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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Socio-Political Situation of Iran under the Saljuks as Reflected by Nizam al-Mulk's Siyāsatnāma

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Abstract

This study examines how the political and social conditions of the Saljuk era are reflected in "Siyāsatnāma" by Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk. In this regard, the views and theories of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), the renowned French sociologist, have been employed to analyze the characteristics of society and the political system during Niẓām al-Mulk's vizierate. Using an explanatory method grounded in a structural–functional approach, the research documents how the prevailing social relations of Saljuk society are mirrored in Niẓām al-Mulk's "Siyāsatnāma". To achieve this, the socio-political formation of the Saljuk period is first delineated based on Durkheimian sociology; subsequently, its representations in the monumental work of this eminent Iranian vizier are critically examined.

Keywords: Siyāsatnāma, Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk, Saljuks, Émile Durkheim

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1- Introduction

One of the significant sources of intellectual thought in the history of Iran is the "siyāsatnāma" ("mirrors for princes"). The Siyasatnameh belongs firmly to the "Mirrors for Princes" genre, an established tradition of political literature aimed at advising rulers on the arts of governance, statecraft, and morality. In the Iranian context, this tradition draws heavily on pre-Islamic heritage. While ancient Zoroastrian literature laid the conceptual groundwork for righteous rule, it is historically essential to recognize the precise timeline of these textual traditions. Major Zoroastrian religious and encyclopedic texts, such as the Denkard and Bundahishn, while preserving much older Sasanian oral and written traditions, were compiled, edited, and

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committed to their final written forms in the post-Islamic era, primarily during the 9th and 10th centuries CE. Nizam al-Mulk adapted these enduring concepts of divine glory (khwarrah) and absolute royal authority into a Sunni Islamic framework, emphasizing that the Sultan is chosen by God to maintain justice and social order.

One of the most important features of Iranian "siyāsatnāmas" is their close connection with political and social contexts. In this regard, it appears that many of these works, to some extent, reflect the political and social relations of their time. In other words, despite their advisory and admonitory nature, these writings can serve as indicators of various characteristics and transformations in public order and the structure of power (Moqaddam, 2014: 33; Mir Ahmadi et al., 2017: 60–61). Throughout their intellectual tradition, they have addressed crucial issues such as the collapse of social cohesion, threats from foreign powers, cultural crises arising from the influx of invading tribes, challenges posed by centrifugal forces, the transition from tribal traditions to a centralized state structure, crises of legitimacy, administrative instability and disorder, the necessity of organizing the bureaucratic system, succession crises, persistent courtly conflicts, tensions between military and bureaucratic elites, weakness in political education, lack of efficient political elites, political and economic corruption among government officials, the weakening of judicial justice, and the spread of oppression (Pahlavan Sabagh et al., 2024: 45; Mashhadi & Ghani Kallelu, 2019: 51–72).

Due to their composition across different historical periods, Iranian siyāsatnāmas differ considerably in form and content. (Qaderi, 2011: 117). Nevertheless, a considerable number of these writings share numerous common elements and components. In this regard, it can be said that in most "siyāsatnāmas", rulers and sovereigns are the primary audience of advice and counsel (Ahmadvand & Sa'diyān-Nejad, 2023: 196–199; Jazaei & Eslami, 2019: 3). Within this intellectual tradition, kings and sultans are described as the most crucial element of social and political life. In these texts, they are addressed as the sole agents of political and social order. Their overarching authority over political and social affairs is taken as a given. In such an approach, the king or sultan, wielding absolute power, bears the grave responsibility of safeguarding the integrity of the society under his command. He is obliged to ensure stability and security throughout his realm. He must also combat both internal and external enemies and adversaries. In the intellectual tradition of the "siyāsatnāma", kings and sultans are portrayed as the exclusive agents of justice and order across their dominion (Mir Ahmadi et al., 2017: 39–59; Qasemi, 2007: 269–275). They are entrusted with the duty of preserving and promoting the religion and customs of the community. In this respect, the king or sultan is tasked with preventing oppression among the people and curbing the tyranny of government officials. He is mandated to punish those who disrupt the material and spiritual order of society (Mousavi, 2018: 74–78).

In many siyāsatnāmas, kings and sultans are regarded as divinely chosen. Their justice or tyranny is understood solely in relation to divine will (Tabatabaei, 2005: 86–87). Within this intellectual framework, their downfall and decline occur through the eternal will of God, and the expansion or contraction of their sovereignty lies within His power. In antiquity, this stance was explained through the concept of "farr-e īzadī" (divine glory). In those times, legitimate kings and emperors possessed "farr-e īzadī" or "farr-e kiyānī". "Farr" was a divine and transcendent force bestowed directly upon rulers by Yazdān (God) (Qazi-Moradi, 2011: 4–25). They held this divine gift as long as they governed justly; however, once they turned to oppression and corruption, the heavenly endowment was withdrawn from them. This perspective was reproduced differently in the medieval era. In Islamic "siyāsatnāmas", the authority and legitimacy of sultans were likewise linked to divine decree. In this approach,

rulers were depicted as the shadow of God on earth (Qaderi, 2019: 266–280). Most were addressed with sacred titles such as "ẓill Allāh fī al-arḍ" (God's shadow on earth) and guardians of religion. Medieval texts often introduced sultans as divinely appointed. Although these rulers were expected to possess immense power, majesty, and grandeur, they were nonetheless obliged to obey divine commands and Islamic law in their governance. Consequently, if a king or sultan disobeyed divine injunctions and the Sharī'a, his sacred legitimacy and authority would be revoked (Qazi-Moradi, 2011).

One of the most significant works in the history of the Iranian "siyāsatnāma" tradition is the "Siyāsatnāma" of Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭūsī. This book of counsel was authored by Abū ʿAlī Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī, known as Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭūsī (408–485 AH), the powerful vizier of the Saljuk court. He was born in 408 AH in the town of Nūqān, a district of Ṭūs. His father was from the dehqān (landowning) class of Greater Khurāsān. At the age of twenty-one, Niẓām al-Mulk entered the service of Abū ʿAlī ibn Shādhān, one of the local Saljuk commanders. After some time, he joined the court of Dāwūd ibn Mīkāʾīl, the brother of Ṭughril, the founder of the Saljuk dynasty (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995: 302). Eventually, with the accession of Alp Arslān and Malikshāh, Niẓām al-Mulk rose to the position of vizier. He served as minister for thirty years during the reigns of these sultans. In addition to practical politics, he was also active in the theoretical domain. Toward the end of his life, at the command of Sultan Malikshāh, he compiled his experiences as vizier into a valuable work entitled "Siyāsatnāma" (also known as "Sīr al-Mulūk") (Haj-babaeai & Shahbandī, 2012: 59–75). The book is divided into two sections: one comprising thirty-nine chapters and the other eleven chapters. In light of the foregoing, the present study aims to examine the political and social characteristics of Niẓām al-Mulk's era and to analyze some of the most important reflections of these conditions in his work. In other words, this research seeks to answer the question: which aspects and dimensions of the political and social conditions of the Saljuk period are reflected in Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭūsī's "Siyāsatnāma"?

