

Foundations of Governance in 'Aṭā-Malik al-Juwaynī's Political Thought

Seyed Reza Hedayati

Center for the Revival of Islamic Works, Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy, Qom, Iran.
kharegh3@gmail.com



Abstract

The period of Mongol dominance over Iran is considered one of the most turbulent and critical epochs in the history of this land, characterized by the collapse of former political and social structures. Within this context, Iranian elites and statesmen faced the fundamental challenge of "cultural and political survival" against a foreign, destructive, and non-Muslim sovereignty. Among these elites, 'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī (623–681 AH), a prominent historian and bureaucrat, played a unique role. He not only served as an official within the Mongol administrative apparatus but also, in his monumental work, *Tārīkh-i jahāngushāy*, formulated a political theory aimed at both explaining the status quo and providing a framework for its management and reform.

This research aims to extract and explain the principles of governance in the political thought of 'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī. Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach, it addresses the fundamental question of how he designed a model of governance for managing society during a period of crisis by synthesizing Iranian-Islamic intellectual traditions with a realistic understanding of contemporary conditions. Although the book *Tārīkh-i jahāngushāy* is a historical work rather than a treatise on political philosophy, this article systematizes Juwaynī's political ideas by extracting key concepts and recurring themes regarding the state, power, the ruler, and society.

Findings indicate that Juwaynī's political thought is built upon several pillars. To justify his cooperation with the Mongols and to establish stability, he attributes their rise to "Divine Providence," viewing it as the inevitable consequence of the moral and political decadence of Muslim societies. Consequently, Mongol rule, however oppressive, is a "legitimate destiny" that must be accepted and managed for a successful transition. The central axis of his thought is justice as the fundamental condition for the survival of both state and religion—a multidimensional concept encompassing the provision of security, the seeking of redress, a fair taxation system, and the selection of righteous officials. In his view, the ruler (monarch) is the "heart of the state" who must ensure the health of the entire

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political body through the promotion of justice, prudence, courage, receptiveness to counsel, and a commitment to the prosperity and welfare of the people. Rather than a total rejection of the new rulers, Juwaynī adopted a strategy of "reform from within." By skillfully synthesizing Sassanid bureaucratic traditions, Persian mirrors for princes (*andarz-nāma*), and Islamic principles, he designed a model of governance intended to educate and moderate the behavior of the Mongol Khans. Ultimately, 'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī's political thought is not an abstract theory but a practical strategy and an astute response to the profound crisis of his era. By presenting a model of governance based on justice and realism, he succeeded in establishing the intellectual and administrative foundations of the Ilkhanid state while preserving Iran's cultural and administrative structures, thereby ensuring the continuity of Iranian civilization. Thus, his thought stands as a prominent example of "resistance through cooperation" and crisis management in the history of Persian political thought.

Keywords

'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī, Tārīkh-i jahāngushāy, political thought, governance, justice, Iranshrism (Iranotopianism), Mongols.

1. Introduction

The Mongol invasion of Iran in the seventh century AH was not merely a devastating military campaign but one of the most cataclysmic historical ruptures in the political and intellectual life of this land. This event confronted the worldview and civilizational structures of a society—which for centuries had been established upon Iranian-Islamic traditions—with a profound crisis of identity and meaning. In this era of chaos, where previous political legitimacy, social order, and cultural values had collapsed, Iranian elites and bureaucrats (the "men of the pen") faced a fundamental challenge: how could one conceive of cultural survival and political reconstruction within the power structure of foreign, non-Muslim, and destructive rulers? This question was not merely a theoretical issue but an existential concern for a generation of officials who had to choose between isolation and destruction, or cooperation and the endeavor for reform. At the heart of this challenge stands the figure of ‘Atā-Malik Juwaynī (623–681 AH), a statesman and historian who served both as a high-ranking official within the Mongol administrative apparatus and as a thinker engaged in theoretical reflection on the conditions of his time and the formulation of solutions to escape the crisis. In his immortal work, *Tārīkh-i jahāngushāy*, he did not merely narrate events; rather, he sought to devise a new blueprint for "governance" from the midst of the ruins—a plan that would both accept the bitter reality of Mongol domination and open a path to moderate, restrain, and direct it toward stability and prosperity. Consequently, Juwaynī’s thought represents a rare instance of the intersection of theory and practice, and an astute endeavor in political theorization under conditions of emergency. This research, aimed at explaining the principles of governance in the political thought of ‘Atā-Malik Juwaynī, seeks to answer the following primary question: as an Iranian-Muslim statesman and thinker, how did Juwaynī engage in theorizing statecraft amidst the crisis of Mongol dominance, and what foundations and strategies did he offer for governing society and moderating the behavior of the conquerors? In other words, how was he able to present a political project for civilizational reconstruction from within a historical text? The central argument of this article is that Juwaynī’s political thought constituted a pragmatic and multifaceted strategy for crisis management. First, by realistically accepting Mongol rule as "Divine Providence," he prepared the ground for engagement and influence. Subsequently, by centering the fundamental concept of justice as the prerequisite for the survival of both state and religion, and by drawing astute inspiration from Iranshahri (Iranotopian) intellectual traditions and Islamic

