



MO'IN-AL-DIN NAṬANZI

MO'IN-AL-DIN NAṬANZI, early 15th-century historian, author of the *Montaqab al-tavāriq*, a general chronicle on dynastic history of Iran in the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, dedicated to the Timurid ruler Šāhroq (1405-47).

Little is known of Naṭanzi's life. According to [Dawlatšāh Samarqandi](#) (p. 371), he was a man of letters at the court of one of Timur's grandsons, Eskandar b. 'Omar Šayq, in Shiraz. On at least three occasions, Naṭanzi (pp. 151, 379, 407) gives pro-Shiite comments on historical events in the past, which can be taken to imply that he followed Shiite Islam. Furthermore in his chronicle, Naṭanzi (p. 433) refers to a contract (*'ahd-nāmeḥ*) similar to the Shiite concept of *naṣṣ*, and he calls Eskandar b. 'Omar Šayq the "Messiah of the Last Days" (*mahdi-ye āker al-zamān*; Binbaş, 2013, p. 198).

In 1413, Naṭanzi composed a world history "from the time of Adam up to 1405" for this prince. This chronicle later came to be known as the *Anonime Eskandera*, as its extant manuscripts bear neither a title nor the author's name. The following year, Eskandar was deposed by Šāhroq. Naṭanzi then quickly revised the text to reflect the new political reality, removing the passages in praise of Eskandar. He presented this new version of his chronicle to Šāhroq in Herat on 22 Rajab 817/7 October 1414 (Aubin, "Piš Goftār," pp. 1-8; Woods, pp. 89-93). Only one manuscript of this revised version is known, held under the call number Supplément persan 1651 in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Blochet, IV, pp. 228-31). In 1929, [Vasiliū V. Barthold](#) established that the Paris manuscript, entitled *Montaqab al-tavāriq-e Mo'ini*, was another version of the *Anonime Eskandera* (Aubin, "Piš Goftār," p. 4). Jean Aubin



published a critical edition of the text, using both original and revised versions, in 1957.

The *Montakāb al-tavāriḳ*'s interest lies in the material on the events closest to the author's time. Accordingly, Jean Aubin's edition includes only the histories of the dynasties that ruled in southern Iran at the time of the Mongols, as well as the Mongol khanates of Russia and Central Asia, the dynasties who succeeded the Mongols, and the Timurids. The revised version of the *Montakāb al-tavāriḳ* treats each dynasty as a class (*ṭabaqeh*). Naṭanzi's account on these classes usually includes brief individual entries on ruling members of each dynasty, wherein he provides us with a wealth of historical information on cultural and administrative life in 14th- and early 15th-century Iran (Aigle, 1993; idem, 2008).

The sources on which Naṭanzi draws in the *Montakāb al-tavāriḳ* have long been the subject of debate in modern scholarship. Bartol'd used the *Anonime Eskandera* in many articles, relying on the Leningrad manuscript. He concludes that Naṭanzi was familiar with Šāmi's *Zafar-nāmeḥ* but had also used other material whose legendary, non-Islamic, and pro-Chinggisid nature suggests that they might have been taken from either an Uighur or Mongolian oral and written narrative source (Bartol'd, p. 54; Woods, p. 90). Aubin particularly notes that, while Naṭanzi refers to "trustworthy" informants, he never cites any specific Turkish or Mongolian sources. He concludes from this that much of the author's information on Central Asia might have been derived from oral traditions transmitted by members of the Turko-Mongol military aristocracy originating from Mongolia who had been stationed in Shiraz in the early 15th century (Aubin, "Piš Goftār," pp. 7-8; idem, "Le mécénat timouride," pp. 76-77; Woods, p. 90).

Naṭanzi gives precise descriptions of military equipment and tactics. This material appears only in *Montakāb al-tavāriḳ-e Mo'ini*. Furthermore, thanks to the precision with which he uses Turkish and Mongolian terminology, it is possible to clarify many details of social and institutional history that often appear in a confused form in other contemporary Persian chronicles. The text is also particularly useful for understanding Timur's attitude to the Chinggisid regime, and thus the development of some aspects of his ideology of conquest and government (Woods, p. 93). Finally, Naṭanzi, who wrote in Shiraz, provides some completely new information about southern Iran and adds valuable details to the information about the region already available in Šabānkāra'i's *Majma' al-ansāb* (Aubin, "Piš Goftār," p. 7). Taking into account



this wealth of original information in the *Montaqab al-tavāriq-e Mo'ini*, it can be considered a major narrative source on the cultural and administrative dynamics of power relation between the nomadic and settled ways of life that characterized Iran and Central Asia at those times.

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