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have examined the vizierate of Khājeh Niẓām al-Mulk and his Siyāsatnāma. Scholars have approached the text from different methodological and intellectual perspectives. The most relevant works may be summarized as follows: Lambton introduces Niẓām al-Mulk as one of the most influential viziers of medieval Iran. She argues that by drawing upon the administrative legacy of the Sasanian Empire, Niẓām al-Mulk played a decisive role in consolidating absolute monarchy and expanding the bureaucratic apparatus of the Saljuk state (Lambton, 1993). One of the scholars who has examined the Seljuk period in his studies is Seyyed Javad Tabatabai. Employing a Hegelian dialectical framework, he interprets the Saljuk period as a pivotal moment in Iranian political thought. In his view, Niẓām al-Mulk represents the final stage of ancient Iranian rationalism and political pragmatism. He contends that the vizier's political reasoning outweighs his religiosity, and that his adherence to Sharī'a should be understood within the logic of Iranshahrī rationality (Tabatabaei ,2019) Another scholar who has examined aspects of the Seljuk period in his historical studies is Davood Firahi. Applying Michel Foucault's analytical method, Feirahi examines medieval Islamic political writings as discourses of power. He argues that Niẓām al-Mulk's counsel is grounded in Sunni jurisprudential thought and that, during his vizierate, monarchy was subordinated to Sharī'a. Accordingly, Siyāsatnāma should be read as a component of Sunni legal–political knowledge aimed at legitimizing the authority of the caliphal institution (Firahi, 2003). Another study that addresses this subject is the article by Hossein Foroughinia and his colleagues. Using Thomas Spragens' theory of political crisis, the authors identify the major socio-political disruptions of

the Saljuk era and interpret Niẓām al-Mulk's recommendations as prescriptive responses to the acute challenges of his time (Foroughi-nia, et al, 2021).

As these studies demonstrate, scholars have examined Niẓām al-Mulk's Siyāsatnāma from diverse angles: some view it as a continuation of the ancient Iranian tradition of governance; others interpret it as a product of Islamic legal discourse; still others regard it as a theoretical response to the crises of the Saljuk period. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the structural impact of Saljuk social and political conditions on the composition of the text. Given that Siyāsatnāma—like other works in the mirrors for princes genre—was deeply embedded in its historical context, analyzing these structural influences is essential for a fuller understanding of the work. The present study, therefore, examines the socio-political relations of the Saljuk era and explores how these conditions are reflected in Niẓām al-Mulk's Siyāsatnāma.

3- Theoretical Framework

The study and analysis of major historical texts such as Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk's "Siyāsatnāma" requires an efficient and systematic theoretical foundation. Such a framework must go beyond descriptive aspects and be capable of explaining the relationship between political and social structures and the intellectual architecture of the author. Although the existing literature and prior research have employed diverse philosophical and historical theories—such as those of Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Thomas Spragens—it appears that the sociological dimensions of this subject have received less attention.

Accordingly, this research seeks to examine Niẓām al-Mulk's "Siyāsatnāma" within the context of the political and social relations of his era through a sociological approach. In this way, the vizier's work can be regarded not only as a literary text but also as a reflection of a political and social order. To this end, the present study intends to analyze the impact of the political and social structures of Niẓām al-Mulk's time on his work by drawing upon the sociological perspective of Émile Durkheim.

From the author's standpoint, Durkheim, in his sociological theories, focused on the characteristics of traditional societies—such as the dominance of collective norms, the precedence of collective rights over individual rights, the sanctity of governance systems, and the role of punitive law. He established a historical-sociological approach through which one can connect political and social structures with a historical text.

Émile Durkheim, in his sociological studies and research, devoted considerable attention to the examination of early and pre-modern societies. In his view, despite their many distinctions, these societies share significant similarities. In most of them, the form and formation of human life are organized around a large-scale tribal order (clan) (Durkheim, 2015: 157–158). According to him, traditional and pre-modern societies generally possess fundamental characteristics such as the absence of internal differentiation, lack of specialization, non-integration among groups, low levels of external communication, limited social mobility, kinship-based relations, and a system of task distribution grounded in heredity (ibid: 264–383).

In these societies, shared collective values and sentiments constitute the foundation of social order and regulation (Durkheim, 2014: 13). These collective values and sentiments, expressed in the form of unified beliefs and convictions, served as the basis for the

establishment of early small-scale communities. This collective force, manifested through symbols, rituals, and various ceremonies, automatically organized the behavior and thought of each member of the tribe. Over time, these shared behaviors and mentalities endured and became internalized in the psyche of individuals (ibid: 57–61).

Durkheim referred to this unifying force as the "collective conscience" (Durkheim, 2015: 118). In his view, in traditional and pre-modern societies, the collective conscience exists as a set of shared sentiments among the majority of individuals. This collective force is independent of the existence of individual members; it is a transcendent and sacred entity that stands above the will of each member of society (ibid: 123, 126).

1.3 – Collective Norms

According to Durkheim, collective values shape behavioral norms. In traditional societies, these norms are formed on the basis of religion. For him, religion represents the highest expression of the collective conscience in such societies (Durkheim, 2015: 253). In other words, shared cults and rituals embody the conscience of the members of society. This collective force is manifested through the unison of hearts moving in a single direction (Durkheim, 2014: 34). Such a force possesses a sacred and transcendent nature. As the most important aspect of the collective conscience, it is beyond time and space, functioning as the spirit of society that links successive generations together (Durkheim, 2015: 352).

Religion, in essence, is the mechanical law governing social equilibrium. Through religion, one can discern the structure of society and the degree of its unity. Religions are primarily composed of beliefs and rituals that bind co-religionists together (Durkheim, 2017: 47). As a defined system of belief and behavior, religion is obligatory for all members. Durkheim argues that religion consists of a series of prescriptive and prohibitive commands that must be obeyed by members to establish and sustain society (Durkheim, 2014: 176–177). In his view, the prevailing conditions and relations in these societies guide members toward adherence to religious norms and values, since any disruption, disobedience, or violation of religion places social solidarity and cohesion at fundamental risk. The exalted and transcendent status of religious norms in such societies is such that their continual violation inevitably leads to anomie and social collapse (Durkheim, 2015: 352; Durkheim, 2020: 153).

