characters in these narratives are not

merely passive figures but symbolic constructs encoding tribal values. Employing a hermeneutic approach informed by feminist folklore studies (cf. Dundes, 1980; Mills, 1991), this analysis interprets these archetypes as expressions of Lur gender ideology, where female representation fluctuates between cultural allegory and social reality.

5.3.1. Archetypal Constructs and Their Sociocultural Implications

A. The Matriarch as Spiritual Authority: Alexander's Mother

Alexander's mother epitomizes the wise matriarch, a recurring archetype in Lur oral traditions. Her role extends beyond domesticity; she orchestrates his funeral rites, delivering a eulogy emphasizing humility and divine obedience. This role aligns with Luri kinship structures, where older women wield moral and spiritual authority, mediating between the living and ancestral spirits. Ethnographic studies highlight how Luri women play a central role in funerary rituals (Amān Allāhī Bahārvand, 2002), reinforcing their position as custodians of tribal cohesion during crises.

B. The Marginalized Outsider: Alexander's Wife

Alexander's wife is described as qarīb (outsider/oppressed), reflecting the liminality of Lur patrilineal clans' exogamous brides. Intra-clan endogamy, particularly between paternal cousins, is favored to consolidate tribal solidarity, while outsiders—even of elite Persian lineage—are systematically disempowered (Vanden Berghe, 1961). Her erasure from the narrative (reduced to "Iranian origin, one son") mirrors Lur skepticism toward exogamy, a common theme in regional folklore, where foreign brides symbolize destabilizing external influences. The fact that Alexander entrusts her to his mother's care underscores her dependence on internal tribal structures, reinforcing the cultural notion that female agency derives solely from within the clan.

C. The Seductress as Scapegoat: Alexander's Mistress

In Luri oral tradition, Thaïs[47]—Alexander's mistress and the alleged instigator of Persepolis's destruction—is vilified under the epithet *Tāš Gerote* (Luri: "may she burn"). This portrayal transforms her into a narrative scapegoat, absolving Alexander of responsibility for burning the Persian capital. Such absolution may reflect Alexander's ambivalent legacy in Persianate cultures, where he is condemned as a conqueror and admired as a bearer of civilization. The motif reflects broader cross-cultural anxieties about the "dangerous seductress" (cf. *Pandora*, *Eve*), reinforcing patriarchal fears of female autonomy. Stripped of historical nuance, Thaïs becomes anonymous and morally corrupt—a sharp contrast to the valorized Persian women within the same tradition. This dichotomy underscores a recurring cultural theme: virtuous tribal women are idealized, while deceitful outsiders—embodied by figures like *Tāš Gerote*—symbolize transgressive femininity, threatening communal stability. Such tropes persist in Luri curses, where her name is both condemnation and warning.

D. The Heroic Collaborator: Ariobarzan's Beloved

Ariobarzan's beloved exemplifies the tribal consort, whose support—symbolized by gifting her kerchief and fastening his gaiter—enhances male heroism. This portrayal reflects ethnographic accounts of Luri women in conflict zones, where they provide emotional and material support during inter-clan warfare (Hassanpour, 1994). The contrast between Ariobarzan's beloved and Alexander's mistress suggests a deliberate cultural revisionism, where Persian women are romanticized to affirm Lur-Iranian identity against the Hellenized "other."

[47] Thaïs (تائیس), an Athenian *hetaira* active in the late 4th century BCE, played a notable role in the entourage of Alexander the Great and later became associated with Ptolemy I Soter. Ancient sources most famously describe her as the instigator of the burning of Persepolis, claiming that she urged Alexander during a banquet to set fire to the palace. Although scholars continue to debate the historical accuracy of this account, her presence remains well-attested in both historical and literary traditions. For further details, see *Brill's New Pauly* (n.d., s.v. "Thaïs").

E. The Warrior Woman: Ariobarzan's Sister

Ariobarzan's sister disrupts gender binaries as a martial figure, echoing historical accounts of Luri women in combat (e.g., Bībī Maryam Baḫtīārī in the 19th century). Her presence in the narrative signals the conditional acceptance of female agency: women may assume warrior roles in defense of kinship, but this power remains constrained by patriarchal structures.

5.3.2. Cultural Dialectics and Implications for Gender Representation in the Luri Alexander Romance

The **gendered constructs in the Luri Alexander Romance** reflect a **complex interplay between reinforcement and subversion of patriarchal norms.** On the one hand, the vilification of **Alexander's mistress** and the marginalization of **his wife** reinforce **traditional gender hierarchies,** portraying women who exist outside the bounds of tribal structures as destabilizing figures. This aligns with **Lur societal norms**, where **endogamous marriage practices** uphold kinship-based solidarity, while **exogamous figures**—even those of noble Persian descent—are viewed with suspicion and limited agency.

However, alongside this reinforcement of male-dominated structures, the narrative creates space for female agency within culturally sanctioned roles. Figures such as Alexander's mother, who exercises spiritual authority, and Ariobarzan's sister, who assumes a martial role, illustrate how female power is permitted and even valorized when it serves the preservation of tribal structures. This duality mirrors **Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of the "patriarchal bargain,"**[48] in which women navigate restrictive systems by adopting culturally sanctioned roles that provide them with **alternative forms of influence and power.**

[48] Deniz Kandiyoti's (1944) concept of the "patriarchal bargain" refers to how women negotiate power within patriarchal systems by adopting culturally sanctioned roles that provide them with relative autonomy and security. She argues that rather than universally resisting patriarchy, women often strategically conform to traditional gender norms in ways that afford them social capital, influence, and agency within their respective communities. The nature of these bargains varies depending on regional, historical, and sociocultural contexts.
In tribal and kinship-based societies, such as the Lur communities discussed in this study, women can exercise authority through specific roles—spiritual mediators, matriarchal figures, or symbolic protectors of lineage and honor—even while remaining within the constraints of a male-dominated structure. The Luri Alexander Romance exemplifies this dual structure, wherein women are marginalized in some respects (e.g., Alexander's wife) and empowered in others (e.g., Ariobarzan's sister, who takes on a martial role).
Kandiyoti's framework provides a useful lens for analyzing these narratives. It explains how oral traditions reflect the resilience and adaptability of gender roles within patriarchal societies.

This dynamic negotiation of gender roles within oral traditions underscores the broader significance of folk narratives in shaping collective identity. The Luri Alexander Romance does not simply **reflect** gender norms—it also **reproduces, reconfigures, and occasionally challenges them** in ways relevant to contemporary tribal dynamics.

Analyzing these portrayals provides critical insights into how oral traditions function as repositories of gender ideology, particularly in marginalized communities where historical narratives and mythologies serve as tools for cultural assertion. A comparative approach—examining other regional oral traditions, such as Kurdish Šāhnāme variants—could offer valuable perspectives on the broader patterns of gender representation in Iranian folklore. Similarly, ethnographic studies on the persistence of these archetypes in modern Lur society could reveal how these narratives continue to shape gender expectations and social structures.

Oral traditions should not be viewed as static relics of the past but as living, evolving discourses that reflect and shape sociocultural imaginaries. In the case of the Luri Alexander Romance, the interplay between subversion and reinforcement of patriarchal norms highlights the flexibility of folklore as both a means of preserving tradition and a space for negotiating identity.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored how Alexander the Great's legacy in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad has been embedded within Lur's historical memory, mythology, and cultural identity. By examining toponyms, onomastic practices, oral traditions, and gendered narratives, the discussion has demonstrated how Lur society has reinterpreted Alexander's presence through a localized lens, transforming historical figures and events into meaningful cultural symbols.

The chapter has highlighted the role of toponyms—such as Tang-ārī and Dašt-e Rūm—in preserving historical memory and reinforcing Lur identity. These place names serve as mnemonic markers, merging Hellenistic narratives with indigenous oral traditions. The comparison between Iskandar-e Maqdūnī and Kay Ḫusrow has further illustrated how Alexander's myth has been assimilated into the broader Iranian mythological framework, particularly in the Lur oral tradition.

The chapter has also demonstrated how personal naming practices reflect historical consciousness and sociocultural values. While names such as Eskandar and Nūšāba remain embedded in Lur society, the absence of Ariobarzan as a commonly used name suggests the complexities of historical commemoration and selective memory. The case of Yūtāb (Yūtā) further exemplifies how oral traditions can conflate different historical figures, resulting in localized legends that integrate themes of heroism, gender roles, and tribal identity.

