Literatures and Cultures of the Islamic World

Poetics and Politics of Iran's National Epic, the *Shāhnāmeh*

Mahmoud Omidsalar

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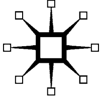

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To Teresa Portilla Omidsalar, wife, friend, all.

گر مرده بوَم، برآمده سالی بیست — چه پنداری که گورم از عشق تهیست
گر دست به خاک برنهی کاینجا کیست — آواز آید که: ”حال معشوقم چیست؟“
ابوسعید ابی الخیر (440–357)

If I've been dead for twenty years or so
And you, believing love gone long ago,
Should stir my dust and say, "whose grave is this?"
"How is my love?" will echo from below.

(*Abū Sa*[c]*īd Abelkheyr AD 967–1048;*
translation by Dick Davis)

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Note from the Editor

The Islamic world is home to a vast body of literary production in multiple languages over the last 1,400 years. To be sure, long before the advent of Islam, multiple sites of significant literary and cultural productions existed from India to Iran and from the Fertile Crescent to North Africa. After the advent of Islam in the mid-seventh century CE, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Turkish authors in particular produced some of the most glorious manifestations of world literature. From prose to poetry, modern to medieval, elitist to popular, oral to literary, this body of literature is in much need of a wide range of renewed scholarly investigation and lucid presentation.

The purpose of this series is to take advantage of the most recent advances in literary studies, textual hermeneutics, critical theory, feminism, postcolonialism, and comparative literature to bring the spectrum of literatures and cultures of the Islamic world to a wider audience and appreciation. Usually the study of these literatures and cultures is divided between classical and modern periods. A central objective of this series is to cross over this artificial and inapplicable bifurcation and abandon the anxiety of periodization altogether. Much of what we understand today from this rich body of literary and cultural production is still under the influence of old-fashioned Orientalism or post–World War II area studies perspectives. Our hope is to bring together a body of scholarship that connects the vast arena of literary and cultural production in the Islamic world without the prejudices of outmoded perspectives. Toward this end, we are committed to pathbreaking strategies of reading that collectively renew our awareness of the literary cosmopolitanism and cultural criticism in which these works of creative imagination were conceived in the first place.

—Hamid Dabashi

Preface

This book is a contemplation about the *Shāhnāmeh*, its cultural context, and the scholarship on it—both Iranian and Western. Preparing these essays in my twilight years, it dawned on me that there is little in standard *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship especially about the poem's history and cultural context, its organization, and the character and motivations of its author with which I agree. Because of my fundamental disagreements with much of standard *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship, I have relied on the poem itself and on the primary sources that can shed light on a better understanding of it.

Let me now thank the many friends and colleagues who have helped me over the years, and remember the great scholars upon whose towering shoulders I have climbed in the hope of seeing further.

Through the many years of our friendship, and long, rewarding hours discussing various aspects of narrative and manuscript traditions of Iranian storybooks, Professor Mohammad Jaᶜfar Mahjoob, that walking encyclopedia of Persian folklore and literature, taught me to relearn these texts from inside out. He drew my attention to those aspects that had fallen in the blind spots of my Western education. Although there was much more that I could have learned from him, his untimely death in 1996 brought a sorrowful end to our association.

Alan Dundes, America's undisputed master of psychoanalytic folkloristics, taught me to look behind the obvious and the conscious in search of the implicit and the unconscious. He taught me how important and relevant the social and cultural contexts of scholarship are to its content. I had the good fortune of being able to draw on his vast learning and penetrating insights until his sudden death in 2005. My only solace is that he died the death of a true teacher: while conducting a graduate seminar at UC Berkeley.[1]

During his frequent visits to Berkeley, the late Professor Ali-Akbar Shehabi (emeritus, Tehran University) opened the vast vistas of classical Arabic literature in our technical discussions of the subject. His loss would have been unbearable if not for Professor Mahdavi Damghani

(emeritus Tehran University), who took me under his wing and made his great wisdom and immense learning available to me.

I also owe a great deal to Professor Jalal Matini (emeritus, Ferdowsi University). He not only taught me the intricacies of early Persian paleography, but in his capacity as the editor of the journals *IranNameh*, and later *Iranshenasi*, "defanged"—as he is fond of putting it—much of my polemical writings in Persian. Professor Ehsan Yarshater (emeritus, Columbia University) has never withheld kindness and wise council, nor has Professor Heshmat Moayyad (emeritus, University of Chicago). Professors Martin Schwartz (UC Berkeley) and Shaul Shaked (emeritus, Hebrew University of Jerusalem) have been more than generous with their advice on pre-Islamic matters over the years. Professors Susan Slyomovics (UCLA) and Elliott Oring (emeritus, CSULA) have patiently listened to my rants against the followers of Harvard's tribal religion of "Oral Formulaic Theory" who, in their attempts to convert Ferdowsi into an Iranian Homer, only manage to put his eyes out. Elliott and Susan have always insisted that I need not push a point too far. My learned friend, Heda Jason gave me the benefit of her sensible advice years ago in our walks together, and later in her letters and e-mails. Professor Hamid Dabashi (Columbia University) has often tested my traditionalism with his postmodern sensibility and has pointed out alternative ways of looking at things that I, wrapped in my cocoon of tradition, may have missed. Professor Frank Lewis (University of Chicago) carefully read the manuscript and made a number of typically intelligent and constructive suggestions. I have adopted some, and have tried to explain myself better in response to others. Although Frank and I view a number of problems differently, I am grateful to him for his sensitive and intelligent reading.

My greatest debt of gratitude however, goes to two great scholars, Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh (emeritus, University of Hamburg), and Iraj Afshar (emeritus, Tehran University). All that I know about textual criticism and codicology I owe to these men.

Khaleghi-Motlagh, this most "Germanic" of Persian scholars, took the time to patiently instruct me in the intricacies of Persian textual criticism. His long letters and innumerable conversations sustained and enlightened me over the 14 years I spent preparing the text of the sixth volume of his monumental *Shāhnāmeh* edition. His hundreds of letters on textual problems of the *Shāhnāmeh* would be an excellent source for a handbook of Persian textual technique. He read over every verse of the *Shāhnāmeh* that I edited, studied every textual variant that I cited, and discussed many thorny problems with me more patiently than I had a right to expect. He also showed exceptional patience with my blunt manner of expressing my opinions. He was always kind enough to allow me

to edit the text as I saw fit, even when he disagreed with my views, and only suggested that alternative readings be mentioned in the volume's notes. This level of critical open-mindedness could only be attained by a perception molded by great learning and scholastic humility.

From Professor Iraj Afshar I learned the art of looking at the manuscript as a cultural artifact, and also the skill of distinguishing significant detail from what only seems important.

Aside from his vast learning and ability to focus on important detail, the most amazing thing about Afshar is that in his eighties, he possesses the natural curiosity of a child. He is certainly more inquisitive, open-minded, and receptive to new ways of looking at old problems than any octogenarian has a right to be. His open-mindedness is as awe-inspiring as his vast erudition and uncanny ability to cut through distractions and focus on the heart of the matter.

During my visits to Iran I've had the opportunity of exchanging views with some members of my homeland's scholarly community. I have been favored innumerable times by the kindness and erudition of the scholars at the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia (CGIE). My dear friend, Dr. Sadegh Sajjadi, the center's assistant director and the head of its History Department, Mr. Bahramian, and Drs. Mir-Ansari, Majidi, and many other learned scholars in CGIE never withheld good advice. At Iran's National Academy of Language and Literature (فرهنگستان زبان و ادب فارسی), Professors Saᶜadat and Mr. Keyhani could not have been more helpful. The young and talented scholar, Mr. Pejman Firoozbakhsh meticulously proofread my edition of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s sixth volume, with its many thousands of variants. He raised several sensible suggestions in the course of our correspondence, and helped me refine some of my arguments about the poem. I am delighted that over the years of our association he has become a textual scholar of considerable capability, and hope that he has learned as much from our encounters as have I.

Professor Yahaghghi (Ferdowsi University and the National Academy), Dr. Sajjad Aydenloo (Urmiya University), and a host of young scholars from Tehran, Shiraz, Mashhad, and Qom have helped me with access to manuscripts and information not easily available in the United States. My learned friend, Mr. Mehran Afshari (*The Center for Iran's Encyclopaedia Islamica*) has been exceptionally generous with his vast knowledge of Persian folk tradition and epic storytelling (*naqqāli*).

I am greatly indebted to a number of other friends and scholars who have been more than gracious in facilitating my research in Iran: Mr. Bojnoordi, the director of CGIE in Tehran and Dr. Akbar Irani, the director of the *Center for the Written Heritage.* My dear friend, Mr. Nader Mottalebi-Kashani, the learned editor of the *Nameh-ye Bahārestān*, the

international journal of manuscript studies published by the Iranian parliamentary library (کتابخانهء مجلس شورای اسلامی), has been instrumental in securing reproductions of Persian and Arabic manuscripts from the different Iranian libraries for me, and I owe him a special debt of gratitude. I am also indebted to Dr. Abhari, the library's former director, and Professor Jafarian, its present director. Friend and foe agree that these two scholars have achieved more during their few years of directorship than have all the previous directors of that library since 1906.

Much of my researches on Persian literature have been possible thanks to the help of my two student assistants, Mr. Carlos Carillo and Ms. Linda Tang, who helped me in ways too numerous to mention.

My colleague Mr. Lawrence R. Vogt deserves a special note of gratitude. He generously agreed to read over the whole text, and did so with care and competence. Larry reorganized much of the narrative, and made many of my long and confusing sentences actually understandable. He also made a number of very useful suggestions that I believe have considerably improved the narrative. I could not have asked for a more intelligent or patient editor. This would have been a far less readable book without Larry Vogt's capable editing, although I alone am responsible for its flaws. I am deeply grateful to Ms. Zeinab Piri at *The Center for the Written Heritage* in Iran, who took the photograph of Ferdowsi's statue for the cover of this book.

I don't have the words to adequately thank the person to whom this book is dedicated: my dear wife Teresa Portilla Omidsalar. For all she is, and all she has given our family over the past 20 years, I am speechless with awe, love, and appreciation. I can't imagine what life would be without her, and ardently pray that I never find out.

Note on Text and Transliteration

I have used the text of Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition for my citations from the *Shāhnāmeh*, but have occasionally provided reference to Mohl and Moscow editions when it seemed necessary.

No standard transliteration system has been followed in this book because I expect most readers would prefer convenient approximations to strict adherence to transliteration standards. Nonetheless, I have tried to remain within the confines of generally recognizable transliteration standards by adopting a transliteration system that employs a minimum of diacritical markings.

Persian vowels are the following:

"a" as in "b**a**t"
"ā" as in "f**a**ther"
"i" as in "r**e**d"
"ī" as in "b**ee**t"
"u" as in "J**oe**"
"ū" as in "b**oo**t"

The diphthongs are:

"aw" as is "bl**ow**ing" except in such names as Khosr**ow** or Kaykhosr**ow**, where the spelling has become conventionalized.
"ai" as in "gr**ey**"

Persian has a few sounds like ***gh, q,*** and ***kh*** that do not exist in English. Of these, the first two, namely, ***gh*** and ***q*** are guttural sounds that resemble the sound of the letter ***r*** in the French pronunciation of the word *Paris*, but they are harder and closer to a velarized stop. Although these letters, which are written as غ and ق respectively, have distinct pronunciations in Arabic, they sound exactly the same in Persian. Thus, my making a distinction between these letters in my transliterations is only a matter of following the spelling conventions rather than signaling different

pronunciations. Similarly, Persians do not pronounce the Arabic letters س ,ص, or ث differently. All of these letters sound as the letter *s* in the English word *sing*. The same may be said of the Arabic letters ح and ﻫ that are pronounced as the letter ***h*** in the English word ***hat***. Similarly, the Arabic letters ذ ,ض , ز, and ظ are pronounced uniformly as **z** in the English word *zebra*. The letter خ is rendered by ***kh*** in this volume. It is pronounced like the sound of ***ch*** in the Scottish word *lach* "lake," or alternatively in the German word *doch*. The letter ژ that sounds like **s** in the English word *pleasure* is transliterated as ***zh***. This should help most readers who don't know Persian with pronouncing words that they encounter in this volume.

Generally, I have decided to follow the Persian pronunciations of names in my transliterations. However, in order to help readers who know Arabic but are not familiar with Persian, I have included the Arabic form of the name in parenthesis when it first occurs, for example, Nazr (نضر). I have made no distinctions between the letters ص ,س, and have rendered the letter ث as ***th*** only in Arabic words or nouns (e.g., al-Tha^c^ālibī). The letter ع is rendered with a raised *^c^* (e.g., al-Tha^c^ālibī again). The following chart describes my system of transliterating Persian consonants in this volume:

ب	b	**b**oy
پ	p	**p**et
ت، ط	t	**t**op
ث، س، ص	s	**s**am
ج	j	**j**ack
چ	ch	**ch**air
ح، ﻫ	h	**h**ope
خ	ch	lo**ch**
د	d	**d**octor
ذ، ز، ض، ظ	z	**z**ebra
ژ	zh	plea**s**ure, gara**g**e
ش	sh	**sh**op
ر	r	**r**oad

ع	c	a, i, u
غ	gh	–
ف	f	foot
ق	q	–
ک	k	cab
گ	g	good
ل	l	lip
م	m	man
ن	n	noon
و	v or w	vest
ی	y or i	yacht

Although Iranians use a solar calendar now, they used the Muslim lunar calendar during the classical period. I have converted most of the dates from the Muslim or *hijri* dates to the Gregorian calendar, and have provided the *hijri* dates in parenthesis only when absolutely necessary. However, because of the discrepancies between the lunar Muslim calendar and the solar Gregorian, the dates are approximate. For instance, the date of the second redaction of the *Shāhnāmeh*, which is the year 400 in the Muslim calendar may fall anywhere from August 31, 1009 A.D. to August 20, 1010 A.D. because the beginning of the year 400 in the *hijri* calendar falls on the end of August 1009, and its end falls near the end of August 1010. For this reason dates are not exact, except when we know the day and the month as well as the year. Be that as it may, I find presenting the exact dates unnecessary for the purposes of this book except in those few instances when exact dates are necessary for making a point. The reader may rest assured that the Christian dates that have been provided are generally correct. I have also avoided the use of the awkward CE, and BCE and have stayed with the traditional A.D. and B.C.

Introduction

Scholarship, like everything else, has a context. Because the *Shāhnāmeh* is Iran's national epic—with all that the word "national" implies—recent scholarship, especially Western scholarship, on the *Shāhnāmeh* should be considered in the context of Iran's international relations with the West, especially with the United States. Recent American *Shāhnāmeh* studies are conducted in an atmosphere of cultural conflict and conscious or unconscious hostility that reinforces Western myths and beliefs. A distorted Iran that bears little resemblance to the actual country is imagined by Western academics; and it is this imaginary Iran that is fed into the educational and communication pipelines of Europe and America.

Because the *Shāhnāmeh* is the most iconic expression of Iranian nationhood, and since the conflict between Iran and the United States is fundamentally national and colonial rather than religious or cultural, American scholarship on Iran's national epic has a distinctively nationalist and colonial flavor. Despite any protestations to the contrary, no American—in or out of the academia—can stay neutral with regard to the ongoing conflict between Iran and the United States. Academics, like politicians and the press, not only reflect the dominant temperament of their culture, but also define and focus it. I will suggest in this book that the West's aggressive stance toward Iran has influenced the nature of academic discourse on the most national of Iran's cultural symbols—her national epic.

Although most would not readily admit it, academics are more socially and politically compliant than they are usually willing to acknowledge. The majority of them tend to operate within the framework of their cultural zeitgeist. This is all too apparent in the behavior of the German academy under the Third Reich. Most German academics fell in line, and very few of them actively took part in protecting their colleagues, students, or departmental staff against Nazi persecution.[1] Norman F. Cantor puts the matter succinctly:

> As soon as the Nazis came to power, academics of distinction—the famous philosopher Martin Heidegger at Freiburg, the historians Albert

> Brackmann at Berlin and Adolf Rein at Hamburg—leaped into the fray, making pro-Nazi speeches and giving courses infected with Nazi propaganda. Probably Heidegger soon regretted what he had done, but Rein and Brackmann persisted in their Nazification of the historical curriculum, Rein giving laudatory and expectant courses about the tradition of medieval German *Ostpolitik* ("Eastern policy") to justify the invasion of first Poland and then Russia.[2]

Of course, America is not Nazi Germany, and Iranians are not the Jews or Gypsies of prewar Europe. There are no explicit threats of genocide against Persians, but the implications of military options are explicitly kept on the rhetorical "table" with academic blessings. Elaborate threats rationalized by pseudoacademic arguments abound in the American mass media and in the press of America's allies.[3] It is no secret that anti-Iranian sentiment has been on the increase, in and out of the academy, for nearly 30 years. The very idea of Iran as a nation has increasingly come under attack by various Western or Western-trained academics.[4] Naturally, if Iran is not a "nation" in the sense that America and her allies are, then neither attacking her nor violating her sovereignty could be a violation of international law. In this context, it is not surprising that Iran's national epic should also be reevaluated according to the West's political posture.

The most nefarious feature of Western *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship is its adamant attempt at transforming that which is Iranian and Muslim into something subservient to whatever might be considered "Western" and "Christian." The very subjugation that cannot be achieved politically or militarily is thus attempted obliquely, and is carried out through a series of inappropriate analogies camouflaged as "comparativism." Purely Western concepts such as "medieval" and "poetic oral epic tradition" are forced upon the *Shāhnāmeh* in the name of bringing it into the arena of "comparative epic" scholarship, thus making an entirely literary epic mimic medieval European troubadour songs. Classical Muslim civilization—and the *Shāhnāmeh*'s place in it—is redefined according to concepts that make sense only in the context of Western European history. The designation of classical Persian literature as "medieval," and the conclusions that follow from this categorization, result in a deliberate diminution of the art of a great literary culture as we shall see in greater detail. The thinly disguised ethnocentrism implicit in the proclamation that "all standards must be Western standards" is difficult to miss.

Shāhnāmeh scholarship of the Iranian students of the poem suffers from its own problems of prejudice. It is often wrapped in a thick and distorting fog of anti-Arab, anti-Turk, and anti-Muslim discourse that tends to either alter or misrepresent historical facts. Afflicted by what I've come to call the *Gunga Din complex*, many Iranian scholars look

westward in an attempt to be "Indo-European free thinkers" rather than "Middle Eastern Shiites." Influenced by the vestiges of their colonial experience and the feelings of inferiority and inadequacy that it engenders, they negate who they are in the hope of becoming something else. This grotesque self-definition results in Persians—a racially and culturally diverse people—trying to present themselves as "Aryan," in accordance with the most vulgar European myth of the last century. The absurd desire to change "color" shapes much of these transplants' theorizing about their history and literature. This pathetic attempt at assuming the "European" part of the term "Indo-European" drastically infects some Iranian scholars' view of the *Shāhnāmeh*. It directs their gaze toward an idealized West, away from the cultural history that created their own country's wonderful diversity.

In the eighteenth century, British colonial scholars began to study Iran's national poem, contextualizing it within the then embryonic field of comparative Indo-European studies. Their efforts culminated in Friedrich Rückert's (1788–1866), Jules Mohl's (1800–1876), and Theodor Nöldeke's (1836–1930) magisterial works on the epic. Of course some of these major scholars brought personal and cultural prejudices to the poem, along with their great learning. For instance, Nöldeke was not above taking cheap shots at Ferdowsi. In his discussion of Friedrich Rückert's statement that the difference between Ferdowsi and Homer is that " . . . [Ferdowsi] has a little less body and a little more soul," Nöldeke (1930) writes:

> I take the liberty to repeat here, with some trifling alterations and a certain amount of additional detail, what had been said by me to the contrary in my *Persische Studien*, 11, 15. The delicately feeling poet had been here led a little too far by his fondness of Eastern lore. Firdousi has got not a little, but very much less body, than Homer, as has been pointed out in the preceding lines. The lesser amount of concrete perception can be seen, amongst other things, in the many hyperboles used by Firdousi. Thus, when he often transposes the rhetorical expression "to weep tears of blood" into actuality, he describes the cheeks as red of blood, nay even the ground as a swamp of blood! I also contest the assertion that Firdousi has got more soul, than Homer. The deep feeling of home-sickness in the Odyssey should be taken into consideration. One could in vain be looking for verses like [quotes *Odyssey I*, 58 f. in Greek] in the Shāhnāmeh. (81–82)

Nöldeke goes on to cite instances of Odysseus's meeting with his mother (*Od.* Xi, 202 ff.), his coming upon his faithful old dog who dies at the foot of his master (*Od.* Xvii, 291–327), and the scene between Hector and Andromache from the *Iliad* as evidence of Homer's superiority to

Ferdowsi.[5] There is, of course, no accounting for taste. Since Homer's two poems are classics of Western civilization, it is understandable that a European scholar might find them superior to Oriental texts. Similarly, for those of us who view the world through an Oriental prism, Homer's repetitions, less complex characterizations, simpler structure, and much-diminished scale make him less compelling than Ferdowsi.

To answer Nöldeke's critique, let me cite a *Shāhnāmeh* scene dramatizing the ill-fated Prince Siyāvush's final encounter with his personal mount, Shabrang-i Bihzād. According to the poem, Prince Siyāvush, who has foreseen his own doom, first goes to his wife and tells her of his approaching death. He then goes to the stables and delivers a moving farewell to his horse, which he releases into the wild. The section begins with a line of personal musing by Ferdowsi, which I translate here. I will also include a translation of the encounter between the horse and Siyāvush's son, Kaykhosrow, who finds his father's steed many years later (vol. 2, p. 347, ll. 2143–58, and vol. 2, pp. 426–28, ll. 115–35):

> O world, I know not why you raise some men
> And when you have, why then you cast them down?
> Farīgīs tore her cheeks and plucked out her hair,
> Her heart filled with worry, and tears streamed down her face.
> When Siyāvush told her of his sorrows,
> The woman held him tight and wept.
> [Then the prince,] his face covered by tears of heartbreak,
> Went to the stables of his Arab steeds,
> And led forth the night-hued Bihzad,
> Which overtook the wind in days of battle.
> Weeping, he clasped the steed's head upon his breast,
> Took the halter and the headstall off him,
> And whispered a long while in his ear, saying:
> "Be vigilant and run wild.
> When Kaykhosrow comes to avenge me
> Then you must serve as his mount.
> But now renounce the stables and away,
> For you shall be his mount at the time of vengeance."
> He hamstrung all the other horses
> And moving fast like a raging fire
> His men and he rode towards Iran
> Their faces covered with tears of sorrow.

Many years later, the hero Gīv travels to Tūrān, finds Kaykhosrow and Farīgīs, and sets out for Iran with them. Before they leave, the princess tells her son to take Bihzād's saddle and halter to a nearby meadow where herds of horses come to drink water at midday. She instructs him to find

Bihzād in the herd and stir the horse's memories with the old riding gear from his glory days. Gīv accompanies the young prince into the pastures.

> The valiant lord mounted
> And Gīv walked in front, leading the way
> They set out for a [nearby] hill
> Where they could survey the fields
> When the herd came by
> And the horses drank their fill
> Bihzīd looked up, saw the prince,
> And sighed piteously
> He saw that saddle of Siyāvush, covered in leopard's skin
> Those long stirrup leathers and the fine pommel
> Resolutely, he stood at the waterhole
> And did not move from where he was
> Seeing his calm, Kaykhosrow
> Treaded towards him with the saddle
> He caressed and laid his cheek upon his face
> He ran his fingers through his mane and touched him gently
> Then the prince haltered and saddled him,
> And remembered his [slain] father [to him].
> When he mounted and steadied himself in the saddle
> The colossal steed stirred
> And rose like the wind.
> It flew and vanished from Gīv's sight.

Although the scene's beauty, imagery, and drama are diminished in translation, I believe it proves Nöldeke wrong.

In this book, I'll consider the *Shāhnāmeh* with an eye on these issues. I will also challenge a number of canonical beliefs about the poem and the highly literate poet who devoted his life to its creation and perfection. Before I go on with my discussion however, let's review some preliminary facts about the *Shāhnāmeh* for the nonspecialists who may come upon it.

As the country's national epic, the *Shāhnāmeh* constitutes Iran's ethnic history. It tells the story of Iran from her first kings and culture-heroes to the Muslim conquest of the seventh century A.D. Compared to European epics, the *Shāhnāmeh* is a poem of remarkable length. At just under 50,000 distiches, (100,000 lines of verse) it is nearly four times the size of the *Iliad* (approximately 16,000 lines) and the *Odyssey* (roughly 12,000 lines) combined. Its sheer size, as we shall see later in this book, can make discerning its marvelously detailed structure difficult.

Customarily, the narrative of the *Shāhnāmeh* is divided into a three-part structure covering mythology, legend, and history. This division, although

serviceable, would be misleading if taken too literally: the *Shāhnāmeh* is quintessentially a literary work of art. It is true that it contains important historical references; but strictly speaking, it is literature—*not* history. In fact, the lion's share of the poem's historical section cannot be considered historical in any accepted sense of that word, and historians who draw on it for their research are well-advised to exercise considerable caution.

The point that I will raise repeatedly in this volume is that the *Shāhnāmeh* was composed by a highly educated poet who drew on a single literary source in order to produce a work of art rather than an historical treatise. The poem's importance, therefore, is primarily literary. As though speaking about Ferdowsi, Sir William Davenant (1606–1668), who claimed to be Shakespeare's illegitimate son,[6] wrote, "How much pleasure they lose . . . who take away the liberty of a poet and fetter his feet in the shackles of a historian." This is fair warning to all who study the *Shāhnāmeh*.

I have already said that the *Shāhnāmeh* is an "epic," and that it is understood to contain mythical, legendary, and historical narratives. Putting aside the term "history," which does not concern us in this book, let me explain what I mean by the word "epic."

In Persian literature, the epic is a narrative genre of heroic literature that may be set in prose or in poetry.[7] For Persian epics in verse, the meter of choice is the *mutaqārib*, which is a quantitative meter based on regular recurrences of long and short syllables in distiches. There is a regular caesura between hemistiches of each verse. These hemistiches are called *bayt* in Persian prosody. There is however, no caesura within the distiches, which is called *misrā*ᶜ.