2.3 – The Sacredness of Governance

According to Durkheim, in traditional and pre-modern societies, there exist primary institutions and organs that safeguard the integrity of the community. The principal function of these institutions is the protection of collective values. These organs represent a rudimentary form of government whose duty is to preserve shared norms (Durkheim, 2015: 116). In such societies, the political apparatus, acting on behalf of the people, is obliged to uphold religion as the tangible expression of the collective conscience (ibid: 123). These institutions are tasked with defending the accepted values and norms of society against both internal and external threats. Consequently, the functional mode of these institutions creates a close bond between them and religion. Under such conditions, political power and its foundations of legitimacy necessarily acquire a sacred character.

Durkheim argues that in traditional and pre-modern societies, due to their unitary nature, the natural form of government is individualistic. In these societies, the ruler is perceived as a sacred being and the embodiment of the collective conscience. He is regarded as the living symbol and manifestation of the collective conscience before all. Through the linkage of his authority with sacred power, he is considered the guardian and protector of the community's

integrity. As a result of such relations, the ruler's relationship with society assumes a unilateral and vertical form (ibid: 161–162). In this situation, as long as the ruler safeguards the material and spiritual existence of the community, his rule continues. However, should he govern against religion and collective sentiments, his authority will be shattered by society itself (Durkheim, 2014: 152).

3.3 – The Primacy of Collective Rights over Individual Rights

According to Durkheim, in pre-modern societies, due to life being organized in small tribal units, the degree of social control over the individual is extensive. In such societies, individual actions and thoughts are subject to numerous restrictions (Durkheim, 2015: 199–201). The behavior and performance of each member are aligned with collective values. Under these conditions, the primary duty of individuals is conformity with others and avoidance of private, personal life (ibid: 351).

Within this social formation, all members are obliged to act in accordance with transcendent and collective values, since any form of individual difference threatens the foundations of society. The structure, nature, and functioning of these societies are such that any heterogeneity or diversity in belief and behavior undermines social unity. In other words, the existence of heterogeneous and plural elements runs counter to the unitary order (Durkheim, 2020: 153).

Durkheim emphasizes that this dominance of collective and group life over the individual is not artificial or contractual, but rooted in the very nature and structure of society. The existence and survival of society depend solely on the complete unity of its members. Consequently, the structure and functioning of such societies are designed in a way that individual existence is absorbed into the collective order (Durkheim, 2015: 199–201).

4.3 – Repressive Law

Durkheim argues that in early and pre-modern societies, any act or thought that diverges from collective values and norms is considered a crime. Crime, in his view, is a powerful condition that harms the conscience of society's members. Such offenses possess a force that wounds the sentiments of the average community (Durkheim, 2019: 61, 83). Essentially, crime is any action that, to a certain degree, provokes a reaction from society against its perpetrator (Durkheim, 2015: 90).

Durkheim maintains that in traditional and pre-modern societies, whenever individuals disobey dominant norms and values, they face punishment from society. These crimes generate disorder, crisis, and anomie within the social order. The severity of society's reaction corresponds to the extent of damage inflicted upon its core. Punishment, therefore, is not merely the consequence of the act itself but the penalty for actions committed against collective values. Through punishing offenders, society preserves its cohesion and equilibrium. In other words, punitive measures serve as a means of safeguarding the community (Durkheim, 2015: 99–100). According to Durkheim, punishment in traditional societies involves the infliction of pain or deprivation upon the offender, aimed at harming their wealth, happiness, life, or personal freedom (Durkheim, 2015: 68). This act represents a specific emotional reaction that society, through political and judicial institutions, directs against rebellious individuals. The typical objects of such crimes are public matters such as religion, customs, and centers of authority (Durkheim, 2014: 187).

4- Political and Social Relations in the Era of Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭūsī

1.4 – Historical Background

From the collapse of the Sasanian Empire until the rise of the Saljuks, instability, disorder, and insecurity dominated the political and social life of Iran. With the fall of the centralized Sasanian Empire, many external groups, such as Arab and Turkic tribes, entered Iranian territory. Some of these tribes gradually established local governments in different regions of the Iranian plateau (Mahrooyan, 2002: 163–179). These political and social transformations led to the destruction of the Sasanian class system and the emergence of a fragmented feudal order. Consequently, tribal and nomadic elements increasingly shaped Iranian society (Tabatabaei, 2004: 116–121).

Initially, most of the Sasanian domains came under the rule of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs. With the weakening of the caliphate, independent and semi-independent dynasties such as the Ṭāhirids, Sāmānids, Būyids, Ghaznavids, Ṣaffārids, and ʿAlavids rose to power (Soleimani, 2016: 66–68). Unlike the centralized Sasanian system, these dynasties were local and decentralized, ruling over limited and shifting territories, often in conflict with neighboring regions. This unstable and contentious situation persisted until the early fifth century AH (Moqtader, 1966: 33–48). Finally, with the establishment and consolidation of the Saljukid dynasty in the mid-fifth century, political unity was restored in Iran for the first time (Tabatabaei, 1998: 104).

The Saljukid dynasty was founded in 429 AH by Ṭughril Beg. This dynasty traced its lineage to the Oghuz Turkic tribes, nomadic peoples who migrated from Central Asia toward the eastern frontiers of Iran in the late fourth century (Lambton, 1993: 11–13). After successive migrations, they settled in the steppes east of the Caspian Sea, defeating local rulers and consolidating their authority from the lower Oxus to the Volga (Bosworth, 1993: 224). By the early fifth century, the Saljuks extended their control over Transoxiana and Greater Khurāsān (Fajouri, 2010: 9–13; Iqbal, 1959: 11–13). They then launched campaigns across Iran and beyond, defeating Sultan Masʿūd of Ghazna at the decisive battle of Dandānqān in 431 AH, and subsequently conquering Kirmān (433 AH), Rayy (434 AH), and other regions including Qazvīn, Daylam, Ṭārom, and Hamadān. By 446 AH, they ended Būyid rule in Iraq-i ʿAjam and annexed Kirmānshāh (Foruzani, 2014: 61–75).

After Ṭughril's death, Alp Arslān succeeded him, marking the beginning of Niẓām al-Mulk's vizierate. Under Alp Arslān, the empire expanded significantly, aided by Niẓām al-Mulk's counsel (Iqbal, 1959: 46–53). Alp Arslān conquered Isfahan (443 AH), eliminated the Ṣaffārids in Sīstān (445 AH), and subdued Gurgān, Ṭabaristān, and Khwārazm. In 446AH, he famously defeated Byzantine Emperor Romanos IV at the Battle of Manzikert, annexing Azerbaijan, Armenia, and parts of Georgia (Foruzani, 2014: 61–75).