Furthermore, the gendered analysis of the Lur Alexander Romance has revealed how female archetypes in oral traditions negotiate patriarchal structures. Figures such as Ariobarzan's sister and Nūšāba underscore women's agency in tribal society, while Alexander's mistress and wife illustrate the tensions between external influences and Lur sociocultural norms. This dynamic interplay between reinforcement and subversion of patriarchal values reflects the adaptive nature of oral traditions in shaping gender roles.

Ultimately, this chapter has situated Lur oral traditions within broader historiographical and ethnographic frameworks, revealing how historical events are reinterpreted to serve cultural continuity and communal identity. By mapping Alexander's legacy onto the landscape, personal names, and gender constructs, the discussion underscores how oral traditions function as both a repository of historical memory and a means of cultural resistance against external hegemony.

These findings provide a foundation for further interdisciplinary research, particularly in the areas of oral tradition studies, regional historiography, and comparative mythology. Understanding how historical narratives are constructed, preserved, and adapted within tribal societies remains critical to broader discussions on identity formation, historical memory, and the intersections of myth and reality in the Iranian cultural landscape.

Conclusion and Contributions

Dissertation Summary

This thesis consists of five chapters, each analyzing key aspects of Luri oral traditions related to Alexander the Great and their role in shaping historical and identity consciousness. These traditions do not merely reflect the past but function as an active historiographical force, preserving, reinterpreting, and transforming Alexander's memory. Through narrative adaptation and selective emphasis, they construct a distinct historical image of Alexander that aligns with and challenges broader Persian and Islamic representations. In some Luri narratives, Alexander is reimagined as a local hero, a characterization that contrasts with his more ambivalent depiction in Persian and Islamic texts. By mediating historical memory, these traditions contribute to negotiating regional identity. This dynamic process underscores the power of storytelling in shaping collective historical and cultural perceptions, offering a nuanced perspective on Alexander that reflects the depth of Luri heritage.

Chapter One

Chapter One establishes the foundation of this dissertation by examining the transmission, transformation, and regional adaptations of the Alexander Romance across written and oral traditions. Using a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, it integrates textual criticism, historical analysis, and ethnographic insights to trace the legend's evolution from Greek to Byzantine, Syriac, and Persian sources, culminating in Iranian oral traditions.

The chapter first explores the Greek origins of the Alexander Romance, distinguishing between historical accounts (Callisthenes, Arrian) and fictionalized narratives (Pseudo-Callisthenes), which introduced mythological elements that facilitated cross-cultural adaptation. It then examines the legend's transformation in Byzantine and Syriac sources, emphasizing Christian theological reinterpretations and the possible influence of a lost Middle Persian intermediary.

Persian sources present two contrasting portrayals of Alexander:

- **Zoroastrian texts** (*Bundahišn, Dēnkard*) depict him as an accursed figure responsible for Persia's decline.
- **Islamic and Persian literary traditions** (*Šāhnāme, Iskandarnāme*) portray him as a philosopher-king or divinely guided prophet (*Ḏu'l-Qarnayn*).

The chapter then turns to Iranian oral traditions, particularly in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, where Alexander is preserved as a heroic figure. Using oral-formulaic theory and ethnographic methods, it demonstrates how oral narratives shape historical memory by adapting Alexander's image to local sociopolitical contexts.

Methodological and Theoretical Framework

This chapter employs:

- **Cultural memory theory** (Assmann) to analyze ideological adaptations.
- **Oral-formulaic theory** (Lord, Parry) to examine the structure and transmission of oral narratives.
- **Intertextuality and adaptation studies** to trace the Romance's evolution across linguistic and religious boundaries.

Original Contribution and Significance

This chapter integrates written and oral traditions, addressing a critical gap by analyzing understudied Persian oral narratives and situating Persian sources within broader Byzantine and Syriac traditions. Its focused scope (excluding Armenian and Coptic traditions) ensures methodological rigor. This chapter establishes the foundation for the dissertation's broader argument on the interplay between textual and oral storytelling in shaping historical memory by demonstrating that the Alexander Romance is a dynamic and evolving tradition.

Chapter two

Chapter Two provides a socio-political and historical analysis of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, situating Luri oral traditions within their broader social and political context. It examines the region's geographical, political, and social structure, tracing historical transformations that shaped its tribal system, identity, and oral traditions. The chapter uses historical and sociological methodologies to explore how colonial policies, modernization efforts, and state interventions impacted Lur society and its oral narratives.

The chapter begins by outlining the methodological framework, integrating historical sociology and ethnographic analysis to assess socio-political shifts in the Luri tribal system. It then examines the geographical and environmental characteristics of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, emphasizing their influence on tribal mobility, settlement patterns, and cultural resilience.

The socio-political structure of the Lur tribes is analyzed through their hierarchical organization, historically centered around kinship networks, tribal governance, and the role of the **Ḫān**. The chapter discusses the centralization policies of the Pahlavi dynasty, which sought to dismantle tribal autonomy through:

- **Forced settlement** of nomadic groups
- **Disarmament policies**
- **Implementation of the Public Military Service Law**
- **Land reforms** that altered traditional ownership structures
- **Attire regulations** aimed at cultural homogenization
- **Marginalization of women** within tribal communities

These interventions profoundly affected tribal governance, economic structures, and cultural identity, eroding traditional power hierarchies and integrating tribal societies into the broader Iranian state. The chapter argues that oral traditions persisted as cultural resistance, preserving alternative historical narratives that challenged dominant state discourse despite these transformations.

Methodological and Theoretical Framework

This chapter applies:

- **Historical sociology** to analyze socio-political transformations.
- **Cultural memory theory** to explore how oral traditions maintain historical consciousness.
- **Political anthropology** to assess tribal governance and power dynamics.

Original Contribution and Significance

This chapter situates Luri oral traditions within their sociopolitical and historical landscape, offering a novel interdisciplinary perspective on the resilience of oral narratives amid state-led modernization efforts. It fills a scholarly gap by demonstrating how tribal identity, governance, and storytelling evolved in response to political pressures, particularly during the Pahlavi era.

Through this analysis, Chapter Two establishes the socio-historical context necessary to understand the role of Luri oral traditions in shaping historical memory. This reinforces the dissertation's argument that oral storytelling is not a passive reflection of the past but an active force in negotiating cultural identity and resistance.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three examines the representation of Alexander the Great in the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, where he is known as *Iskandar-e Maqdūnī*. It explores how Luri oral traditions reinterpret Alexander's image, adapting his legacy to local socio-political contexts. Using ethnographic fieldwork and comparative analysis, this chapter investigates how oral storytelling preserves, reconfigures, and negotiates historical memory, offering an alternative perspective to Persian literary and historical accounts.

The chapter begins by outlining the collection and analysis of oral narratives, detailing the methodologies used in documenting, transcribing, and translating these stories. It situates Luri oral traditions within broader global and Indigenous storytelling frameworks, drawing on Mahuika's (2021) perspective on Indigenous oral histories to argue that Luri narratives should be understood through insider epistemologies rather than external classifications.

The second section categorizes oral traditions into *Maṣal* (proverbs), *Muqawwim* (chants), *Tīmṣāl* (literary adaptations and genealogies), *Matīl* (fables), and *Iʿtiqāt* (beliefs). The study finds that Alexander's stories in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad primarily fall under *Tīmṣāl* (literary interpretation) and *Iʿtiqāt* (beliefs), with some instances in *Maṣal* (proverbial wisdom). The linguistic and etymological origins of these categories reveal cross-cultural exchanges with Arabic, Persian, and Syriac influences, demonstrating how oral traditions function as contact zones for linguistic and historical synthesis.

The third section examines oral narratives of Alexander, showing how he is depicted as:

- A legendary ruler embodying justice and wisdom, reflecting local values of governance.
- A historical figure intertwined with regional conflicts, particularly in narratives about Āriyobarzan's resistance against Alexander.
- A mystical figure connected to supernatural elements, as seen in stories about the Water of Life and encounters with magical beings.

These narratives present a unique regional perception of Alexander, distinct from Persian literary sources such as the *Šāhnāme* and *Iskandarnāme*. While Zoroastrian traditions depict Alexander as a destructive force, Luri oral traditions offer a more ambivalent and sometimes even favorable portrayal, aligning him with Luri socio-political structures and leadership ideals.

Methodological and Theoretical Framework

This chapter applies:

- Ethnographic fieldwork to document oral storytelling practices.
- Cultural memory theory (Assmann) to examine how oral traditions preserve historical consciousness.
- Oral-formulaic theory (Lord, Parry) to analyze how Luri narratives structure and transmit historical memory.
- Postcolonial and Indigenous methodologies (Mahuika) to critique Western frameworks of categorizing oral traditions.