◡-- ◡-- ◡-- ◡-   ◡-- ◡-- ◡-- ◡-

Enjambments are almost entirely lacking, and are in fact considered as flaws. Although the hemistiches of each line have end-rhymes, successive lines do not rhyme. The rhyming pattern followed in these narrative poems requires that the hemistiches be of the same distich rhyme. However, as long as independent distiches stay within the *mutaqārib* meter they need not have the same rhyme. The rhyming pattern of sequential distiches may be represented as: aa/bb/cc, and so on. The double letters aa, bb, and cc indicate that the hemistiches of every distich rhyme. Here is a distich from the *Shāhnāmeh* in transliteration:[8]

◡ - -◡ - - ◡ - - ◡ -

Kunūn man zi turkān-i jang āvarān

◡ – –◡ – – ◡ – – ◡ –
Farāz āvaram lashkarī bī karān
[And] now, I, from the warrior Turks,
Will gather a great host

Heda Jason divides the epic genre into the three subgenres of *Heroic, Mythic,* and *Carnivalesque.* The *Mythic* epic depicts the struggle of gods and demons and often tells of the world's creation. The Babylonian *Enuma Elish,* which depicts the fight between Marduk and Tiamat is an example of this epic type.[9] There are no *Mythic* epics in classical Persian. The *Carnivalesque* epic is a mock epic in which the confrontation between ordinary people, objects, or animals is expressed in a stylized mythic parody. The *Heroic* epic narrates family, tribal, or national struggles, which may take place against real or fabulous enemies. Jason further divides the *Heroic* epic into four categories: *Historic, National, Romantic,* and *Religious.* Broadly speaking, all classical Persian epics fall into one of these sub-genres of the *Heroic* epic. Using Jason's classification for convenience's sake, we may point to the *Shāhnāmeh,* as an example of national epic; to the *Bahmannāmeh* (ca. A.D. 1092 to 1107), as an example of a romantic epic; to the *Zafarnāmeh* (A.D. 1335), as historic epic; and to the *Ali-nāmeh* (A.D. 1089), as a religious epic.

Aristotle's views about the form of the epic notwithstanding,[10] classical Persian epics may be either in prose or in poetry. What must be kept in mind is that absolutely every known Persian epic is based on a literary prose archetype. Professor Mahjoob was quite emphatic about this feature of Persian narrative poetry in general and epics in particular. He wrote, "There is no poetic narrative in Persian literature that is not based on a prose source; be that prose source oral or literary. The poet may have heard the story or may have had access to its written form. [Whatever the case] he has versified a prose tale."[11] What's more, Persian epics, in their prose and poetic forms, may exist side by side. For instance, we know that several prose Shāhnāmehs existed alongside Ferdowsi's poem, and prose as well as verse versions of Alexander's story are still extant.[12]

In one final aside, let me now give you an overview of this book. The first chapter is largely devoted to questioning some of the presumptive assumptions that have governed *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship for nearly a century. The most counterproductive of these is the set of assumptions that confuses classical Muslim culture with medieval Europe's civilization and makes inferences about the former based on features of the latter. I develop and elaborate on these objections in the fifth chapter, and challenge these assumptions from historical, cultural, and textual-critical

view points. It may be objected that I dichotomize the field of *Shāhnāmeh* studies inaccurately along national or cultural lines, and insinuate conscious or unconscious meta-motivations to some Western scholars' methods. Frankly, almost every area of Middle Eastern studies, including classical Persian, which incorporates *Shāhnāmeh* studies, is already dichotomized, and has been for some time now. The field closely reflects the polarization of the academy and U.S. society. Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, and the many essays and volumes that engaged with one or the other, had already dichotomized the field long before I conceived of this book. *Shāhnāmeh* scholars are divided into a Western camp that believes in the orality of the poem, and a "native" group, that considers it to be a literary creation by a highly cultured poet. This isn't a personal daydream brewed of too much coffee and an overactive imagination; it is a reality in this field of scholarship. Not a single Iranian specialist on the *Shāhnāmeh* believes the poem to be an "oral" work; and conversely, almost no Western scholar of Persian considers it to be purely literary. My argument is straightforward: scholars do not work in a protective bubble that isolates them from their societies' ideological and cultural currents. Like other human beings, scholars, will have conscious or subconscious meta-motivations. This is hardly a radical or controversial statement. In his seminal *Inventing the Middle Ages*, Norman F. Cantor details how many German medievalists, such as Kantorowicz (himself a Jew) and Schramm, fell in line behind the Nazis, carried by the dominant ultranationalist zeitgeist of their time. In his excellent monograph on the Bayeux Tapestry, a defining European cultural icon, R. Howard Bloch powerfully chronicles a similar situation. He cleverly changes Clausewitz's famous dictum that "War is a continuation of politics by other means" to read, "Scholarship is the continuation of war by other means."[13]

We live in an age of conflict between Iran and the West. It should surprise no one that scholars on both sides reflect all the accumulated contentions and contradictions of the struggle in their work. Academics are far less impartial and far more easily swept by prevailing political winds, than they like to think they are. This has happened throughout history. For instance, a direct statement on this was evidently going to be part of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's famous "Farewell Address." According to Henry Giroux of Canada's McMaster University, Eisenhower had originally included establishment scholars in his warning against the "military-industrial-academic complex" but later deleted the word "academic" before he delivered the talk, and the final phrase appeared without the academic reference.[14] A few years later, in 1967, Senator J. William Fulbright, in a Congressional speech, warned against the involvement of academia in

the military-industrial complex. Fulbright pointed out that the military-industrial complex is not a conspiratorial invention; simply an outcome of a coexisting "huge permanent military establishment" with "industries and businesses that fill military orders." Fulbright went further than Eisenhower's public statement, noting that the absorption of academics into the complex constituted no conspiracy either. It was a simple by-product of growing bonds between the government and universities. The symbiotic relationship between the academy and the government is "an arrangement of convenience, providing the Government with Politically usable knowledge and the universities with badly needed funds."[15]

The academy's involvement in militarism grew beyond weapons development long ago. Establishment academics eventually wrested the control of strategy from the generals. In the words of Andrew J. Bacevich, strategy became the purview:

> Not of generals like the crude, cigar-chomping Curtis LeMay who had presided over the firebombing of some sixty Japanese cities and the utter destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki without losing a night's sleep, but of highly-trained, cutting-edge academics—men like Brodie, with his preference for bow ties, his unquestioned brilliance, and his basic decency. Henceforth, tweed should tutor khaki.[16]

The deep involvement of the American academics in justifying and promoting George W. Bush's wars in the Middle East is a matter of record. The revolving door between such "think tanks" as the RAND Corporation, Hoover Institute, Council on Foreign Relations, Brookings Institute and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and government agencies, is too well known to require extensive documentation.[17]

Iran and the West have been in conflict for over 30 years. America and her European allies' many concerns and anxieties about Iran are vented in their aggressive postures, threats, and overt and covert anti-Iranian operations. Scholars who specialize on Iran's national poem, whether Westernized Iranian transplants or Americans and Europeans, reflect their society's concerns and anxieties in the way they assess Iran's national epic. It would be naïve to think that academic discourse on Iran's national epic, a fundamental icon of Iranian nationalism, can remain isolated from the fray. It is, I believe, impossible to keep Iran's national epic, or for that matter Iran's culture, out of a conflict that is both national and cultural. I definitely do not find any insidious conspiracy in Western scholarship on the *Shāhnāmeh*. I believe that scholarship reflects the zeitgeist of the culture in which it operates, which is neither a new nor a particularly radical position.

The book's second and the third chapters focus on the *Shāhnāmeh*'s history. These are perhaps the most technical sections in which I lay out my agreements and disagreements with the great scholars who may be considered the founding fathers of *Shāhnāmeh* studies. Chapter 4 takes up the question of Ferdowsi's fidelity to his prose archetype. It challenges some of the views that question the existence of that source or the degree of Ferdowsi's dependence on it. The fifth chapter details how evidence of the existence and nature of the poet's prose source has been appropriated for political or psychological reasons by native and foreign scholars. It questions the recent Western understanding of Iran's national poet as a faceless member of an anonymous, collective epic tradition, rather than as an individual artist with specific personal characteristics and idiosyncratic literary taste. Chapter 6 examines the legends of the poet's conflict and confrontation with his intended patron, King Mahmud of Ghazna (r. A.D. 998–1030). It offers an alternative interpretation of what we know about the details of their contacts. The seventh chapter is devoted to the study of Ferdowsi as a man and an artist. It challenges the hagiological reconstructions of the poet's biography in the works of Iranian *Shāhnāmeh* scholars and reinterprets his relationship to Persian language and culture. The seventh chapter reassesses his standard literary and folk biographies, and challenges a number of accepted interpretations that seem to contradict the known facts of the poet's life.

The second part of the book is devoted to the study of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s text. Chapters 8 through 11 are devoted to demonstrating the poem's narrative unity and the logic of its organization. This part reexamines stories that have been specifically singled out as evidence of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s fragmentary nature by other scholars. Contextual analysis of these stories shows how every one of them fulfills an important narrative function in the overall flow of the epic, and establishes their firm structural and thematic relationship to the episodes that precede or follow them. This part is followed by a concluding chapter that pulls the various strands of my arguments together . Whatever the merits of my arguments in this book, and regardless of their persuasiveness, it is my hope that even if I have failed to offer new answers, I have at least suggested new and possibly fruitful questions.

CHAPTER 1

Shāhnāmeh and the Presumptive Authority of the West

The association of the Iranian national poet, Ferdowsi, with Homer, and the *Shāhnāmeh* with the *Iliad* is, in my view, the most unfortunate analogy in the history of classical Persian scholarship. In what passes for comparative epic scholarship in the West, Ferdowsi is discussed as though he were merely an Iranian manifestation of Homer. As a result, the *Shāhnāmeh* is often analyzed by criteria that grew out of scholarship on Homer's poems rather than in terms of its own cultural milieu, artistic merit, or even literary language.

The infelicitous association of Homer and Ferdowsi may be traced to almost the very beginnings of the European studies of the *Shāhnāmeh*, when a number of European scholars began to label Iran's national poet as an "Oriental Homer," being quite careful not to imply that he was in any way Homer's equal. For instance, Sir William Jones wrote in 1772:

> As to the great Epic poem of Ferdowsi, which was composed in the tenth century, it would require a very long treatise, to explain all its beauties with a minute exactness. . . . This poem is longer than the *Iliad*; the characters in it are various and striking; the figures bold and animated; and the diction every where sonorous, yet noble; polished, yet full of fire. A great profusion of learning has been thrown away by some criticks, in comparing Homer with the heroick poets, who have succeeded him; but it requires very little judgement to see, that no succeeding poet whatever can with any propriety be compared with Homer . . . the spirit and invention of Homer have ever continued without a rival: for which reasons *I am far from pretending to assert that the poet of Persia is equal to that of Greece* [my italics]; but there is certainly a very great resemblance between the works of those extraordinary men: both drew their images from nature herself, without catching them only by reflection, and painting, in the manner of the modern poets, the likeness of a likeness; and both possessed, in an eminent degree, that rich and creative invention, which is the very soul of poetry.[1]

In a letter to Edmund Cartwright, 11 years later, Jones compared Ferdowsi and Homer once again and observed:

> If I can bring the Persian epic poem to European in an English dress, I shall be as far below Lycurgus as Firdusi is below Homer, but shall think the analogy just and my country will be obliged to me.[2]

This misguided equating of Ferdowsi and Homer led to attempts to discover similarities between his and Homer's poems. But the similarities that were discovered between the two poems were superficial and irrelevant. For instance, Sir William Ouseley (1767–1849) detects a resemblance between the scenes of Rustam's fight with the White Demon in the *Shāhnāmeh* and the encounter between Hector and Ajax in the *Iliad* (bk. 15.251).[3] How these two scenes may be similar beyond the fact that they both involve a fight is unclear.

Before long, the desire to find parallels between Iran's national epic and Homer's poems spread to Iran, where a small number of Iranian scholars have suggested other analogous episodes between the two books. For instance, Eslami Nodushan claims that Rustam's fight with the White Demon is "reminiscent of Ulysses' fight with Polyphemus," in spite of the fact that neither the plot nor the sequence nor the nature of motifs in these episodes have the remotest connection with one another.[4]

The movement to connect the *Shāhnāmeh* with the Homeric corpus seems to be motivated not only by the wish to be Western, but also by a need to "validate" a purely Oriental poem by associating it with an iconic text in the Western canon. Iranian intellectuals who promote such absurd associations do this because long experience of having been colonized has taught them to think of themselves as something less than the European, something that needs validation either *by* the European or through association *with* the European.

The habit of granting primacy to that which is Western over all else is frequently passed off as the "comparative method" in the United States, where the Oriental is made to ape the moods and movements of the Occidental in a grotesque dance of submission. However, what has traditionally been called "the comparative method" by folklorists is quite a different thing than what passes for it among the neo-Orientalists of our discipline, and I will clarify what folklorists mean by the comparative method and how they apply it in their studies.

The comparative method may be employed for different purposes by different scholars who may have different goals. It may be used to isolate general similarities between plots, motifs, or other elements of narratives

in the kind of analysis that does not concern genetic relationships but focuses on "meaning" such as semiotic or psychological analyses of folk-narratives. Alternatively, it may be employed in order to determine a tale's *Urform*, its place of origin, and paths of diffusion over time. This kind of comparative study is ordinarily conducted by means of an exhaustive cataloguing and comparison of the known oral and written forms of the tale, and is usually called either the "Historic-geographic Method" or the "Finnish Method" in folklore scholarship. The term "Finnish Method" is sometimes used because this type of study was formulated by the Finnish scholars, Julius Krohn (1835–1888) and his son Kaarle Krohn (1863–1933). Kaarle Krohn presented the essence of this approach in his *Die folkloristische Arbeitsmethode*, which was published in Oslo in 1926, and has since become a classic in the field.[5]

The practitioners of the Finnish Method are careful not to infer genetic relationship between different narratives only because the narratives may share superficial similarities. For Krohn, "the criterion of identity is decisive" in determining whether narratives are actual variants of a primary form, or merely share accidental similarities.[6] He believes that the identicalness of an individual characteristic or of a few scattered features of generally similar narratives is not sufficient grounds for postulating an actual connection between these narratives.[7] Krohn makes his point through several examples that show similar features found in a number of unrelated narratives. Since his examples are striking as well as germane to my point, I will quote extensively from them:

> In a ballad about Hansagast in Turku (Åbo), a deceived girl on the beach asks God to send the North Wind to capsize the faithless merchant's ship. Similarly, in a Scandinavian ballad a fiancée who, abandoned on an island, has saved herself by swimming to another shore, asks Christ for wind, which then springs from the north and capsizes the untrue lover's ship. The correspondence between the two songs is limited to one cohesive train of thought—prayer to God, strong wind from the north, and destruction of the ship—which can easily have been independently devised on several occasions during the same Christian era on the shores of the same body of water under the same wind conditions.[8]

Krohn insists on as complete a set of correspondences before any genetic relationship between two narratives may be assumed:

> In order to establish a certain relationship on the basis of individual features, their correspondence must also be as complete as possible. If we compare, for example, the attempt of the slant-eyed Lapp to shoot the Karelian hero Väinämöinen into the sea with an arrow and the striking of

> Lemminkäinen into the River of Death by the blind man from Nordheim with a poisonous plant's stalk, we do not find one single completely corresponding trait in the descriptions of the common main plot. They may not therefore be included as variants of the same tradition . . . In the example mentioned above, Lapland, lying in the North and mythic Nordheim are parallel concepts, the sea and the River of Death unite a general conception of water, and the arrow parallels the stalk used as a projectile. But a "slant-eye" does not correspond to a blind man; the dissimilarity of these images renders an interrelationship of the songs unlikely.[9]

Of course, Krohn allows for the influence of borrowing, and writes that two "independent traditions can take on a common identical characteristic through borrowing from one by the other or even from a third tradition."[10] The lesson of these examples and Krohn's approach for those who seek to apply the comparative method to the *Shāhnāmeh* is to remember his warnings against hasty application of this technique and against unjustifiable attempts at positing genetic relationships on the basis of superficial similarities.

In a statement especially germane to our discussion, Krohn points out that compared to other narrative forms,

> the most nationalistic creation of a people, its heroic poetry, *seldom spreads across linguistic boundaries.* [my italics]. For instance, the Kalevala, which is revered among the Finns, never really spread to the neighboring Swedes or Russians.[11]

It may be interesting for those who attempt to locate Homeric influences in the *Shāhnāmeh* to know that Europe's classical *epic* tradition has had very little discernable influence upon the European oral tradition. William R. Halliday (1886–1966) commented on this feature of Western folklore nearly three-quarters of a century ago:

> It is perhaps remarkable that constant as has been its influence upon the sophisticated literature of Europe, the higher classical mythology and literature has exercised very little direct influence upon folktale.[12]

So there is no reason to think that Europe's classical corpus spread beyond the continent and influenced other cultures' folk traditions, when Homer's influence on European oral tradition has been negligible.

The tendency to see Greek traits in every epic tale is rooted in the European habit of mind, which assumes the direction of diffusion to be from the Greek (= European or more civilized) to the Oriental (= Eastern, or uncivilized). Folklorists have long been proponents as well as critics

of this habit; and I will leave it at that in order to avoid an unnecessary digression.[13]

Western *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship does not stop at confusing Ferdowsi with Homer and his purely literary epic with Homer's originally oral poems. It has of late identified Ferdowsi as a "medieval" author whose approach to his art was identical to the approach of medieval European authors. The *Shāhnāmeh* is thus seen as a "medieval" work that shares certain characteristics with medieval European compositions. Dick Davis has voiced this view elegantly but also unpersuasively. In a paper on the sources of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*, Davis summarizes what he believes Ferdowsi says about the prose source of his epic:

> Here is an edifying tale. There was once a nation that prided itself on its traditions of heroism and independence. This nation was overrun by a foreign power; its rulers were changed and foreign manners and customs assumed the privileged position once enjoyed by the native culture. The local language survived but so profound were the . . . transformations that . . . it was many years before literature was once again written in that language. . . . Fortunately a lover of his country's past, as it had existed before the foreigners' conquest, heard of a history that had recently been put together and that was drawn from authoritative sources in the ancient language. A friend contrived to enable him to have access to a copy of this work, and so, moved by motives of "racial patriotism," he was able to draw on its narrative to write the legendary pre-conquest heroic history of his native land, thus preserving it . . . for future generations.[14]

He then points to "similarities" between Ferdowsi's account of his composition of the *Shāhnāmeh* and the account given by the medieval Geoffrey of Monmouth (A.D. 1100–1158), whose *Historia Regum Britanniae* is one of the main sources of Arthurian stories:

> Students of Middle English and medieval Latin will recognize this as the story of how Geoffrey of Monmouth's history of the kings of Britain . . . came to be written. They will recognize the narrative about the "friend" . . . who provided the authoritative chronicle (since lost), which the author drew on. Students of medieval Persian will recognize it as the story of how Ferdowsi's history of the kings of Iran came to be written. And they too will recognize the narrative about the "friend" who provided the "authoritative" chronicle (since lost), which the author drew on. (p. 49)

The similarities that Davis sees between Ferdowsi's account of how he obtained his prose archetype and Geoffrey's report of his acquisition of the source on which he based his *Historia Regum Britanniae* leads Davis to the conclusion that as a medieval author, Ferdowsi shared the attitude

and approach of European medieval authors. Therefore, Ferdowsi's words about the nature of his sources should be understood in the light of what we know about European authors of the Middle Ages. That is, since we know that Geoffrey lied about basing his narrative on the written narrative of an old "book" that he received from his "friend," and because he actually either made up his history's narratives from his own imagination and already existing oral tales, Ferdowsi must have done the same. In other words, the Iranian poet's claim that his *Shāhnāmeh* is a verse retelling of an existing prose archetype is as false as Geoffrey of Monmouth's claim that his *Historia Regum Britanniae* is a Latin rendition of an ancient written account. I will address Davis's claims in greater detail later in this volume. Here I only want to dispose of an important misunderstanding that may have implications beyond *Shāhnāmeh* studies.

Just because Ferdowsi and his Iranian contemporaries lived during the time that is ordinarily referred to as the "Middle Ages" in European historiography, we may not justifiably think of them as "medieval" in any accepted sense of that word. We must also not confuse the way Ferdowsi worked, the sources he drew on, or the manner that he engaged in his literary activities with the way medieval European authors worked, utilized sources, or approached literary tasks. I will, therefore, take a few moments to briefly examine what medievalists mean by the term, "medieval," before proceeding with my consideration of whether we may apply this term to Ferdowsi and his contemporaries.

Confusing Cultures: Medieval Europe and Classical Iran

"Any break cripples chronology," writes Henri-Jean Martin. Thus, whether we place the end of "classical antiquity at A.D. 476 under the pretext that a barbarian prince deposed the last Roman emperor of the West, Romulus Augustulus," or in the summer of A.D. 410, when Alaric the Visigoth sacked the city of Rome, the break would be "neither worse nor more satisfactory than any other."[15] Whatever the date, we know that following the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D., Western Europe entered a period of its history that is commonly called "the Middle Ages" in English. Assuming that Alaric's sack of Rome began the Middle Ages, we know that Rome suffered relatively little "external damage" at that time.[16] However, the fall of "the mother of all nations" marked a momentous occasion in the history of Western Europe, and had great symbolic significance.[17] Saint Augustine (A.D. 354–430), bishop of Hippo—modern city of ᶜAnnāba in Algeria—wrote his *De Civitate Dei* (*The City of God*), which greatly influenced the subsequent development of Christian thought, as a reaction to this event. The disaster also moved

Augustine's contemporary, Saint Jerome (A.D. 347–420)—a resident of Bethlehem at the time—to lament the fall of Rome in a moving expression of sorrow:

> The havoc wrought in the West and above all, in the city of Rome (Epist. 126, 2) . . . When the brightest light on the whole earth was extinguished, when the Roman empire was deprived of its head and when, to speak more correctly, the whole world perished in one city, . . . Who would believe that Rome, built up by the conquest of the whole world, has collapsed, that the mother of nations has also become their tomb?[18]

With the fall of Rome, Europe crossed the threshold into a period that was frequently termed the "Dark Ages," and was defined as

> that period of intellectual depression in the history of Europe from the establishment of the barbarian supremacy in the fifth century to the revival of learning about the beginning of the fifteenth, thus nearly corresponding in extent with the Middle Ages.[19]

What's important for our purposes is that the Renaissance humanists, especially Petrarch (1304–1374) and his followers, used the term "Middle Ages" to refer to the vast period of intellectual and cultural stagnation that separated them from the classical European civilizations of Greece and Rome. They viewed themselves as the generation that "revived" the lost civilization of the classical period:

> They argued that human culture had reached its zenith in the ancient world, had collapsed, like the Roman Empire, with the onset of Christianity and barbarism, and had only revived in their own time.[20]

Therefore, many Westerners, including the humanists of the Renaissance and the general public of the twentieth century, understood the terms "Middle Ages" or "Dark Ages" to refer to that period of European history marked by a general decline of arts, sciences, and political institutions as a result of the barbarian invasions of Europe.

During this period, Rome's beautiful and well-maintained cities, her government, courts of law, schools, libraries, infrastructure, and much of what marked her civilization were either destroyed or came to a virtual standstill. Various reasons, ranging from the simple fact of barbarian invasions to a more complex series of causes including the economic decline that had begun two centuries before the invasions, barbarization of the Romans, Romanization of the barbarians, and the manner in which barbarian settlements in former Roman territories proceeded, have been

adduced for the onset of the Middle Ages.[21] Whatever the reasons, the medieval period in Western European coincided with the onset of the long autumn of Europe's cultural life that lasted nearly a thousand years.

In contrast to the preinvasion Roman society, literary civilization barely existed in medieval Europe, and literacy continued only in a few ecclesiastical centers such as Benedictine monasteries. The rest of Western Europe was cut off from the thriving intellectual and economic life of the eastern Mediterranean that followed the expansion of Islam in the seventh century.[22] This was especially true in the early part of the Middle Ages, roughly from A.D. 475 to 1000, which is sometimes dubbed the "Dark Ages," and described as "a time of despair . . . disintegration of the Mediterranean world and the collapse of [Europe's] political, cultural, and economic unity."[23] This period was also marked by a decline in Latin literature, an almost complete absence of national literatures, and by population decline and economic stagnation. The emperor Justinian I (483–565) attempted to revive the glories of the past and reunify the empire. But he made matters worse. In his discussion of the latter parts of Justinian's reign, Davis writes:

> So far as Italy was concerned, it was Justinian's wars that marked the beginning of the "Dark Ages." In re-conquering the West, Justinian had in fact destroyed it; of him it could be said more truly than of any other emperor, that "he made a desert and called it peace."[24]

Medieval European life's distance from its former intellectual and artistic achievements is not questioned by any specialists. What remains a matter of debate is the degree of this separation rather than the fact of its existence.

The barbarous cultural circumstances to which Western Europe was subjected during the early Middle Ages, roughly A.D. 500 to 1000, were so dreadful that the word "medieval" has gained the sense of something backward, wild, cruel, barbarous, and generally uncouth in many European languages, especially in English.

By contrast, the Middle East did not experience the dreadful barbarization to which Western Europe was subjected as a result of the Muslim invasion. The Muslim world, in other words, did not have a "medieval" phase or a "Dark Ages" of its own during these same centuries.[25] In view of these facts, the application of the word "medieval" to any aspect of the classical Muslim civilizations—including that of Iran, is highly problematic. In fact, the tripartite division of European history into the *classical*, the *medieval*, and the *modern* periods—with all the implications of this periodization—is applicable *exclusively* to Western Europe.