teachings, he redefined the roles and duties of the ruler. Within this framework, Juwaynī sought to familiarize the Mongol rulers with the principles of statecraft through education and the presentation of models of governance, guiding them from "absolute evil" toward a "relative good." Accordingly, this research will demonstrate that *Tārīkh-i jahāngushāy* is not merely a work of historiography, but a political manual for the survival, reconstruction, and continuity of Iranian civilization during one of the darkest periods of its history. To systematically elucidate this claim, the present article is organized into several sections. The discussion begins by examining the fundamental issue of legitimacy—specifically, how Juwaynī theoretically justified Mongol dominance and his own cooperation with them within the shattered world following the conquest. Once this pragmatic foundation is clarified, the analysis turns to the cornerstone of his political thought: the concept of justice. In this section, the various dimensions of justice from his perspective—ranging from security and the seeking of redress to fair taxation and the selection of righteous officials—are explored, demonstrating how he presents justice as a non-negotiable condition for the stability of any government. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the agent of this justice, namely the ruler (monarch), detailing the ideal characteristics Juwaynī ascribes to him, such as wisdom, piety, and a commitment to public welfare. The following section is dedicated to examining Juwaynī's practical strategies for bridging the gap between his ideals and the reality of Mongol sovereignty, particularly his efforts to manage the complex relationship between religion and politics. Finally, the article concludes by tracing the roots of Juwaynī's ideas within the rich traditions of Iranshahrism (Iranotopian) and Islamic political philosophy, summarizing the findings and explaining his enduring contribution to the history of Iranian political thought.

2. Foundations of the Legitimacy of the Mongol Government in Juwaynī's Thought: Theorization in the Age of Crisis

The Mongol invasion of Iran abruptly shattered the traditional legitimacy based on the three pillars of Iranian lineage, the Islamic faith, and the caliphal investiture. 'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī, as an Iranian-Muslim bureaucrat now serving a foreign and non-Muslim power, faced a profound crisis of legitimacy. He had to formulate a new framework for legitimacy—not only to justify his own position but also to establish a stable theoretical foundation for governing society and engaging with the new rulers. An analysis of *Tārīkh-i jahāngushāy* reveals that, to resolve this dilemma, Juwaynī presents a sophisticated,

multi-layered argument resting on three primary pillars: theo-theological justification, politico-rational necessity, and socio-cultural strategy.

2-1. Theological Foundation: Catastrophe as Divine Providence and Wrath

The first and most fundamental layer of Juwaynī's argument is a theological justification for the catastrophe. Citing Koranic verses and traditions, he invokes the absolute power of God: "God does what He wills by His power" (Ibrahim: 27). From this perspective, the rise and dominance of the Mongols is not a random event or merely the result of their military superiority; rather, it is a manifestation of God's overriding will, which no power can withstand. If an individual like Genghis Khan achieves unprecedented power, this event gains meaning within the framework of Divine Providence and is, therefore, "legitimate" from a divine standpoint (Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 3, p. 89). In Juwaynī's thought, however, this Divine Will is not a blind or arbitrary force; rather, it is a form of Divine Wrath and the direct consequence of the moral and political decadence of the Muslims themselves. In the role of a social pathologist, Juwaynī meticulously enumerates the causes of this collapse:

1) Worldliness and Corruption of Rulers: Muslim statesmen, immersed in "frivolity and idleness," neglected justice and the affairs of the subjects. Through their oppressive conduct, they became embodiments of the "destroyed nations" mentioned in the Quran (see: Ravandi, 1975, vol. 2, p. 301).

2) Ingratitude and General Discord: During its period of power, Islamic society failed to show gratitude for its blessings, and in times of hardship, it failed to practice patience. This ingratitude led to social division and fragmentation, rendering them vulnerable to the enemy (Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 1, pp. 81-82, 100-101, 135).

3) Silence in the Face of Tyranny and Subsistence to Autocrats: Juwaynī also places the blame for this catastrophe on society itself, noting that the people feared the Sultan more than they feared God. Silence in the face of oppression and obedience to self-willed rulers deprived society of Divine support (see: Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 1, p. 104).

This analysis leads to a staggering conclusion. This conclusion reaches its climax in a statement Juwaynī attributes to Genghis Khan following the conquest of Bukhara: "I am the punishment of God. Had you not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you" (see: Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 1, pp. 81-82).

By placing these words in the mouth of the Mongol conqueror, Juwaynī transforms him from a savage invader into an unwitting instrument of Divine Wrath. In doing so, he renders the catastrophe meaningful and presents resistance to it as equivalent to opposing the will of God, thereby clearing the path for the acceptance of reality and the necessity of engagement.

2-2. Political Logic: Order from Chaos and the Necessity of Survival

The second pillar of Juwaynī's argument is based on political realism and rational logic. He effectively demonstrates that, prior to the Mongol invasion, the Islamic world was embroiled in pervasive chaos and internal warfare. The conflicts between the Khwarazmian dynasty, the Seljuks, and the Abbasid Caliphate, alongside external threats such as the Qara Khitai, had decimated stability and security, leaving the region in a state of permanent "anarchy". From this perspective, the emergence of a supreme and centralized power like the Mongols—despite all its violence and devastation—brought an end to these fragmented upheavals and replaced them with a form of ironclad order. For Juwaynī, who was trained in the school of Iranian bureaucracy and deeply concerned with stability, this order, however oppressive, was preferable to anarchy and civil war.