Following Alp Arslān's ten-year reign, Malikshāh ascended the throne, retaining Niẓām al-Mulk as vizier for twenty years (Bojnourdi, 2014: 587). With his vizier's guidance, Malikshāh pursued expansionist policies, extending Saljuk rule from the Oxus to Antioch (Sadeghi Samarjani, 2004: 106; Iqbal, 1959: 16). The Saljuks were the first post-Sasanian rulers to push their dominion to the Byzantine frontier, controlling territories from the Mediterranean to Transoxiana (Moslemi, 2017: 177). Under Malikshāh, the empire's geographical scope rivaled that of the Sasanians (Akbari, 2007: 9).

The Saljuks sought to consolidate their rule by dismantling local dynasties and strengthening central institutions (Iqbal, 1959: 18–19). This brought relative stability and security to Iran, fostering domestic commerce and foreign trade (Foruzani, 2016: 3–5). Their reign is considered one of the most brilliant periods in Iranian history, marked by cultural, scientific, and literary flourishing, with the expansion of educational, religious, and cultural centers (Montazeri, 2009: 187).

By establishing and consolidating their authority, the Saljuks revived the grandeur of ancient Iranian empires. They did not create entirely new institutions but rebuilt the legacy of Iran's imperial tradition (Lambton, 1993: 375). Drawing inspiration from Iranian and Islamic civilization, they forged a powerful and cohesive government (Sa'dian & Yusefi, 2007: 127). Although they initially conquered lands by force, they gradually assimilated into the cultures of their subjects. Upon entering Muslim territories, they embraced Islam as the foundation of their political legitimacy (Lambton, 1993: 2; Klausner, 2002: 9). In addition to religious integration, they adopted elements of Iran's imperial heritage, using titles such as "shāhanshāh" (King of Kings), reminiscent of pre-Islamic rulers (Bartold, 1979: 24).

2.4 – Political Conditions

During Niẓām al-Mulk's vizierate, the Saljuk political structure was a blend of absolute monarchy and feudal fragmentation (Ahmadi, 1999: 66–67; Namazi et al., 2023: 355–357). The sultans exercised authority across their vast empire through a combination of Iranian-Islamic bureaucracy and tribal traditions. As heads of the ruling dynasty, they stood at the apex of the Saljuk hierarchy (Pahnadayan, 2010: 86). They wielded uncontested leadership in political, military, religious, and administrative domains, appointing viziers, military commanders, scholars, senior judges, and local governors (Nikzad Chāleshtarī et al., 2020: 910–911). By relying on extensive tribal and ethnic alliances, they imposed absolute sovereignty over their empire. After conquering many Islamic territories, the Saljuks claimed ownership of all lands and redistributed political offices and economic resources among their loyal networks (Azad Armaki & Kamal, 2012: 137; Lambton, 1993: 110).

To consolidate and strengthen their authority, Saljuk rulers required not only military and bureaucratic instruments but also political legitimacy. Although the dynasty's founders rose to power through military campaigns and political violence, their successors sought broader acceptance and public recognition (Barani & Dehqani, 2014: 11–12). Since the overwhelming majority of the population was Sunni Muslims, deeply committed to the religious authority of the Abbasid caliphs, Saljuk rulers presented themselves as kings of the Muslims. In line with the beliefs of the majority, they declared loyalty and obedience to the caliphate (Sedghi, 2021: 250; Bojnourdi, 2014: 560–562). Early Saljuk sultans frequently expressed devotion and absolute submission to the Abbasid caliphs in audiences, correspondence, and official communications (Bojnourdi et al., 2014: 560–563). In this context, they pursued religious policies centered on the strict implementation of Sharī'a (Lambton, 1993: 149). By adopting titles such as "al-Malik al-Islām" and "Rukn a-Ddīn", Saljuk rulers portrayed themselves as guardians of Islam and defenders of Sunni orthodoxy (Namazi et al., 2023: 355; Bojnourdi, 2014: 648–649).

In the era of Niẓām al-Mulk's vizierate, the majority of the Saljuk population adhered to the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī schools of law. Other groups, such as the Ḥanbalīs, Mālikīs, and Shiʿites, formed minorities. Although most of society shared a common religious identity, many communities, organized along ethnic and sectarian lines, were engaged in conflict and rivalry (Moqtader, 1966: 45–47). This situation confronted the Saljuk state with hostile and contentious

factions. In response, the sultans pursued a policy of religious homogenization to create unity within the political and social structure (Jafari, 2014: 6–7). They supported the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī schools to maximize cohesion (Sedghi, 2021: 244–246). In other words, by promoting the majority faith, Saljuk rulers sought to establish social unity. The continuation of these measures meant that the state tolerated no religious plurality. Other sects and traditions were harshly suppressed (Barani & Dehqani, 2014: 13–23; Torkmani Azar, 2006: 54–55). The rulers justified these policies by claiming to fulfill the duty of jihād against rival sects such as the Bāṭiniyya, Rāfiḍa, Ismāʿīlīs, and Muʿtazilites (Jafari, 2014: 20).

Within the Saljuk political hierarchy, viziers ranked immediately after the sultans. They played a crucial role in determining the empire's grand strategies. Acting on behalf of the rulers, viziers directed religious, military, and bureaucratic institutions (Iqbal, 1959: 22–32). The office embodied executive authority and the management of state affairs. In the Saljuk period, the vizierate implemented the sultans' policies across political, religious, economic, administrative, and military domains. As head of the dīwān, the vizier not only advised the sultan but also supervised the various governmental departments. He oversaw institutions such as the "dīwān al-istīfā" (taxation), "dīwān al-rasāʾil" (correspondence), "dīwān al-ʿarḍ" (military affairs), "dīwān al-barīd" (intelligence), "dīwān al-tawqīʿ" (official documents), the judiciary, the waqf (charitable endowments), the "muḥtasib" (social oversight), the "shuhna" (security), the "iqṭāʿ" (military financing), and the "Nizāmiyya" madrasas (education) (Khosravi, 1979: 109–114; Bojnourdi, 2014: 655–658).

During the reigns of Malikshāh and Alp Arslān, the office of vizier was held by Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk. For thirty years, he directed the administration, consolidating and strengthening the authority of the central government and reorganizing the bureaucratic structure of the Saljuk court. In pursuit of an absolute monarchy, he curtailed the influence of local magnates, tribal leaders, and Turkman chiefs (Nikzad Chāleshtarī et al., 2020: 916–917). By employing Iranian accountants and bureaucrats, Niẓām al-Mulk extended Saljuk power across much of the Islamic world (Iqbal, 1959: 46–50; Pigolovskaya et al., 1974: 270–271). Alongside the sultans and the ruling dynasty, he established a personal and familial sphere of authority within the vizierate (Sedghi, 2021: 239). He created an independent military corps known as the "ghulāmān-i nizāmiyya" to protect the security and position of the bureaucracy against internal and external threats.