Every medievalist of note has been conscious of this fact, and many have noted it in their writing. For instance, the influential American medievalist Joseph Reese Strayer (1904–1987) writes of the medieval European civilization:

> In the first place, it is clear that we are dealing with a civilization which, in its complete form, covers *only Western Europe* [my italics]. It has little influence on Eastern Europe and even less on Western Asia and Northern Africa.[26]

Strayer's view is echoed by W. F. H. Nicolaisen, who, in his introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages*, writes:

> The notion of a chronological Middle Age, with its concomitant epithet medieval, is, in its hint at a tripartite temporal division, essentially European in origin and application. Any exercise insisting on a double vision in matters concerning oral tradition in a medieval setting . . . , is consequently almost by definition, predestined to concentrate on and perhaps even to deal exclusively with, the European scene.[27]

Therefore, the assumption that Ferdowsi was a "medieval" poet simply because he was born in A.D. 940, began work on the *Shāhnāmeh* in A.D. 981, and died in A.D. 1020—the period coinciding with the "Middle Ages" of Western historiography—is analogically flawed. Equally flawed is the supposition that Ferdowsi's behavior would have been similar to the behavior of any of the medieval English authors, least of all to the behavior of Geoffrey of Monmouth, in whom Davis finds Ferdowsi's European counterpart.[28] Here are some of the stark differences between the classical Muslim society and the society of medieval Europe.

In contrast to Western Europe, whose civilization had collapsed into the Dark Ages following the barbarian invasions, the Iranian civilization after the Arab invasion entered its golden age and attained its most productive period. Western Europe and Iran therefore, experienced opposite outcomes following these radically different invasions, and produced two drastically different cultures. In other words—and this cannot be stressed enough—at almost exactly the same time as Western Europe was experiencing her Dark Ages, the civilizations of the Middle East, including the Iranian civilization, were undergoing a revolution in science, technology, and the arts largely *as a result* of the Muslim invasion. Therefore, inferences drawn from the lives or habits of medieval European authors may not be used to deduce anything about the life or habits of Ferdowsi, or for that matter any of his contemporaries.

Middle Eastern populations and cities were generally growing at a rapid rate during the early Middle Ages, when Europe's population was declining precipitously. Great publicly and privately funded research institutions were active throughout Muslim lands. Massive translation efforts that made the sum of pre-Islamic Persian, Greek, and Sanskrit learning available to the Muslim intelligentsia were undertaken, and speculative science and philosophy thrived throughout the Middle East. Powerful centralized regional governments, which paid nominal homage to the Caliphate in Baghdad, appeared in vast parts of the empire with immense bureaucracies that, at least in Persia, mimicked earlier practices of Iran's pre-Islamic empire. More importantly, secular literatures in Arabic, Persian, and a number of other languages thrived after the Muslim invasion.

Given these incontestable facts, one might ask how the intellectually dynamic Iranian society of the tenth century A.D. could be confused with the declining cultures of Western Europe? Why should Persian society of Ferdowsi's time be considered a "medieval" society? How can a highly literate poet like Ferdowsi be compared to the likes of Geoffrey of Monmouth? Ferdowsi and Geoffrey operated in two drastically different social contexts. The European was handicapped by living in a society moving backward; the Persian was fortunate to be part of a society moving forward. As the English medievalist Michael T. Clanchy has convincingly argued, the growth of the "literate mentality" in England happened sometime between the Norman Conquest of 1066 and the end of Edward I's rule in the first decade of the fourteenth century.[29] This fact may serve as a point of comparison for the state of literacy in Ferdowsi and Geoffrey of Monmouth's respective cultures.

It is a demonstrable fact that medieval European society before the twelfth century A.D. was predominantly illiterate and depended largely on the "oral tradition," while the Muslim world of the same period enjoyed a high rate of literacy, and relied extensively on the written word and on archival and documentary resources. The implications of this fundamental difference for the life and careers of Persian poets of the period is that Ferdowsi's society was by no stretch of the imagination an "oral" culture in the same sense as medieval Europe was oral. Therefore, Ferdowsi did not have to rely on the same type of sources that attracted his European contemporaries.

It may be argued that my characterization of medieval Europe as a primitive culture compared to the Muslim civilization of the Middle East during the same period simplifies the situation and lacks in nuance. The idea that medieval Europe was economically, intellectually, and culturally less advanced than the Muslim Middle East is a matter of consensus

among most medievalists. For instance, in his revised edition of his classic work on medieval Europe, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (1993), Norman F. Cantor, who can hardly be accused of lacking in nuance, says substantially the same thing:

> Compared to the Moslem countries, western Europe appears as an underdeveloped area. The Mediterranean world under Moslem rule at the zenith of its power and prosperity in the eleventh century resembled the Hellenistic and Roman empires in the size and grandeur of its cities. . . . The greatest Latin scholar of the age, the Frenchman Gerbert of Aurillac, who eventually became pope, went to Moslem Spain to study philosophy and mathematics. The education he received from Arabic teachers made him so intellectually superior to his Christian contemporaries that for many centuries Gerbert was regarded as the possessor of mysterious powers of sorcery and black magic. It was not until after 1100 that the iron curtain between Latin Europe and Moslem Spain was effectively breached; the result was the importation of the Aristotelian corpus from Spain and Sicily into western Europe, inaugurating an intellectual revolution.[30]

And again: "Compared to Byzantium and the other Mediterranean civilization, Islam, western Europe was indeed impoverished and backward in the middle of the tenth century."[31] Similar pronouncements may be culled from the works of virtually all modern and earlier medievalists about the European society of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Of course, things changed a century or two later. But that period has nothing to do with the lifetime of Ferdowsi (d. 1025). Therefore, my characterization of the European society of the tenth century as relatively backward compared to the Muslim civilization of Ferdowsi's time is hardly outlandish. Some readers might wish that I be a bit more nuanced and avoid the use of such terms as the "Dark Ages," which they might consider outdated. Let me quote Cantor's portrayal of Europe of that time precisely because he is known for his sensitivity and nuanced approach. Consider the following passage in which Cantor contrasts the primitive state of European life in the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D. with the more advanced East (pp. 25–26):

> Now in 1096 above the Rhine gorges, in the ghettos of the crooked little urban enclaves overlooking the magical great river, the French Crusaders beat upon the caftaned, defenseless Jewish townspeople as the Latin lords and knights proceeded along their boisterous way to the brilliant and effete East. . . . In many past centuries the armed, ignorant lords and knights of Roman Catholic and Germanic Europe had huddled, embarrassed and fearful, in their swampy, forested, and mountainous redoubts

> to escape from the magnificent, inscrutable caliphs and stern mullahs and incessantly disciplined Muslim armies of the south. In their smoky, putrid northern halls, the Franks had long gossiped about the southern riches, aching to add Arab booty to their looted capital accumulation. They fervently imagined the sunny, sexy wonder of the Mediterranean climes. Now these wild and subliterate Frankish warriors had at last been organized and channeled by the handful of great kings and dukes from their castellanies in the river valley of the north. Zealous Latin-mouthing priests, chatting persuasively about reviving the glorious Roman Empire, had given them a simple but more elevated self-image. The aristocratic Frankish women—with whom the lords and knights diurnally copulated in the high-ceilinged wooden feasting halls among the packs of dogs and heaped garbage bones of countless red meat roasted dinners—if only to save themselves from constant pregnancies and early deaths in the roulette experiences of perilous childbirths, had begun to urge their masters and sons to fabled and valiant deeds of heroic romance in distant exotic climes.[32]

Lest it be thought that such an assessment of the European Middle Ages is limited to Cantor, let me cite Robert S. Lopez, Yale's transplanted Italian historian of the Middle Ages, who defined the period as "the meeting of German primitivism with Roman decrepitude."[33]

Be that as it may, a comparison between the medieval Europe and Muslim Middle East on the production, circulation, and treatment of books, and the number and size of public and private libraries demonstrate that the Muslim Middle East fundamentally differed from medieval Europe with respect to its reliance on the written word. Indeed, the quantitative difference in this area is vast enough to imply a *qualitative* difference between these two worlds. Similarly, the development of scientific and speculative thought in these two cultural areas is poles apart. A statistical study of mathematical texts that were authored between the ninth and seventeenth centuries A.D. in the Muslim world might put things in a less abstract context.

This study focuses on purely mathematical works that were composed between the ninth and the seventeenth centuries A.D. in Muslim countries and rules out religious, philosophical, and other treatises that may interfere with a measurement of Muslim society's purely scientific output.[34] Table 1.1 lists the number of such compositions in every century of the period under study:

A clearer idea of the level of scientific activity over time could be had from transferring these numbers to figure 1.1.

Ferdowsi's lifetime falls in the peak period of Islam's intellectual activities. As we saw before, about the same time Gerbet d'Aurillac had gained a reputation as a magician only because he had learned a little algebra

Table 1.1 Mathematical Books in Islam

Years A.D.	*Number of Texts*
800–900	110
900–1000	91
1000–1100	235
1200–1300	16
1300–1400	24
1400–1500	8
1500–1600	8
1600–1700	3

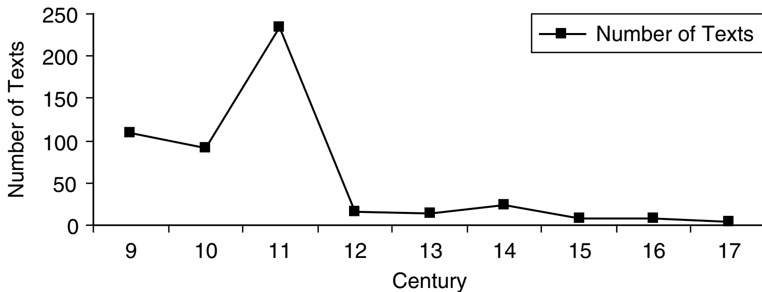

Figure 1.1 Published mathematical books in Islam

from the scholars of Muslim Spain. The implications of all this should be quite clear.

In contrast to the Muslim world, learning in medieval Europe was essentially religious. Western libraries were devotional collections that served a primarily religious purpose.[35] They were viewed as tools of disputation with the nonbelievers rather than means to acquire knowledge per se. This is implied in a letter addressed to Peter Mangot, a monk of Baugercy in the diocese of Tours, from Geoffrey, the sub-prior of S. Barbe in Normandy, who in the year A.D. 1170 wrote:

> A monastery (*claustrum*) without a library (*sine armario*) is like a castle (*castrum*) without an armory (*sine armamentario*). Our library is our armory. Thence it is that we bring forth the sentences of the Divine Law like sharp arrows to attack the enemy. Thence we take the armour of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God.[36]

By contrast, Muslim libraries of that time were primarily nondevotional. They had vast holdings in science, literature, astronomy, mathematics, and a host of other nondevotional subjects.

It may be argued that the historical evidence of the prevalence or use of libraries in the Middle East reflects the lifestyle of the educated classes, rather than that of the general public, and that one may not use this evidence to generalize about society as a whole. But precisely because Ferdowsi was not a member of the general public, and belonged to the intellectual elite of his time, this evidence is quite relevant to his work.[37] In other words, evidence concerning the nature of literary resources that were available to the educated elite of Ferdowsi's time is unquestionably relevant to the study of his literary activities.

Muslim society's greater dependence on literacy during the Middle Ages is born out by another form of evidence, namely the evidence of the graffiti. Reports of extensive graffiti in Iran and the rest of the Middle East are scattered throughout classical Persian and Arabic literatures. These reports show that writing was a far more common skill among the Muslim public than it was in Europe. Such graffiti is even reported from pre-Islamic Iran. Ibn Qutaiba(d. A.D. 891) quotes from the translation of a pre-Islamic text that a Persian courtier advised his son against writing upon walls or on gates.[38] I will mention in passing, and by way of a digression here, that implicit in many studies of the *Shāhnāmeh* is the view that, with the exception of the religious canon, what was inherited from pre-Islamic Iranian literature was transmitted orally. I find this quite unlikely. An empire of the size and complexity of the Sassanid Empire could not administratively survive by "oral tradition" alone, any more than could its only rival, the Roman Empire. There is a great deal of evidence scattered through the early Arabic texts that establishes the high level of literacy in the pre-Islamic Persian society. This vast data, however, remains largely unexplored. To return to our main point, it may be demonstrated that at the time when most Europeans, including much of the nobility of Europe, were illiterate or at best subliterate, most of the professional classes, aristocrats, and not a small number of the general public and the military personnel in the Middle East could read, and many could also write.

Abū al-Faraj al-Isbahānī (A.D. 897–967), best known for his encyclopedic *Book of Songs (Kitābal-Aghānī)*, not only devoted an entire volume to *The Slave Poetesses (al-Imā' al-Shawāᶜir)*, which proves that literacy was not limited to the "elite," but also compiled a short treatise containing a mass of interesting graffiti. He named this book *The Book of the Strangers' Literature (Kitāb Adab al-Ghurbā')*. The graffiti in this book was collected from mosques, gardens, inns, fortifications, tombstones, rocks, and gates.[39] One of his informants, a Sufi by the name of ᶜAlī son of ᶜAbdullāh al-Wāsitī, was utterly amazed at the dizzying abundance of graffiti found covering the inner walls of the minaret of the main

mosque in Sāmira, Iraq, which implies a large number of literate persons among the general public of his time.[40] Needless to say, no similar situation existed in medieval Europe.

One detects a textual orientation even among members of the more lowly professions in Iran of the Middle Ages. For instance, fortune-tellers appear to have relied on books for the conduct of their business in Ferdowsi's era. The poet Manūchihrī (d. A.D. 1041) writes:

بسانِ فالگویانند مرغان بر درختان بر   نهاده پیشِ‌خویش اندر پر از تصویر دفترها

The birds upon the trees resemble fortune-tellers
Who have placed their picture-filled books in front of them.[41]

At the very least this implies a textual orientation among the fortune-tellers.

The educational system of the Muslim Middle East was widely accessible to a large portion of the population and was by no means limited only to the offspring of the elite. An anecdote related by the classical scholar al-Zamakhsharī (1074–1143) tells of how the children of the wealthy and those of the poor were taught by the same teacher in the same school.[42] Yāqūt quotes Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī (d. 1023) to have reported that when Ibn Kaysān (d. 912) taught one of the texts of the grammarian Tha^{c}lab (816–904) over 100 nobles and literati *and a great many other people* attended his lectures, and adds that Ibn Kaysān treated the poor as he treated the notables who came to his classes.[43]

Ferdowsi lived in a literary culture with a sophisticated critical community. His peers, the literati of Khurāsān, possessed such learning, literary sophistication, and command of written sources that he could not have possibly fabricated his own source without being ridiculed for it. His contemporaries would not have allowed him to get away with such a deed.

The intellectuals of Khurāsān paid great attention to detail. An example of this is found in the work of Ferdowsi's contemporary, the Ghaznavid historian Bayhaqī (d. 1077), who quotes the polymath Bīrūnī as follows:

> One day, the king was drinking wine on horseback, and he reached my residence. He ordered that I be called, and it took me a little while to get to him. He drove his horse right up to my door, and was about to dismount [as a sign of respect], I paid obeisance, and implored him not to and he did not dismount, but recited [this verse]:
>
> Learning is the greatest of dominions
> All go [humbly] forth to it while it does not need to go to anyone
> [in humility]

> He then added: "If I were not bound by worldly ceremonies I would not have called you forth [and would have come to you myself]; verily learning is above all and nothing is above learning." It is possible that the king had studied the history of the Caliph al-Muᶜtazid [r. 892–894] because I've read in it that one day Muᶜtazid was strolling in a garden while holding the hand of [the savant] Thābit ibn Qurra [836–901]. He suddenly pulled his hand away. Thābit asked: "Why did you pull your hand away my lord?" He answered: "My hand was over your hand while learning is above all and nothing is above it."[44]

That Bayhaqī recognizes the statement of Bīrūni's patron and speculates about the source in which the king may have read it, shows the profound command of Ferdowsi's contemporaries over the literary sources of their time. Bayhaqī was neither exceptional nor even the best of the literati of Khurāsān. There were plenty of others who were as competent as he was. The very prince about whom Bayhaqī provides this anecdote was one of the most learned men of his time.[45] The notion that Ferdowsi could fake a whole book in such a highly literate environment is at best unrealistic.

Classical Muslim scholars paid special attention to the questions of authority and originality. Most classical Persian and Arabic handbooks of poetry devote at least a chapter to the problem of plagiarism (*saraqāt*) in which they discuss its different forms. These may be roughly translated into English as: outright plagiarism, limited plagiarism, superficial plagiarism, and borrowing (*intihāl*, *salkh*, *ilmām*, and *naql* respectively). Outright plagiarism (*intihāl*) is when one plagiarizes from someone else's work either verbatim or with very little change in the original. Limited plagiarism (*salkh*) is when one borrows the idea and uses it with little or moderate change in either the original's wording or syntax. Superficial plagiarism (*ilmām*) is when one takes the idea and puts it in his own words in a way that he may sometimes improve the original idea. The final form of plagiarism, borrowing (*naql*), is taking the gist of an idea from the work of someone else and using it in a different context in one's own work. For instance, if the original idea was used in a eulogy but the borrower decides to use it in a satire, he has practiced *naql*.[46]

Reputable poets and authors of the classical period cautiously avoided even the appearance of impropriety where plagiarism was concerned, and carefully specified their sources. For instance, the great Ghaznavid historian and secretary ᶜUtbī (d. 1036) carefully specifies the name of the poet whose verse he borrows in eulogizing his master.[47]

Given this cultural context, Ferdowsi could not have gotten away with fabricating his source because his contemporaries knew their sources, and he would have been unable to fool them. He was not dealing with a largely subliterate society to whom books were mysterious and wondrous

things. This is evident from the words of another one of Ferdowsi's contemporaries, Hasan b. Muhammad b. Hasan al-Qummī, who wrote in A.D. 988:

> He who sets out to compose a book or compile a treatise, places his person in danger by exposing himself to the criticism of the literati . . . I have collected most of what is in this book from geographical texts, treatises that concern the founding of cities, histories of the Caliphs, and the works of those who were skilled in some area of learning, and I took the information from books and documents that were in possession of such [learned] people. I say this [beforehand] so that when some denigrator learns that I have compiled this book from the [information] in other books, he cannot malign my work by saying that I have collected the works of others and have plagiarized from them. I can lay no claim to the contents of this book beyond the arrangement of its contents. Only that information that specifically concerns [the city of] Qumm and its inhabitants is mine; and all that is other than that has been taken from other books and histories. . . . That which I've quoted in this book—be it correct or incorrect—I have attributed it to its own author.[48]

The intellectual atmosphere in which authors had to take such great care not to be accused of plagiarism had nothing in common with the semiliterate society of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Ferdowsi worked in a highly refined literary environment, which considered oral tradition vulgar and uncouth. Classical Persian culture emphasized "textuality" and disdained "orality." The historian Bayhaqī refers to "storytellers" and those who listened to them in these words:

> And most common people prefer impossible lies—such as tales of demons, fairies, ghouls, and [adventures in] mountains and seas—[to historical accounts]. [They prefer it] when an idiot makes a spectacle, and a bunch of other like-minded idiots gather around and he says: I saw an island in such and such a sea, where five hundred of us landed, and set up our pots and baked bread, and when the fire got going and the heated the ground, the earth began to move, and we found that [the island] was a whale. [Or he would say]: I witnessed such and such in some mountain, or [says]: an old sorceress turned a man into a donkey, and another old woman anointed his ear again and he was turned back into a man. They say things like this, which only puts the ignorant folk to sleep when they read them in their ears at night. But those who demand true words in which they can believe are counted among the wise, and truly their number is small.[49]

Muslim intellectuals of Ferdowsi's time were not in the habit of uncritically accepting every oral or written report that they encountered. They

made very careful distinctions between accounts that they considered authoritative and those that they viewed as untrustworthy. The development of the sciences of *hadīth* criticism and *rijāl* in Islamic theology was largely due to concern with the authority of sources. Because of the importance of the concepts of authority and authoritative sources, preparing authoritative editions of available texts was considered an indispensable part of scholarship some two centuries before Ferdowsi. In the eighth century A.D., al-Jāhiz (776–868) speaks of the difficulty of making critical editions (مشقّة تصحيح الكتب), and the necessity of producing such editions (وجوب العناية بتنقيح المؤلفات).[50] Naturally, if Jāhiz and his contemporaries considered all written documents to be of equal authority, they would not have bothered to discuss the problems of establishing a "correct" text. The same idea is expressed by Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar (d. 1098) who in A.D. 1082 advised his son, "You should not trust written sources except when they are in the handwriting of trustworthy authors, nor should you consider every book or pamphlet reliable."[51] In or around A.D. 1216, which is about two centuries after Ferdowsi's death, the author of the *History of Tabaristān* provides another example of the dislike of the Muslim intellectuals of the early thirteenth century for the "oral tradition" of our neo-Orientalist romantics:

> One day I discovered a few pamphlets among the books in the library of the college of the warrior king Rustam b. ᶜAlī b. Shahriyār (r. 1140–1163), which contained information on Gāvbāra. I remembered that the late king Husām al-Dawla Ardashīr (r. 1172–1206) . . . had often asked me, saying: "It is said that Gāvbāra used to be the title of a ruler of Tabaristān in the past. Have you ever seen such a thing in Persian or Arabic books, [and do you know] to which clan or tribe he may have belonged?" . . . I responded that I had only heard this from his majesty . . . [and as for] the history of Tabaristān [I know of] no other book than the *Bāvandnāmeh*, which was collected in verse during the days of king Husām al-Dawla Shahriyār Qāran (r. 1074–1110) from the lies of the country folks and the mouths of the common people.[52]

In the above report, it is noteworthy that when the king inquires about a legendary ruler of the past, he specifically wants to know if this ruler has been mentioned "in Persian or Arabic books." In his response, the king's interlocutor differentiates between books that are authoritative sources and those that are mere collections of rustic folklore. Elsewhere in this text, Ibn Esfandiyār again expresses his distrust of written compendia of legendary material. He quotes a story about a ruler called "the Fish-Head" (*Māhiya Sar*) from a written source and adds:

> According to the *History of the Barmakids* this [fellow] *Māhiya Sar* was the man who originally owned the [famous] ring of Barmak [belonging to] ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Marwān . . . and this appears to me to be a lie because *Māhiya Sar* lived before the time of the prophet while ᶜAbd al-Malik is one of the Umayyad Caliphs. Yazdādī has included many stories about *Māhiya Sar* and his kingship [in his work], which is nothing but a bunch of nonsense and old wives tales, and I refrained from translating them because they were irrational.[53]

Authoritative manuscripts were highly valued in classical Muslim lands. Aside from listing the titles of the literary sources that he used in preparing his monumental *Insight and Treasures (al-Basā'ir wa al-Zakhā'ir)*,[54] Abu Hayyān al-Tawhīdī, who died shortly after Ferdowsi in A.D. 1023, repeatedly boasts of his access to authoritative sources in the handwriting of great and trustworthy savants. Among these he mentions the scholar and Caliph Ibn al-Muᶜtazz (861–909).[55] Moreover, in his monumental *al-Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadīm (d. between 990–998) frequently communicates the authoritative nature of the sources at his disposal by specifying the names of the scholars in whose handwriting those sources were found.[56] Source criticism was inherent in classical Muslim scholarship. Therefore, neither Ferdowsi nor any other serious author of that period could just invent a source about a subject as well-known as pre-Islamic Persian history, and hope to get away with it.

All of this, of course, is not to say that classical Muslim authors did not depend on oral material at all. They clearly did. However, the oral tradition on which they relied was chiefly a learned and scholastic oral tradition. It was quite different from the one imagined by the neo-romantics of our discipline. Their oral tradition was of quite a different character than the bucolic crudity on which many medieval European authors relied. Dependence on oral tradition, especially in studies on the history of transmission of *hadīth*, is almost completely misunderstood by nonspecialists. In the introduction to his edition of *Taqyīd al-ᶜIlm* (تقييد العلم) by al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (392–463/1001–1070), Professor Yusif ᶜIshsh brilliantly questions the prevalent misconception among many students of *hadith* in the West and challenges those who consider oral tradition to be the sole or the primary means of transmission of *hadith*.[57] Similarly, Rosenthal refers to the "never abandoned fiction . . . of the primacy of the spoken word," and the pervasiveness of the erroneous belief that "books were . . . innovations that came about only after the year 120/738 when . . . the men around Muhammad and most men of the second generation, were dead, and so on. In fact, of course, written books were indispensable almost from the outset."[58]

Source criticism and concerns for methodology informed the evaluation of material collected from oral tradition among Muslims. Scholars were concerned about the nature and quality of the fieldwork that produced the oral information that they planned to use. They contemplated the accuracy of the collectors' notes and occasionally expressed their unease about any uncritical acceptance of linguistic and folklore data collected from oral tradition. For instance, al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d. 1005 or 1010)[59] reports the criticism against the famous Ibn Kaysān, who was faulted by his critics for distorting knowledge three times: first, by recording what he hears in the field inaccurately; second, by transferring his field notes into his journals inaccurately; and third, by reading the information contained in his journals to his students inaccurately.[60]

The upshot of all this is that the nature of literary culture and activity in Ferdowsi's time was quite different from what prevailed in medieval Europe. It was much more literate and text oriented than its Western counterpart. The structure of learning, literature, and the transmission of legends and history in the context of this highly literate culture was therefore drastically different from what went on in medieval Europe. For this reason and a thousand others, suggesting that either Ferdowsi or any of his contemporaries worked in a manner analogous to the way Geoffrey of Monmouth and other culturally disadvantaged authors of the European Middle Ages worked; or presuming that the term "medieval" with all of its specific implications of barbarity, illiteracy, and orality, may be applied to Ferdowsi is simply preposterous. It is true that Ferdowsi lived between the years A.D. 940 and 1020, and that his lifetime coincided with the medieval period in European historiography. But, it is also true that he thrived during the most vibrant period of scientific and intellectual activity throughout the Muslim world. To believe that Muslim poets, scientists, or other intellectuals of this period had anything in common with their subliterate European contemporaries or that they shared the Europeans' notion of what constitutes a dependable "source" is incorrect. Since I have already compared public literacy in classical Islam and in medieval Europe in a long paper in which the size and number of libraries and the manner and nature of utilization of literary sources have been used as an index of literacy of the two civilizations, I will not belabor the point here.[61]

To sum up, what we know about the classical Muslim civilization of Ferdowsi's period does not allow us to think of it as "medieval" in any accepted sense of the word because the term "medieval" implies a set of cultural, economic, and political characteristics that were specific to Western Europe and were completely absent in the Middle East. Similarly, classifying Ferdowsi as a "medieval" author and his *Shāhnāmeh*

as a "medieval" work would be equally unjustifiable. Being a contemporary of Europe's "medieval period" does not make Ferdowsi a "medieval" author, nor does it make other classical Muslim scholars of the Middle East "medieval men." All considerations of classical Persian literature, especially the *Shāhnāmeh*, must keep this distinction firmly in mind.