Original Contribution and Significance

This chapter offers a novel contribution by systematically categorizing Luri oral traditions on Alexander the Great. It demonstrates how oral storytelling reshapes historical figures within localized cultural and political landscapes. Integrating oral histories with textual traditions challenges dominant historiographies, offering an alternative perspective on the transmission of the Alexander Romance.

Chapter Three reinforces the dissertation's central argument that oral traditions are active agents of historical interpretation, shaping regional identity and collective memory. This analysis highlights the dynamism of oral traditions, showing that Alexander's legend is preserved and actively transformed to reflect contemporary socio-political realities in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four explores how the works of Niẓāmī Ganjavī—particularly his Ḫamsa—have left a significant and enduring impact on the oral storytelling traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Moving beyond Alexander-focused narratives, the chapter broadens the lens to consider the transmission and transformation of literary motifs from *Iskandarnāma*, *Ḫusraw va Šīrīn*, *Laylī va Maǧnūn*, *Haft Paykar*, and *Maḫzan al-asrār* into the region's oral culture. The chapter argues that these literary elements do not survive as static references but are actively reshaped within the region's moral, cultural, and aesthetic frameworks.

The first part of the chapter provides historical and literary background on Niẓāmī's life, oeuvre, and the cultural role of Ganja as a regional intellectual hub in the 12th century. It highlights Niẓāmī's innovation in the romantic epic genre, his symbolic and philosophical depth, and his synthesis of Persian, Islamic, and Turkic traditions. Each major poem in the *Ḫamsa* is then discussed in detail, emphasizing the narrative structure, thematic complexity, and moral or allegorical orientation.

The second part of the chapter traces these themes into the oral traditions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Through a detailed examination of collected folktales—referred to as *matīl* and *timsāl*—the chapter demonstrates how Niẓāmī's narratives have been internalized, adapted, and recontextualized in Luri storytelling. Stories about strategic cleverness, secret-bearing barbers, female agency, divine fate, and moral justice are interpreted as oral reflections or transformations of motifs found in Niẓāmī's works.

Two core examples form the analytical backbone of this section:

- The story of the **fox, dogs, and wolves** mirrors the Šarafnāme's emphasis on strategic wisdom over brute force.

- The tale of the **barber and the horned king** parallels the *Kheradnāme* section of *Iskandarnāma*, which is itself in dialogue with the Midas myth. It reveals transregional layers of cultural transmission and symbolic politics of secrecy.

Further sections extend this comparative framework, analyzing stories with parallels to:

- *Haft Paykar* (e.g., the tale of Ḫuršīd Āfarīn and the king, based on the motif of the impossible task),
- *Laylī va Mağnūn* (themes of unfulfilled love and spiritual longing),
- *Maḫzan al-asrār* (moral allegories on Good and Evil),
- Moreover, other stories that explore repentance (*tūba*), divine reward for honesty, and karmic justice—elements central to Niẓāmī's ethical-poetic vision.

Methodological and Theoretical Framework

This chapter employs the following approaches:

- **Intertextual analysis** compares motifs between classical Persian literature and Luri oral texts.
- **Comparative folklore studies** are used to trace shared narrative logics across oral and manuscript traditions.
- **Narrative theory and ethics** are used to evaluate how storytelling reflects and enacts local moral systems.
- **Reception studies**, to investigate how canonical texts are absorbed into non-literate cultural spaces.

Original Contribution and Significance

Chapter Four offers a significant contribution by demonstrating that Niẓāmī's influence is not confined to courtly manuscript culture but has actively shaped oral narrative traditions in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. The chapter challenges the strict dichotomy between elite literary production and local oral cultures, showing that motifs, characters, and ethical paradigms from the *Ḫamsa* have permeated the region's collective memory.

This chapter also contributes to the broader argument of the dissertation: that oral traditions serve as dynamic frameworks for cultural continuity, adaptation, and identity formation. By

tracing the echoes of Niẓāmī's classical Persian themes in rural and tribal storytelling, the chapter uncovers a rich intertextual field where Persianate values, Sufi ethics, and Luri social norms are creatively negotiated.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five examines the historical and cultural significance of Alexander's incursion into Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, analyzing how his presence has been localized within regional historical memory, mythology, and identity. It traces the interplay between history and legend, demonstrating how toponyms, personal names, and gendered narratives preserve and reinterpret his legacy.

The first section explores **onomastics and toponyms**, analyzing how geographical landmarks in the Zagros Mountains—such as **Tang-ārī, Dašt-e Rūm, and Dey wo Dodar**—have become embedded in local oral traditions. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and historical texts, the analysis shows how these sites function as **cultural markers** that blur the distinction between historical events and legendary constructs, reinforcing Lur's identity and historical consciousness. The chapter also compares **Alexander and Kay Ḫusrow**, illustrating how both figures serve as mythic rulers in Luri oral traditions, reflecting shared themes of **divine favor, just leadership, and conquest**.

The second section investigates **naming practices**, analyzing how names such as **Eskandar and Nūšāba** persist in Luri oral traditions, reinforcing Alexander's cultural significance. The study contrasts this with the **absence of Ariobarzan** as a commonly used name, suggesting that **selective memory and political narratives** influence historical commemoration. The chapter also examines **Yūtā (Yūtā), the supposed sister of Ariobarzan**, demonstrating how oral traditions conflate historical figures, integrating them into localized heroic narratives.

The third section provides a **gendered analysis** of the Luri Alexander Romance, exploring the portrayal of female figures such as **Alexander's mother, wife, mistress, and Ariobarzan's sister and beloved**. Using feminist folklore studies and cultural dialectics, the analysis examines how oral traditions reinforce and subvert patriarchal structures. Figures such as **Ariobarzan's sister and Nūšāba** represent female agency within tribal society, whereas **Alexander's wife and mistress** illustrate tensions between external influences and Lur sociocultural norms. This section reveals how **gendered archetypes in oral traditions negotiate power, resistance, and identity**.

Methodological and Theoretical Framework

This chapter applies:

- **Oral tradition studies** to analyze how toponyms and names function as mnemonic devices.
- **Cultural memory theory** (Assmann) to examine how Lur society constructs and preserves Alexander's legacy.
- **Feminist folklore studies** (Dundes, Mills) explore the intersection of gender, power, and oral tradition.
- **Comparative mythology** to situate Luri narratives within broader Iranian and Hellenistic traditions.

Original Contribution and Significance

This chapter offers a novel synthesis by mapping Alexander's legacy onto Luri **cultural landscapes, onomastics, and gendered narratives**. It fills a critical gap in scholarship by demonstrating how oral traditions **actively reconstruct historical figures**, integrating them into localized identity formation.

Chapter Five analyzes the intersection of **geography, historical memory, and gender**, reinforcing the dissertation's broader argument that oral traditions are not passive reflections of history but **dynamic frameworks that negotiate cultural identity and resistance**. The findings lay the groundwork for further interdisciplinary research in **oral history, comparative mythology, and gender studies**, demonstrating the complexity of historical adaptation in tribal societies.

Major Findings

This research finds that oral narratives of Alexander the Great in the Luri tradition are fluid and shaped by socio-political contexts. Unlike literary representations, Lur storytellers depict Alexander in multiple ways—as a just ruler, a conqueror, or a symbolic figure of moral dilemmas. This adaptability underscores oral tradition as an active historical process, where

narratives evolve in response to generational and ideological shifts, prioritizing cultural relevance over rigid factual consistency.

Additionally, this research has documented previously unrecorded oral versions of Alexander's legend, highlighting their critical role in local historiography. These narratives counterbalance Persian nationalist interpretations and Western historiographical perspectives, demonstrating the resilience of Luri oral traditions. This finding is significant for preserving narratives that might otherwise be lost and contributing a new dimension to Iranian oral historiography.

Methodological Scope and Localized Focus

This study's exclusive focus on **Luri oral traditions** reflects a deliberate methodological choice to prioritize **depth over breadth**. While comparative analyses of Kurdish, Pashto, or Anatolian narratives of Alexander could yield valuable insights, such an approach would require extensive linguistic and historical engagement beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, a **localized focus on Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad** ensures analytical precision. This allows for a culturally grounded examination of **Luri oral historiography** without the risks of overgeneralization inherent in cross-regional comparisons. This **localized approach** is a key strength, providing a solid foundation for the analysis.