Niẓām al-Mulk also founded schools and seminaries, attracting numerous scholars and jurists. His establishment of the "Nizāmiyya" madrasas promoted both religious and rational sciences throughout the Saljuk realm (Firahi, 2003: 258–261). These initiatives contributed significantly to the intellectual and cultural flourishing of the period. He further reformed taxation, introducing systematic methods of revenue collection to increase the income of the central government. By constructing caravanserais, bridges, roads, and trade routes, he improved the economic and infrastructural foundations of the empire (Montazeri, 2009: 185–187; Yusefi & Hasan-Zadeh, 2018: 138–142; Soleimani, 2016: 245–246).

Following the sultans and viziers, judges ("quḍāt") played a crucial role in the Saljuk political system. In the religious discourse of the time, they were given exalted titles such as "guardians of religion" and "deputies of the Prophet" (Baghdādī, 2006: 48–57). They were regarded as custodians of Sharīʿa and trustees of God on earth. This elevated status stemmed from the fusion of local traditions with the requirements of Islamic law. Acting on behalf of the Saljuk sultan's secular and religious authority, judges presided over trials and prosecutions.

As agents of the ruler, they were charged with ensuring justice throughout the empire. By royal decree, they were obliged to judge with fairness and integrity. Within this legal framework, judges were responsible for preventing the spread of heresy that could harm Muslim belief. They had the authority to punish criminals and rebels severely, to restore the rights of the oppressed, and to restrain the hands of plunderers. Acting under the mandate of the sultan, they were expected to impose penalties sufficient to deter others from committing crimes (Maʿwadh, 1976: 18–33).

During the Saljuk era, in accordance with religious and customary traditions, the sultan was the highest judicial authority. As the supreme figure, he presided over the entire judicial system of the realm (Maʿwadh, 1976: 25). In his capacity as "qāḍī al-quḍāt" (chief judge), he appointed all senior officials and heads of the judiciary (Sadeghi Samarjani, 2004: 5). He personally oversaw the royal court ("maḥkama sulṭānī") and the "dīwān al-maẓālim" (tribunal of grievances) (Sedghi, 2021: 227). This tribunal functioned as the highest judicial institution, dedicated to the expansion of justice and the establishment of social security.

Within this legal framework, the sultan was obliged to prevent the oppression of the weak by the powerful, to restore the rights of subordinates against superiors, to uphold the limits of Islamic law in society, and to adjudicate the complaints of the oppressed with fairness. During Niẓām al-Mulk's vizierate, Saljuk sultans personally addressed certain grievances and injustices inflicted upon subjects by bureaucratic and judicial officials (Eslami & Moniri, ۲۰۱۹: 19).

Nevertheless, most judicial responsibilities were delegated to trusted officials. Typically, Saljuk rulers entrusted the administration of both religious and customary law to qualified judges. These judicial authorities, acting under the sultans' decrees, adjudicated many petitions in accordance with prevailing Sharīʿa and customary norms (Maʿwadh, 1976: 16–17).

3.4 – Social Conditions

Iranian society during the vizierate of Niẓām al-Mulk retained a tribal and conflict-ridden character. Although most regions of the Iranian plateau came under the authority of the central Saljuk government, no major transformation occurred in the social structure. Despite the strengthening of state institutions, the fabric of society remained deeply influenced by tribal modes of life (Grantovsky, 1980: 201–202). In other words, even with the emergence of political and geographical unity under Saljuk rule, the general condition of society continued to be fragmented and diverse.

During this period, most subjects lived under tribal leadership. In many cities, villages, and nomadic settlements, kinship and clan relations governed social life. Collective interactions and communal relations were primarily organized within ethnic, tribal, and familial frameworks. Although urban life expanded considerably, various aspects of social existence remained shaped by ties of blood, lineage, and kinship (Sedghi, 2021: 254–255).

In the Saljuk era, tribal affiliations and clan solidarities formed the core of social relations. The majority of people in urban neighborhoods, rural communities, and nomadic groups typically belonged to a specific tribe. Each tribe was subdivided into clans, lineages, and families, each headed by a tribal chief (Goodarzi, 20۰۹: 47–54). These leaders represented their kin groups, organized internal and external relations, and exercised political and social authority over their clans and families. They played a decisive role in maintaining cohesion, distributing resources, and regulating intra-tribal relations. As the principal source of authority, they were

responsible for establishing order and adjudicating disputes within their tribes. Their jurisdiction was generally derived from family position and kinship ties. Acting on behalf of their tribes, they maintained relations with other tribes, the central government, and broader social institutions (Ahmadi, 1999: 69–76).

Across the Saljuk realm, particularly from Transoxiana to Anatolia, numerous tribes and clans resided. They functioned as relatively self-sufficient social units, each possessing its own political and social order. Some groups lived as nomadic pastoralists, while the majority settled in kinship-based communities in villages, oases, and small settlements (Bojnourdi, 2014: 669). Each of these communities practiced subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry. Due to the absence of secure communication routes, many regions maintained only limited contact with one another. Scarcity of natural resources and ethnic-tribal rivalries often led to conflict and strife (Ahmadzadeh, 2015: 45–53; Khosravi, 1979: 14).

In many Saljuk-era cities, alongside urban life, tribal and clan relations remained dominant. Social interactions and communal ties were largely organized around kinship and family affiliations. Networks of ethnic and local relations governed guilds and professional groups, while political and economic offices were distributed according to tribal logic and clan leadership. Consequently, in most cities, tribal and ethnic affiliations outweighed professional and economic associations (Sedghi, 2021: 254).

Saljuk society, in addition to its tribal structure, was characterized by religious governance. During this period, many ethnic and tribal groups adhered to diverse religious traditions. Despite differences, most shared a common identity as Muslims. Even amid disputes, they remained committed to Islamic principles and teachings. The majority of inhabitants—whether urban, rural, or nomadic—observed these religious norms, codified in Islamic Sharīʿa (Lambton, 1993: 79). Sharīʿa encompassed various aspects of social and personal life, enforced by religious elites such as judges, heads of religious institutions, jurists, scholars, market inspectors, waqf administrators, imams, preachers, and exhorters. Under these conditions, tribal and ethnic affiliations transcended local, regional, and urban boundaries only when aligned with Islamic law (Boyle, 2011: 309). These dynamics formed the structural and identity foundations of Iranian society during the Saljuk era (Sedghi, 2021: 249–250).

During Niẓām al-Mulk's vizierate, despite the presence of a shared religion, widespread sectarian conflicts permeated society. Numerous religious and doctrinal groups were engaged in constant strife and hostility. Consequently, alongside tribal disputes, religious and sectarian tensions contributed to fragmentation and division within urban, rural, and nomadic communities (Pigolovskaya et al., 1974: 272–273; Shimoyama & Aghajari, 2015: 85–96).