Furthermore, the logic of "survival" dictated that resistance against the invincible Mongol force would yield nothing but total annihilation and further bloodshed. Therefore, cooperation with the new rulers was not an act of weakness or betrayal, but rather a rational choice to preserve lives, property, and the remaining cultural and social structures. This approach paved the way for a transition from mere passivity and resignation toward active engagement and an effort to exert influence (see: Ravandi, 1975, vol. 2, pp. 279-283).

2-3. Cultural Strategy: Legitimization through the Revival of the Iranian-Islamic Tradition

The third and most forward-looking layer of Juwaynī's argument is the effort to achieve social and cultural legitimacy by reconstructing and reviving Iranian-Islamic governance traditions. He realized that collaboration offered an opportunity for the education and "domestication of the new rulers." Upon entering the Mongol administrative apparatus, Juwaynī sought to instruct them in key concepts of statecraft, such as justice, development, benevolence, and the patronage of scholars. By recounting historical parables, narrating the fates of tyrannical and just kings, and relying on rich Iranian traditions, he practically aimed to transform nomadic conquerors into urban monarchs

acquainted with the principles of governance. This endeavor not only rendered Mongol rule more tolerable in the eyes of Iranian and Muslim subjects but also, in the long run, prepared the ground for the absorption of Mongol culture into the superior and deeply rooted Iranian-Islamic civilization (see: Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 1, p. 2; vol. 2, pp. 37, 78).

In this way, Juwaynī presented a comprehensive framework for legitimacy through these three complementary arguments: theological justification established political necessity, and this necessity provided the opportunity for a cultural strategy to reconstruct the future.

3. Justice: The Cornerstone of State and Religion in Juwaynī's Political Thought

If divine providence served as the theological and initial justification for accepting Mongol hegemony, justice became Juwaynī's master key and roadmap for the continuity, stability, and reform of this rule. In his thought, justice is not an abstract moral virtue; rather, it is a political technology and an essential condition for survival, inextricably linked to key concepts such as security, prosperity, military power, and religiosity. Drawing upon the enduring tradition of Iranshahri (Iranotopian) political thought and Islamic teachings, Juwaynī introduces justice as the central axis of his political project to educate the new rulers and reconstruct a devastated society (see: Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 1, p. 2; vol. 2, pp. 37, 78).

3-1. Theoretical Foundation: The Circle of Justice and the Bond Between State and Religion

At the core of his analysis, Juwaynī reconstructs the "Circle of Justice," a concept rooted in Sasanian mirrors for princes and further developed by Islamic thinkers. From his perspective, the pillars of the state are linked in a chain-like fashion: the king requires an army to maintain power; the army needs wealth (the treasury) for its sustenance; wealth is obtained from the subjects through taxation; the subjects can only produce wealth under the shadow of development and security; and development and security are unattainable except through the king's justice (see: Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 3, pp. 139, 141).

This cycle clearly demonstrates that, in Juwaynī's view, oppression of the subjects ultimately leads to the weakening of the treasury, the army, and the monarch himself. Injustice is not merely a moral sin, but a fatal calculative error. Through this line of reasoning, he teaches the Mongol rulers—whose

logic was rooted in military might—that the sword alone is insufficient for governance, and that sustainable power is rooted in the satisfaction and welfare of the subjects. Accordingly, Juwaynī establishes a profound link between the state and religion, maintaining that without justice, the state collapses and religion vanishes. In this view, justice ensures the implementation of religious ordinances and the preservation of public morality, while religion provides the spiritual and ideological backbone for justice. A government that upholds justice receives divine assistance and becomes the bearer of the banner of "Verily, We have granted [thee] a manifest victory" (Quran, 48:1), for God Himself is the "Avenger against the criminals" (Sajdah, 22) and the helper of the just.

3-2. Practical Examples: Justice from Theory to Practice

Juwaynī translates justice from an abstract concept into a set of specific executive policies. He demonstrates to the Mongol rulers that justice must permeate all aspects of governance:

1) Support for subjects and the absolute negation of oppression: This is the primary and most fundamental duty of the ruler. Citing Quranic verses, Juwaynī warns the Mongols that oppression leads to nothing but annihilation. Referencing the verse, "My covenant does not include the wrongdoers" (Quran 2:124), he emphasizes that the divine covenant and the right to leadership do not extend to oppressors. He depicts the fate of tyrannical regimes with the imagery of "their houses [lying] in ruins" (Quran 27:52)—their homes left desolate because of their wrongdoing—to teach the new rulers that their palaces, too, will turn into ruins through oppression. (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 3, pp. 139, 141).

2) Establishment of security and public order: After decades of chaos and insecurity, the establishment of security was the most vital manifestation of justice. Combating bandits, thieves, and corrupt individuals was essential not only for the people's comfort but also for the revitalization of trade and agriculture. Security is the prerequisite for prosperity and the primary gift that a powerful government can bestow upon its subjects (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 154).

3) Judicial justice and the redress of grievances: The ruler must be a sanctuary for the oppressed. Juwaynī emphasizes the necessity of the people's access to the ruler and the allocation of specific times for hearing complaints. This principle reduces the gap between the ruler and the people and fosters a sense of trust within society instead of fear. (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 154).