Their unique narrative logic further justifies the decision to center **Luri traditions**, which are deeply intertwined with **tribal identity and regional memory**. For instance, the Luri reinterpretation of **Iskandar-e Maqdūnī (Alexander the Accursed)** reflects localized socio-political dynamics, resisting assimilation into Persian literary or nationalist frameworks. By foregrounding these narratives, this study addresses a critical gap in Alexander's scholarship, which has historically **privileged Greek, Persian, and Islamic textual sources**.

This methodological narrowing does not diminish the value of future comparative work but **establishes a foundational framework** for such research. The specificity of this analysis ensures that **Luri oral traditions are understood on their terms**, free from external analogies that might obscure their cultural significance. Subsequent studies may build on this foundation to explore broader patterns of oral historiography across Iranian or Near Eastern contexts, offering new insights and perspectives.

Oral Traditions as Cultural Resistance

This study positions **Luri oral tradition** as a site of **resistance** against **state-imposed historiography**. While the Iranian state has elevated the Šāhnāme as a nationalist text, oral performers and storytellers in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad have preserved an **alternative historical framework** where **Niẓāmī's works** hold significant cultural weight. The Luri tradition's selective engagement with Persian literary figures like **Niẓāmī** reflects **agency rather than passive assimilation**, as these works are **reinterpreted** to reinforce **local identity and resistance**. While **Iskandarnāma** was not as frequently recited as **Ḫusraw va Šīrīn**, its **influence endured**, underscoring **Niẓāmī's literary prestige** in shaping Luri oral tradition.

Moreover, this research highlights the role of **oral tradition in preserving marginalized histories**. The continued preference for **female warrior archetypes** like **Yūtāb** in Lur storytelling—contrasting with her nationalist depiction as a Persian hero—demonstrates how oral tradition serves as cultural resistance to state-driven homogenization. This resistance is not merely a challenge to dominant historiography but a testament to these narratives' enduring cultural and historical significance.

Toponyms & Naming Practices

This dissertation highlights the **mnemonic function** of geographical markers and personal names in **oral storytelling**. **Toponyms** such as **Tang-ārī** ("Ariobarzanes' Gorge") and **Dašt-e Rūm** ("Roman Plain") function as **living historical texts**, embedding **historical memory** into the physical landscape. Likewise, names like **Eskandar** and **Nūšāba** were not merely **personal identifiers** but also **pedagogical tools**, reinforcing **historical consciousness** within Lur society.

These **naming practices** demonstrate that oral tradition is not simply a **storytelling mechanism** but a **complex system of historical transmission** where **space and identity** are deeply interconnected. This interplay adds further depth to **understanding historical narratives** in the context of **Lur oral tradition**.

Gender and Lur Oral Traditions

This study demonstrates that Luri oral traditions, in their unique preservation of **gender roles**, contrast sharply with state-imposed narratives and challenge patriarchal norms. Unlike the **gender archetypes** promoted during the Pahlavi era, which sought to construct a **state-controlled model of femininity** through Westernization, education, and workforce participation while marginalizing **tribal and rural female figures**, Lur storytelling upheld alternative models of female agency.

Figures such as **Yūtāb**, a female warrior who resisted Macedonian forces, exemplify a tradition in which women played significant historical and mythological roles. Despite **state erasure**, the persistence of these figures highlights the **subversive power** of oral tradition in preserving **counter-narratives** that challenge **dominant historiography**.

Reżā Šāh's Nation-Building and the Marginalization of Regional Oral Traditions

Reżā Šāh's nation-building policies (1925–1941) systematically prioritized a **centralized Persian identity**, leading to the erosion of **regional oral traditions** through both **active suppression and institutional neglect**. These traditions, rich with **local heroes and unique cultural heritage**, faced disruptions in **intergenerational transmission**. While figures such as the Luri-associated Ariobarzan were not explicitly reimagined within a Persian nationalist **framework**, their **cultural significance** was omitted from **state-sanctioned historiography**. This exclusion reflects a broader pattern of marginalizing non-Persian narratives to consolidate a homogeneous national identity centered on Persian heritage.

As part of Reżā Šāh's nationalist agenda, the recitation of Ferdowsī's Šāhnāme was actively promoted, particularly during Šab-e Čelle and Nawrūz, transforming these state-endorsed celebrations into platforms for reinforcing a unified national identity while further marginalizing **regional oral traditions**. In contrast, **alternative literary traditions**, such as **Niẓāmī's Iskandarnāme**, which **Luri oral performers** had actively preserved, were deliberately relegated to informal settings. This deliberate demotion, a form of **cultural injustice**, diminished their prominence in public cultural life and weakened their role in shaping collective memory.

Mechanisms of Erasure: Active vs. Passive Strategies

The tension between state-driven historiography and regional memory persists in contemporary Iran, as demonstrated by the 2023 cancellation of a Luri oral traditions conference by Iranian authorities. This incident highlights the ongoing political sensitivity surrounding regional narratives that challenge centralized historical discourse. Such actions reflect Reżā Šāh's legacy, revealing how institutional mechanisms continue to prioritize monolithic identity constructs over pluralistic cultural expressions. The urgency of preserving regional histories remains evident, underscoring a broader strategy to control national identity and historical memory.

- **Active Suppression**: Direct **censorship** of regional narratives (e.g., Alexander's Luri tradition) to eliminate perceived threats to **nationalist unity**.
- **Passive Neglect** is the **omission** of regional figures (e.g., **Ariobarzan**) from educational and cultural platforms, leading to their **gradual disappearance** from public consciousness.

This **dual approach** reshaped Iran's cultural landscape, privileging Persian-centric historiography while fragmenting the transmission of alternative identities. The resulting marginalization illustrates the complex interplay between modern Iran's state power, historical memory, and identity formation.

Oral Tradition as an Active Historiographical Force

This dissertation argues that with its **remarkable resilience**, oral tradition is a **dynamic and independent historiographical practice** that actively **resists, adapts, and negotiates dominant narratives**. By centering **Luri oral traditions**, this research demonstrates that **local storytelling** is not a **passive remnant of the past** but a **vital mode of historical agency**, shaping **cultural memory** beyond the constraints of **state-endorsed texts**.

The study shows that Reżā Šāh’s nationalist agenda sought to centralize historical memory by institutionalizing the Šāhnāme as Iran’s foundational epic, actively promoting its recitation during Šab-e Čelle and Nowrūz while marginalizing alternative traditions such as Niẓāmī’s Iskandarnāme. This deliberate elevation of state-sanctioned historiography over regional oral traditions highlights how memory and identity are contested spaces where oral traditions

function as sites of preservation and resistance. The persistence of Luri storytellers and reciters (Mullas) in maintaining Niẓāmī's narratives despite state efforts to erase them exemplifies the pluralistic and contested nature of Iranian historiography.

The erosion of these oral traditions is not merely a regional cultural loss; it signals a broader threat to historical diversity in Iran. As oral histories vanish due to modernization, Persianization, and state policies, alternative accounts of Iran's past—rooted in local memory rather than centralized historiography—face the risk of permanent erasure. This dissertation underscores the urgent need to preserve these narratives, as their disappearance would mean the loss of a vital counter-history, challenging monolithic national narratives and enriching our understanding of Iran's complex historical landscape.

Future Research Directions

This dissertation lays the groundwork for several **urgent and significant** avenues of future research:

- **Comparative studies** on **Niẓāmī's influence** in other Iranian **tribal oral traditions**, such as those of the **Bakhtiyārī, Kurdish, and Gilaki** communities.
- **Digital preservation strategies** for documenting **disappearing oral traditions**, including archival projects, ethnographic films, and linguistic analysis of oral performances.
- Exploration of contemporary storytelling formats, examining how **oral narratives** are being **transformed** through **social media, podcasts, and digital storytelling platforms**.
- Further linguistic research traces **Arabic, Syriac, and Persian influences** in **Lur oral narratives** to determine how **pre-Islamic and Islamic historiography** shaped Alexander's image in Lur tradition.

This dissertation underscores the significance of Luri oral traditions as a vital historiographical force that actively **preserves, reshapes, and negotiates historical memory**. By examining the oral narratives of Alexander the Great within the socio-political and cultural landscape of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, this study highlights the agency of oral tradition in resisting state-imposed historiography and maintaining regional identity. The findings demonstrate that

oral storytelling is not merely a relic of the past but a dynamic, evolving process that continues to adapt in response to modern political and cultural transformations. As regional histories face increasing marginalization, the need for systematic documentation and scholarly engagement becomes increasingly urgent. Future research must build upon these insights, ensuring that the **diverse voices of Iran's oral traditions** are recognized, preserved, and integrated into broader historical discourse.