At this time, the majority of the Saljuk population was Sunni Muslims. Among them, minorities such as the Muʿtazilites, Imāmī Shīʿa, Karrāmiyya, Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa, extremist Shīʿa groups, the Māturīdī school, and various Sufi orders also existed. In addition, non-Muslim communities—including Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and even Buddhists—lived within the empire (Sattarzadeh, 2007: 87–96). Persistent sectarian disputes were common among these groups. In many regions such as Transoxiana, Khurāsān, Iraq, and Syria, as well as in major cities like Sāva, Isfahan, Rayy, Qazvīn, Qom, and Kāshān, conflicts and wars occurred between Muslims and non-Muslims, Sunnis and Shīʿa, and among other sects (Ibn al- Jawzī, 1995: 406–538; Ibn al-Athīr, 1997: 127–158).

5 – The "Siyāsatnāma" of Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk

As previously noted, during Niẓām al-Mulk's vizierate, the Saljuk sultans governed a fragmented and heterogeneous society composed of diverse ethnic and religious groups. This period was marked by extensive sectarian and tribal conflicts across the Iranian plateau and its surrounding regions. In such circumstances, the Saljuk rulers, with the support of the Abbasid caliphate, sought to eliminate ethnic and religious divergences and to maximize their legitimacy by promoting and expanding the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī schools of law. By pursuing these policies, they aimed both to create social unity and to secure sacred legitimacy for their throne (Namazi et al., 2023: 359).

At this juncture, Niẓām al-Mulk, as one of the most influential officials of the Saljuk system, aligned himself not only in practice but also in theory with these strategies. In his "Siyāsatnāma", shaped by the religiously governed society of the Saljuk era, he identified religion and Sharīʿa as the primary forces of unity. In his views, he emphasized the fundamental importance of religion and the preservation of religious rituals as the pillars of social stability and continuity. By grounding kingship in divine principles, he sought to create sacred authority for the Saljuk sultans (Nikzād Chāleshtarī et al., 2020: 911–913).

In theory, and in response to the feudal fragmentation of his time, Niẓām al-Mulk transferred all sources of power and wealth to the person of the sultan (Mokhtari et al. &, 2020: 11–18; Luymi, 195–196). From his perspective, the Saljuk ruler, by monopolizing all resources, was obliged to ensure order and security in society. To achieve these goals, he mandated that the sultan unify society around Sunni Sharīʿa and suppress other sects, religions, and traditions. In his counsel, Niẓām al-Mulk instructed the ruler to punish, with utmost severity, those who disrupted the existing political and religious order (Qaderi, 2011: 122–132).

A close examination of the "Siyāsatnāma" reveals the imprint of these political and social conditions, reflected in key themes such as Sharīʿa-centered governance, sacred kingship, hierarchical relations, and the punishment of dissenters.

1.5 – Sharīʿa-Centered Governance

As noted earlier, in the Saljuk period, Sunni religious institutions played a crucial role in fostering and maintaining social cohesion. Religious organizations and elites were instrumental in creating unity among diverse groups and tribes. From this perspective, the elevated position of religion and Islamic law (Sharīʿa) in Niẓām al-Mulk's thought is understandable. In his "Siyāsatnāma", he treats religion in the form of Sharīʿa principles and rulings, using the two concepts interchangeably within the same semantic framework.

Niẓām al-Mulk regarded Sharīʿa not only as a system of personal belief and practice but also as a social institution with functional significance (Mūsavī Sīrjānī & Farzād, 2021: 11–16). In his view, religious principles and rulings were instruments for achieving political and social unity (Torkmani Āzar, 2006: 59). He considered the survival of society and the preservation of political authority dependent upon adherence to divine commands. Any harm to religion and Sharīʿa, he argued, would place the fabric of the Muslim community at risk of collapse. Disobedience and rebellion against divine decrees would lead society and government toward deviation and destruction.

Throughout the "Siyāsatnāma", Niẓām al-Mulk repeatedly expressed concern about threats and dangers arising from neglect of Sharīʿa and divine law. He warned that deviation from religious obligations would result in disorder, instability, and the downfall of kingdoms. "And when, God forbid, servants fall into disobedience and contempt for Sharīʿa, or negligence appears in obedience to the divine commands, and He wills that they be punished and taste the

recompense of their deeds, surely from the evil of disobedience and the wrath and abandonment of God, calamity will descend upon the people. A good kingship will perish, swords will be drawn against one another, unjust blood will be shed, and it will be as if fire has fallen upon a reed-bed." (Ṭūsī, 2009: 1–2).

This passage vividly illustrates the inseparable link between social-political order and Sharīʿa in Niẓām al-Mulk's thought. His warning reflects the sectarian wars between Sunnis and Shīʿa, the weakening of Abbasid authority, and the rise of groups such as the Ismāʿīlīs, Mazdakites, and Khārijites. For him, adherence to Sharīʿa was not merely a matter of faith but a practical solution to prevent chaos and political violence.

This passage from Niẓām al-Mulk's "Siyāsatnāma" clearly reflects the interconnection between socio-political order and Sharīʿa. His words must be understood against the backdrop of multiple challenges of the time, including sectarian wars between Sunnis and Shīʿa, the weakening of Abbasid authority, and the rise of groups such as the Ismāʿīlīs, Mazdakites, and Khārijites. The existence of such crises compelled Saljuk rulers to promote religious teachings as a political and social solution.

Niẓām al-Mulk's admonitions regarding Sharīʿa and the faith of the people can thus be interpreted as practical strategies to prevent disorder and political violence. He warns that any weakening of Sharīʿa would lead to social collapse. Disobedience and rebellion against religion were, in his view, causes of societal ruin. Neglect of divine commands was seen as a major factor in disorder, instability, and the downfall of governments. For him, "disobedience" and "contempt" for Sharīʿa inevitably produced social upheaval and the disintegration of governance. Any "negligence in obedience to divine commands" would bring severe consequences. According to Niẓām al-Mulk, whenever Sharīʿa and God's commands were not obeyed, chaos and hostility would dominate society, and by divine decree, "a good kingship" would be taken away, leaving the community in turmoil.

In another passage of the "Siyāsatnāma", he states explicitly:
"The kingdom, kingship, and religion are like two brothers. Whenever the kingdom suffers disorder, religion is also impaired, and heretics and corrupters appear. And whenever religion is impaired, the kingdom is disturbed, and corrupters gain strength." (Ṭūsī, 2009: 71). These words highlight the bond between the institutions of religion and kingship. Niẓām al-Mulk establishes a reciprocal relationship between "mamlakat" (political authority) and "dīn" (religious values). He links "disorder" in the state to instability in religion and Sharīʿa. This statement can be seen as a deliberate response to the political and social threats of his time. Influenced by the kinship-based society of the Saljuk era, he describes "kingship" and "religion" as two "brothers." The application of this metaphor underscores the functional interdependence of religious and political institutions.