4) Tax justice: As a seasoned bureaucrat, Juwaynī knew well that heavy and unjust taxes would wither the roots of agriculture and production. He taught the Mongol rulers that a fair and predictable land tax (*kharāj*) would, in the long run, yield much greater revenue for the treasury than indiscriminate looting and extortion. This policy led directly to prosperity and public welfare (cf. Qazvini, 2006; Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, pp. 47, 87).

5) Administrative justice and meritocracy: Selecting righteous, trustworthy, and just ministers, governors, and officials guarantees the implementation of justice throughout the realm. Corruption within the bureaucratic apparatus neutralizes all of the ruler's efforts to establish justice (cf. Qazvini, 2006; Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 84).

3-3. Consequences of Injustice: A Warning to Conquerors

To complete his argument, Juwaynī reminds the Mongol rulers of the inescapable consequences of injustice through an exemplary narrative of the fate of previous governors. He demonstrates that injustice leads to the spread of tyranny, the migration of elites and the labor force, economic stagnation, internal rebellions, and ultimately, the complete collapse of the political system. From his perspective, history is a vast laboratory in which the divine tradition of the destruction of oppressors has been proven repeatedly. Through this method, he warns the Mongols that if they trample upon the principles of justice, they will meet a fate no better than that of the fallen regimes before them, and their power, however immense, will not endure. In fact, he transforms history into a tool for political education and admonition (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, pp. 91, 157–158; also: Qazvini, 2006; Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, Introduction, pp. 137, 144).

4. The Ideal Ruler in Juwaynī's Thought: Depicting the Just King Model

If justice is the cornerstone of a stable government in Juwaynī's thought, the ruler (the King) is the architect and guardian of that structure. Utilizing an organic metaphor, Juwaynī refers to the ruler as the heart of the state—an organ whose health or malady directly infects the entire body politic; therefore, the reformation of government and society is impossible except through the reformation of the ruler's person. Recognizing this reality, and with the strategic objective of educating and training the Mongol rulers, Juwaynī proceeds to delineate an "ideal model" of kingship. This model is a sophisticated synthesis of two great and deep-rooted traditions: the Iranshahri

(Iranotopian) model of kingship and the Islamic model of leadership (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 154). This ideal model is founded upon a dual basis of authority and responsibility. On one hand, by reviving the ancient concept of "the King as the Shadow of God on Earth," Juwaynī bestows a charismatic and divine status upon the ruler. While this position grants him unquestionable authority, it simultaneously places a heavy burden of responsibility on his shoulders; as God's representative, the ruler is duty-bound to implement justice, establish security, and most importantly, ensure the prosperity of the country and the preservation of its cultural heritage. Juwaynī complements and balances this Iranian model with Islamic teachings. The ruler must be a true Muslim, not one who "worships God only with his tongue." His deeds must align with his words, lest he become an instance of the verse, "Why do you say what you do not do?" (Qur' an 61:2); he must act based on reason and divine law (Sharia), holding himself accountable to both God and the people. The result of this synthesis is a balanced model of power and responsibility, in which the charismatic authority of the Iranian King merges with the moral duty and accountability of the Islamic ruler (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 154).

From these foundations, Juwaynī extracts a set of virtues that serve as a "manual for good governance." In the political and strategic sphere, the ruler must possess prudence and sagacity (Fereydun-like wisdom) to anticipate and repel seditions (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 2, pp. 37, 78; Vol. 3, pp. 18–19). He must be brave and courageous to defend the integrity of the country (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 172) and, at the same time, wise and consultative to avoid the arbitrariness of opinion that leads to error (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, pp. 53, 85; Yunini, 1992, Vol. 4, pp. 224–225). These political skills are complemented by social and moral virtues. The ruler must treat his subjects with compassion and kindness, addressing their livelihood through magnanimity (*muruwwa*) and generosity (*futuwwa*) to build an integrated and loyal society by fostering solidarity (*muwālāt*) (Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 10). At the heart of all these characteristics lie personal and spiritual virtues such as piety, forbearance in the face of anger, humility before power, and fidelity to covenants, which guarantee the ruler's integrity and prevent corruption (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 273). By describing the actions of various monarchs, from Genghis and Hulagu to the kings of old, Juwaynī portrays these characteristics either implicitly or explicitly. By praising the courage of the Mongols or commending their constructive and developmental measures, he effectively holds up a mirror to them so they may see themselves reflected in it and strive toward this ideal model. Thus, delineating the "ideal ruler"

was a pedagogical and strategic tool in Juwaynī's hands to transform alien conquerors into legitimate and just sovereigns (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 172).

4-1. Characteristics of the Ideal Ruler: A Roadmap for Transforming Conqueror into King

After outlining the general framework of the ruler's role, 'Atā-Malik Juwaynī enumerates in detail the practical characteristics and moral virtues that collectively constitute a "Mirror for Princes" (*Āyina-yi Shāhī*) or a guide for good governance. These characteristics are not a random list of good traits; rather, they represent a comprehensive educational program and a sophisticated political tool designed to train and "civilize" the Mongol rulers. By presenting this model, Juwaynī teaches them how they can transition from the position of a mere conqueror to the rank of a legitimate and enduring sovereign. These virtues can be categorized into three primary domains: the moral compass, strategic tools, and the art of statecraft (the art of winning the people's hearts).