CHAPTER 2

An Epic's Journey: A Brief History of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s Transmission

In the previous chapter, I explained that neither Ferdowsi nor his poem may be considered medieval. I also provided a glimpse of the intellectual environment in which Iran's national poet and his contemporaries worked. Let us now turn to the poem's background; we will address the *Shāhnāmeh*'s history, and attempt to disentangle what can be known with reasonable certainty from speculative flights of fancy.

Let us begin with Ferdowsi's own account of how he put the *Shāhnāmeh* into verse. After all, what an artist says about the unified work of a lifetime must be considered carefully in order to form a realistic and reasonable picture of his masterpiece. It may be objected that poets are inherently fanciful, and have a tendency to exaggerate or bury the origins and history of their works in obscure allusions or deliberate falsification. They may, in other words, say one thing and mean something else, and this would make it impossible to take Ferdowsi's words about the *Shāhnāmeh* at face value. This could be a reasonable objection, and in order to guard against potentially misleading poetic obfuscation, I will present evidence from Persian and Arabic texts that corroborate Ferdowsi's account of his activities. I will argue that, given the cultural context of *Shāhnāmeh*'s creation, it is not possible to believe that Ferdowsi incorporated any stories from other sources—oral or written—into his narrative, and that the prose *Shāhnāmeh* served as the exclusive source material for his epic.

This, of course, is not to say that Ferdowsi took no poetic liberties with rendering the prose account of his source into verse; he must have done so. But, taking occasional liberties with the wording of the prose *Shāhnāmeh* is one thing; changing its structure or adding to its narrative is something else entirely. As we shall see later, one of Ferdowsi's goals was to showcase his remarkable poetic technique. He intended to demonstrate, both to potential patrons and to future generations, that he had

the technical and conceptual skills to versify an extremely lengthy prose source in its entirety. Ferdowsi succeeded in skillfully rendering that text into verse without interfering with its contents. More importantly, he alchemized that source into the culminating poetic epic of a major cultural tradition. Before we address the question of how Ferdowsi treated his archetype, a few words about the history of Persian epic literature are in order.

Epic Sources before Ferdowsi

There is considerable evidence for the existence of a national epic tradition in Iran as early as the pre-Zoroastrian times. This tradition may be detected in textual sources that we shall briefly examine here.

The Avestan Evidence

The *Avesta* is the sacred book of the Zoroastrian creed, which was Iran's pre-Islamic state religion. This book is divided into 11 sections. One of these is called the *Yashts*, or hymns (henceforth *Yt*). The Avestan *Yts,* which are 19 in number, are at least partly metrical.[1] These hymns are not all of the same age. Some are much older than the others. For instance, *Yts* 5, 8, 10, 13, 17, and 19 seem more ancient than the rest.[2]

Each of the *Yts* is devoted to a specific deity in the pre-Islamic pantheon, and contains frequent references to the tales of various kings and heroes of Iran's ancient lore. Unfortunately, these references are often short and obscure. Gershevitch detects an important implication in the brevity of these references:

> Clearly when the Yashts were composed the stories were so well-known that a hint was sufficient to recall them. It was economy, rather than lack of skill or of interest in detail, which caused the priestly authors to be concise; their purpose in composing a hymn was to extol the god, not to tell tales or write history. Occasionally, however, an author would be carried away by the picturesqueness of a story, and go into happily expressed details as in Yasht 18:18–34, 5:61–66, 19:39–51, and 56–64. The complete *Avesta* with its three times more texts than have come down to us, will have contained more examples. (Gershevitch, p. 23)

The details of the stories that are only hinted at in the *Yts* are often found in the *Shāhnāmeh* or in Middle Persian literature. These facts, taken together, imply considerable constancy and resilience in Iran's heroic lore. As Gershevitch has noted, at the time of the composition of the *Yts*, some of which may date from 1000 B.C., the heroic legends of Iran were so well

known that a mere reference to them in a religious hymn would have sufficed to conjure up the full tale in the minds of the listeners.[3] Theodor Nöldeke and Friedrich Spiegel argued that the compilers of the *Avesta* in the first millennium B.C. knew a complete repertory of mythical and legendary lore. These ancient collectors evidently believed that the anthologized traditions forged a chain of historical facts within a general chronology that constituted their ethnic history.[4]

The Greek Evidence

Ctesias of Cnidus (fourth century B.C.) served as a physician at the court of the Achaemenid kings of Persia between 404–397 B.C. He wrote a history of a number of ancient civilizations, including Iran, fragments of which have survived as quotations in the works of other classical authors. The part of Ctesias's history that deals with Iran is called *Persica*.[5] In a section of his *Persica* that deals with the account of the Median Empire (728–549 B.C.), he lists nine kings whose names, he claims to have obtained from the Persians' "Royal Leather Records." He renders this title in Greek as: Βασιλικαί διφθέραι (*BasilikaiThiftherai)*, which may also be interpreted as "Books or Records of King" (Diodorus, II: 32–34). Ctesias served as personal physician for Artaxerxes II (435–358 B.C.) during the king's wars of succession with Cyrus the Younger (d. 401 B.C.). He was honored as the king's doctor for 17 years and was able to access information from the Achaemenids' royal records. Ctesias claims that "from the royal records, in which the Persians in accordance with a certain law of theirs kept an account of their ancient affairs, he carefully investigated the facts about each king, and when he had composed his history he published it to the Greeks."[6] It would not be a great leap of fancy to see precursors of the Persian *Shāhnāmeh* in these "Royal Leather Records." I believe the *Books of Kings* to which Ctesias refers were, like the *Shāhnāmeh*, primarily works of imaginative literature, which also included some historical accounts of ancient rulers. The legendary aspects of these royal records may be inferred from certain features of Ctesias's account.

According to Diodorus, Ctesias lists nine Iranian kings and claims that he discovered this line of kings in "the royal records." But only one of the monarchs in his list is historical. The other eight do not appear in any other sources.[7] For this reason, the classicist, Robert Drews doubts the factual value and dependability of Ctesias' account and writes: "It is certain that Ctesias did not find his information in any royal leather records."[8] He believes that because so many of the kings in Ctesias's list are not historical, his list is not really based on official archival records at all.

Drews' argument has an important implication for the history of Iranian epic tradition. If Ctesias did not obtain his list from "official" *Royal Records*, then he either got his information from the oral tradition or found it in nonhistorical written compilations. Had he obtained his list from oral tradition, he would have said so because other Greek authors did not shy away from specifying that their information was obtained from oral sources. Now, if we take Ctesias's "Leather Records" to mean not a historical record of kings, but rather a royal record in the sense of a "royal epic," then we may be on firmer ground. We may therefore suggest that these so-called royal records may in fact have been a collection of stories about ancient kings, gods, and culture heroes that were combined with accounts of historical personages, and existed in compilations much like the *Shāhnāmeh*. Thus, the very fact that all but one of the kings in Ctesias's list are not historical implies that these kings were legendary rulers who belonged to the ancient Iranian lore, and records of their exploits existed in some written form in the fifth century B.C.

The point at issue, as far as Ctesias's *Royal Records* and the *Shāhnāmeh* are concerned, is *not* a genetic relationship between Iran's national epic and the Leather Records of Ctesias. I am not suggesting that the narrative of the *Shāhnāmeh* is traceable to what was found in Ctesias's ancient source. I am merely arguing that his report points to the existence of a body of royal epic literature that was produced under the patronage of the Iranian nobility since before the fifth century B.C. Let us leave ancient Iran and move on to the Middle Persian period (roughly A.D. 224–651).

The Middle Persian Evidence

Reference to a Middle Persian book called *Khudāynāmag,* meaning "The Book of Lords/Kings,"[9] which contained an account of Iran's kings and heroes is found in a vast number of sources. Most scholars assume that the *Khudāynāmag* was a single specific book that was compiled sometime between the fifth to the seventh centuries A.D., probably under Khosrow I, Anūshīrvān (A.D. 531–579).[10] Most also agree that this Middle Persian text was later translated into Arabic in the eighth century A.D., and was given the title of *Siyar al-Mulūk* (The Chronicle of Kings). The most famous of the book's translators was a Persian convert to Islam, called ᶜAbdullāh Ibn al-Muqaffaᶜ (d. CA. A.D. 759). In time, a genre of epic literature in New Persian language evolved which combined these Arabic translations with information from Middle Persian and New Persian sources. The general name given to this body of narrative literature in the New Persian language was the *Shāhnāmeh.* Thus, long before Ferdowsi, all literary Persian epics were known by the generic title of *Shāhnāmeh.*

I propose a minor variation on this account. In my opinion the word, *Khudāynāmag* did not refer to a specific book but rather to a *genre* of epic literature about Iran's ancient gods and heroes. I imagine that a vast number of *Khudāynāmags* and other independent epic tales must have existed between the third and mid-seventh century A.D., and that several of these must have been translated into Arabic with the advent of Islam. I believe, in other words, that a reinterpretation of the available evidence about the *Khudāynāmag* is in order.

An Excursus: Khudāynāmag, Book or a Genre?

Many *Shāhnāmeh* scholars, such as Mojtaba Minovi (1903–1976), Safa (1911–1999), and others, believed that the Middle Persian *Khudāynāmag* was a specific book that was commissioned by one of the later Sassanid monarchs.[11] This, I believe, is an untenable position. Evidence for the contention that the Middle Persian *Kudāynāmag* was a literary genre comes from the work of a Muslim historian of the late ninth to late tenth century A.D.. In his *Chronology of the Kings and the Prophets of the Earth*, Hamzah of Isfahān (ca. 280–360 AH / A.D. 894–971), quotes a Zoroastrian priest as follows:

> Bahrām the Priest says: I collected twenty odd copies of the book which is called *Khudāynāmah*, in order to correct the dates of the kings of Persia from the time of Kayumars the father of mankind, until the time when the dominion passed from them unto the Arabs.[12]

Hamza also quotes Kisravī, a well-known translator of Middle Persian into Arabic, that he had looked into the manuscripts of the book that is known as the *Khudāynāmag* very carefully, but found its manuscripts to be quite different from one another. Indeed, Kisravī claims that he found the texts of his manuscripts to be so varied that they agreed on nothing:

> [Kisravī] says: I looked into the book that is called *Khudāynāmah*, that is, the book that was translated from Persian into Arabic as *The Book of the History of Persian Kings*. I repeatedly investigated the manuscripts of this book and carefully studied them only to find them quite different from one another; to the point that I could not find [even] two manuscript that agreed with one another.[13]

What is important for our purposes here is that both Bahrām the priest, and Kisravī the translator, could read Middle Persian. When they report that the texts of their *Khudāynāmag* manuscripts were widely different, they are speaking about the Middle Persian manuscripts of the

book—*not* its Arabic translations. It goes without saying that Bahrām, who was a Zoroastrian priest, was not likely to use Arabic sources in constructing the history of his own creed. Such an assumption would be as absurd as believing that a learned Rabbi would likely compose a history of Judaism from exclusively non-Jewish sources. Therefore, when a priest and a translator testify that their Middle Persian manuscripts of the *Khudāynāmag* were widely divergent, we must conclude that Iran's legendary history existed in vastly different literary Middle Persian compilations.

The divergence to which Bahrām and Kisravī refer must have stemmed from the fact that these different manuscripts represented different local, dynastic, or political versions of a central narrative. These divergent manuscripts of the *Khudāynāmag* represented literary forms. Followers of the Swedish folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878–1952) might call them the different *oicotypes* of the Iranian people's central epic narrative.[14]

Perhaps the most important reason why the *Khudāynāmag* must have been a literary genre rather than a single book has to do with the nature of Iran's aristocratic worldview, and the character of the Zoroastrian religion. The Zoroastrian worldview is a dualistic one that believes in ceaseless conflict between good and evil, gods and demons, and heroes and villains. The Sassanid aristocracy who ruled Iran from the third to the seventh century A.D., adhered to Zoroastrianism. Assuming that the Iranian epics were compiled into the *Khudāynāmag* during the reign of Khosrow I (531–579) or Yazdgird III (632–651), as many scholars do, is problematical. Such a theory would be tantamount to believing that this bellicose nobility—fed on tales of conflict and confrontation—postponed the codification of its heroic lore for nearly three centuries. It is difficult to believe a scenario that has literate Sassanid society, possessed of a rich body of epic lore and ruled by an educated aristocracy[15] who thrived on gore and glory, end up doing nothing with its heroic tales for nearly three centuries, in spite of these tales' suitability as political and military propaganda. Moreover, such a scenario implies that the Iranian nobility of the Sassanid period had no interest in associating itself with the kings and heroes of ancient lore, either for reasons of vanity or political expediency.

A more probable scenario may be postulated: It appears that, broadly speaking, three types of epic or legendary texts existed in the Middle Persian language:

- Local histories, some of which have been incorporated into classical Persian and Arabic. These had incorporated some of the country's local heroic legends (e.g., Histories of Sīstān and Tabaristān.)[16]

- Literary epics about heroes or heroic families, such as those concerning the adventures of Bahrām-e Chubina and of Garshāsp. Fragments of the former survive in Arabic translations of ninth and tenth centuries A.D.,[17] and a poetic Persian rendition of the latter has survived in the epic: *Garshāspnāmeh* (ca. A.D. 1066).[18]
- A national epic that told the ethnic history of Iran from her mythical beginnings to the time of the Sassanids. The most complete form of this national narrative may have been prepared under the patronage of Khosrow I in a royal redaction. However, other great aristocratic houses must have commissioned their own versions of this national tradition. This third type of the literary epics later evolved into a narrative that formed the core of Iran's national epic, but it may have interbred with the other two varieties along the way.

Different manuscript traditions of these three types of epic narratives existed alongside the oral form. These various literary compilations, like the Four Gospels of the New Testament in Western Christian tradition, told the same story in different versions. The Iranian narratives were in conversation with one another and with Iran's oral tradition. They differed from one another *not* because they were divergent textual versions of the same textual archetype, but because they were different books about the same national narrative, but written by different authors for different reasons. I believe such a scenario better explains the vast divergence in the manuscript tradition of the *Khudāynāmag* reported by Bahrām the priest and Kisravī the translator.

After Iran's conquest, the Arabic translation movement took notice of this body of heroic and political narratives and began to render it into the language of Iran's new overlords. Then the textual differences of the original were carried into Arabic and were reflected in the divergent narratives of the translations. The enigmatic nature of Middle Persian orthography, combined with the linguistic incompetence of some translators—about whom al-Jāhiz (A.D. 767–869) complained so bitterly—led to the creation of the different accounts of Persian epic tales that we find in Arabic sources.[19]

These epic compilations must have existed in written form because our earliest Arabic sources specifically refer to them as written documents. Indeed, there is reason to believe that some of these texts were carried to Arabia during the lifetime of the Prophet and gained some popularity among pre-Islamic Arabs. Texts that report the popularity of Iranian stories in Mecca have been largely misinterpreted, and since this is an important point in the history of the *Shāhnāmeh*, I will discuss it in some detail.

Persian Epics in Mecca

One of the fiercest opponents of the Prophet Muhammad was a man by the name of al-Nazr ibn al-Hārith (نضربن الحارث), who was killed by the order of the prophet in A.D. 624. Nazr relentlessly stalked the Prophet, and whenever he heard him telling a biblical story during his sermon, Nazr would call upon the audience, saying, "Come to me, and I will tell you better tales of Persian kings and heroes."

Nazr's behavior is important in our discussion because it establishes that Iranian epic tales were prevalent among the pre-Islamic Arabs of the sixth century A.D. Details in the available historical information about Nazr tell us that he had access to *written* versions of these Iranian narratives, and that he read these tales to his audience. *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship, however, has neglected this important information and has concluded that Nazr had learned his Persian stories from storytellers rather than from books. For instance, Taqizadeh writes:

> As [the historian] Ibn Hishām (d. 218 AH / A.D.833) reports a merchant from Mecca by the name of Nazr son of Hārith *had learned* [my italics] the stories of Rustam's fights with Isfandiyār in the city of Hīra[20] in southwestern Iran and narrated them in Mecca about two years before the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina.[21]

Others are even more emphatic. In his introduction to Tarsūsī's *Dārābnāmeh*, published in 1969, Safā writes how Nazr had: "*heard and memorized* [my italics] his repertoire of tales in Mesopotamia from storytellers who narrated their tales in the manner that these storytellers do so in Iran."[22] Curiously enough, earlier in his career, Safa had taken a less emphatic position about the oral source and performance of Nazr's stories. In his book on the history of the Iranian epics (*Hamāseh Surā'ī dar Irān*), which was published in 1954, he writes that Nazr had *learned* the story of Rustam's fight with Isfandiyār in Mesopotamia. There is no mention of listening to storytellers in this earlier opinion.[23] Other scholars such as Minovi, Riyāhi, and others generally express the idea that Nazr had *learned* his version of the stories of Rustam and Isfandiyār from the Iranian oral tradition.[24] The list of important Iranian scholars who either explicitly state that Nazr utilized oral sources, or strongly imply the idea may be easily extended.[25]

Since all of these authorities depend on the reports of the Prophet's earlier biographers, Ibn Ishāq (d. A.D. 768) and Ibn Hishām (d. A.D. 833), let us see what these two authors actually say about this issue.

Ibn Ishāq's biography of the prophet Muhammad exists only in fragments. But we do have a retelling of it in the words of Ibn Hisham,

which is known as the *Life of Muhammad*. Ibn Hishām refers to Nazr's transmission of Iranian epic tales in two places in his book, and I believe that one must take these two statements together before one can clearly understand their meaning.

In his earlier reference to Nazr, Ibn Hishām implies that Nazr had "learned" the Persian stories, which he used to narrate in Mecca, and writes: "This Nazr ibn al-Hārith was one of the devils of Quraysh and one of those who used to bother the prophet of God . . . and displayed hostility toward him." He tells us that this Nazr, "had gone to Hīra and had learned stories of the Iranian kings and tales of Rustam and Isbaniyār; and whenever the prophet of God would sit to preach about God in a gathering and to warn his people about what had befallen ancient peoples by way of divine retributions." He would follow the prophet, and say to the Qurayshites, "By God my stories are better than his. Come to me and I will tell you better tales." He would then narrate the tales of king of Iran and of [the heroes], Rustam and Isbandiyār, and add: "How are Muhammad's [tales] better than mine?"[26]

On the face of it, this account implies that Nazr had learned his stories of Persian kings from the oral tradition. But this is misleading because, in a second reference to Nazr's activities, Ibn Hishām writes:

...كان اذا جلس رسول الله صلعم مجلساً فدعا فيه الى الله و تَلا فيه القرآن و حذر فيه قريشاً ما اصاب الامم الخاليه خلفه فى مجلسه اذا قام فحدّثهم عن رستم الشديد و عن اسفنديار و ملوک فارس ثم يقول والله ما محمّدٌ باحسن حديثاً منّى و ما حديثه الا اساطيرالاوّلين **اكتَتَبَها كما اكتَتَبتُها.**

> [Nazr] used to follow the Prophet when he held an assembly to call the people to God and to recite the Koran and to warn the tribe of Quraysh of what befell peoples of the past, and when the Prophet rose to leave, he [would come forth] and tell them [tales] of the hero Rustam and of Isfandiyār and the kings of Persia; and then would say: By God Muhammad is not more entertaining than me. His narratives are nothing but ancient myths that he's had *transcribed* as I had mine *written* (my italics).[27]

The key point in this passage is that Nazr clearly states that he had his Persian stories *written* (*iktatabtuhā)*, which rules out the assumption that he had learned these tales from Mesopotamian "storytellers" as Safa and others would have us believe. This statement also rules out the interpretation that these tales were necessarily oral tales.[28]

Because Ibn Hishām refers to a written body of lore only in his second statement, it may be argued that we may not trust the authority of the second report over that of the first, and that we are in no position to draw any definitive conclusions about the nature of Nazr's source from these two statements.

However, given the cultural context of the pre-Islamic Arabian society in which oral tradition had a position of prominence, if Ibn Hishām believed that Nazr relied exclusively on "oral tradition," he would not have introduced the idea of writing at all. Ibn Hishām uses the verb *iktataba* (اكتتب), "to have something written down, to have something copied, to make a copy of something." This word choice indicates the probability that he was aware of Nazr's dependence on written sources.

Even disregarding this point and insisting that Ibn Hisham's testimony is "inconclusive" the possibility of inconclusiveness demands that we keep an open mind with regard to the nature of Nazr's Persian tales. The matter, if left to Ibn Hisham's report alone, remains unresolved.

Fortunately, however, we do have independent Persian and Arabic testimonies that help resolve the problem. Some of these are literary and historical sources, while others are glosses on texts of prophetic traditions. Chief among our witnesses are a number of commentaries on the Koran, which discuss Nazr's pestering of the Prophet in a way that clarifies the situation.

Commentators who discuss verse 6 of the Chapter 31 of the Koran (i.e., *Luqmān*: 6), tell us about the nature of Nazr's narration of his Iranian tales. The earliest of these, a commentator by the name of al-Farrā' (A.D. 761–822), predates Ibn Hishām. According to al-Farrā', "This verse was revealed regarding Nazr, who used to *purchase books of the foreigners of Persia, Greece, and those of Hīra* and used them to tell stories for people of Mecca."[29] This reference to Nazr's *purchase of books* and his dependence on the text of these books is corroborated by other commentators. For instance, al-Māwardī (A.D. 975–1058), who provides a version of the events on the authority of al-Kalbī (d. A.D. 820), a contemporary of al-Farrā', whom he says agreed with al-Farrā' in this regard. I take al-Māwardī's statement that the story is mentioned by al-Farrā' as well as by al-Kalbī to mean that these commentators agreed that Nazr relied on books from which he read his tales to the Meccan Arabs.[30]

Sometime around the year A.D. 1000, the anonymous author of a Persian commentary on the Koran, which is known as the *Cambridge Commentary* because its unique manuscript is kept at the library of the Cambridge University, wrote:

> Nazr had gone to the land of the Persians to trade, and had *purchased* stories of Rustam and Afrāsiyāb, and had *brought these* to Mecca and used to *read* them in the presence of the nobles of the Quraysh, who liked the tales and preferred to listen to them rather than to the [Prophet's recitation of the] Koran.[31]

Clearly "purchasing" stories, "bringing them" to Mecca, and "reading them" for the Meccan nobility implies that these stories were in

purchasable, transportable, and readable form. That would mean that they were in writing, and that Nazr read them to his audience.

I do not know of a single early commentary on the Koran which does not explicitly or implicitly state that Nazr had access to written forms of the Iranian epics. A brief listing of the authorities who verify that Nazr had purchased "books" of Persian epic stories follows; the texts of their actual statements may be found in the endnotes.[32]

Aside from those whom I have already mentioned, numerous authorities specifically state that Nazr told his stories from Persian books, which he had purchased in his trips and carried back to Arabia.These scholars include: Shaykh-i Tūsī (A.D. 995–1068),[33] Abū Muhammd Makkī ibn Abī Tālib al-Qaisī (d. A.D. 1045),[34] Sūrābādī (ca. A.D. 1078 or 1088),[35] Maybudī (ca. A.D. 1126),[36] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (A.D. 1149–1210),[37] Abū ᶜAlī al-Faz libn al-Hasan al-Tabrasī (d. A.D. 1154),[38] Ibn al-Jawzī (1115–1200),[39] Abū al-Futūh-i Rāzī (d. A.D. 1157),[40] Mahmūd ibn Abī al-Hasan al-Naysābūrī (d. after A.D. 1158),[41] al-Nasafī (d. A.D. 1211),[42] Abū ᶜAbdullāh Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abī Bakr al-Khazrajī al-Andalusī (d. A.D. 1273),[43] and Khāzin al-Baghdādī (d. A.D. 1279),[44] among others.[45]

Aside from commentators on the Koran, a number of classical Arabic literary and historical sources also state that Nazr relied on books. For instance, the Andalusian, Ibn ᶜAbd Rabbih (A.D. 860–940), in his *al-ᶜIqd al-Farīd (The Unique Necklace)*, takes issue with commentators on the Koran and writes that although these commentators have interpreted Koran 31:6 to refer to Nazr, he believes that they are mistaken, and that the verse does not refer to Nazr specifically, but to "people who purchased books of stories (Arabic: *samar* [سمر] manuscript variants: *siyar* [سير]),[46] and [other] ancient narratives" in order to claim that these [tales] are better than the scripture.[47] The historian, al-Kutubī (d. A.D. 1363) points out that Nazr was literate and used information from Persian, Jewish, and Christian *books* to oppose the Prophet of Islam.[48]

The evidence in favor of Nazr's use of written sources is overwhelming and clearly argues for his dependence on a body of written literature. This evidence strongly supports my contention that Ibn Hishām's statements in his *Life of Muhammad* should be understood to mean that Nazr purchased books of Persian epic tales from which he read to his audience. Naturally, I do not exclude the possibility that other versions of Persian epic tales may have diffused into Arabia through oral sources. However, as far as Nazr is concerned, our available evidence does *not* indicate that *he* had learned his Persian tales from oral sources.

Let me end this discussion with a comment about the chain of transmission for the account of Nazr's storytelling in Mecca. We have seen that

the account of Nazr's dependence on written sources was transmitted by Ibn Hishām, in a report independently corroborated by other Arab and Persian authors. However, Ibn Hishām is by no means the earliest source who mentions the dependence on written documents. We have already referred to the earlier authorities, Al-Farrā' and al-Kalbī. But, in addition to these two authorities, we have evidence that Muqātil ibn Sulaymān ibn Bashīr al-Balkhī (d. A.D. 767) also believed that Nazr used books to read Persian stories to his Arab audience. Muqātil was a contemporary of Ibn Ishāq (d. A.D. 768), who we know was Ibn Hishām's source. Therefore, our earliest authorities support the interpretation that Nazr's Iranian epic tales were taken from written documents—not "oral tradition."