Appendices

Appendix A: Maps and Illustrations

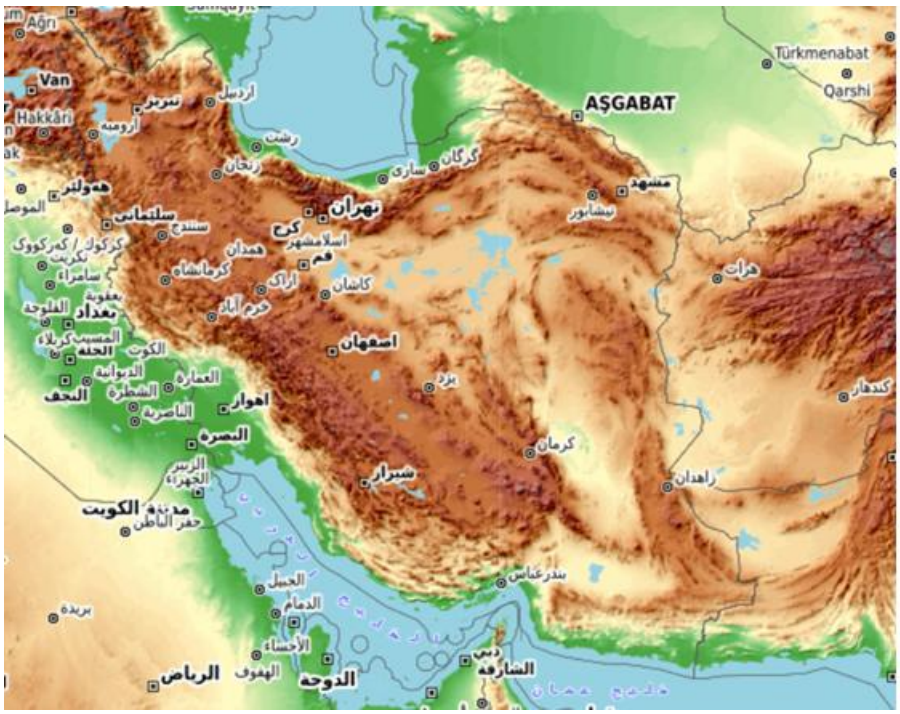
This appendix includes all maps, photographs, and visual materials referenced in the main text. Each figure is labeled with a corresponding number and description to facilitate cross-referencing.

Maps

Map A.1. Geographical location of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province in southwest Iran and the studied areas.

Based on the map “Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad in Iran” by Ali Zifan, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/). Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Kohgiluyeh_and_Boyer-Ahmad_in_Iran.svg (accessed February 15, 2025).

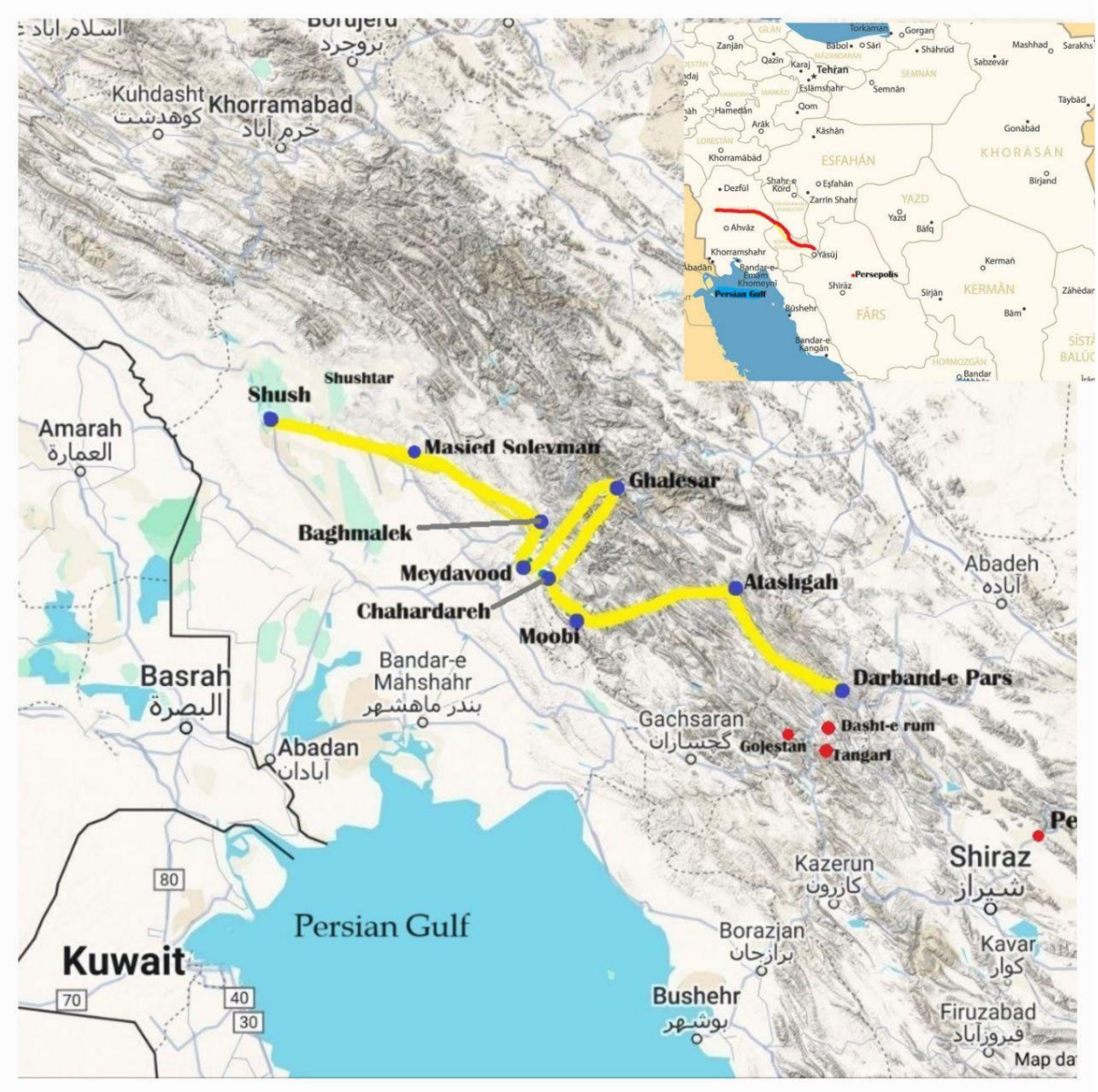
Map A.2. Topographic map of Iran and neighbouring regions.



Source: © OpenTopoMap (CC BY-SA 3.0). License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/. Data © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL 1.0). License: https://opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/1-0/. Retrieved from https://www.opentopomap.org (accessed on 26 November 2025).