4-1-1. Moral Compass: Justice-Orientation and Religiosity

At the center of Juwaynī's model lie two fundamental virtues that determine the general orientation of the government:

1) Quest for Justice: This is the most paramount and non-negotiable characteristic of the ruler. In Juwaynī's view, justice means "refraining from all acts of aggression against all beings" and seeking redress for the oppressed. This principle is so vital that Juwaynī, citing Quranic verses, links the fate of the just ruler to divine victory and the fate of the oppressor to ruin and abandonment. He warns the Mongol rulers that if they tread the path of tyranny, they will not only lose divine support but, according to the immutable divine tradition, will suffer a severe punishment akin to that of the "People of Pharaoh" (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 195).

2) Religiosity and Piety: For Juwaynī, true religiosity is the bedrock for the implementation of justice. Despite his audience being pagans, he boldly calls upon them to observe the "light of the Muhammadan Sharia" and to support the people of knowledge. Piety, in this view, signifies a profound understanding of divine limits—such as the law of retribution (*qisās*), which guarantees the "life" of society—and a struggle against those who "wish to extinguish the light of God." In fact, Juwaynī teaches them that religion is not a mere collection of rituals, but rather a moral framework that restrains power and imbues it with meaning (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 3, p. 60).

4-1-2. Strategic Tools: Reason, Courage, Wisdom

Having established the moral orientation, Juwaynī proceeds to the practical instruments of statecraft:

1) Sagacity and Prudence (Fereydun-like Wisdom): The ruler must possess the intelligence and acumen necessary to anticipate and neutralize seditions. Juwaynī regards this trait as a "God-given blessing" and the "heart of intellects," a quality he praises even in Genghis Khan. This sagacity must be accompanied by wisdom and the ability to discern interests from harms, enabling the ruler to distinguish right from wrong in a complex world (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 203; Vol. 2, pp. 37, 78).

2) Courage and Fortitude: Recognizing the martial spirit of the Mongols, Juwaynī praises their bravery and valor. However, he astutely redefines this trait. Ideal courage is found not in destruction, but in steadfast resistance against enemies and patience through hardships. Citing Quranic verses and traditions, he teaches rulers that true power lies in firmness of step and reliance on divine victory, for indeed, "with every hardship, there is ease" (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 172; Vol. 3, pp. 8–9).

3) Love of Knowledge and Consultative Leadership: A wise ruler does not rely solely on his own intellect. He must value knowledge, draw scholars to his court, and select his ministers and advisors from among them. This principle is, in fact, a subtle invitation from Juwaynī to the Mongol rulers to trust the Persian bureaucratic and educated class and to utilize their accumulated wisdom for the administration of the realm (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, pp. 53, 85; Yunini, 1992, Vol. 4, pp. 224–225).

4-1-3. The Art of Statecraft: Welfare, Clemency, and Loyalty

Ultimately, the legitimacy of a ruler depends on his relationship with his subjects. Juwaynī emphasizes three fundamental pillars in this regard:

1) Pursuit of Welfare and Development: The most crucial duty of a ruler, after establishing security, is to strive for the development of the realm and the prosperity of the people. Referring to his own administrative performance in Baghdad, Juwaynī demonstrates that this is not an abstract ideal. Reducing taxes, constructing infrastructure, and revitalizing agriculture and commerce are the tangible manifestations of a just and popular government (cf. Eghbal Ashtiani, 2005, pp. 201, 203, 506; Ravandi, 1975, Vol. 3, p. 249).

2) Clemency and Chivalry (*Javānmardī*): True power lies in the capacity for forgiveness. A ruler must master his anger and, in times of peace, refrain from vengefulness. This "chivalry," which stood in direct contrast to the

cruelty of the Genghisid era, is a hallmark of the self-confidence and spiritual greatness of a true sovereign (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 10).

3) Fidelity to Covenants: Political stability depends on the mutual trust between the ruler and the people. A ruler who breaks his pledge ultimately harms himself, as he loses his legitimacy and paves the way for rebellion (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 273).

In summary, these traits constitute a comprehensive and coherent program. By delineating this ideal model, Juwaynī demonstrates to the Mongol rulers that the path to the survival of their sovereignty lies not in persisting with the coercive methods of the past, but in embracing the time-tested principles of Perso-Islamic kingship and evolving into just, wise, and benevolent sovereigns.

4-2. Juwaynī's Practical Solutions: Transforming Theory into Reality

The political thought of 'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī was not merely a subjective utopia, but rather a pragmatic political project that he sought to realize through sagacity and prudence. He was well aware that to transform a Mongol "Khan" into a "Just Shah," he had to employ specific and effective instruments. An analysis of Juwaynī's conduct reveals that he adopted three key strategies to influence Mongol governance and advance his objectives: intellectual influence and consultation, the diplomacy of survival and the preservation of heritage, and steadfastness in Perso-Islamic identity (cf. Tatavi & Qazvini, 2003, p. 3941).

4-2-1. Intellectual Influence: The Circle of Sages and the Art of Consultation

As a seasoned bureaucrat, Juwaynī believed in the power of the "word" and "consultation." He understood that to shift the mindset of the Mongol rulers, he had to gain proximity to both their minds and their ears.