In this passage, Niẓām al-Mulk uses "disorder" ("iḍtirāb") and "impairment" ("khalal") as synonymous terms. Thus, whenever disorder and impairment affect the foundations of both state and religion, "heretics" and "corrupters" dominate society. Consequently, if Sharīʿa and royal authority are endangered, the affairs of the kingdom inevitably fall into chaos and upheaval. Throughout the "Siyāsatnāma", Niẓām al-Mulk repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of linking religious and political institutions (Ṭūsī, 2009: 70–71, 1–2, 4, 13–14, 37, 48–49, 51–52, 57, 69).

2.5 – Sacred Kingship

In Niẓām al-Mulk's intellectual system, God occupies the supreme position, and the king derives his authority from Him (Nikzād Chāleshtarī et al., 2020: 909). According to Niẓām al-Mulk, every transformation in the world is subject to divine will, which is manifested like the king (Ahmadvand, 2023: 216). Within his conceptual framework, alongside religion and Sharīʿa, kingship constitutes another essential pillar of society. He considered the rise and legitimacy of the monarch to be based on divine election (Namāzī, 2023: 374). In several passages of the "Siyāsatnāma", Niẓām al-Mulk addresses the Saljuk sultan as God's representative, even equating the king's position with that of the caliph (Sha'bani, 2007: 137). Although Niẓām al-Mulk ascribed a sacred and transcendent status to the sultan, he also imposed upon him a set of duties and obligations. The ruler, in his view, was required to organize society in accordance with the commands of Sharīʿa (Namazi et al., 2023: 376).

He makes this point explicitly in the opening passage of his work:
"God Almighty, in every age and time, chooses one from among His creation, adorns him with the arts of kingship and noble qualities, entrusts to him the welfare of the world and the tranquility of His servants, binds corruption and disorder to him, spreads his authority and majesty in the hearts of Muslims and in the eyes of all people, so that men may live under the shade of his justice and the protection of his care." (Ṭūsī, 2009: 1).

In this passage, Niẓām al-Mulk presents a comprehensive vision of kingship in the Saljuk era, combining religious, ethical, and political concepts. This outlook can be considered one of the intellectual foundations of the Saljuk system amid ethnic and sectarian conflicts. Given the political and social challenges of the time, Niẓām al-Mulk's use of such concepts appears aimed at strengthening the institution of monarchy against centrifugal forces. By attributing the sultan's authority to divine will, he defines kingship as an instrument for the execution of God's purpose.

The ruler, in this conception, is essentially God's chosen representative. As a sacred figure, his legitimacy derives from God. Niẓām al-Mulk's phrasing—such as "the welfare of the world and the tranquility of His servants are entrusted to him"—positions the sultan as the axis of social and political stability. By contrasting "welfare and tranquility" with "corruption and disorder," he situates the rise of the monarch as the antidote to chaos. In this formulation, God, through a majestic king, establishes justice within the Muslim community. The ruler, endowed with "the arts of kingship" and "noble qualities," eradicates corruption and turmoil, spreading peace and justice throughout society.

Given the political and social conditions of the time, Niẓām al-Mulk's statement—"his authority and majesty shall be spread in the hearts of Muslims and in the eyes of all people"—can be understood as an effort to reinforce royal power against hostile ethnic and sectarian forces.

In another passage of the "Siyāsatnāma", Niẓām al-Mulk writes:
"God Almighty brings forth a king, just and wise, from among the sons of rulers, granting him a dominion by which he subdues all enemies, and endows him with intellect and knowledge so that he may discern all matters." (Ṭūsī, 2009: 175).

This statement reflects a discourse shaped by the crisis of authority and the political-social fragmentation of the Saljuk era. Niẓām al-Mulk's perspective here can be interpreted as part of his practical efforts to centralize power within the feudal society of the time. Although relative

stability and security had been established in the Iranian plateau and surrounding regions, governance remained challenged by divisions, local disputes, and the rivalries of tribal chiefs. Against this backdrop, Niẓām al-Mulk sought to legitimize Saljuk kingship by sacralizing the monarch, thereby marginalizing competing forces. His phrase "God Almighty brings forth a king" links royal power to divine origin, effectively diminishing the role of political elites and other institutions. In this passage, he sanctifies the Saljuk throne by attributing to the monarch both dynastic lineage and the qualities of wisdom and discernment.

Elsewhere in the "Siyāsatnāma", he states:
"For the welfare of religion and the world is bound to their welfare, and the beauty of kingship and state lies in the survival of the king." These words reveal Niẓām al-Mulk's anxiety over the potential collapse of political and social order. Such concerns may stem from the long history of conflicts and rivalries in the medieval and post-Sasanian periods. In a society where political power required religious legitimacy, this assertion is comprehensible. Here, Niẓām al-Mulk positions kingship as the central axis of both religious and worldly order. By declaring that "the welfare of religion and the world" depends on "the survival of the king," he simultaneously transfers all sources of political and religious authority to the monarch and conditions the existence and continuity of society upon the Saljuk ruler's survival.

This formulation clearly illustrates the unique and critical role of the king in the political and social order of the Saljuk era. Based on Niẓām al-Mulk's thought and practice, it appears that by uniting political and religious leadership in the person of the monarch, he sought to create moral and religious unity within society. Throughout the "Siyāsatnāma", Niẓām al-Mulk consistently endeavors to construct an intellectual foundation for the concentration of power in the hands of the king.

3.5 – Hierarchical Relations

In Niẓām al-Mulk's era, the fragmentation of individuals around tribal and ethnic life facilitated the unilateral and top-down exercise of political power by the ruling system. In many historical texts, including royal decrees and administrative documents, Saljuk sultans regarded the realm as their personal property. Within this legal framework, the sultan was, in theory, the ultimate owner of the empire (Lambton, 1993: 110). Consequently, other individuals and elites were deprived of rights. Niẓām al-Mulk, influenced by such structures, did not recognize any independent status for individuals in his political thought. From his perspective, subjects of the empire lacked the competence and capacity to manage their own affairs. In his intellectual system, the king, as leader of society, possessed all rights, while the people were merely obedient subjects. Their fate, like that of flocks and herds, was determined by divine decree and the will of those in power. The ideal human type for Niẓām al-Mulk was the submissive subject whose duty was obedience (Masʿūdi-Ashtiyani, 2021: 63–64).

He states in the "Siyāsatnāma":
"It is reported that on the Day of Judgment, whoever has commanded others in this world—over the people, the inhabitants of his household, or his subordinates—will be questioned about them, just as a shepherd will be asked to account for the flock he has tended." (Ṭūsī, 2009: 7)
This passage clarifies the position and function of individuals in the Saljuk socio-political order. With a hierarchical and prescriptive tone, Niẓām al-Mulk defines the duties of subjects. His analogy of the "people" to "sheep" portrays individuals as beings without personal agency. By equating the relationship between ruler and subjects to that of shepherd and flock, he articulates a vertical and unilateral distribution of power. In this framework, all rights are stripped from individuals and concentrated in the ruler, who is responsible for the survival and continuity of

society. At the same time, Niẓām al-Mulk expects the sultan to be accountable for his subjects, warning that neglect of these duties will result in divine punishment in the afterlife.