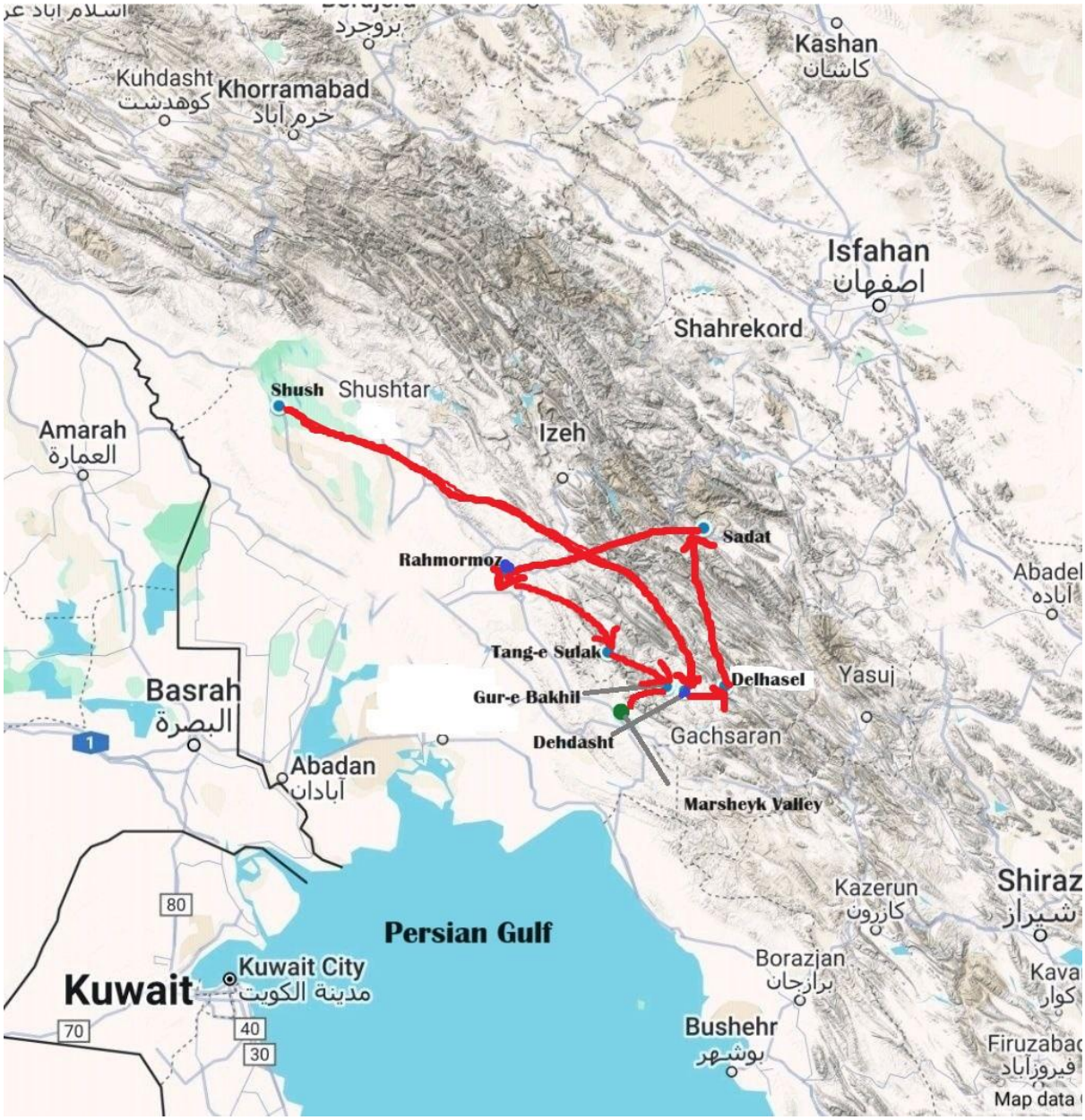
Map A.3. First route of Alexander the Great in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province.

Blue dots represent the locations mentioned in the text. The route begins in Shusha (Susa) and ends in Darband-e Pars (Persian Gate). Due to the local specificity of these sites, adjustments were manually applied.



.Created by the author using OpenStreetMap base map data. © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL 1.0). License: https://opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/1-0/ and https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright. Retrieved February 15, 2025, from https://www.openstreetmap.org.

Map A.4. Second route of Alexander the Great in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. Arrows indicate the direction of movement.



Created by the author using OpenStreetMap base map data. © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL 1.0). License: https://opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/1-0/ and https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright. Retrieved February 15, 2025, from https://www.openstreetmap.org.

Figures

The photographs used in Figures A.1–A.6 were taken by Mr. Arash Seddighi Nejad as part of a commissioned work for my doctoral research project. As the commissioning party, I hold the right to use these images for academic and non-commercial purposes, including the publication of this dissertation.

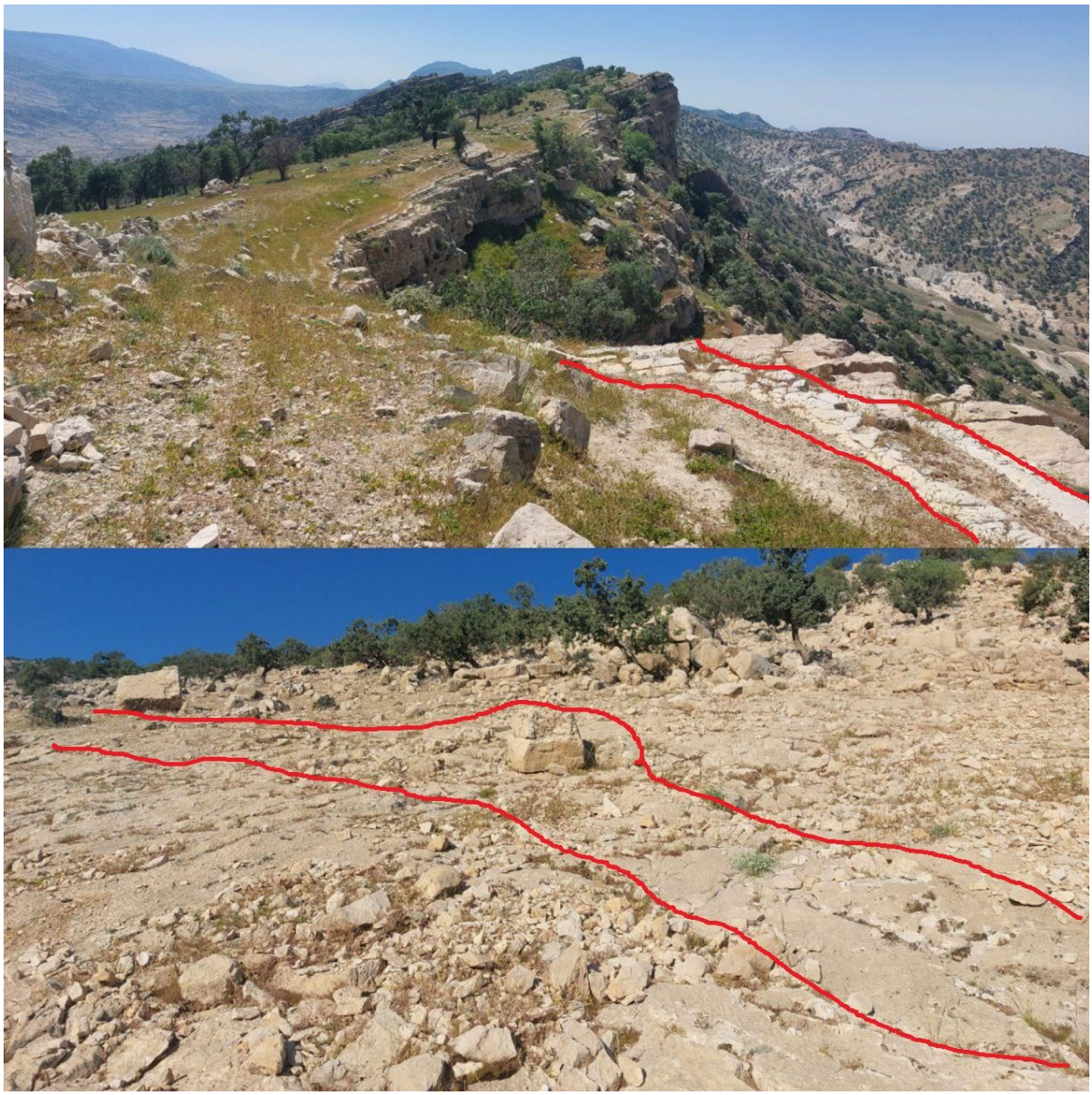
Figure A.1. The ruins of Qalʿa-yi Sar. Photograph by Arash Seddighi Nejad, April 2023. Used as part of a commissioned work for the author’s doctoral research.

Figure A.2. Darband-e Pars (Persian Gate). Photograph by Arash Seddighi Nejad, April 2023. Used as part of a commissioned work for the author's doctoral research.

Figure A.3. Tang-e Sūlak with a view of Mār-Šayḫ Valley. Photograph by Arash Seddighi Nejad, April 2023. Used as part of a commissioned work for the author's doctoral research.

Figure A.4. Mār-Šayḫ Valley. Photograph by Arash Seddighi Nejad, April 2023. Used as part of a commissioned work for the author’s doctoral research.

Figure A.5. The Ancient Royal Road [βασιλικός δρόμος] at two different locations. Photograph by Arash Seddighi Nejad, April 2023. Used as part of a commissioned work for the author's doctoral research.



Note: The areas marked in red indicate locations recognized by locals as part of the Ancient Royal Road, where artifacts attributed to Alexander the Great have been discovered. This road extends across the mountainous terrain.

Figure A.6. The Tomb of the Mother and Daughter from two perspectives. Photograph by Arash Seddighi Nejad, April 2023. Used as part of a commissioned work for the author's doctoral research.

Figure A.7. Dašt-e Rūm (Rome Valley). Photograph by Mohamad-2z, 2015.