1) Formation of an Elite Circle: His first and most vital measure was the gathering of Persian-Muslim elites and scholars around the seat of power. By introducing an eminent figure such as Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī to Hulagu, he not only preserved Ṭūsī's life but also established a formidable intellectual and scientific weight by his side. This circle, which included scholars and men of letters like Ibn Maytham al-Bahrānī and Ibn al-Fuwati, functioned as a "think tank" capable of steering Mongol policies and checking their radical excesses (cf. Eghbal Ashtiani, 2005, pp. 492, 504–506).

2) Influencing Strategic Decisions: Historical evidence indicates that this

intellectual influence was profoundly effective. Hulagu's decision to construct the Maragheh Observatory—a monumental scientific and cultural project—was directly influenced by Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and supported by Juwaynī. During the conquest of Baghdad, Hulagu's reliance on the advisory opinions of Juwaynī and Khwāja Naṣīr played a crucial role in mitigating the scale of the catastrophe. This trend persisted under Hulagu's successors; measures such as the reconstruction of Nishapur by Abaqa Khan, or the issuance of the first decree for the *Imarat al-Hajj* (Pilgrimage Leadership) during the Mongol era—drafted by Juwaynī himself—all signify the success of this strategy in institutionalizing the concepts of "development" and "observance of Islamic rites" within the minds of the rulers (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 3, p. 138).

4-2-2. Diplomacy of Survival: Negotiating for the Preservation of Life and Culture

In the face of the Mongol's devastating military might, Juwaynī substituted fruitless resistance with a strategy of "negotiating for survival." He leveraged his status and prestige to safeguard human lives and the cultural heritage of Iran.

1) Mediation during Conquests: During the campaigns, Juwaynī advised the governors of fortresses and cities that lacked the capacity for resistance to surrender in order to prevent massacres and destruction. Although this approach appeared to be a collaboration with the conqueror, in practice, it saved thousands of lives and forestalled the total annihilation of cities (cf. Browne, 2003, p. 582).

2) Preservation of Scientific Treasures: The most salient example of this strategy is observed in the conquest of Alamut Castle, the Isma'ili stronghold. Juwaynī, who regarded this victory as comparable to the "Conquest of Khaybar," persuaded Hulagu to save the vast and unparalleled library of Alamut from destruction. The preservation of this precious collection, along with its precision astronomical instruments—which were later utilized in the Maragheh Observatory—constituted a major cultural achievement that was only possible through the presence of a culture-loving bureaucrat at the side of the Mongol conqueror (cf. Eghbal Ashtiani, 2005, p. 561).

4-2-3. Steadfastness in Identity: Cultural Resistance against Assimilation

Despite his close collaboration with the Mongols, Juwaynī was never assimilated into their culture and identity. In the face of political and cultural pressures, he remained steadfast in his Persian and Shi'i identity (according to

certain accounts and evidence).

1) Resistance against Political Pressures: During the reign of Abaqa Khan, who was influenced by his Christian wife and Crusader advisors, the Juwaynī family faced trumped-up charges, and his brother, Shams al-Din, was executed. Nevertheless, Juwaynī did not deviate from his path, which was rooted in Perso-Islamic thought (cf. Eghbal Ashtiani, 2005, pp. 182–220, 219, 485, 492).

2) Reliance on Shiite Intellectual Foundations: His close association with eminent Shi'i scholars, such as Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani—the commentator on the *Nahj al-Balagha*—and his reliance on the counsel of Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, demonstrate the depth of his intellectual bond with this school of thought. In describing Juwaynī, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrānī characterizes him as a person of "celestial soul," "laudable ethics," and "lofty ambition," reflecting the profound respect Shi'i scholars held for his character and conduct. This steadfastness in identity prevented Juwaynī from becoming a mere, passive functionary in the hands of Mongol rulers, instead granting him the spiritual authority to persevere in his path (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, Vol. 1, pp. 53, 85; Yunini, 1992, Vol. 4, pp. 224–225; Muzaffar, 2007, p. 34).

In conclusion, these strategies demonstrate that Juwaynī was a consummate statesman who knew how to translate thought into action. By synthesizing consultation, diplomacy, and cultural resistance, he succeeded in keeping the flame of Persian culture and wisdom alive amidst the darkest of eras, ultimately altering the course of history in favor of his civilization.

5. Managing the Relationship between Religion and Politics: Juwaynī's Strategy for the Revival of Islamic Civilization

One of the most fundamental challenges faced by 'Atā-Malik Juwaynī was managing the relationship between religion and politics under unprecedented circumstances: the sovereignty of a non-Muslim and pagan power over Dar al-Islam (the Abode of Islam). This situation confronted the classical theory of "al-mulk wa-l-dīn taw'aman" (Kingship and religion are twins)—which Juwaynī deeply espoused and had inherited from thinkers such as Niẓām al-Mulk and al-Ghazālī—with a profound crisis. According to this theory, religion serves as the guardian of ethics and values, while the state acts as the executor of ordinances and the protector of order; yet, now a government held power that not only lacked faith in the religion of its subjects but was initially regarded as its adversary (cf. Qazvini, M. in Juwaynī, A.T., 2006, Introduction to Vol. 1, pp. 84–85).

To resolve this dilemma, Juwaynī designed a multi-stage and pragmatic project. Instead of confrontation or passivity, he adopted a strategy of "gradual reform from within," the ultimate goal of which was not only to restore religion to its former status but also, eventually, to facilitate the conversion of the Mongol rulers themselves to Islam.