Elsewhere, he writes:
"God Almighty has created the king superior to all men, and all people are his subordinates, deriving their sustenance and greatness from him. They must never remove the ring of servitude from their ears nor loosen the belt of obedience from their waists."

Here, Niẓām al-Mulk explicitly defines the hierarchical relationship between the Saljuk sultan and society. The king is placed in the position of "superior," while all others are "inferior." This reflects the tribal and feudal logic of his time. Individual rights are framed entirely in relation to the king. By stating that people derive "bread and greatness" from the monarch, Niẓām al-Mulk denies any independent rights to individuals, attributing even their livelihood to the grace of the ruler. Thus, he constructs a socio-political order in which the king is the sole source of rights and authority.

He further emphasizes this in a poetic verse:
"One obedient servant is better than three hundred sons, for the former seeks the life of his master, while the latter desires the death of his father." (Ṭūsī, 2009: 146). This verse underscores the primacy of obedience over kinship, reinforcing Niẓām al-Mulk's hierarchical vision of society, where loyalty to the ruler outweighs familial bonds.

4.5 – Punishment of Dissenters

During Niẓām al-Mulk's vizierate, the fragmented and divisive tribal and sectarian conflicts of the Saljuk era led him to adopt uncompromising positions against dissenters. His stance, shaped by the political and social conditions and the policies of Saljuk rulers, was particularly severe toward religious groups. At this time, the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī schools of law were regarded as the foundations of social unity and the legitimacy of the Saljuk system (Firahi, 2003: 258–261). From this perspective, Niẓām al-Mulk's hostile attitude toward other sects and religions can be understood. In the "Siyāsatnāma", he draws a sharp distinction between "true religion" and "heresy." For him, apart from Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī Islam, other sects and traditions—such as the Rāfiḍīs, Bāṭinīs, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews—were sources of deviation, instability, and threats to the existing political and social order. He classified the followers of these groups among the lower strata of society (Sedghi, 2021: 252–253).

According to Niẓām al-Mulk, stability and security required the elimination of all unofficial religious and sectarian groups. Thus, in the "Siyāsatnāma", he urged the Saljuk sultan to punish adherents of other religions and sects harshly (Luymi, 2022: 199). In the final sections of his work, he elaborates extensively on the "policy," "discipline," and the permissibility of shedding the blood of Rāfiḍīs, heretics, Mazdakites, Khārijites, and Ismāʿīlīs. His hostility was particularly intense, uncompromising, and ruthless toward Shīʿa sects. Ultimately, this severity and lack of tolerance contributed to his assassination by the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa (Grantovsky, 1980: 278).

He writes in harsh and offensive language:
"Throughout all ages, there have been Khārijites, from the time of Adam until now; they have rebelled. In every land of the world, no group has been more ominous or more wicked indeed against kings and prophets than this people, who from behind walls plot evil against this kingdom, seek the corruption of religion, lend their ears to false whispers, and fix their eyes on envy. If, God forbid, the victorious state suffers a heavenly calamity, these dogs will emerge

from their lairs and rise against this state, claiming Shīʿism, and their strength will surpass that of the Rāfiḍīs and Khurramites, leaving nothing of evil, corruption, and heresy undone." (Ṭūsī, 2009: 235).

In this passage, Niẓām al-Mulk conceives of governance as a combination of a "victorious state" and official religion. For him, dominant norms meant obedience to the king and unquestioned adherence to the official faith. Any deviation from religion and the established state was tantamount to undermining the entire socio-political structure. Thus, groups such as the Shīʿa, Khārijites, and Khurramites were branded as deviant. His use of extremely derogatory expressions—such as "plotting evil from behind walls," "seeking the corruption of religion," "more ominous and more wicked," "dogs emerging from lairs," and "leaving nothing of evil and heresy undone"—demonstrates his uncompromising and intolerant outlook.

These descriptions reveal the deep intertwining of religion and state in Niẓām al-Mulk's thought, reflecting the logic of Saljuk society. His rhetoric underscores the perception that political legitimacy and social order depended upon suppressing dissent and enforcing conformity to Sunni orthodoxy.

Niẓām al-Mulk, in another passage of the "Siyāsatnāma", declares:
"If a king of the world should arise and draw the sword, waging war against the unbelievers and polytheists whom the Messenger of God fought, turning idol-temples into mosques and transforming the abode of unbelief into the abode of Islam." (Ṭūsī, 2009: 193).

In this section, Niẓām al-Mulk assigns specific legal and religious duties to the Saljuk monarch. This statement can be understood within the framework of the penal system of his era. The ruler envisioned by Niẓām al-Mulk, vested with religious leadership, is the executor of unity and the eliminator of sectarian plurality. Such a king, by wielding the sword, pursues a policy of religious homogenization across the Islamic realm. He is obliged to suppress and eradicate other sects to expand the version of Islam endorsed by Niẓām al-Mulk.

In this passage, the sacred monarch, in the interest of preserving and perpetuating the Sunni religious order, "draws the sword" and "transforms the abode of unbelief into the abode of Islam." Through the phrase "turning idol-temples into mosques," Niẓām al-Mulk assigns to the king the role of religious and social engineer, responsible for reconstructing society based on Sunni Sharīʿa.

6 – Conclusion

Niẓām al-Mulk, deeply influenced by the political and social conditions of the Saljuk era, conceived the foundations of power and legitimacy as sacred. In his monumental work, he linked the ruling monarchy of the Saljuk religious order to divine will and providence. Shaped by the tribal and hierarchical society of his time, he envisioned political power as unilateral and top-down. Authority flowed vertically from the king—God's chosen representative—down to the subjects.

In his intellectual framework, the Saljuk sultan was the guarantor of the endurance and stability of society. The ruler's primary function was to preserve order and security in accordance with Sunni Sharīʿa. These duties were defined in response to the fragmented and multi-sectarian nature of his age. For Niẓām al-Mulk, achieving these goals required the absolute submission of society to the sultan's authority.

Thus, in his system of thought, the Saljuk monarch stood at the apex of all affairs, akin to a shepherd over his flock. As supreme judge and guardian of public order, the king was entrusted with the survival of the polity. In Niẓām al-Mulk's view, any rebellion against the established order constituted a grave threat to the very foundations of society and warranted severe punishment. He counseled the Saljuk sultan to punish dissenters against the existing power structure with the utmost severity.

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