The intriguing question about Nazr's tales is not whether they were in oral or in written form, but rather, in what language were they written? Were Arabic translations of Persian epic tales available in frontier towns between Iran and Arabia, or was Nazr extemporaneously translating from Persian into Arabic?[49] After all, we know that the Sassanid emperors employed Arab scribes and translators who facilitated communication with their Arab provinces. We also know a fair amount of detail about Persian presence in pre-Islamic Arabia.[50] This fascinating topic goes beyond the present volume's scope, so we will leave it here, only repeating that existing historical and exegetical sources establish that Nazr took his Persian stories from written rather than oral sources, and that he possessed "books" of Persian epic tales in the seventh century A.D.

These arguments place the history of Iranian epic literature in an entirely different light. The following may now be said with relative confidence about the background of Persian epic literature:

1. A literary genre devoted to the stories of kings and heroes existed in ancient Iran.
2. The collection and perpetuation of an epic concerning the national history of Iran may be dated to a time before the fifth century B.C.

The existence of this national epic, which appears to have been compiled in writing, taken together with other references to its written form in later sources, implies a continuity in the literary tradition of Iranian epic tales from sometime prior to the fifth century B.C. until the time of Ferdowsi.

Persian Epics in Iran

We have presented evidence which points to a written literary tradition of epic narrative in Iran since some time before the fifth century B.C. through

the seventh century A.D.. We have also seen that, throughout the rule of the Sassanid emperors (A.D. 224–651), this ancient literary epic tradition grew—under strong political and cultural influences—into a genre of literary and historical epics known by the generic title of the *Khudāynāmag* in the Middle Persian language. A number of these *Khudāynāmags* were translated into Persian and Arabic after the Muslim conquest. In the fullness of time, a genre of literary epic in New Persian grew out of these translations, which was known by the generic title of the *Shāhnāmeh*.

Unquestionably, Iran had a vast secular literature before the Muslim conquest. A number of Muslim authors of the classical period depended on this literature. For instance, Ibn Qutaiba (d. A.D. 884) liberally quotes from the *books* of Persians.[51] The historian Mascūdī (896–956) refers to the many Iranian stories about Afrāsiyāb and his many wars against Persians, the manner of his death, the slaying of Siyāvush, and the stories of Rustam; and says that these stories are all collected in a book known by the title of *Sakīsarān*, which he says was translated into Arabic from Persian. He also gives a brief account of the Middle Persian *Chronicles of Ardashīr*, of which the Middle Persian text has survived, and of another Middle Persian text about the adventures of the hero Bahrām-i Chūbīn.[52] This book has not come down to us, but references to it do exist in classical Arabic sources. Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. A.D. 990–998), the stationer and bibliophile working in Baghdad, has preserved a partial list of these pre-Islamic literary sources. He writes:

> *The first people to collect stories, devoting books to them and safeguarding them in libraries* [my italics] were the early Persians. Then the Parthian kings, the third dynasty of Persian monarchs, took notice of this [literature]. The Sassanid kings in their time adding to it and extending it. The Arabs translated it into the Arabic language and then, when masters of literary style and eloquence became interested, they refined and elaborated it, composing what was similar to it in content.[53]

Ibn al-Nadīm's statements are reinforced by Mascudī, who wrote nearly half a century earlier:

> In spite of the contradictions in the contents of some historical sources about the length of lordship of the Parthian kings... we take our information from the Persian literati because these people exercise the kind of care and precision in preserving the history of their forefathers that is not found among other peoples.[54]

Ibn al-Nadīm's view of how stories were treated in Iran agrees with the scheme that I propose for the evolution of the Persian epic tradition. He

lists the titles of a number of Persian "storybooks" under two different headings: "stories of the Persians" (*asmār al-furs*), and "The title of the books which the Persians composed about legends (*siyar*) and true stories of their kings."[55] As a stationer, Ibn al-Nadīm dealt only with written collections of tales, and every one of the titles that he mentions begins with the word *kitāb*, "book."[56] Taqizadeh has listed nearly 70 of these compendia from Arabic sources,[57] and his list may be extended with little effort because much more has come to light since he prepared this list in the early years of the twentieth century.

Persian and Arabic stories that were prevalent among the elite during the classical period of Islamic history, were often written down in volumes kept in libraries or sold by stationers. For instance, the author of the *History of Tabaristān* (composed in A.D. 1216) states that the words *samar* and *khabar* refer to written accounts.[58] Another one of Ferdowsi's contemporaries, the poet Farrukhī (d. A.D. 1038), writes that his patron's bravery puts the written tales of ancient Persian heroes to shame.[59] Farrukhī also states that those who entertained themselves by reading the *Shāhnāmeh* will now do so by reading the *Mahmūdnameh* (i.e., the Book of Mahmūd's deeds).[60] Clearly, authors continued to produce tales of heroism and adventure in collections of stories. Farrokhī claims that his patron heroic deeds can help epic authors fill many volumes of epic tales and chronicles.[61]

This, of course does not mean that Iranians lacked "oral tradition," or that literary stories did not have oral variants. It does, however, mean that the mere presence of the word "story" in a Persian or Arabic narrative is no guarantee of that narrative's "orality." This point must be stressed so the reader understands that the terms "orality" and "textuality" must always be considered carefully when cultures of classical Islam are concerned. These terms cannot be simply applied as they would be in studies of medieval European literatures. We will return to this point later.

CHAPTER 3

At Home: The *Shāhnāmeh* in New Persian

Although the word "Shāhnāmeh" has come to mean Ferdowsi's epic exclusively, we know that Ferdowsi did not create the *Shāhnāmeh*'s stories. As we have seen, the word "Shāhnāmeh" originally referred to the genre of literary narrative about ancient Persian kings and heroes that existed in prose and poetry long before Ferdowsi. The factual background of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh* is so generally misunderstood that it is probably worthwhile to describe the pre-Ferdowsi Shāhnāmehs in some detail here.

The word "Shāhnāmeh" was originally the generic name for compositions in which stories of kings and heroes were narrated. Three of these Shāhnāmehs are known. They are: *The Great Shāhnāmeh of Abū al-Mu'ayyad of Balkh*, *The Shāhnāmeh of Abū ᶜAlī of Balkh*, and *The Prose Shāhnāmeh of Abū Mansūr Of Tūs*. Although a number of scholars include the poem of Masᶜūdī of Marv (d. tenth century A.D.) among the pre-Ferdowsi Shāhnāmehs,[1] I think it was no more than a list of kings that was neither large nor detailed enough to qualify as an independent Shāhnāmeh. Moreover, Masᶜūdī's poem is not even called "Shāhnāmeh" in any of the extant classical Persian and Arabic sources. Since this appellation has become something of a scholastic convention, however, we shall yield to tradition and briefly discuss it along with the other Shāhnāmehs.

Masᶜudī's Poem

The earliest authority who mentions Masᶜūdī's work is Mutahhar ibn Tāhir al-Maqdasī (living in A.D. 965), who quotes three verses of that poem, which he calls a "*qasīda*."[2] Masᶜūdī's verse is also mentioned by al-Thaᶜālibī (d.1038), who twice refers to it in his free Arabic translation of the great prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr.[3] Masᶜūdī's version of

Iran's heroic tales must have been somewhat different from those found in Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*. According to Mas^{c}ūdī, Rustam's father, Zāl, was killed by Bahman, son of Isfandiyār; his version also states that the city of Marv's citadel was constructed by King Tahmūrat.[4] However, in Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*, Bahman does not kill Zāl and there is no mention of Tahmūrat's construction of Marv's citadel. Generally, we have no more than fragmentary information about the contents of Mas^{c}ūdī's *Shāhnāmeh*.

The *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū ^{c}Alī Muhammd ibn Ahmad of Balkh

This is the first book that is explicitly referred to by the title of the *Shāhnāmeh*. It is sometimes called the *Shāhnāmeh* of "the poet" Abū ^{c}Alī of Balkh. Bīrūnī quotes a version of the story of Kayūmart from it in his *Chronicles of Ancient Nations (آثار الباقیه)*, which he composed in A.D. 1000.[5] Although Bīrūnī uses the epithet, *al-shā^{c}ir* "the poet," for Abū ^{c}Alī, one should not assume that this *Shāhnāmeh* was necessarily in verse. Abū ^{c}Alī may very well have been known as a poet. However, that does not mean that his *Shāhnāmeh* was necessarily in verse. Plenty of poets produced important prose works in Persian and Arabic. The general tone of Bīrūnī's quotations, and the fact that he groups Abū ^{c}Alī with historians, implies that this version of royal Persian histories was judged to be an authoritative and sober work of scholarship by the meticulous Bīrūnī.

The *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū al-Mu'ayyad of Balkh

Abū al-Mu'ayyad flourished in the tenth century A.D., and was well known for his poetry and prose. The poet-lexicographer, Asadī of Tūs, who was active in the middle of the eleventh century A.D., quotes a line of verse by him in his dictionary (s.v. *kālūs*).[6] Fragments of one of his great prose works have also been preserved in *The History of Sīstān* (ca. A.D. 1053–1346). Abū al-Mu'ayyad's great prose work was entitled *Kitāb-i Garshāsp* (*The Book of Garshāsp*), and included an account of the hero Garshāsp's adventures along with other information both legendary and geographical.[7] Asadī (d. ca. A.D. 1072) versified this book in A.D. 1066, and gave it the title of the *Garshāspnāma*.[8] A comparison of Asadī's *Garshāspnāmeh* with Abū al-Mu'ayyad's prose epic shows verbatim agreement with the book's summary that has been preserved in the *History of Sistān*.[9] The attribution of another prose work called *^{c}Ajāyib al-duniyā* to Abū al-Mu'ayyad is problematic.[10]

Aside from his *Book of Garshāsp*, Abū al-Mu'ayyad had produced a Shāhnāmeh, which must have been in fine prose because the anonymous

author of the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* (composed ca. A.D. 1125) refers to it as an example of excellent writing, and observes that it is not easy to write prose like that of Abū al-Mu'ayyad.[11] The Samanid vizier and author Balᶜamī (d. A.D. 974) also refers to Abū al-Mu'ayyad's great prose *Shāhnāmeh*, and there is no doubt that he used it as a source when amending his free translation of Tabarī's history, which he completed in A.D. 963. Balᶜamī's mention of the book, as *Shāhnāmeh -yi buzurg*, "the Great Shāhnāmeh," implies that it was a massive prose epic.[12] In the eleventh century A.D., the author of the *Qābūsnāma,* composed in A.D. 1082, corroborates the statements of these earlier authorities about Abū Al-Muayyad's *Shāhnāmeh* when advising his son to consult its authoritative text.[13] Shahmardān son of Abū al-Khayr, the author of an important work on cosmology entitled *Nuzhat Nāmeh* (composed sometime between A.D. 1084–1119), also refers to the great mass of stories about the family of the Rustam, which he says were collected by Abū al-Mu'ayyad in his *Shāhnāmeh*.[14] These statements leave little doubt that Abū al-Mu'ayyad's *Shāhnāmeh* was an extensive and popular work of heroic lore.[15]

We know that this prose *Shāhnāmeh* existed alongside Ferdowsi's poem for several centuries after the death of both authors.The historian Ibn Isfandiyār, who like the author of the *Mujmal al-Tawārīkh* was quite familiar with Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*, quotes verses from Ferdowsi's poem and lists information from Abū al-Mu'ayyad's prose text in his *History of Tabaristān*, which he composed circa A.D. 1216.[16] The fact that Balᶜamī in the tenth century and Ibn Isfandiyār in the thirteenth century quoted from Abū al-Mu'ayyad's prose *Shāhnāmeh* implies that it enjoyed a good reputation as a dependable source of pre-Islamic Persian history for nearly three centuries after its composition.

The Prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr of Tūs

This was the most important and extensive prose work on Persian epic literature before Ferdowsi. Its complete text has unfortunately not survived. However, its narrative is preserved in two sources: in Ferdowsi's verse rendition, and in al-Thaᶜālibī's free Arabic translation. Additionally, its preface has come down to us as the prose introduction that has been affixed to a number of older manuscripts of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*. Two fine editions of this preface were prepared by Professor Qazvini.[17] The fact that a number of ancillary Persian and Arabic sources either refer to Abū Mansūr's prose *Shāhnāmeh* or quote from it leaves no doubt that it was quite a popular text. We know that it was commissioned by the Samanid aristocrat Abū Mansūr Muhammad ibn ᶜAbd al-Razzāq of Tūs,

and was completed in A.D. 957. Later, it served as Ferdowsi's exclusive prose archetype.

But who was the man who commissioned the great prose *Shāhnāmeh*? Abū Mansūr traced his lineage to pre-Islamic Persian princes. He was quite influential in the court of the Samanid rulers of Khurāsān at least since A.D. 932, and served as the governor of that province between A.D. 960 and 961. This was the highest military position that the Samanid administration had to offer. We have evidence of the continued influence of Abū Mansūr's clan even after his death in A.D. 962. This may be inferred from the reports of the historian Bayhaqī, who in his narrative of events for the year A.D. 1033 refers to an attack upon the city of Nayshābūr by an army under the command of a man who was associated with Abū Mansūr's family.[18] Further evidence of that clan's power may be deduced from the fact that long after Abū Mansūr's death there existed a square in Nayshābūr, which was called after him as "The ᶜAbd al-Razzāq Square."[19]

The fact that the preface to Abū Mansūr's lost prose *Shāhnāmeh* is used for the same purpose in older manuscripts of Ferdowsi's epic poem implies that classical scribes considered the two texts related. They expressed their appreciation of this relationship by attaching the preface of the old prose *Shāhnāmeh* to Ferdowsi's verse rendition of it. In other words, the scribes knew that Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh* is a poetic rendition of the old prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr, and felt that the older prose preface would serve as a useful and appropriate introduction to the new poetic work.

Although we know that the prose *Shāhnāmeh* was completed in A.D. 957, its compilation must have begun a few years earlier because it was a large project and required a team of specialists to complete. According to its surviving preface Abū Mansūr ordered his chamberlain, a man by the name of al-Maᶜmarī, or al-Muᶜammarī, to gather the literati of his domain in order to produce a book that contained all of the stories of the Persian kings. The book was completed sometime in the month of Muharram of 346 AH, that is, between April 4th and May 1st of A.D. 957. Since this is an important passage, I will provide its Persian text and an English translation here.[20]

پس [ابومنصور] دستور خویش ابومنصور المعمری را بفرموذ تا خداوندان کتب را از دهقانان و فرزانگان و جهاندیدگان از شهرها بیاوردند. و چاکر او ابومنصور المعمری به فرمان او نامه کرد و کس فرستاد به شهرهای خراسان و هشیاران از آنجا بیاورد و از هرجای، چون شاجِ خراسانی[21] از هری و چون یزدانداد پسر شاپور از سیستان و چون ماهوی خورشید پسر بهرام از نشابور و چون شادان پسر برزین از طوس و از هر شارستان گرد کرد و بنشاند به فراز آوردنِ این نامه های شاهان و کارنامه هاشان و زندگانی هر یکی از داد و بیداد و آشوب و جنگ و آیین از کیِ نخستین که اندر جهان او بود که آیین مردمی آورد و مردمان از جانوران پدید آورد[22] تا یزدگردِ شهریار که آخر ملوک عجم بود اندر ماه محرّم و سال بر سیصد و چهل و شش از هجرت بهترین عالم، محمدِ مصطفی صلی الله علیه و سلّم، و این را نام شاهنامه نهادند.

> Thereafter [Abū Mansūr] ordered his vizier, Abū Mansūr al-Maᶜmarī, to gather possessors of books (خداوندانِ کتب) from among the gentry and the learned and the experienced [men] of different cities. And his servant Abū Mansūr al-Maᶜmarī sent letters and agents according to his lord's orders to the cities of Khurāsān, and brought the learned of every clime from far and wide, such as the Khurāsānian Shāj from the city of Herāt, and Yazdāndād son of Shāpūr from Sīstān, and Māhūy son of Khorshīd son of Bahrām from Nayshābūr and Shādān son of Burzīn from Tūs, and gathered them all from every city and charged them with compiling these chronicles of kings and an account of their deeds and lives. [A narrative] of [their] justice and injustice and [such] chaos [that may have prevailed during their rules] and of wars [was compiled. It included an account of the events] from the time of the first king who established human culture in the world, and who made men distinct from [other] animals, through the time of the emperor Yazdgird, who was the last of the Persian kings. [They completed the task] in the month of Muharram, during the year 346 from the *hijra* of the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and named this [book] the Shāhnāmeh.

The literati who took part in the project were concerned with their book's structure and narrative unity. They stressed the importance of its narrative structure, to which they refer by the term *bunyād-i nāma*.[23] They took great care to give the narrative of the prose *Shāhnāmeh* both coherence and logical order, and explicitly stated these concerns in the book's preface. Their statements, however, are misunderstood—thanks to minor textual corruptions that Professor Qazvini failed to adequately rectify. Although my restoration of a passage in this text was published several years ago,[24] I believe that this preface could benefit from a new and improved edition of its whole text, undertaken with the help of some recently discovered manuscripts.[25]

Be that as it may, although we no longer have the full text of Abū Mansūr's *Shāhnāmeh*, we do have a clear idea of its contents and organization from several ancillary sources. Chief among these are Ferdowsi's own statements that his poem is a faithful rendition of the prose *Shāhnāmeh*'s contents. Virtually all *Shāhnāmeh* scholars recognize the factual value of Ferdowsi's statement in this regard.[26] However, an argument against the scholarly consensus has recently been voiced in America, which I will turn to later in this volume.[27]

In addition to Ferdowsi, who rendered this prose *Shāhnāmeh* into verse, al-Thaᶜālibī (d. A.D. 1038), also relied on it for the composition of his *Ghuraru Akhbāri Mulūk al-Furs wa Siyarihim* (*The Illustrious Accounts of the Kings of Persia and Their Chronicles;* henceforth *Ghurar*), which he composed sometime between A.D. 1017 and 1021. Thaᶜālibī

twice quotes "the author of the Shāhnāmeh" in his Arabic text.[28] These quotations are important because they are independent corroborations of Ferdowsi's claim that the *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr was in use during the Ghaznavid period.

Because Tha^c^ālibī's book is dedicated to Mahmūd's younger brother Prince Nasr, who died in A.D. 1021, and because the author wishes a long life for his patron in his preface, the book must have been composed sometime before A.D. 1021. Given the fact that Tha^c^ālibī joined the Ghazanvid court after A.D. 1017, it is reasonable to assume that he composed his book between A.D. 1017 and 1020 or 1021. That both Ferdowsi and Tha^c^ālibī depended on the same prose source for the composition of their respective works is evident from the verbatim agreements of their respective texts in many places. H. Zotenberg (1836–1894) has published an extensive list of these points of agreement in the preface to his edition and French translation of the *Ghurar*.[29]

A recent reinterpretation of the relationship between Ferdowsi's poem and Tha^c^ālibī's *Ghurar* seeks to ascribe the narrative similarity of the two books to a different reason. This reinterpretation suggests that rather than relying on the prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr, Tha^c^ālibī actually depended on Ferdowsi's own *Shāhnāmeh*, and that the prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr never actually existed. Although the idea that Ferdowsi lied about the existence of his prose archetype is associated with Dick Davis in the West,[30] the notion was first voiced by an Iranian scholar Mohammad Hosseini, several years before Davis published his essay.[31]

Davis, who does not mention Hosseini, alleges that being a medieval author, Ferdowsi fabricated the existence of his prose source in order to gain the authority of an "ancient book" for his narrative, which, in Davis's opinion, was based on oral tradition rather than on a literary prototype. Without providing any evidence for his assertion, Davis claims that Tha^c^ālibī composed this book "some thirty of forty years after Ferdowsi's death."[32] This doesn't add up: Ferdowsi died in A.D. 1020, so by Davis's calculation al-Tha^c^ālibī, who died in A.D. 1038, would have been obliged to write his work in A.D. 1050 or 1060, which would be 12 to 22 years after his own death. This is an unlikely event, even by the liberal standards of Western *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship.

It may be argued that the Tha^c^ālibiī who authored the *Ghurar* was, as Minovi and others erroneously believed, a different person than the famous Arabic stylist who died in A.D. 1038. But, even if we accept this argument, we know that the book *was* dedicated to Prince Nasr during the lifetime of that prince. Thus, we must also accept that the *Ghurar* must have been completed prior to A.D. 1021, which is the date of the prince's death. There is no way that Tha^c^ālibī could have composed his *Ghurar*

"twenty or thirty years" after Ferdowsi's death. Indeed, for reasons that I will not go into here, Thaᶜālibiī in all likelihood finished translating the prose *Shāhnāmeh* sometime between A.D. 1017 and 1018, which falls within Ferdowsi's lifetime.

Ferdowsi's great epic did not gain any fame during the poet's own lifetime. In fact, it was not widely known until nearly a century after the poet's death. Therefore, al-Thaᶜālibī, who was living in Khārazm hundreds of miles away, could not have known about the *Shāhnāmeh* when even the literati of Khurāsān did not know about it. This may be surmised from the fact that none of the Khurāsān literati, except perhaps those who had lived in Ferdowsi's native city of Tūs and were familiar with the local literary scene, give any indication that they knew about Ferdowsi or his epic. Virtually all literary and historical texts of the period, including Thaᶜālibī's own *Yatīmat al-Dahr*—a veritable who's who of Khurāsān's literary scene—are absolutely silent about Ferdowsi and his *Shāhnāmeh*.[33] All of this forces the conclusion that al-Thaᶜālibiī could not have known of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*, let alone based his *Ghurar* on it. Therefore the "Shāhnāmeh" to which he refers in the *Ghurar,* must be a different work than Ferdowsi's epic. Consequently, the verbatim agreements between Ferdowsi's verses and al-Thaᶜālibī's Arabic account in his *Ghurar* prove that both authors relied on the same archetype, and that their common source was none other than the prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr. I will quote al-Thaᶜālibī's references to the prose *Shāhnāmeh* later. For now, let us consider the testimony of other scholars and literati of Ferdowsi's time.

Abū Mansūr's prose *Shāhnāmeh* must have been quite popular among the literati of Khurāsān. One of the most distinguished scientists of the period, the polymath Bīrūnī (A.D. 973–1048), twice refers to it in his *Āthār al-Bāqiyah ᶜan al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah* (*The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, henceforth, *Chronology*). We know that Bīrūnī completed his *Chronology* in A.D. 1000,[34] which puts the date of its completion nearly ten years before the final redaction of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh* in A.D. 1009. Therefore, the "Shāhnāmeh" that Bīrūnī mentions in his *Chronology* could not be Ferdowsi's epic. Moreover, Bīrūnī quite specifically states that the *Shāhnāmeh* to which he refers was made for Abū Mansūr;[35] he even objects to the fabricated genealogy that was concocted for Abū Mansūr in that *Shāhnāmeh*.[36] The fact that this genealogy is *also* found in the surviving preface to the prose *Shāhnāmeh* leaves no doubt that the prose *Shāhnāmeh* to which Bīrūnī refers, and the one that Ferdowsi versified, are one and the same. Thus, Bīrūnī independently corroborates Ferdowsi's statements about his prose source. One last point on Bīrūnī: the wording of his reference to the prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr indicates that the book was so well known that a mere allusion to it would

suffice and Bīrūnī knew that his readers would immediately recognize which *Shāhnāmeh* he was talking about.

The existence of the Abū Mansūr's prose *Shāhnāmeh* is independently confirmed by the poet Daqīqī (d. A.D. 976).We know that Daqīqī had already begun to versify the same prose *Shāhnāmeh* before Ferdowsi undertook the project, but did not live to finish the monumental undertaking. Nearly 1000 lines of Daqīqī's versification of the *Shāhnāmeh* survive because Ferdowsi included them in his epic.[37] In his other surviving verse, Daqīqī explicitly refers to having written poetry "about kings." I believe, along with Khaleghi-Motlagh, that this verse is a reference to his incomplete versification of the prose *Shāhnāmeh*:

مرا گوید ز چندین شعر شاهان   ز چندین عاشقانه شعرِ دلبر
کم از شعری که سویِ مافرستی؟   نه ام اندر خورِ گفتار، وز در؟

He says: from your many verses about kings
And from your many love lyrics
Why not send me a single poem?
Am I not worthy of such [a gift?][38]

These independent confirmations of Ferdowsi's statement on his versification of the Abū Mansūr-commissioned prose *Shāhnāmeh* leave no reasonable doubts about the veracity of his claim. All the existing evidence points to the fact that Abū Mansūr's prose *Shāhnāmeh* served as primary source material for the works of Daqīqī, Thaᶜālibī, and Ferdowsi.

As I pointed out before, the prose *Shāhnāmeh* remained popular for some time after Ferdowsi's death. However, as Ferdowsi's poem grew in fame and popularity, the earlier prose version fell out of favor because of the contemporary Persian elite's preference for poetic narrative. The elite's preference for verse is implied in many statements by the literati of the period. For instance, the poet Azraqī (d. before A.D. 1073) boasts to his patron that he will improve the *Book of Sindbād* with his poetic skill,[39] and writes:

A prose story is [nothing but] mean and grimy rubbish
That is transformed into a jewel when it is re-told in verse
Of all the stories that are told in the Shāhnāmeh
It is Ferdowsi's verse that is of value, not the tale of the Seven Trials.[40]

In the same vein, the poet Asadī speaks of his archetype, the prose *Garshāspnāmeh*,as a withering plant that he revived by the waters of his poetic talents.[41] Similarly, when the author of the *Mujmal al-Tawārīkh* writes of finding certain information about a hero in the *Bahman-nāmeh*

(The Book of Bahman), and adds that the book has been put into verse, the implication of his statement is that the *Bahman-nāmeh* existed in prose before it was versified.[42] Clearly, Persian poetry at its zenith was considered a far more vivid, immediate, edifying and frankly *entertaining* reading experience than mere utilitarian prose.