5.1. Step One: Education and Persuasion through Historiography

Juwaynī's first and most ingenious tool for exerting influence was the very composition of the *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy* (The History of the World Conqueror). As some scholars have noted, this book is more than a mere narrative; it serves as a "soft opposition tool" and a "political manual" for the Mongol rulers. Through the masterful use of Quranic verses, Hadiths, parables, and poetry, Juwaynī infused a religious worldview into his historical text. In doing so, he pursued two objectives:

1) Moral Lessons: By narrating the fates of tyrannical rulers of the past and explaining the theological reasons for their downfall, he warned the Mongols that disregarding ethical and religious principles would lead to nothing but destruction (cf. Khatami and Arabov, 2010, pp. 36–42).

2) Providing a Model: By incorporating his own administrative views—derived from religious foundations—he demonstrated to the new rulers the proper path of governance and how they could achieve the status of a legitimate monarch (cf. Khatami and Arabov, 2010, pp. 36–42).

Consequently, the *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy* was, in fact, an educational project that sought to prepare the mindset of the Mongol rulers to embrace the principles of Perso-Islamic governance.

5-2. Step Two: Tactical Pluralism and the Recruitment of Religious Elites

Juwaynī recognized that to reconstruct society and exert influence over the ruling power, he required the support of all intellectual and religious elites. Consequently, he adopted a policy of pragmatic pluralism. Although he was likely a Hanafi himself, instead of relying on a specific denomination, he utilized the capacity of all Islamic schools of thought—particularly Shia scholars—to advance his objectives.

1) Formation of a United Front of Scholars: By attracting prominent figures from various schools of thought, from Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (Shia), Ibn Maytham al-Bahrānī (Shia), and Ṣafī al-Dīn Armawī (Shāfī'ī or Ḥanafī), to Bahā' al-Dīn Ardabīlī and others, he formed a comprehensive "cultural cabinet." This action not only helped in the better administration of

affairs but also conveyed an important message to the Mongol rulers: the Islamic community, despite its internal differences, stood united against them (see: Eghbal Ashtiani, 2005, pp. 504-506; Muzaffar, 2007, p. 36).

2) Utilizing Mongol-Era Religious Freedom: Juwaynī cleverly leveraged the early Mongols' policy of religious tolerance (which stemmed from their indifference) for the benefit of the Islamic community. By supporting Shia scholars to such an extent that some mistakenly considered him Shia, he was, in practice, striving for the "salvation of the Islamic nation" through unity and solidarity (see: Tūsī, 2012, p. 46).

This strategy not only helped preserve and strengthen the institutions of knowledge and religion during the period of interregnum/transition but also paved the way for inter-religious dialogue and, ultimately, for presenting a cohesive and attractive image of Islam to the Mongols.

5-3. Step Three: Tolerance, Peacemaking, and the Realization of the Ultimate Goal

Juwaynī, in order to advance this long-term project, required stability and peace. Therefore, wise tolerance and a peacemaking approach became one of his key strategies. He dealt with the intrigues of court rivals such as Majd al-Mulk Yazdi with patience and tolerance, refraining from retaliation or vengeance. He well understood that internal conflicts would unravel all his efforts and provide opportunities for their common enemies (cf. Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 2, p. 10).

This set of strategies ultimately bore fruit. The convergence of Islamic scholars' ideas and the presentation of a successful model of just and prosperous governance gradually influenced the Mongol rulers. The outcome of this long-term and intelligent project is clearly evident in the conversion of Tekuder, Ghazan Khan, and Öljeitü (Muhammad Khodabandeh), and ultimately in the transformation of the Ilkhanid state into a full-fledged Islamic sultanate. This achievement marked the ultimate victory of Juwaynī's strategy and his like-minded associates in managing the complex relationship between religion and politics, and in reviving the Iranian-Islamic civilization from the ashes (cf. Muzaffar, 2007, p. 36).

6. The Roots of Thought and Practical Expression: The Creative Synthesis of Traditions in the Governance of Baghdad

‘Atā-Malik Juwaynī’ s political thought was not a sudden invention or a historical anomaly; rather, it had deep roots in two rich and long-standing

intellectual traditions: the legacy of Persian civilization and Islamic political wisdom. He was not merely a follower of tradition, but a pragmatic and integrative thinker who, through a deep understanding of these two traditions and an accurate grasp of the realities of his time, was able to present an effective and successful model of governance. The best laboratory for testing the effectiveness of this model was his 24-year rule over Arab Iraq and its capital, Baghdad—a period during which Juwaynī transformed theory into practice and demonstrated how civilization could be rebuilt from ruins and order restored from chaos (cf. Ravandi, 1975, vol. 3, p. 249; Idaram, 2009, p. 48).

6-1. Intellectual Foundations: Drawing from Iran and Islam

Juwaynī stood on the shoulders of two great intellectual giants:

1) The Iranshahri (Iranotopian) thought: He was the direct heir to the political thought of ancient Iran, a tradition that had continued through works such as Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyasatnama*. Key concepts from this tradition—such as the centrality of justice, the inseparable bond between religion and the state (the unity of faith and kingship), the importance of order and prosperity, and the role of the king as the axis of stability—formed the foundational structure of his thinking. Juwaynī drew from these epics and administrative traditions not as museum-like texts, but as practical tools for educating Mongol rulers and offering a tested model of governance. For him, historiography was also a means of imparting lessons to kings and encouraging them to uphold the principles of justice.