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Appendix B: Informants' Profiles

This study aimed to document the stories and traditions of individuals from rural communities in compiling these oral narratives, prioritizing the voices of elderly, often illiterate speakers who serve as the primary bearers of Luri oral traditions. As custodians of cultural memory, these informants offer valuable insights into the region's historical imagination and folkloric heritage. Their narratives, centered around Alexander the Great, intertwine historical, mythical, and moral elements passed down through generations, reflecting the dynamic ways in which oral traditions shape collective identity and cultural continuity.

Research Team and Fieldwork Context

Before delving into Mr. ʾAlī Sadīq's (See infra P. 243) findings, it is crucial to note that the region has undergone significant transformation and destruction due to unplanned construction, road building, and dam projects, often suspected of being fronts for treasure hunting. These activities have drastically altered the landscape, adversely affecting the native community and leading to acute poverty. Many historically significant areas associated with Alexander the Great and Ariobarzanes are now buried under modern infrastructure. Despite his extensive knowledge, Mr. Sadiq could not recognize many locations, highlighting the profound impact of these developments. Previous landscapes, inhabited by wildlife such as bears and leopards, required Mr. Saddiq to carry fire-making equipment, a gun, and even an extra pair of shoes in his backpack. This evolution highlights the magnitude of modern intervention in the historical and natural landscape of the region, ironically making it difficult to easily trace and research the ancient route. This radical change leaves only meager remnants of the former path and its historical background.

Identifying the precise route of Alexander the Great is not a matter that can be determined solely through the discipline of history or through field research. For the topic at hand, local and regional beliefs may be of greater importance than historical accuracy. However, archaeological evidence is also necessary to delineate the more accurate route. The subsequent narrative derives from the observations of Mr. Saddiq in the most remote villages of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

Our team consisted of four members: myself, Mr. ʾAlī Sadīq, Mr. Arash Seddighi Nejâd (vide supra Figure A.1.), who served as our photographer, and Mr. Allahreza Rezaei, a highly trusted and knowledgeable attorney familiar with the area and the local people's disposition. His presence and trustworthiness as a lawyer were crucial given the illegal treasure-hunting activities often associated with this route. We did this based on historical facts and not the sites associated with myths, like the travel to the Cave of Kay Ḫusraw.

Key Research Contributors

- **Mr.ʾAlī Sadīq (Age 80)** (vide supra)**:** A highly knowledgeable local expert from Dehdasht County, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. Fluent in Luri, he has firsthand knowledge of regional geography and oral traditions, though he infrequently speaks Persian. His observations were essential in identifying locations linked to Alexander the Great.
- **Mr. Arash Seddighi Nejâd:** The official photographer for the field research, responsible for documenting the landscapes and historical sites visited during the study. His visual documentation serves as crucial evidence in preserving the rapidly changing topography of the region.
- **Mr. Allahreza Rezaei** (vide supra)**:** A respected attorney with in-depth familiarity with the local people and their customs. His presence was indispensable for ensuring the safety and legal security of the research team, particularly in regions impacted by illegal excavation activities.

Informants' Profiles

The following individuals provided valuable oral histories and narratives that contributed to the research findings:

Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Languages	Narrative Contribution
Mrs. Bāgom Jān	86	Housewife	Fath Village	Luri (Illiterate)	Text A – A quatrain on healing, wisdom, and Alexander's reverence for tradition
Mrs. Bī Melkī	68	Herder	Bohun Village	Luri (Illiterate)	Text G – Alexander's wisdom and bravery in Luri folklore
Mr. Esfandīyār	72	Shopkeeper	Basht	Luri, Persian (Illiterate)	Text D – Cultural and historical aspects of Alexander's leadership
Mr. Eslām	80	Cobbler	Gachsaran City	Luri, Persian (Limited)	Text M – Alexander's encounter with Kay Ḫusrow, blending history and myth
Mr. Jahānbakht	93	Farmer	Suq	Luri (Illiterate)	Text E – Alexander's administrative and cultural integration
Mr. Ḫalīfeh	78	Teacher	Gachsaran County	Luri, Persian	Text Q – Alexander's leadership during a crisis
Mr. KeyŠarīf	110	Village Headman	Shah Bahram Village	Luri (Illiterate)	Texts O, X, Y – Divine intervention, predictions, and Alexander's symbolic role
Mrs. Māhtāb	85	Carpet Weaver	Ganaveh Village	Luri (Illiterate)	Text N – Alexander's

					journey to a dark cave, testing perseverance against fate
Mrs. Pūneh	76	Herder	Fath Village	Luri (Illiterate)	Texts P, R, U1 – Alexander's encounters with animals and symbolic decisions
Mrs. Sandal	80	Housewife	Kohsarak Village	Luri (Illiterate)	Text K – Alexander's journey through Khorasan and his strategic decisions
Mr. Narīmān	65	Farmer	Lendeh Village	Luri (Limited Farsi)	Texts S, T – Alexander's encounters with justice and symbolic lessons from nature
Mr. Numdār	90	Ranchman	Yasuj	Luri (Illiterate)	Text F – Alexander's humble beginnings and rise to power
Mr. Moḫtar	67	Farmer	Dehdasht	Luri (Illiterate)	Text C – Alexander's administrative approach and governance
Mr. Darvīš	79	Resident	Chah Talkh Village	Luri (Illiterate)	Texts U2, V – Loyalty, wisdom, and mystical trials in Alexander's journey
Mr. Mondanī	72	Farmer	Fath Village	Luri (Basic Literacy)	Text J – Alexander's quest for the "Water of Life" and immortality themes
Mr. Olmās	78	Teacher	Lendeh Village	Luri, Persian	Text H – Alexander's role in

					overcoming oppression and supernatural elements
Mrs. Ṣedīqeh	48	Herder	Gorku Village	Luri (Illiterate)	Text W – The battle of good and evil in Alexander's myth
Mr. Sardār	79	Farmer	Dehdasht	Luri (Illiterate)	Text I – Alexander's philosophical view on leadership and victory
Mr. Ṭahmās	72	Farmer	Fath Village	Luri (Basic Literacy)	Texts L, Z – Alexander's journey to Alborz Mountain and his conquests

Appendix C: ATU Classification of Oral Narratives

This study's classification of folktales follows the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) Index, a system developed by Antti Aarne (1910), expanded by Stith Thompson (1928, 1961), and revised by Hans-Jörg Uther (2004) to categorize folklore based on thematic motifs (Uther, 2004).

This appendix classifies the collected oral narratives according to the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) Index, categorizing folktales based on their recurring motifs, plot structures, and themes. This classification allows for a comparative study of Luri oral traditions in a broader global folklore context.

ATU Category	Narrative Theme	Text Reference & Summary
ATU 300-399: Supernatural Adversaries	The Quest for the Vanishing Princess	Text M - Alexander encounters Kay Ḫusrow, testing virtue and intelligence.
	The Struggle of Good and Evil	Text W - Alexander's encounters with mythical creatures symbolize good vs. evil.
ATU 400-459: Supernatural or Enchanted Relatives	The Search for the Water of Life	Text J - Alexander seeks the mythical Water of Life, meeting supernatural guides.
ATU 500-599: Supernatural Helpers	The Golden Bird	Text O - Alexander receives a prophecy about his fate and kingdom.
	The Sons on a Quest	Text X - Alexander's journey of enlightenment with guiding figures.
ATU 850-999: The Clever and the Stupid	The Fox as Helper	Text P - A cunning fox aids Alexander in strategic wisdom.
	The Test of Cunning	Text R - Alexander completes impossible tasks set by a ruler.
ATU 1000-1199: Anecdotes and Jokes	The Righteous Judge	Text S - Alexander as a wise judge resolving disputes.

	The King and the Disguised Beggar	Text T - Alexander disguises himself to learn about his people.
ATU 1200-1499: Religious Tales	The Saint's Warning	Text Y - Alexander receives divine revelations shaping his leadership.
ATU 1500-1999: Realistic and Historical Tales	The Wise Leader	Text C - Alexander’s administrative and military strategies as a just ruler.
	The Philosophy of Power	Text I - A philosophical tale on leadership, fate, and conquest.
ATU 2000-2399: Unclassified Tales	The Hero's Rise to Power	Text F - A blend of history and mythology depicting Alexander's rise.
	The Test of Loyalty	Text U2 - Alexander’s soldiers prove their devotion through trials.