Another reason why Abū Mansūr's prose *Shāhnāmeh* was lost is that Ferdowsi's verse gradually gained such reputation and acceptance that patrons were no longer willing to pay for copying its voluminous prose archetype when the same book was available in Ferdowsi's beautiful verse. Ironic as it is, Ferdowsi's artful verse contributed to the loss of the prose archetype on which it was based. As Ferdowsi's epic gained in popularity, the prose *Shāhnāmeh* fell out of favor with copyists and patrons alike until it finally disappeared into oblivion. It left only a trace of itself in its preface, which survived only because copyists who were aware that Ferdowsi's poem retold the prose work, adopted it as a preface to Ferdowsi epic.[43]

We have already offered evidence from the works of Bīrūnī, and al-Thaᶜālibīi to show that the existence of Ferdowsi's prose archetype may not be reasonably dismissed. Generations of Iranian and European scholars who accepted Ferdowsi's account of his prose source were not inattentive to such detail. They were not following an outmoded scholastic convention, but were pursuing a chain of evidence.

Aside from Bīrūnī and other contemporaries of Ferdowsi, a number of Persian authors who lived after the poet's time mention his prose archetype. The most important of these is Asadī, who like Ferdowsi was a resident of the city of Tūs. In the introduction to his own epic, the *Garshāspnāmeh* (composed in A.D. 1066), Asadī writes how he came to versify his poem and provides confirmation of a great prose *Shāhnāmeh*. He writes of two grandees of his patron's court who came to him with the argument that since Ferdowsi has eternalized his own name by putting the "book of old" into verse, it is fitting that Asadī too, make his own fame by versifying a related epic tale.[44] The poet agrees, and retells the *Book of Garshāsp* in verse.

The practice of demanding that the poets in their service put some prose text into verse had become something of a custom among the Iranian nobility of the classical period. For instance, ᶜAzud of Yazd (fourteenth century A.D.) recounts how his patron asked him to versify a prose tale in his name so that his name would be celebrated forever.[45]

> One night, his majesty, [that monarch] of wakeful fortune
> He whom the very throne longs for[46]
> Addressed me saying: O man of [many] abilities!

O' darling of Kings and princes!
It is not fitting for the nightingale to sit quietly
Nor for the parrot to remain speechless . . .
Versify some prose work while I rule
So that my fame may remain as long as stars shine in heavens
O' masterful wordsmith, I want that
You versify [the book] of Sindbād.

With the exception of the pious poets who used their art purely for didactic purposes, almost all others who versified prose texts did so either on commission, or composed in the hope of dedicating their work to someone for patronage. The poet Nizāmī versified the romance of *Laylī and Majnūn* (completed in September of A.D. 1188), by the explicit written order of his patron, who had written to the poet in his own hand.[47] By contrast, Nizāmī began the versification of his life of Alexander the Great, which he named *Sharafnāmeh,* on his own initiative. He decided to dedicate the poem to his patron some time after beginning the project.[48] We even know of a Mongol history that was versified by the order of the Mongol ruler Abū Saᶜīd Bahādur Khān (r. 1317–1335). However, because the king died two years before the completion of the project, the poet let another prince, Masᶜūd Shāh,[49] share the patronage. That is why the text bears the names of both princes. It is interesting as an aside that, although none of this poet's patrons were Iranian, he claims that except for names, he consciously avoided the use of Arabic words in his poem. This contradicts the unfortunate tendency of many Iranian students of the epic to suppose that Turkish princes were sworn enemies of Persian language and literature.[50]

To get back to the testimony of post-Ferdowsi poets, we know that in A.D. 1197, the poet Nizāmī complains that all stories of Persian kings were gathered in a single book, which had already been *versified* by a poet who left him only scattered fragments to put into verse.[51] Nizāmī also mentions Ferdowsi's prose archetype in his *Sharafnāmeh* and refers to the many versions of Alexander's romance that were available in different languages, thus confirming the pervasiveness of diverse published epics that could be used by poets for versification.[52] Given all this evidence about the background and context of the *Shāhnāmeh*, no reasonable doubts concerning the existence of Ferdowsi's prose archetype can be seriously entertained. Let us now consider what Ferdowsi himself has to say about his archetype.

Ferdowsi repeatedly claims that he is working from a prose archetype to which he refers by a variety of names. Some of these are: *the famed book of the prince* (i: 11: 112), *the book* (i: 15: 161, 106: 18), *the book of kings* (v: 175: 1035), *the book of the heroes* (iii: 305: 22), *the book of the*

truthful ones (iv: 171: 32), *the paladin's book* (vii: 409: 3929–3930), and *the ancient book* (viii: 259: 3388). He also tells of how he came to undertake his project following the death of his precursor, Daqīqī in A.D. 975, and how he included the 1014 lines of Daqīqī's composition in his *Shāhnāmeh* (v: 75–76: 1–13; cf. Moscow vi: 65–66, 6: 136–38; Mohl iv: 180, 4: 224–25):

> Thus was it that one night the poet dreamed
> That he held a cup of wine such as rosewater.
> Daqīqī appeared from some place
> And began conversing and drinking
> He said to Ferdowsi: "Do not drink wine
> Except according to the fashion of the days of Kaikāvūs.
> For you have chosen [to serve] a king in whom fortune,
> Kingship, crown, and throne rejoice,
> Mahmūd, the king of kings and conqueror of countries,
> Bestower of felicity to one and all. . . .
>
> Though you sought this book for some time,
> Now you have found all that you sought.
> I too composed some of these [tales],
> If you find any [of my composition], be not base!
> A thousand couplets of [the stories] of Goshtāsp and Arjāsp
> I composed, but [alas] my days were done
> If even that meager work of mine reaches the king of kings
> My soul will soar to heavens [on wings of that honor]
>
> So now, I [i.e., Ferdowsi] will quote the verses that he composed
> For I live, and he is but dust.

Following these remarks and his quotation of Daqīqī's verses, Ferdowsi prefaces his own versification of the rest of the tale by these words:

> When I got hold of this book
> And seized that which I longed for,
> I looked, and found this verse weak
> With many a deficient line.
> But I quoted this so that the King
> Can see for himself how unfit verses sound
> Two jewelers are we, each with his gem to sell
> Now let the Shah give ear to what we tell.
>
> If you can compose only in this vein,
> Speak not and spare your nature pain,
> If your talent flows not fluent as a stream
> Don't bring it to this royal tome . . .

There was an ancient book
Composed by the lofty wise of old
Its tales very ancient and in prose;
The wits unable to put it into verse
If its age is asked,
Six thousand years had passed over it.
None thought of versifying it
So, my heart was filled with thoughts of it.
I praised the poet
Who first attempted the task
Though he only managed a small portion of it,
Only a thousandth of tales of feasting and war
Truly he was [this] poet's pioneer,
He was the first who set [this] king upon the throne.
The nobles bestowed honor and riches upon him
But he was hounded by bad habits
His words proved weak when it came to versifying a prose tale,
And he failed to rejuvenate these tales of times bygone

I took [finding] this book a good omen
And for years I labored [day and night]
But I found I no generous patron—
A shining [sun] upon the throne of ancient kings.
I was much discontented in my heart,
But patience alone was the remedy.

I saw before me the lush garden [of my verse]
An abode of the most fortunate of men
But its portal was not to be seen
Because it was not dedicated to a king
I demanded a portal fit for my garden
One that was tight would not do at all.
Some twenty years, I therefore, kept my words
To see who deserves the fruits of my toil.
Until Abū al-Qāsim [i.e., Mahmūd], that king of the world
Who rejuvenated the [glory] of the crown of kings
Came forth and ascended the throne of justice--
Who remembers such a lord of the world?
His name thus crowned my book
And my darkened heart was made luminous like ivory[53]

Ferdowsi conveys the same information in the introductory part of his poem in greater detail. He tells us of the written heroic lore of Iran that existed scattered in "the hands of the learned men of the realm" and how a noble lord, that is Abū Mansūr, commissioned the compilation of this scattered literary heritage into a coherent narrative. He then speaks of

how he got hold of a copy of the book, and how he put it into verse (i: 12–15: 115–60 with some omissions):

> There was an ancient book
> That contained many stories.
> It was scattered among the learned
> Each of whom had a piece.
> There appeared a paladin, of noble line,
> A courageous, grand, wise, and generous [lord].
> Seeking after [accounts] of the ancient times
> He [had] all the old narratives collected
> He called forth aged wise men of every clime,
> In order to collect this book . . .
> The noble men told him all
> The tales of kings and the turning [fortunes] of the world
> When the lord heard their accounts
> He had a book fashioned from them.
> A book that remains a memorial
> Worthy of praise, by lord and commoner.
>
> Readers often recite these tales aloud,
> From the book [in which they were told] . . .
> There appeared an eloquent youth,
> Skilled in poetry and great of talent.
> "I will versify these tales," said he,
> And every one rejoiced at this.
> But he had some foul habits
> That he struggled against day and night.
> At last, he gave his sweet life to vice,
> Without enjoying his time a single day.
> Death rushed upon him swiftly
> And pulled a hood of darkness upon his head
> His fortune left him at once,
> And he was slain by the hand of his own slave.
> He departed, and this book was left untold.
> And wakened fortune fell into stupor. . . .
>
> Disheartened by his fate,
> My heart turned to the divine throne[54];
> Asking: Should I reach out for this book,
> And put it in my own verse?
> I consulted many a man
> For I feared the turning fortunes of this world.
> Wondering that I might not live long enough
> [To finish the task] and might have to surrender it to others.
> Moreover, my fortune might not last
> Nor do I see patrons to support my toils.

I had a dear friend in our town
Who was like a brother to me.
He said, "yours is a fine plan.
You tread upon the path of goodness.
I will bring a copy of this heroic book
To you. But be not slack.
You are eloquent and [still] young
And are also skilled in manly discourse.
Go forth, and versify this book of kings
And by it, seek your honor among the great."

When I began to work on this book,
A great nobleman
Of the lineage of lords, wise, prudent, and sagacious,
[Came forth] and said to me: What need you from me?
To put your mind at ease and keep you at your poetic task?
All that I can afford
Will be put at your disposal to remove want from your life.
He cared for me as one would guard fresh fruit
Lest a chill wind spoil them.
Worldly wealth was worthless in his eyes.
He was chivalrous and true.
[But alas] such a nobleman was lost
As the tall Cyprus that falls [to wind] in the meadows . . .
I see no trace of him dead or alive,
He vanished in the clutches of murderous beasts
Bound is he, and my heart has given him up for lost
Moaning, and trembling like a willow [in the wind].

But let me recall an advice of that prince
And let it lead our soul to righteousness from the gloom.
He said to me: "Dedicate, if you manage to versify,
This Book of Kings, to some great king."

Thus, Ferdowsi says that he dedicated the *Shāhnāmeh* to Mahmūd because his patron—quite possibly Abū Mansūr's son—had told him to put the book in the name of a great king if he ever finished it.[55]

Given what we can learn from Ferdowsi's own words and from the testimony of his contemporaries, the notion that Ferdowsi invented his source and had in fact adopted the stories of the *Shāhnāmeh* from oral tradition should be put to rest. The fact is that Ferdowsi did exactly what he claims to have done: he recast an already well-known prose *Shāhnāmeh* into his masterful verse. His artistic achievement and creativity, therefore, is not in *what* he said but rather in *how* he said it. It is the beauty of Ferdowsi's verse and the inimitability of his poetic genius that make the *Shāhnāmeh* the masterpiece of literary Persian that it is.

Let us look back again at the brief history of the *Shāhnāmeh* as we have outlined it in this and the previous chapter. A genre of literary epics in prose existed in pre-Islamic Persia, known by the generic name of the *Khudāynāmag*. Ruling clans or families patronized this genre, using it for political propaganda and for legitimizing their rule by attaching themselves to the ancient kings and heroes. After the Muslim conquest, and the development of the New Persian literature, Iran's aristocratic families continued their pre-Islamic ancestors' practice of patronizing this genre of epic literature, which had now changed title, and was known as the *Shāhnāmeh*. Like their precursors, these families promoted the compilation of different Shāhnāmehs in an attempt to connect themselves to ancient royal lines for purposes of legitimacy. The most famous prose *Shāhnāmeh* was commissioned by Abū Mansūr Muhammad ibn ᶜAbd al-Razzāq (d. A.D. 963), who had a number of learned scholars of his realm brought together in order to compile the book. This *Shāhnāmeh* was a systematic narrative of Iranian history from the first king to the Muslim conquest, and was based on the literary sources available at the time. Some of these sources were in Middle Persian, some were in Persian, and others may have been in Arabic.

Abū Mansūr's *Shāhnāmeh* was completed in A.D. 957 in New Persian prose, and came to be known after its patron as *The Great Shāhnāmeh of Abū Mansūr*. The poet Daqīqī tried to render this book in verse, but did not live long enough to complete his project. Later, when Ferdowsi decided to try his hand in versifying a prose work, he chose this particular *Shāhnāmeh*, and followed its narrative quite faithfully. In other words, Ferdowsi's verse *Shāhnāmeh* is exclusively based on Abū Mansūr's prose epic. The small disagreements between Ferdowsi's account of the epic tales and that of the famous al-Thaᶜālibī, who also depended on this prose *Shāhnāmeh* are due to at least two factors. First, manuscript variants that must have existed between the different copies of the book that were used by these two authors. Second, because al-Thaᶜālibī operated with greater freedom than Ferdowsi allowed himself, and tended to conflate the prose *Shāhnāmeh*'s account with ancillary material. This scenario is far more believable than the notion that the differences between the two imply that Ferdowsi drew on "oral tradition" or on other textual sources. As we shall see in the next chapter, Ferdowsi carefully followed the text of his archetype. This was not only a matter of fidelity for him, but also a means of showing his poetic skill. That is, it is much more difficult to compose poetry when the poet has to stay within the confines of a given narrative that when he can let his poetic imagination roam free.

CHAPTER 4

A Fierce Fidelity: Ferdowsi and His Archetype

We know beyond reasonable doubt that the prose *Shāhnāmeh* commissioned by Abū Mansūr was set to verse by Ferdowsi. I believe that this *Shāhnāmeh* was Ferdowsi's only source. However, some scholars have argued that before he obtained a copy of the prose *Shāhnāmeh*, Ferdowsi had already begun to versify individual epic tales that either were present in the oral tradition or existed as independent textual narratives.[1] What he did, they suggest, is retell his newly found archetype in verse, while incorporating his previously versified stories into that archetype's narrative. The result, according to this view of the poem's history, was an epic that wedded the narrative of Abū Mansūur's prose *Shāhnāmeh* with a miscellany of other epic tales from Iran's oral tradition and other literary sources. Others believe that the poet largely followed his prose source faithfully, and that any indications of multiple sources must have existed in his prose archetype, and entered his verse from that source alone.[2]

It's simply not possible to conclusively judge the degree of Ferdowsi's adherence to his prose antecedent without an extant text of that source. However, an educated guess can be made from existing evidence. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the best argument in favor of the view that Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh* had a single source is al-Thaᶜālibī's free Arabic translation of Abū Mansūr's *Shāhnāmeh*. This translation, which we call the *Ghurar* for the sake of brevity, shows verbatim agreements with Ferdowsi's verse in numerous places, implying that both books depended on the same source.[3] We also have Ferdowsi's own statements about his faithfulness to the text of his archetype, which we shall discuss in greater detail presently. I find Muhammad Taqī Bahār's assessment of the situation quite convincing:

> It is certain for me, having carefully studied the verses of the *Shāhnāmeh* that Ferdowsi did not make up anything in this book. . . . He tried to

> versify the very book to which he had access, which he considered to be a collection of histories, narratives, and national epic tales, quite literally; and to show off his poetic prowess in elaborating upon these stories and in his use of beautiful images and wise didacticisms. It is not the case that he took different tales willy-nilly and wove them together as he wished. . . . There may be no doubt that there was a literary text in front of our poet that was compiled in an orderly fashion from ancient sources . . . Ferdowsi's allusions to the *dihqān* or to *Āzād Sarv,* or to *Māhū* or *Bahrām* must have existed in his archetype, which he has reproduced verbatim.[4]

Ferdowsi's commitment to textual sources has been acknowledged by every important scholar of the epic since the nineteenth century. Like Bahār, Theodor Nöldeke believed that Ferdowsi's sources were purely textual He pointed out that when the poet writes that he had "heard" a certain tale, he was really narrating a story which he had actually read.[5] Shahbazi also stresses Ferdowsi's dependence on his literary sources, and observes:

> Another indication of strict adherence to the sources is the fact that in the chapters derived from Abū Mansūr's prose work which were likewise used by Tha^c^ālibī, the correspondence is so exact as to prove Ferdowsi's method: we see him as a historian rather than a poet with license for modification or alteration.[6]

In the extensive introduction to his edition and translation of the *Shāhnāmeh*, which was published between 1838 and 1878 in Paris, the French Orientalist Jules Mohl (1800–1878), recognized Ferdowsi's adherence to his prose archetype. However, he also opined that the poet included tales from other literary sources in addition to the ones that he found in the prose *Shāhnāmeh*.[7]

Ferdowsi specifies how he adheres to the text of his prose archetype quite frequently throughout the epic. For instance at the end of Kāmūs's story, he expresses his joy in finishing that long episode (iii: 285: 2879–80):

> This tale of Kāmūs too, have I ended
> It is long and not a jot of it was left out
> Had a word been omitted of it
> My soul would have mourned [the loss].

Again, after the long episode of philosophical discourses between the sage Būzarjumihr and the emperor, Khosrow I, he writes (vii: 303: 2661–62):

Praise be to the lord of the Sun and the Moon
That I was finally rid of Būzarjumihr and the King.
Now that this tiresome task is done,
I must tell the story of the game of Chess.

Clearly, if Ferdowsi was not scrupulously following a prose original, he would have skipped the source's tiresome parts. Similarly, he must have found the story of Alexander difficult to put into verse, since he breathes a sigh of relief at its conclusion, saying (vi: 129: 1907):

I finally crossed this Alexandrian obstacle
May there lay goodness and fortune ahead!

The literary nature of the Ferdowsi's source is well illustrated in the introduction to the story of Kaykhosrow's Great War, where he writes:

[Following this panegyric], I shall [return to] putting this ancient book
Into my verse from that which the pious ones [of old] have said.
When I contemplate the passing of time
I need no better teacher than the [turning fortunes of men].
Now that I have reached the story of Kaykhosrow's war,
I shall bewitch all by my words
I shall rain pearls by my telling of this tale
And make tulips to spring forth from granite stones.
Lo, I found a proem before it
That is filled with great wisdom.[8]

The hemistich, *kunūn khutba'ī yāftam pīsh az ān,* "Lo, I found a proem before it," implies that there was an exordium at the beginning of the story of Kaykhosrow's Great War. In other words, having read the story's exordium in the prose *Shāhnāmeh*, Ferdowsi is so moved by it that he uses the narrator's voice to express his admiration for its contents.

The verses in which Ferdowsi tells the reader that this is his translation of the prose exordium before the story of the Great War, however, have been misunderstood. Arthur and Edmond Warners's standard translation interprets them incorrectly,[9] and even Khaleghi-Motlagh misunderstands them and writes:

[Ferdowsi] says: now, before versifying this tale, *I thought up* an exordium for it because I found the story exceedingly meaningful. He means [to say], "I have too many wise words to leave them unsaid" (my italics).[10]

But that is not what these verses mean. The translation that I presented above is a more accurate statement of what the poet seems to be saying. In

any case, if Ferdowsi were not working from a prose archetype he would have had no reason to say that he liked the story's exordium, nor would he have felt obliged to put that exordium into verse. The very fact that he versified the exordium from his prose source reveals the literary character of Ferdowsi's archetype. Further elaboration on this point would require a long and tedious digression. However, I do want to highlight one important fact.

Great works of literature have a literary character as well as a cultural aspect. The *Shāhnāmeh*'s iconic importance in Persian culture has overshadowed its literary character, and *Shāhnāmeh* scholars tend to spend so much time ruminating about the poem's cultural significance that they lose sight of its literary characteristics. They often forget that aside from being a cultural milestone, the *Shāhnāmeh* is also a major work of art that obeys the same literary conventions present in all the other literary monuments of its own time.[11] One of these conventions called for composing an appropriate exordium (*khutba*) for the opening of every new section in a large work. Some authors also favored adding an epilogue to conclude long chapters, in order to provide a smooth transition to the next section. There were two types of exordia. The exordium that was added to the beginning of the book or its different sections was called *khutba-yi ibtidā'iyya*, "the commencing discourse." But the material attached to a work's end were called *khutba-yi ilhāqiyya*, loosely translated as an epilogue, or more literally, as "the ending discourse." The historian Bayhaqī inserted several exordia in his famous chronicle. He introduced these exordia not only at the beginnings of the different books in his history, but also at important narrative transitions. For instance, at the end of his fifth book, which concerns an account of the rivalry between Mas^{c}ūd I (r. A.D. 1031–1041) and his brother Muhammad and the victory of Mas^{c}ūd over his rival, Bayhaqī writes:[12]

> I narrated the story of this prince up to this point. [Some may think] that I should have said that he ascended the throne on the day that his brother was arrested in Tagīnābād, but I did not make that statement because this king had just begun his move to secure the throne, and was moving toward [the city of] Balkh. But now that he has arrived in Balkh and all the affairs of the realm are put in order, [my] narrating of this history must change [accordingly]. I will compose an exordium to which I shall add a few [didactic] sections before returning to telling the history of his auspicious rule because that would be a separate book [of this history].

He then opens the sixth book of his history that is entirely devoted to the reign of Mas^{c}ūd I with the following proem:[13]

> My aim is to write a history and [in so doing] erect a great edifice, the fame of which lasts until the end of time... And because I had stipulated in [this] history that I compose a proem and affix it to the account of the reign of every king before going on with my narrative, I will follow that stipulation now by the help and will of God.

At the end of his long exordium of some six pages, he writes: "Now that I have completed this exordium, I will add a few sections of a didactic nature that might be useful to kings as well as to others" (p. 118). He then resumes his narrative, saying: "Now that I have completed the proem and these [didactic] sections, I can return to my history" (p. 129). Bayhaqī follows this strategy throughout his massive history. At another important transitional point where he must make a necessary digression he writes (p. 903):

> Since the conditions of this province [i.e., the province of Khārazm] is as [I related], I consider it necessary to insert an exordium here about the wondrous stories and reports pertaining to it. [These are narratives] that are of a nature that the wise do not reject, but [actually] find acceptable.

Most manuscripts of Bayhaqī's history have inserted the heading, "Exordium" at this point. What matters here is that in this respect, Bayhaqī's practice is quite similar to the practice of those who authored Ferdowsi's prose archetype. They also placed a proem before the story of the Great War, because that story is an important transitional point in their epic's narrative. Therefore, the very existence of the proem that Ferdowsi has put into verse indicates that the story of the Great War is taken from classically structured literature. This evidence should dispel any doubts about the highly literary nature of Ferdowsi's source.[14]

Ferdowsi followed a narrative order that was imposed upon him by his written source. He ends every important episode with a few verses which set the scene for the following episode. This implies not only a written source behind his verse, but also his resolve to follow that source's narrative order. I will provide only a few examples here.

At the end of the story of the "War of Hāmāvarān," he writes that he is now going to tell one of the tales of Rustam.[15] The tale of Siyāvakhsh, he informs his readers, must be followed with the story of Siyāvakhsh's vengeance, which must in turn be followed by Kaykhosrow's return from Tūrān (ii: 376: 2523). At the end of the story of Furūd, which precedes the episode of Kāmūs, he writes: "The tale of Furūd is ended, and the story of Kāmūs must now be put into verse" (iii: 102: 1245). Also, he ends

the story Bīzhan and Manīzha with the verse (iii: 397: 1279):

> The story of Bīzhan I told,
> And must now turn to Pīrān and Gūdarz.

Following the story of "The Fight of the Eleven Paladins," also known as the "Tale of Pīrān's Vengeance," he writes (iv: 166: 2521):

> Now that you finished with the vengeance of Pīrān,
> You must versify the wars of Kaykhosrow.

Virtually every important episode of the *Shāhnāmeh* ends with a similar statement.

Now that we have seen how Ferdowsi dealt with the structure of the book he was putting into verse, let us look again at the surviving preface to Ferdowsi's prose archetype. We will consider what additional light it can cast on the issue of Abū Mansūr's *Shāhnāmeh* as the poet's sole source.

Recall that, by a fortunate circumstance, the preface of Ferdowsi's prose source survived the tides of history. We have seen evidence from the works of several classical Persian and Arab authors who used Ferdowsi's prose archetype. Their testimony leaves no doubt that the prose *Shāhnāmeh* was quite well known in the tenth century A.D.. Balᶜamī (d. A.D. 974), the grand vizier of the Samanids rulers of Khorasan, was one of these authors. In his history, Balᶜamī includes a number of verbatim quotations from the prose *Shāhnāmeh*. Since Balᶜamī's citations date from several years before Ferdowsi even started to versify the book, we can surmise that Abū Mansūr's *Shāhnāmeh* was quite well known in the last half of the tenth century, and was used as an important source by the authors of that period.

We have already pointed out that the polymath Bīrūnī (d. A.D. 1048) had consulted the prose *Shāhnāmeh*. He says so in three places of one work that he completed nine years before the final redaction of the *Shāhnāmeh*. We also made reference to al-Thaᶜālibī's Arabic translation of the prose original, which in many places agrees with Ferdowsi's poem, verbatim.[16] The literal agreements between al-Thaᶜālibī's Arabic prose and Ferdowsi's verse have led several generations of Iranian and Western scholars to conclude that both Ferdowsi and al-Thaᶜalibī depended on the same prose source. In the absence of this conclusion, it would be difficult to account for the frequent verbatim agreements between these two texts. Therefore, the fact of Ferdowsi's prose archetype can't be questioned any more than the great poet's own existence.