2) Islamic Political Wisdom: Juwaynī blended this Persian heritage with the profound teachings of Islam. His *Tārīkh-i Jahangushā* is rich with references to the Holy Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah. Concepts such as *ihsan* (excellence in conduct), *rahmat* (mercy), avoidance of injustice, and the ruler's responsibility toward the people infused the Islamic spirit into the body of his Persianate political thought. Relying on these foundations, he emphasized the necessity of upholding Islamic law (*sharia*) and supporting the scholars, and even drew from the ideas of Muslim philosophers such as Farabi to enrich his own thinking. This synthesis gave his thought depth and spiritual legitimacy (Juwaynī, 2006, vol. 1, pp. 9–10).

Juwaynī, through this creative synthesis, went beyond mere imitation. Instead of rejecting the Mongols, he penetrated the depth of their rule in order to transform their thinking and style of governance from within, to the benefit of the Iranian-Islamic civilization.

6-2. Practical Achievements: Baghdad as Juwaynī's Visionary City

Juwaynī's rule over Baghdad, which Ibn al-Mithim called him "the servant of the kings of Arabs and Persians" due to this period, was the practical embodiment of all his theoretical ideas. During this time, he transformed the ruined Baghdad, devastated by the Mongol invasion, into a thriving center of economic, cultural, and political life. He demonstrated what results could be achieved in practice by applying the principles of justice and prosperity:

1) Political Unity and Religious Moderation: Understanding the necessity of solidarity, he promoted religious moderation and, by fostering unity between Shia and Sunni scholars, restored peace and stability to the intellectual and social environment of Iraq (see Tūsī, 2012, p. 46).

2) Prosperity and Economic Development: Relying on his own principles, Juwaynī launched a grand civil and economic project. He revitalized agriculture and horticulture by reducing taxes. Across Iraq, he built roads, caravanserais, and scientific schools, and repaired and expanded irrigation canals. Baghdad, during his time, became even more prosperous than in the era of the Abbasid Caliphs, according to historians. With the establishment of weaving and textile factories, it turned into an industrial and commercial hub (Ravandi, 1975, vol. 3, p. 249; Idaram, 2009, p. 48).

3) Cultural and Religious Revival: He paid special attention to scientific and religious centers. By restoring and embellishing the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf and the shrines of the Imams Kazim in Baghdad, and by creating a safe environment for scholars, he once again transformed Baghdad into one of the key centers of Islamic civilization (Eghbal Ashtiani, 2005, p. 559).

The brilliant achievements of Juwaynī in Baghdad are the best evidence of the success of his political thought. He demonstrated that a just and wise ruler, even in the most difficult circumstances and under the shadow of foreign power, can bring security, welfare, and culture to his people by relying on proven principles. His rule over Baghdad was not only an administrative success, but also the ultimate victory of a long-term intellectual project aimed at reviving the Iranian-Islamic civilization.

7. Conclusion

This research, with the aim of explaining the foundations of governance in the political thought of 'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī, addresses the question of how, as an Iranian-Muslim statesman and thinker, he faced the crisis caused by Mongol domination and what theory he proposed for managing society and reforming

governance. An analysis of the book *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy* shows that Juwaynī's thought is not an abstract theory, but rather a practical and multi-layered political project for managing the crisis and rebuilding civilization. This project was based on three main pillars: rhetorical justification, the centrality of justice, and modeling for the ruler.

In the first step, Juwaynī, with a smart realism, justified Mongol domination as the "Divine Will" and the inevitable result of the Muslims' own decline. This theological foundation opened the way for a transition from unproductive confrontation to active engagement and internal influence. In the second step, he introduced justice not merely as a moral virtue, but as a political technology and a necessary condition for survival. By reviving the concept of Iranian urban justice and blending it with Islamic teachings, he showed the Mongol rulers that military power alone, without the consent of the people, prosperity, and a fair tax system, would not remain stable. In the third step, Juwaynī, by outlining the model of a just king, presented a set of political, social, and moral virtues as a "governance manual" for the new conquerors, aiming to elevate them from the status of "steppe chieftains" to that of "civilized kings."

The main contribution of this research lies in demonstrating that Juwaynī's thought should not be viewed as a mere list of traits or scattered views, but rather as a coherent and strategic project. By creatively combining the intellectual traditions of Iranian urban culture and Islam, he presented a model of governance that was both comprehensible to the Mongol rulers and served the interests of the Iranian-Islamic civilization. His outstanding 24-year tenure in governing Baghdad, which led to the city's complete restoration and a cultural and economic revival, served as the practical embodiment and proof of the success of this intellectual project.

In the end, the political thought of 'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī is a key to understanding one of the most important questions in the history of Iran: How was the Iranian civilization able to assimilate the destructive Mongol conquerors and transform them into supporters of its culture and religion? The answer lies in the wisdom and statesmanship of figures like Juwaynī, who, by presenting a theory based on "resistance through cooperation" and "reform through education," managed to alter the course of history in favor of their own civilization. His thought not only attests to the continuity and development of political thought in Iran, but also serves as a lasting model of how the wise elites of a rooted civilization can skillfully confront foreign regimes and manage the transition out of the darkest crises.

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