Appendix D: Guide to Transliteration Symbols and Their Equivalents in the IPA Alphabet

Symbol	IPA Equivalent	Description & Example
A	[æ]	Resembling the 'a' in the Persian word "sar" (head)
ɣ	[ɣ]	Akin to the 'gh' in the Arabic word "غ"
Â	[ɑː]	Similar to the 'â' in the Persian word "bâr" (weight)
W	[w]	Comparable to the 'w' in Arabic and Persian
Ā	[æː]	Like the 'â' in Arabic: "mâhir" (skilled)
Q	[q]	Reminiscent of the 'q' in Persian
E	[e]	Representing the short 'e' as in the Persian word "del" (heart)
Ē	[eː]	Denoting the long 'e' as in the unstressed 'e'
O	[o]	Similar to the 'o' in the Persian word "gol" (flower)
Ō	[oː]	Representing the long 'o' as in the stressed 'o'
I	[i]	Signifying the short 'i' as in the Arabic short vowel
Ī	[iː]	Denoting the long 'i' as in the Persian word "pir" (old)
U	[u]	Resembling the 'u' in the Arabic word with a damma
Ū	[uː]	Representing the long 'u' as in the Persian word "zood" (fast)
Č	[tʃ]	Akin to the 'ch' in Persian
J	[dʒ]	Similar to the 'j' in Persian
Š	[ʃ]	Resembling the 'sh' in Persian
Ž	[ʒ]	Akin to the 'zh' in Persian
Δ	[ð]	Similar to the 'dh' in Arabic with less friction
Θ	[θ]	Comparable to the 'th' in Arabic
X	[x]	Resembling the 'kh' in Persian

Note

This table provides a guide to the transliteration symbols used in this study, along with their equivalents in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). These symbols were chosen to ensure a systematic and consistent representation of phonemes in the transliteration of Luri oral narratives. The classification is adapted from Taheri (1389, p. 15).

Appendix E: Terminology and Definitions

This appendix provides a structured list of frequently used terms relevant to the study of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. These terms are essential for understanding the socio-political and cultural dynamics discussed in this research.

Term	Definition
Luri [1]	An adjective meaning "belonging to the ethnic group of Lur.
Īl [2]	In Iranian nomadic communities, 'Īl' signifies a political and social alliance of tribes governed by a paramount chief. It promotes unity, resource allocation, and conflict resolution. The plural form is 'Īlāt.'
Ḫān [3]	A Turkic-derived title of nobility, absorbed into Persian during the Mongol conquests. In Iranian nomadic groups, the Ḫān was the leader of an 'Īl' and responsible for governance, justice, and territorial defense.
Kadḫudā or Kī Ḫūvā [4]	A term meaning 'master of the house.' Historically, the Kadḫudā was appointed by the Ḫān or monarch to manage and govern rural communities, oversee internal affairs, resolve conflicts, and collect tax revenues.
Rīš-safī [5]	Translates to 'White Beard' in Luri, symbolizing an elder with wisdom, respect, and influence within clans or tribes. The role includes providing counsel and participating in community decision-making.
Ṭīfa [6]	A social unit akin to a 'Clan,' referring to individuals with shared ancestry. Ṭīfas practice endogamy and may have symbols or totems representing their identity. In Iranian nomadic societies, they serve as key socio-political structures.

Expanded Terminological Explanations

[1] Although I have encountered "Lurish" more frequently in academic circles, it is uncommon and incorrect when describing something related to the Iranian ethnic group known as the 'Lurs' or connected to their language, culture, or identity. 'Lur' refers to the ethnic group itself, while 'Luri' is the correct adjective meaning "belonging to the ethnic group of Lur." 'Luri' is preferred over 'Lurish' as it more accurately reflects cultural specificity and aligns with linguistic conventions found in Persian and related scholarly terminology. Given the absence of a precise equivalent in European languages, 'Luri' is more appropriate and nuanced in academic and cross-cultural discussions.

[2] The term "Īl" has a complex origin, deriving from the Proto-Turkic term *ēl*, which signifies "realm." Initially used to denote any collective of individuals, the word gradually acquired a more specific meaning, referring to tribal or national alliances as Turkic peoples migrated into the Iranian plateau. Within the framework of the Iranian nomadic community, "Īl" signifies a political and social alliance of tribes governed by a paramount chief. This system promotes unity, efficient resource allocation, and conflict resolution.

The diverse ecological zones of the Iranian plateau have given rise to distinct "Īl"s, such as the nomadic "Īl-i Baḫtīārī" and the agricultural "Īl-i Qašqā'ī." The evolution of the concept of "Īl" mirrors the dynamic social, political, and linguistic history of Iranian nomadic societies. "Īlāt" (Arabic ایلات) is the plural form of "Īl," further emphasizing the collective nature of these tribal or national confederations.

[3] The Turkic term "Ḫān," absorbed into Persian during the Mongol conquests of the 13th century, denotes a title of great nobility, akin to "king" or "chief." Within Iranian nomadic groups, the Ḫān served as the leader of an "Īl," a political alliance of tribes. The Ḫān held responsibilities encompassing governance, justice, and territorial defense. The term expanded to include significant roles within the broader social order, such as governors, military leaders, and judges. Although the title "Ḫān" is less frequently used in contemporary contexts, having largely been supplanted by "Amīr," its historical significance as a representation of authority and nobility within the Iranian nomadic environment endures.

[4] The Persian term "Kadḫudā" combines "kad," meaning "home," and "ḫudā," meaning "master" or "owner," resulting in the translation "master of the house" or "owner of the house." Historically, in rural settlements across Iran, the Kadḫudā (Greek Καχαγιάς), whom the Ḫān or

regional monarch appointed, was responsible for the management and governance of the community. The duties of a Kadḫudā encompassed overseeing internal affairs, resolving conflicts, and collecting tax revenues. The Kadḫudā was selected from among prominent and knowledgeable villagers, chosen to serve as a fair, wise, and experienced leader. In the present day, the role of the Kadḫudā has significantly diminished. While certain villages have adopted the practice of electing Kadḫudās through councils, others continue to uphold a more traditional leadership structure.

[5] The term "Rīš-safīd" in the Luri language, equivalent to "Rīš-sefid" in Persian, translates as "White Beard." In both Persian and Luri traditions, it symbolizes an elder with white facial hair, embodying power, respect, and influence within clans or tribes. The role of the "Rīš-safīd" refers to the leadership within a tribe, characterized by providing wise counsel and holding the utmost reverence within the community.

The term "White Beard" continues to represent wisdom in contemporary contexts. Elders bearing white beards retain significant positions within traditional communities, offering guidance in conflict resolution and participating in crucial decision-making processes. This archetype remains fundamental to these communities' social and cultural dynamics, symbolizing the continuity of traditional values and authority.

[6] The term **Ṭīfa** (translated as "Clan" in English) refers to individuals who share kinship or blood ties, often tracing back to a common ancestor, even if the exact genealogical details are unknown. This shared lineage **or** ancestry serves as a powerful symbol of unity, fostering a deep sense of belonging among the members of a Ṭīfa. In traditional communities, **Ṭīfas** practice **endogamy**, meaning members marry within the clan. They may also use a specific sign or symbol to indicate their identity and demonstrate their status as an independent and separate clan.

In some cases, the clan might have a symbolic ancestor who represents the clan's unity; if this "ancestor" is non-human, it is referred to as a **totem**, which is often an animal. In the nomadic societies of Iran, a **Ṭīfa** represents a socio-political unit comprising several sub-tribes (**Tīrehs**) and is considered one of the most important ranks in the tribal hierarchy. Most **Ṭīfas** fall between larger tribal units (**Īls**) and smaller family groups, but some may operate as independent units not belonging to any more prominent tribe.

The political structure of **Ṭīfas** is a fascinating aspect of their diversity across different cultures. Unlike kin-based groups such as tribes or extended families, **Ṭīfas** are often smaller,

inseparable components of larger communities or states. In some societies, a **Ṭīfa** may have an official leader, such as a **chief**, **matriarch**, or **patriarch**, or leadership may be carried out by elders. In others, leadership may be contested or earned through different means. This variety in political structures adds a layer of complexity to the understanding of Ṭīfas. Examples of clans include those found in Irish, Scottish, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese societies, each functioning within the context of their respective communities. However, tribes and clans can also be components of even larger societal structures.

The word **Ṭīfa** derives from the Arabic term **Ṭā'ifa**, with the masculine form being **Ṭā'if**.

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Acknowledgment of AI Tools

In the process of writing and editing this thesis, I utilized the assistance of artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT and Grammarly. These tools were employed primarily for language refinement, grammar correction, and to improve the clarity and flow of the text.

While these tools were helpful in editing, I take full responsibility for the content, arguments, and academic integrity of the work. All ideas, interpretations, and conclusions drawn in this text are my own, and the use of AI tools was limited to supporting the writing process in line with the guidelines provided by Freie Universität Berlin.