Leaving aside the nature of Ferdowsi's source, and assuming that he relied on the well-known prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr for his project, there has been endless speculation on Ferdowsi's decision to versify a book of kings rather than some other work of literature. There seem to be as many theories as there are specialists. The explanations include a personal desire to glorify his country's past greatness, saving Persian language and culture, expressing personal opposition to the reign of alien kings over his homeland, and many others.[17] I think his reasons must have been quite complicated. It is unlikely that such a profound, life-consuming commitment could be created by external reasons alone. Psychological factors certainly had their own influence and must have relentlessly driven him to the end. Was it perhaps a compulsive personality that energized him? Did he choose a glorious history of heroic kings in hopes of attracting a royal patron? Did the inspired power of his own intoxicating verse move him to ecstatic states? His artistry has certainly had much the same effect on subsequent generations of Iranians. Had the project become an end unto itself? We can speculate until all the proverbial cows come home, but one thing is certain: many different forces must have fueled Ferdowsi's persistent decades of labor. One of these, in my opinion, was the literary tradition of versifying prose material. This may not sound like a sufficiently abstract and engaging reason, or even an interesting one; but it is a cultural factor that can be stated with reasonable confidence. The versification of prose works was a well-known literary trend in Ferdowsi's time, and a topic that I will turn to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Why the *Shāhnāmeh*?

The custom of versifying prose works, which began almost at the dawn of classical Persian literature, continued for many more centuries. The poet Rūdakī, who died in the year of Ferdowsi's birth (A.D. 941), had versified the *Kalīlawa Dimna*, ca. A.D. 937 from a prose Persian translation.[1] An incorrect account of this book's history is preserved in the preface to Abū Mansūr's prose *Shāhnāmeh*, which was completed sometime in April of A.D. 957. This preface is the only part of the prose *Shāhnāmeh* that has survived. According to this preface, Ibn al-Muqaffa[c] "who was [the Caliph al-Ma'mūn's] secretary" translated the book from Middle Persian to Arabic. But this is impossible: Ibn al-Muqaffa[c] was killed in A.D. 756 and Ma'mūn was born in the September of A.D. 786. So Ibn al-Muqaffa[c] could not have done his translation of the book for Ma'mūn because one had been dead 30 years before the other was born. What is interesting for us here is that Ferdowsi's reliance on the prose Abū Mansūr *Shāhnāmeh* preserved this glaring historical error in immortal verse. Of course, Ferdowsi's claim that the Arabic translation of the *Kalīlawa Dimna* was commissioned by the Caliph, al-Ma'mūn (vii: 371–72: 3498–504) has another aspect. The presence of this error, common to the texts of Ferdowsi's poem and what remains from the prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr is further evidence that Ferdowsi put that particular *Shāhnāmeh* into verse.

[c]Unsurī (A.D. 1040), the chief poet of Mahmūd's court, also retold the prose romance of *Vāmiq and [c]Azrā*, which was translated from Greek into Arabic prose, and later from Arabic prose into Persian verse. Some believe that this book was first translated from Greek into Middle Persian, and that its Arabic translation was made from the Middle Persian intermediary that existed in the middle of the ninth century A.D.[2] [c]Unsurī versified three other Persian prose tales in addition to the *Vāmiq and [c]Azrā*. These were the stories of *Shādbahr*, *[c]Ayn al-Hayāt*, and *Surkh But and Khing But*, which we know Bīrūnī (d. A.D. 1048) had also translated into

Arabic.[3] We have already discussed Masᶜudī's verse *Shāhnāmeh*, which must have been composed sometime in late ninth or early tenth centuries A.D., and was already well known in A.D. 961.

The practice of putting prose works into verse was not limited to epic tales and storybooks. Even medical texts were sometimes versified, and sometimes composed in verse from the outset. One of the earliest Persian texts is a medical treatise that was composed by the physician Maysarī (born A.D. 936) probably in A.D. 981. This is about the same time when Ferdowsi began his versification of the *Shāhnāmeh*. Maysarī specifies that he put his book in verse so that it may be easily memorized.[4] Naturally, since versification of scientific texts was mostly for ease of memorization rather than for artistic reasons, most such texts were in very poor poetry. Given this context, Ferdowsi was simply working within a literary tradition that valued versification. Therefore, when he says that his motivation in versifying the *Shāhnāmeh* was to receive a reward for his labor and also to achieve everlasting fame, I believe we can take him at his word.

Ferdowsi's wish to be paid for his toil is quite explicitly stated in the *Shāhnāmeh* (iv: 171–73:32–35, 40, 43–46, 49 50, 51–53, 61):

> I versified this book of old,
> Selected from the books of men of wisdom,
> So that it might yield me fruit when I turn old
> And bring me greatness, wealth, and honor
> But I saw no bounteous king
> One of great fortune, generosity, and fame
> I kept [this book] in the hope that there will appear
> One whose munificence required no urging . . .
> Thus, I lived sixty five years
> In poverty and in hardship
> But when I had turned fifty-eight
> —I grew feeble; alas, how my youth departed—
> I heard a great call throughout the world
> That sharpened my mind and cured my ailing body
> It said: O' noble ones of fame,
> Who seek, the auspicious [king] Fereydūn!
> The sagacious Fereydūn is reborn
> And the whole world has come under his command . . .
> When I heard this call,
> I heeded it with all my heart.
> In his name, I put this book
> —May he be blessed now and evermore—
> So that he may grant me aid in my old age,
> That lord of the sword, the crown, and the throne.
> I ask God on high

> To leave my body free of harm just so long
> That I finish putting this book in the name of the king of the world
> Without leaving any of it unsaid . . .
> Mahmūd, the lord of the world, like the sun in radiance
> He who is a lion when he takes to the blade in battle,
> Will free me from every want on earth,
> And raise me high among the nobility.

These verses indicate that by the time he put his poem in Mahmūd's name, Ferdowsi's concerns were those of an old, lonely, and impoverished man looking for help in the twilight of his life. He had every right to wish that a great king's patronage and protection would help him spend his remaining years in relative comfort and financial security. Conscious of the powerful magic of his words, he hoped to enchant the king into patronizing his great epic and rewarding him for so many years of labor. It is therefore ironic that some of his countrymen—especially those who have traded their common sense for leftist rhetoric, begrudge him the right to enjoy the fruits of *his* labor. It is as though having evolved into a cultural icon, Ferdowsi is no longer allowed to be human or to have normal human concerns. Iranian *Shāhnāmeh* scholars, most of whom were inspired by a peculiar mixture of Marxist doctrine and European racist ideologies, have imagined a Ferdowsi who is quite unreal if not actually inhuman. On the one hand, they expect him to be a devout socialist; an antiaristocratic man of the people who would have nothing to do with Mahmūd and his patronage. On the other hand, they imagine him as a fierce racial purist and cultural imperialist, who disdained all non-Iranians. They can't quite see him for what he was: a great artist with a masterpiece in search of an equally great patron.[5]

Ferdowsi's other stated aim in putting the prose *Shāhnāmeh* into verse was to glorify himself and to secure everlasting fame as a poet. He seamlessly weaves self-praise even into his eulogies of Mahmūd (iv: 173–74:65–69):

> I have performed, O king! a service
> That will remain forever my memorial.
> Thriving dwellings will decay
> By [the ruinous effect] of rain and sunshine,
> I have built a grand palace of poetry
> That storm and rain shall never mar.
> Ages will pass over the book that I have writ
> And those of wisdom will always read it
> And they shall bless the memory of my lord, the king of the world—
> May the throne be never seen without him!

Ferdowsi's primary aim was neither to glorify Iran nor to celebrate Persian culture or language per se. He simply meant to provide for himself, and also to prove that he was the best poet of his generation. This, of course, is not to say that he lacked other conscious or unconscious motives. But whatever his other motivations may have been, we know nothing explicit about them, and I for one prefer to stay with the evidence rather than be swept along with the emotional musings of those who project their modern concerns on to a man who lived a thousand years ago.

In discussions of Ferdowsi and the *Shāhnāmeh*, it is important to remember that the Iran of Ferdowsi's time needed no glorification. Mahmūd, whom Ferdowsi and everyone else in the country rightly considered an Iranian king, commanded a vast territory, which included all of modern Iran, Afghanistan, most of the present-day Pakistan, a considerable chunk of India, and several of the southern republics of the former Soviet Union. Iran was not a "third world" country at that time, and neither Ferdowsi, nor any of his contemporaries were suffering from those feelings of inferiority and self-contempt that many modern Iranians who have suffered the indignities of contact with the hegemonic West have suffered. Ferdowsi was not haunted by the ghosts of a colonial past. He was a confident and self-assured member of his world's ruling elite.

Those who declare that the poet was worried about the fate of his endangered culture and the purity of his native language, and responded to these anxieties by composing the *Shāhnāmeh*, fail to understand that these were not *his* concerns. They are ours. Because anxieties born of modern historical circumstances have turned modern Iranians into helpless victims of a crusading West, many Iranian intellectuals carelessly project their modern anxieties upon Ferdowsi in a series of analyses that take no notice of the cultural and historical contexts under which Ferdowsi and his contemporaries worked. Chief among these projections is the notion that Iranian culture was under assault by foreign forces and rulers. This is an absurd idea, and I have and will challenge it frequently throughout this book. The fact is that Ferdowsi was confident and secure in his national identity, religious belief, and artistic prowess. His insecurities were not ethnic, cultural, or even national. They were the legitimate concerns of an aging man staring into the pitiless maws of approaching frailty and want.

Ferdowsi was a contemplative and conflicted man, who revealed much about his own thoughts and temperament in his verse. He chose the well-known and massive prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr and versified it in order to show his poetic prowess. The monstrous size of this prose archetype was probably the main reason why he chose it in the first place. Being a man of huge appetites, he probably felt that by putting that

colossal *Shāhnāmeh* into verse, he would have done what no other man had done before—and he was right. In the long run, Ferdowsi's project of achieving everlasting fame succeeded brilliantly, even if he failed to receive much recognition or compensation for it during his lifetime. To understand Ferdowsi the artist, and his masterpiece, we must first try to understand Ferdowsi the man. This is easier said than done, because the poet's character has almost disappeared under a dense overgrowth of legend. Nonetheless, I would like to try doing just that in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 6

The Man in the Myths

Great works of literature do not materialize out of thin air. They are created by individuals filled with all sorts of human frailty. Ferdowsi was no exception. To reach Ferdowsi the man and find verifiable facts about his life, we must first penetrate the thick fog of myth that envelops his career and personality. Although verifiable facts about Iran's national poet are by no means abundant, they are also not entirely absent. Our most important source of reliable facts is, of course, the poet himself. Much in the *Shāhnāmeh* may be used to either establish the truth of specific events in his life or support meaningful conjectures about his biography. This chapter will isolate some of what can be said about him with reasonable confidence.

Ferdowsi was born into a family of small landowners in the township of Pāzh. The name of this city is spelled as *fāz* (فاز), *bāz* (باز), or*pāzh* (پاژ) in different Persian and Arabic sources. There's little doubt the town's name was spelled with an initial *p*, and probably pronounced *pāzh*. The great Arab geographer, Yāqūt (d. A.D. 1229) writes that when the name of the city was rendered into Arabic, they expressed the initial sound by the letter *f*. Since Arabs routinely expressed the Persian sound *p*, which does not exist in classical Arabic, by means of the Arabic letter *f*, it's reasonable to conjecture that the original Persian form of this city's name began with an initial *p*. So, in all likelihood, Ferdowsi's hometown was known as Pāzh.[1]

Pāzh is now a small town that is located about 15 kilometers to the northeast of the city of Mahshhad. Some 200 families of farmers and sheepherders resided there in 1969, which would indicate a total population of about 1,000 persons if we assume five persons to a family. This estimation is confirmed by the census of 1993, which again showed a population of 1,000. The reason the community did not change for nearly 30 years may be that young people immigrated to larger cities in search of employment. Archaeological excavations of the city's old fortress indicate that it was a prosperous town with a relatively large population in the

past.[2] By A.D. 1165, Nizāmi-yiᶜArūzī reported that in A.D. 1155, the city could field an armed force of 1000 men.[3] Assuming that each of these men represented a family of five, the population of old Pāzh may be placed at roughly five to seven thousand, including its resident slaves and tradesmen. Important scholars, whose fame drew the great jurist and biographer, al-Samᶜānī (A.D. 1113–1166) to Pāzh, resided in the city.[4] Therefore, the city of Ferdowsi's birth was by no means a small or provincial backwater.

Ferdowsi was probably born in the winter of A.D. 940. The date of his birth can be deduced from a number of verses in the *Shāhnāmeh*: In the exordium to the story of Kaykhosrow's Great War, which we briefly discussed in the previous chapter, he complains that at the age of 65, he must live in poverty (iv: 172: 40–42). He reminisces in the same piece that Fereydūn, the mythical king, was reborn and took over the realm when Ferdowsi turned 58 (iv: 172: 43–46).

> But when I had turned fifty-eight
> —I was growing feeble; alas, how my youth departed—
> I heard a great call throughout the world
> That sharpened my mind and cured my ailing body
> It said: O' noble ones of fame,
> Who seek the auspicious [king] Fereydūn!
> The sagacious Fereydū is reborn
> And the whole world came under his command.

By Fereydūn, of course, he means Mahmūd, and this verse is an allusion to the beginning of Mahmūd's reign, which we know was in A.D. 998. Therefore, we can learn that in A.D. 998 he was 58 years of age, and can put the date of his birth in (998-58 =) A.D. 940. This date is confirmed by two other references in the *Shāhnāmeh*. The first is in the story of the reign of Bahrām-i Bahrāmiyān (vi: 276: 9), where he says that he is 63 years old; and again some 730 verses later in the story of Shāpūr II (A.D. 309–379), where he complains of having grown deaf in his 63rd year; and also tells us that the first day of the Persian month, Bahman, had fallen on a Friday, in that year. Within the period of Ferdowsi's lifetime, it is only in the year A.D. 1003 in which the first day of the month, Bahman falls on a Friday. Knowing that he was 63 years old in A.D. 1003, we can reconfirm our poet's date of birth as (1003-63 =) A.D. 940. Also, at the end of the book, Ferdowsi speaks of being 71 years old, and specifies that he completed his book in the Muslim year 400, which puts the date of his birth in (400-71 =) 329 *hijrī* or A.D. 940.[5]

Although Ferdowsi's date of birth can be determined with reasonable certainty, we know very little about his early life and circumstances.

However, judging from his frequent literary allusions to Arabic and Persian literature, it may be inferred that he received a decent education. Professor Mahdavi Damghani has already published a long article in which he has isolated instances of close similarity between the verses of the *Shāhnāmeh* and the poetry of such early Arab poets as ᶜAntara ibn Shaddād (second half of the sixth century A.D.), Abū Nuwās (ca. A.D. 755–813), and Imru'l-Qays (sixth century A.D.).[6]

The culture of Ferdowsi's time valued learning; he repeatedly expressed this belief in the *Shāhnāmeh*. Perhaps alluding to a commandment that "seeking knowledge is the duty of every male and female Muslim," which has been widely reported in various Shiite and Sunni *hadīth* collections, he writes in the introduction to his poem (i: 4: 14–15):

> Mighty is he who has knowledge
> By knowledge the old hearts grow young again.

Elsewhere he counsels that although knowledge is desirable, one must not allow it to weaken one's faith (vii: 219: 1573–75):

> Cease not from learning even for a moment
> But do not let knowledge drive your heart to doubt.
> When you say: "I have satisfied my lust for wisdom
> And have learned all that I should have learned,"
> Fate plays a pretty trick on you,
> That reduces you to a novice sitting at the foot of a master.

His first name is not known with certainty. Different sources give it as: Mansūr, Hasan, Ahmad, or Muhammad.[7] However, since the Arabic translator of the *Shāhnāmeh* refers to him by the first name Mansūr in the early thirteenth century, and since the earliest manuscript of the *Shāhnāmeh* (dated A.D. 1217) uses the same name for him in the third, fourth, and the sixth title panels of that codex, Khaleghi-Motlagh has argued that Ferdowsi was known by this name to the scholarly community of the early thirteenth century A.D.[8]

His *kunia* or nickname, was probably Abu al-Qāsim, and he was certainly known as Ferdowsi, which may either have been his last name—many people *did* have last names in those days—or his pen-name. We know this fact with certainty because he refers to himself by that name at the beginning of the reign of Gushtāsp in the *Shāhnāmeh* (v: 75: 1–3):

> The poet dreamed one night
> That he held a cup of wine [fragrant] like rosewater

Daqīqī appeared from some place
And, speaking over wine,
He said to Ferdowsi: "Drink not
But in the fashion of the days of Kaykāvūs."

Ferdowsi must have been a tall fellow with black hair, good teeth, and fine eyesight; or must have thought of himself as such a man. This may be deduced from the way he complains of the loss of these physical characteristics with old age (ii: 379–80: 1–8; iv: 172: 40–43):

When the blade of threescore years hangs over one's head
Serve no more wine, for the man is drunk with age.
Age has put a staff in my hands in place of the reins,
My wealth is squandered and my fortune is turned
My watchful eyes cannot from their mountain perch
See the king's great host
Nor do they perceive the harm and turn away from the enemy
Except when the lance reaches the eye-lashes
My agile legs, those fleet runners of yore
Are now bound by pitiless threescore . . .
My voice sings out no longer
Melodious like the nightingale, nor roaring like the lion
Since I took up the cup of fifty-eight,
I think only of the coffin and the grave
Alas my rosy [cheeks], my pitch black [hair] and my pearly teeth!
And my sword-like speech when I was thirty!

When five was piled upon my three score years,
My health declining, and I, descending [toward death]
The tulip-red color of my face changed to hay-yellow
And my musk black hair turned camphor white.

With age, moreover, he must have grown deaf (v: 440: 14; vi: 341: 659):

My ears and feet began to fail
[As] Poverty and old age thrived.

Sixty-three years of age, and deaf
Why expect grace and observance from this world?

It is also possible that with age, he developed dacryocystitis. This is an inflammation of the drainage system of the eyes into the nasal cavity that in chronic cases causes excessive tearing. That Ferdowsi suffered from this condition may be inferred from the wording of the complaint about the condition of his eyes (vii: 88: 11–12):

My fierce black eyes bewail and run
And bend my back in pain.
My careless, happy heart now overflows with pain,
Thus have my days grown ungenerous.[9]

The poet's complaint about his watering eyes is too specific to be lumped together with the poetic topos of "crying rivers" and such. Verses of Fersowsi's contemporaries, who also complain about frailty of age have survived, and show how specific poets could be about their own physical ailments.[10] Assuming that my reading of these verses is correct, it would not be unreasonable to imagine that this malady affected both Ferdowsi's output as well as the nature of his revisions to the *Shāhnāmeh* in old age. It is also possible to ascribe some of the poem's textual errors to his inability to see well through the lacrimation that blurred his sight. This may be speculation, but I don't consider it unlikely.

Ferdowsi's frequent reference to his physical frailties in old age implies that he must have been quite vigorous in youth, and must have felt the loss of his youthful vigor more keenly than others. The bemoaning of his much diminished vitality that begins the Parthian dynasty's story is representative (vi: 133:1–8):

O' High-spinning arch of heaven!
Why do you keep me so forlorn in old age?
When I was young, you held me [lovingly]
But in old age, you abandoned me all helpless.
The crimson rose takes a sallow hue,
Suffering turns the soft silk into thorns
The tall cypress [of my height] is bent in two
And the bright light [of my eyes] has grown lusterless,
The black mountain-top [of my head] is capped with snow,
The host faults the king [for all blunders]
You were once like a mother to me,
But now, I must cry tears of blood because of your tyranny.
Would that you had never nurtured me,
Or, having nurtured had not hurt me so!

We know that the poet had married, and had fathered a son who died young at 37, when Ferdowsi was 67 years of age. We know this because he tells us of his loss in a moving elegy that he included in his poem (viii: 167: 2182–89):

I am past sixty-five
It would be unseemly if I think of worldly goods

Better to heed my own council
And contemplate the passing of my son,
It was my turn, but that youth went forth,
And his sorrow turned me into a soulless form.
I make haste, hoping to reach him,
And when I do, reproach him,
Saying: "It was my turn, how dare you go without my leave?
How dare you rob me of my peace?
You were my helpmate against hardship
Why have you deserted your old travel companion?
Did you perchance find younger company,
That so swiftly abandoned me?"
When the youth was seven years and thirty of age,
He found the world distasteful and left.

Judging from the perfectionist features of his verse, Ferdowsi must have been an emotionally demanding father who had a turbulent relationship with his son. This is evident from a number of lines in the eulogy above, where, contrary to common cultural practice in Iran, he blames his son for dying, and even considers the boy's untimely death as an act of disobedience and abandonment. But, in spite of everything, in the eulogy's last moving lines, he blesses his child, asks forgiveness for his soul, and hopes to be reunited with him in heaven (viii: 167–68: 2190–99):

He was always harsh with me,
Suddenly he turned his back on me and left in rage.
He went but the pain of his loss stayed here
And drenched my heart and [weeping] eyes in sorrow
Now he has reached the light
Where he will choose his sire's abode.
He awaits me there,
And is wrathful that I linger.
He was thirty [seven] and I, sixty-seven years of age
Caring naught for this aged man, he left.
Rushing was he, while I lingered
I wonder what are we to reap of our deeds.
May God envelop your spirit in light
May he make an armor of wisdom for your soul!
I beg God the most just
That pure nurturing giver of our daily bread,
To forgive him all his sins
And illuminate his dark resting place.

Ferdowsi's tumultuous relationship with his son must have influenced his art whenever he mused about parents and children, fathers and sons,

or the conflict between the old and the young. For instance, in the stories of Rustam's fight with his son Suhrāb, or the battle between the old Rustam and the youthful Isfandiyār, he assumes a tone that must have been influenced by all the hurt and bitterness in his own relationship with his son. Perhaps the reason he attains such heights of elegiac expression in these tales has to do with the profound manner in which the motif of the father-son conflict touches him personally; perhaps, in a psychological sense, he becomes Rustam and fights his temperamental son in the personae of Suhrāb and Isfandiyār.[11] Being the incomparable artist that he is, Ferdowsi manages to make these characters' pain his own, and succeeds in weaving their psychological anguish and his own sorrow into the rich tapestry of verse, which he casts upon his reader like a magical spell.

What I've said so far about Ferdowsi's private life and family circumstances may be accepted even by the most devout of Ferdowsi's worshippers. But here I must part company with the agreeable and enter the domain of the controversial. In these arguments, I want to deal with some of the fanciful and culturally cherished stories about Ferdowsi's biography. Beautiful as these stories are, they must not be allowed to form the basis of our understanding of Iran's national poet.

The first of these is the story of Ferdowsi's daughter. This is a famous tale, which most Iranians consider to be true. The gist of the story is as follows: Ferdowsi toiled for 30 years and produced the *Shāhnāmeh* because Mahmūd had promised him a gold coin for every verse. But a vizier who did not like the poet interfered and persuaded the king to reward him with silver instead of gold. When the reduced payment was brought to Ferdowsi, he was offended, gave away all of the prize money, composed a harsh satire against the king, and escaped town.

Although the news of what he had done angered the Sultan, the royal agents were unable to capture Ferdowsi, and the poet lived in hiding until things calmed down and he could return to his hometown. Years after these events, during a military campaign, Mahmūd's new vizier recited a verse from the *Shāhnāmeh*, the heroic tone of which impressed the Sultan. When Mahmūd asked who composed the verse, his vizier responded that the verse belonged to Ferdowsi. The king remembered how he had mistreated the poet, and felt so remorseful that he not only forgave Ferdowsi, but also sent him the 60,000 gold coins that he had originally promised. But alas, goes the story, as the royal reward entered Ferdowsi's hometown through one gate, the poet's corpse was being carried out through another for burial. Faced with this unfortunate situation, the royal envoy offered the money to the poet's daughter or, according to some sources, sister.[12] Here the accounts vary. According to some, the daughter/sister refused

the gift; according to others, she accepted the money and spent it on a public project that Ferdowsi always wanted to finance.

Most Iranians know this version of Ferdowsi's life and death and are especially fond of Ferdowsi's satire against Mahmūd. This narrative must have grown around the poet's persona shortly after his death because it is quoted in an important classical Persian text from the middle of the twelfth century A.D.[13] Since Ferdowsi died in early eleventh century, the tale must have existed in the oral tradition for some time before crossing from the oral tradition into the literary record.[14]

This story is apocryphal for several reasons, the most important of which is that Ferdowsi probably had no daughter.[15] He refers to no daughter in his verse. Indeed the wording of his eulogy for his son implies that the son was his only living relative; an implication that was noted by Professor Yaghma'i more than 30 years ago.[16]

It is true that in a number of verses in the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha he speaks of a female companion. However, I believe these lines refer either to his favorite concubine or to a slave-woman, rather than to his daughter. In them Ferdowsi tells of how this woman was serving him wine and how the two of them were drinking together.[17] Muslim men of the tenth or eleventh centuries A.D.—even those who *did* drink with their wives or daughters—did not advertise the event in verse. Therefore, whoever the woman in these verses may be, she could not have been Ferdowsi's daughter. If she is not a favorite slave-woman or a concubine, then she might be an imaginary woman, a poetic ploy, or even a muse of sorts.

Those who like the story of our poet's daughter too much to let go of it, may argue that even if we disregard these verses, we may still imagine that Ferdowsi had a daughter to whom he made no reference in the *Shāhnāmeh*. I find this argument unconvincing because if Ferdowsi had a daughter—especially one who turned out to be his sole heir—he would have made some reference to her in the *Shāhnāmeh*. After all, he mentions his servant,[18] his son, and others of his acquaintance. It may be argued that his not mentioning his daughter was because the "religiously conservative" men of one thousand years ago were not likely to mention their womenfolk in their verse. This argument is also not convincing.

Iranians of Ferdowsi's time were not as religiously conservative as we may imagine them to be. Although—as I pointed out about the mystery woman in the proem to the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha—Muslim men of Ferdowsi's time would not put it in writing that they drank wine with their wives or daughters, they did not consider naming female family members in their work to be either offensive or improper.[19] Avicenna (d. A.D. 1037) composed a treatise for Zarrīngīs, the daughter of Prince

Shams al-Ma^{c}ālī Qābūs (d. A.D. 1013) in which he named the lady.[20] The historian Bayhaqī (d. A.D. 1077) names several of King Mahmūd's sisters, and also names King Mas^{c}ūd's daughter.[21] Another one of Ferdowsi's contemporaries, the polymath Bīrūnī (A.D. 1048), names the young lady for whom he composed a Persian astronomical treatise.[22] Therefore, if Ferdowsi had a daughter, neither religious considerations nor convention would have prevented him from mentioning her in his poem. The fact that he does not, implies that he had no daughters to name. The girl in Ferdowsi's *vita*, it seems to me, belongs to the realm of folklore rather than history. Such impressive women often appear in biographies of great men in Persian literature: the daughter of the mystic al-Hallāj comes to mind as an example of the type.[23]

Another especially popular element of Ferdowsi's biography is his famous satire against Mahmūd. I believe that this satire is a fabrication because many of its verses are taken from different parts of the *Shāhnāmeh*, and have been mixed with inferior verses of unknown authorship in order to produce it. Its most famous verse is taken from the story of the Iranian king, Anūshīravān, where the king sends an envoy to China in order to choose a Chinese princess to marry the Persian monarch. Anūshīravān advises his ambassador to make sure to select a princess who is of high birth on her father's as well as her mother's side (vii: 265–66: 2160–456):

> Scan well his harem,
> And thoroughly learn all their good and ill.
> Do not let them fool you with looks or cosmetics
> Or with worldly appearance.
> He has many daughters in his harem,
> Stately, tall, and crowned.
> Those born of slave women are not for me
> Although they were sired by a king.
> Look for one that is both meek and temperate,
> And has the queen for her mother.[24]

The verse in question is, "Those borne of slave women are not for me." Although in the satire, this verse is supposed to allude to the fact that Mahmūd's father was a slave-soldier, the context in which it appears in the *Shāhnāmeh* has nothing to do with Mahmūd's father.[25] In fact Anūshīravān expresses the same idea earlier in the story (vii: 262:2126–28):

> I will dispatch a wise man
> To carefully survey his harem.
> And choose one that is most noble
> And more dear to the Chinese Emperor.

He will see to [the princess's] maternal descent,
And ascertain royal blood on her maternal side.

Therefore, this verse is not original to any "satire" by Ferdowsi, but is simply taken out of its narrative context in the *Shāhnāmeh* for use as part of the forged satire.[26]

As it stands, Ferdowsi's satire against Mahmūd is made up of original and spurious verses. Its original verses have been taken out of their narrative contexts in the *Shāhnāmeh* and have been mixed with poorly composed lines in order to create it.[27] The best argument against the authenticity of this piece is that a poet of Ferdowsi's abilities would not have cast about in the *Shāhnāmeh* for verses to compose his satire. Instead, he would have composed original verse to vent his sorrow and disappointment.[28]

Although Ferdowsi's family relationships may not be entirely clear, we have more certain information about his religion.[29] Most modern Iranians prefer Ferdowsi to be either a freethinker or at least a closet Zoroastrian. But as it turns out, he was a devout Shiite. Verses that establish his devotion to Shiism may be divided into those that explicitly tell of his devotion, and those that strongly imply it.

Ferdowsi's Explicit Statements of His Faith

In the introduction to the *Shāhnāmeh*, Ferdowsi professes his Shiism in no uncertain terms:

Find your path with the help of the Prophet's teachings.
Cleanse your heart of all evil by the waters [of his wisdom].
What was it that he said, that inspired lord of revelation,
That master of bidding and forbidding?
He said: "I am the City of learning, and ᶜAlī is my gate."
These are certainly the Prophet's words.
I testify that these words are his,
[It is] as though I hear his voice by my own ears . . .
God created this world like a sea
Whose waves are driven by the blast
Some seventy ships sail upon it,
Each with her canvas unfurled.
One stately vessel, in the middle,
Well adorned and beautiful
Muhammad and ᶜAlī sail in it.
Together with their family and household
If you desire [salvation] in the hereafter

Then [you must] take your place by the Prophet and his successor
(Arabic. *wasī*)
If you find what I say offensive, so be it,
This is my religion and my way.
In this Faith was I born, and in it I shall die;
Verily, I am like the dust under the feet of ᶜAlī.[30]

Most specialists will immediately recognize a famous prophetic tradition (*hadīth*) in these lines. According to this *hadīth* the Prophet says: "I am the city of knowledge and ᶜAlī is its gate."[31] They will also notice Ferdowsi's use of the word "*wasī*" in reference to his son-in-law, ᶜAli, who, for the Shiites, is the only legitimate successor of the Prophet. They realize that because it is only the *Imāmī* or "twelver" Shiites who refer to ᶜAlī by this title, Ferdowsi must have belonged to this sect.[32]

The fact that Ferdowsi places such a clear declaration of personal religious preference at the beginning of his poem is significant because Mahmūd, to whom the poem is dedicated, was a devout Sunni. Two points should be kept in mind with regard to Ferdowsi's declaration of faith. First, we know that this declaration existed in the first redaction of the *Shāhnāmeh* (completed in A.D. 994) because they are included in the Arabic translation of the poem, which was made from that redaction.[33] Second, Ferdowsi choose to keep these verses in his second redaction of the poem that he prepared some 16 years later for a Sunni ruler whose patronage he was seeking. Not only does Ferdowsi go out of his way to profess his religious belief at the beginning of the book, he even flaunts it in the face of a prospective patron from another sect. This implies that his devotion to Shiism was both profound and genuine. In other words, he could have left all reference to his religious beliefs out of the book that he was planning to offer to a Sunni patron; but he did not. If he were not a devout Shiite, he would not have done so.

Ferdowsi's Implicit Declarations of His Faith

Aside from his explicit proclamations of his faith, Ferdowsi embeds a number of references to Muslim religious practices in the *Shāhnāmeh*, which leave no doubt about his familiarity with religious ceremony and tradition. For instance, early in the poem, he refers to the divine "tablet" of predestination (*lawh*) on which God has penned the fate of the world (i: 202: 570–71). The reference to the Tablet and the Pen (Koran, 68: 1 and 85: 22) signal the poet's familiarity with the text of the holy writ.[34] Elsewhere, he refers to verses according to which God creates the world by commanding it to "be!"

> The two world came to be from the letters *kāf* and *nun*
> There is no arguing with his will.[35]

In Arabic, the imperative verb "be" is *kun*, which is spelled with the letters: *kāf* and *nūn* (کن). Ferdowsi's use of this specific word to refer to the creation of the world reveals his familiarity with the text of the holy writ.[36]

The poet also refers to a number of obscure Muslim folk beliefs and practices in his poem. He alludes to the idea that the firmament is made from rubies (i: 8: 75),[37] and mentions the custom of reciting the call to prayer in the ear of the newborn (viii: 243: 3188–89). He makes many allusions to prophetic traditions (*hadīth*) that are known only to the more devout among Muslims:

> Do not consider dreams as frivolous,
> But view them as a form of prophecy![38]

It must be stressed that Ferdowsi's religiosity, as one would expect from a complex man of his intellectual and emotional sophistication, was not simpleminded or straightforward. He was a conflicted Muslim who profoundly believed in his religion, but like most other Muslim intellectuals of his time, did not always follow all of that religion's mandates. He was, as we know from his own words, quite fond of wine and in all likelihood imbibed excessively. However, since alcohol is prohibited in Islam, he felt guilty about his drinking. Ferdowsi's drinking, which may be justifiably called alcohol dependency, was first noticed by M. T. Bahār—himself an opium user[39] who knew a thing or two about the addictive personality. In an incomparable essay, published in 1934, Bahār points to Ferdowsi's fondness of wine with typical subtlety and deference.[40] Here, I only build on his suggestion and list those instances of our poet's references to drinking that go beyond mere descriptions of feasting and betray the profound feeling of guilt that his heavy use of alcohol produced in him.

At the conclusion of the story of Anūshīravān, Ferdowsi emphatically expresses his feelings of guilt and blames himself, saying that at the twilight of his life, he should be more concerned with the hereafter than with indulging his appetites. He mourns his departed comrades, and using the narrator's voice, faults himself for failing to learn from their fate (vii: 445–46: 4324–28):

> Old man! Having reached three score years and one,
> Wine, cup, and peace are now savorless.
> No wise and righteous man

Fastens his heart upon this temporary abode.
Wine for one that readies to die
Is as a light shirt in the dead of winter.
With your body shriveled in vice,
And your soul lost its way to Paradise,
Friends have lingered or have passed away,
But you are left behind cup in hand.[41]

Elsewhere, he rebukes himself for his insatiable appetite for wine, and wishes that he had the willpower to stop drinking (vii: 456: 4450–51):

You, O' remorseless hoary old man
Tend to wisdom! Abandon feasting and merriment!
The world looks refreshed in your eyes now that you are again with wine,
And dragged your soul away from the gate of repentance.

But, in spite of all this, having suffered the loss his only son, and without hope of any recognition for his achievement, he continues to find comfort in wine (viii: 473–74: 736–42):

If you have means, my good sensible man!
Make your heart merry; do not depend on what tomorrow promises,
The world will pass you by,
And time continues to count our every breath;
Spend more and save less
He who provides will provide again if you last.
Were my income equal to my expenses,
[My] time here would be a peaceful time
[But] it hailed this year, a hail like death,
I would have preferred death itself to such a hail!
This lofty high firmament
Caused my fuel, my wheat, and sheep to fail.
Bring forth wine! Little of our days are left,
This is the way of the world, it does not last for anyone.

We find him in a similar mood at the beginning of the story of Rustam and Isfandiyār, where he regrets that he is unable to procure wine and other means of feasting for himself (v: 291: 1–4):

The time to drink delicious wine is now,
That the brooks carry the musky scents [of Spring].
The air resounding and earth boiling [with new life]
Blessed is he who can gladden his heart by the drink.
He who has money, sweets, and wine,

And can slaughter a sheep [for meat].
I have none of these, well is he who does,
Oh! pity one that is in poverty!

A prodigious drinker, Ferdowsi has no patience for those who can't hold their liquor. When he describes the scene of Rustam's drinking with Prince Bahman, who is not much of a drinker, the poet expresses his irritation with the boy's inability. One actually gets the impression that he wants to push Bahman aside and join Rustam at the cup (v: 322–23: 371–75):

[Rustam] filled a golden cup with wine
And drank it to the memory of noble men
He placed another in Bahman's hand, saying:
Drink it to the health of whom you please!
Bahman feared that the cup may be poisoned
[To ease his mind] Zavārah drank a sip form it
And said to him: Prince!
You bring joy to wine and to he who serves the wine
Quickly, did Bahman take the wine-cup from him
—He was a depressing drinker of limited capacity—.

Here, using his own voice, Ferdowsi expresses his low opinion of the prince whose drinking ability matches neither Rustam's nor, presumably, the poet's own.

Ferdowsi's addictive and obsessive personality must have sustained him through the long years of hard work on the *Shāhnāmeh*. He must have been certain that putting the prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr into verse would bring him fame and fortune. Sadly for him—and quite fortunately for the rest of us—no evidence to the contrary and no practical considerations could shake his obsessive commitment and overriding devotion to this project.

Ferdowsi's biography, as I have presented it so far, is largely based on the text of the poet's own work. As such, although different authorities might read or interpret it differently, none would consider it particularly controversial. By contrast, certain aspects of the poet's biography: his relationship to King Mahmūd and his opposition to the so-called foreign invasion of Iran by Arabs and Turks, or his desire to "save" the Persian language from what many allege to have been imminent obliteration, are hotly debated issues. Since I disagree with the views of most *Shāhnāmeh* specialists about these issues, my next chapter will be devoted to discussing them. I must point out by way of a preliminary statement that those scholars who argue in favor of Ferdowsi's heroic stand against

non-Iranian ethnic groups and languages are in reality not concerned with Ferdowsi as a person. They are confusing a historical figure with an iconic entity. To put it bluntly, their Ferdowsi is not a human being. He is a cultural creation, a mythic existence who fights anti-Iranian forces in a battle of good versus evil, and has more in common with typical heroes of Persian folklore than with other major poets. The *vita* of this Ferdowsi, of course, makes for good reading, but very bad literary history.

CHAPTER 7

The Poet, the Prince, and the Language

In previous chapters, I have pointed out implicitly and explicitly that Ferdowsi and his *Shāhnāmeh* are central to Iranians' sense of cultural identity. The reasons for this have to do with the history of Islam's eastward expansion and its interaction with Iran.

Iranians are the only ancient Middle Eastern population that does not speak Arabic. They have maintained a distinct language, ethnic identity, and state after the conquest of their country by the Arab armies, and even after their conversion to Islam. In other words, Persians "Islamized" without "Arabizing." There are many explanations for why Iranians became Muslims without also becoming Arabs. Some have argued that because Iranians were not ethnically or linguistically a Semitic people, they managed to keep their ethnic and linguistic identities—unlike the populations of Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and other parts of the Middle East, who were Semitic and *did* use one of the current Semitic languages. This cannot account for a number of other Middle Eastern populations who were in a similar situation, for instance, the Egyptian Copts who, like Iranians, did not speak a Semitic language; but *were* eventually Arabized. Others have suggested that because Iranians possessed a "superior culture" compared to the invading Arabs' civilization, they could not be culturally invaded even though they were militarily defeated. This explanation also runs into trouble because almost all of the Middle East's conquered peoples at the time of the Muslim conquest could be considered "culturally superior"—whatever that may mean—to the invading Arab tribes.[1]

Of the numerous explanations for the survival of the Iranian nation, the most reasonable is stated in an important paper on "Persian National Sentiment," by the historian Samuel M. Stern (1920–1969). Stern explained the continuation of Persian identity to have been the result of

Iranian's dependence on a body of national lore rather than on religion as the source of their ethnic and cultural identification.[2] The gist of his argument is as follows: At the time of the Muslim conquest in the seventh century A.D., the ethnic identities of most Middle Eastern peoples were religiously determined. For instance, the Egyptian Christians who lived under the rule of the Byzantines expressed their resentment of their overlords by adopting the Monophysite form of Christianity, which was different from the Orthodox Christianity of Byzantium.[3] Consequently, what expressed the Egyptian character was primarily a religious ideology. A similar situation existed among most other Middle Eastern populations. Therefore, the gradual conversion of these populations to Islam led to the gradual loss of their ethnic identities and resulted in their eventual assimilation into an Arab/Muslim identity. This situation was facilitated by the fact that the Muslim conquest of the seventh century A.D. was not only Islamic, but also Arabic. A number of conditions on the ground contributed to the merging of the ideas of Arab and Muslim into one and the same thing. The most important of these was the existence of the concept of "*walā*" or "clientage" in Arab society. A person whose tribe or community came under Arab dominion had to attach himself to an Arab tribe in order to enjoy the protection of that tribe. These "clients," called *mawālī* (singular: *mawlā*) were in practice considered as members of that Arab tribe.

The institution of "clientage" was promoted not only by custom, but also by the social and political insecurity that resulted from the disintegration of administrative authority in conquered territories. Faced with the post-conquest chaos of their environments, the peoples of these localities had little choice but to join an Arab tribe as that tribe's "clients."[4] Once this was done, for all intents and purposes, they became "Arabs." Many of the Arabized "clients" also freely converted to Islam, and soon began to think of themselves as "Arabs" because their religiously defined ethnic identities drove them in that direction.

In time, this gradual elimination of the distinction between Arab and non-Arab Muslims in the empire led to the disappearance of national feelings and ethnic identities among the majority of these new converts. This fact in turn led to the gradual loss of the ethnic identities of these peoples, and to their total assimilation into an Arab/Muslim identity. The only exception to this rule in the Middle East proper was the Iranian population. At this time, of course, the Turks had not yet entered the Middle East in any significant way, so we won't consider them here.

In contrast to the ethnic identities of other Middle Eastern peoples, the Iranian ethnic identity was centered not on religion but on a body of secular legends. Therefore, although Iranians gradually converted to

Islam, their conversion did not lead to the loss of their ethnic identity. They could convert *and* remain Iranian. This is why the Iranian poet, Mahyār al-Daylamī could boast in A.D. 1003—when Ferdowsi was still active—that he had inherited the grandeur of the ancient Persian kings and the religion of the Arabs, proclaiming both his Iranian nationality and Islamic faith without feeling conflicted. Like so many of his countrymen through the ages, Mahyār felt no conflict between his strong Persian cultural identity and his devotion to Shiism. The following verses, which I have loosely translated from his poetry, are telling:

> My people mastered the world by manliness
> And treaded upon the heads of eras
> And My father, Kisrā in his pavilion,
> Where else among the people [of the world] is there a father like mine?
> Splendor, I inherited from the best of the fathers,
> And religion, I adopted from the best of the prophets
> And [thus], I seized glory in every respect:
> The lordship of the Persians and the religion of the Arabs.[5]

Elsewhere in his poems, this fiercely devout Iranian Shiite writes:

> Do you know, daughter of Persians, how many there are who reproach your brother for his passion,
> Proceeding to revile him with a bland countenance which speaks out of an envious and spiteful heart?
> Whilst he proceeds straight upon his path along with glory, as straight as the sharp Mashrafi sword,
> Following the example laid down for him by his fathers—and the lion-cubs are the very likeness of the lions—
> Being of a thicket, no branch of which, ever since Persia planted it, has bent pliantly to (the hand of) any prover. . . .
> There is a difference between a head in which a crown takes pride, and heads that take pride in turbans.[6]

It is true that people like Mahyār were Shu^{c}ūbīs, that is, they belonged to the group of converts that reacted to notions of Arab ethnic superiority that was promoted under the Umayyids, by flaunting the cultural superiority of the non-Arabs over their Arab overlords. However, this is not the same thing as being anti-Islam. Except for the extremist groups on the fringes of the Shu^{c}ūbī movement, the Iranian Shu^{c}ūbīs had no opposition to Islam per se. Opposition to Arabs was not the same as opposition to Islam. It was simply a reaction to the development of racial and ethnic superiority that the Arabs began to show toward the peoples that came

under their rule. Muslim Iranians such as Mahyār and Ferdowsi were no different from their modern descendants in their devotional honesty. They were as proud of their ethnicity as their religion. What they rejected was the Umayyid administration's attempts at relegating them to a second-class status—not their newly adopted religion. Consider the verses of an Iranian poet, Abū Yaᶜqūb al-Kharīmī (ninth century A.D.), who wrote:

> I called forth horsemen from Marv and Balkh
> Who are possessed of full nobility
> But alas, the home of my people is too far
> And they cannot delight me by their help
> Verily my father Sāsān is Kisrā son of Hurmuz
> And if you want to know, Khāqān [the king of China] too, is my kin.
> Before Islam, we ruled over all peoples,
> And they obeyed us with a willing obedience.
> We overcame you [Arabs] and did unto you
> Whatever we wished, right or wrong.
> And when Islam appeared and hearts were opened to receive it
> We followed the prophet of God [in such great numbers]
> As though Muslim men rained down from the sky.[7]

To sum up, unlike other Middle Eastern peoples whose ethnic identities were eventually subsumed in Arabness when they converted to Islam, Iranians managed to maintain their language and national identity because something other than simple religious affiliation defined them as a distinct people. Their ethnic identity was rooted in a body of national lore that is now preserved in Iran's national epic, the *Shāhnāmeh*. For this reason, the way the *Shāhnāmeh* is approached and interpreted, and the manner in which Ferdowsi's life and work are addressed, go beyond mere literary or historical analysis: this work touches the very core of Iranians' being as a people. To the extent that the *Shāhnāmeh* is the highest literary expression of Iranians' ethnic history, the study of the *Shāhnāmeh* is also the study of who Iranians are. This is why Ferdowsi is not merely a poet, but also a cultural hero about whom a vast number of folktales and legends exist in Persia's folk tradition.[8] There is great wisdom in Professor Mohammad-Ali Forughi's definition of who is an Iranian. Forughi (1877–1942), a great scholar of Iranian history and culture, who also served as Iran's prime minister wrote: "Any group who considers Kāva, and Rustam and Gīv and Bīzhan, and Īraj, and Manūchihr, and Kaykhusrow, and Kayqubād and the likes of them as its own is considered Iranian and this has been the link that connected them together and unified them as an ethnicity and nation." To Foroughi, identification with the stories of the *Shāhnāmeh* as one's ethnic history was the only requirement

of being Iranian. Where one lives, or what language one speaks, is not as important.[9]

Ferdowsi: The Father of the Nation

The story of how Ferdowsi revived Persian language and culture is one of Iran's most cherished national myths. It enters Persians' lives with mother's milk and receives academic sanction in the course of their education. But as important as the Ferdowsi legend in Persian folklore may be, and as potently charged with emotion as Iran's national epic may be for Iranians, these facts should not be allowed to interfere with research on the *Shāhnāmeh*. "Objectivity" may be a dirty word in these postmodern times, but incontestable facts about Ferdowsi and his poem may still be "objectively" stated. I am reminded, in this connection, of the words of the French statesman George Clemenceau (1841–1929), who, when asked what future historians may say about the First World War, famously retorted "Whatever they may say, they will not say that Belgium invaded Germany."

In his biography of George Washington, the historian Joseph Ellis writes: "For reasons best explained by Shakespeare and Freud, all children have considerable difficulty approaching their fathers with an open mind."[10] Cultural fathers are the most difficult to approach. The culturally pious dare not disturb their sire's mantle of myth, while the emotionally reckless give free reign to their oedipal rage and end up venting rather than elucidating. As an Iranian, I cannot be entirely objective about Ferdowsi. But assuming that it is possible to steer clear of piety and rage in order to chart a course along the path of moderation, let me start at the beginning and dispel a number of commonly held beliefs about Ferdowsi and his epic.

Many scholars believe that Ferdowsi composed the *Shāhnāmeh* out of a sense of nationalist outrage against the Arab conquest of Iran. This is not true. Ferdowsi lived three centuries after Islam's wars of conquest. Iran had long recovered from any deleterious effects of the invasion and had regained much of her opulence and splendor under the Iranian Taherids (A.D. 821–871), Saffarids (A.D. 867–ca.1495), and Samanids (A.D. 819–1005). The Ghaznavid rulers (A.D. 977–1186), the greatest of whom Ferdowsi dedicated his poem to, grew out of the Samanid political culture and were not only culturally Iranian but were also the political and cultural continuation of the previous Persian dynasties. Furthermore, the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad (A.D. 749–1258) was largely in the hands of Persian administrators. Thus, to Ferdowsi, the Arab conquest of Iran was a mere fact with no greater significance than the daily rising of the sun in the east and its setting in the west.

Ferdowsi, as we have already seen, was a devout Shiite who was not at all scandalized by Islam's "conquest" of his country as some of his compatriots today. Perhaps the most important piece of evidence marshaled in favor of Ferdowsi's alleged anti-Arab and anti-Muslim "nationalism" is his composition of the *Shāhnāmeh*, which is interpreted as an attempt to protect his people's ethnic identity and culture by putting their national lore into verse. However, as we have pointed out in our discussion, Iranian's conversion to Islam did not have any effects upon Iranian's ethnic and national identities because it was limited primarily to the religious sphere and had nothing to do with the population's cultural identity. The best indication of this is the fact that no genre of traditional narratives exist about the Arab conquest of Iran, either in song or in prose. If the Muslim conquest of Iran was culturally traumatic as some claim, it would have left some trace of itself in Persian folklore, because a people traumatized by foreign invasion vents at least some of its resentments in its folk tradition. For instance, a rich body of epic songs about the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans still thrives in Eastern Europe. Similarly, there are Jewish tales in which the Roman assault upon biblical lands is bitterly remembered. We have versions of Spanish tales in which the Moorish conquest of the Iberian Peninsula is commemorated, and also anti-Muslim tales and songs among the Hindus from the time of the Islamic conquest of Indian kingdoms.[11] By contrast, no such narratives against the Arab conquest of Iran exist in Persian folklore. The few lines of the *Shāhnāmeh* in which an Iranian General forecasts the fate of his country after the Muslim invasion hardly counters this fact: that story is preserved in Arabic historical and literary traditions from a time long before Ferdowsi. It, in other words, does not belong to Persian folklore per se.[12]

Siring a Language, Creating a Culture

Let me now turn to a major conundrum about Iran's national poet: Is Ferdowsi the father of Persian language and cultural identity? The answer to this question must be emphatically and dogmatically, "No, he is not"; and equally emphatically and dogmatically: "Yes, he is."

The answer should be "No, he is not," because between A.D. 980 and A.D. 994 when Ferdowsi was active, the Persian language had already produced a vast literature. We have more than 16,550 distiches (some 33,100 lines of verse) from the poetry of only four of his contemporaries.[13] In prose, we have several massive commentaries on the Koran and a number of histories (one of which runs to more than 2,530 pages in small print).[14] We also have numerous treatises on geography, mirabilia, pharmacology, medicine, mysticism, and philosophy that together exceed ten thousand

printed pages. Probably several times this amount is collecting dust in museums and libraries as unpublished manuscripts, and a great many others must have been lost during the past millennium. The language of this vast body of prose and poetry is the same as the language of the *Shāhnāmeh*. Therefore, the claim that Persian language was dead or dying before Ferdowsi blew the breath of life into it has no basis in fact, and he may not be legitimately called the "father of Persian language."

But in a different sense Ferdowsi is the father of the Persian language. He may be called that because of the unique nature of his creative genius. Ferdowsi burst upon the decorous decadence of Persian courtly literature in full armor with the fire and fury of battle in his words. He refined and revitalized the art of Persian narrative poetry to such a degree that his refinement became indistinguishable from an act of independent creation. Because of this fact, one may legitimately ask if the art of Persian narrative verse even existed before Ferdowsi. It is Ferdowsi's essential singularity, the utter uniqueness and vitality of his art compared to the art of all previous Persian poets, which makes him the father of Persian verse, and even the very language. In this sense alone, he was the life force that fathered the language.

Ferdowsi's influence upon Persian language and culture has been so profound that he has become mythologized. Fact and fancy mingle in discussions of his life. In spite of this, I believe a reasonably levelheaded biography of the poet may be inferred not only from his own verse, but also from a number of incontestable facts. However, before we can examine that narrative we must determine which assumptions about Iran's national poet may be retained and what legendary accounts must be shed along the way. I must, therefore, briefly discuss the legendary scenarios of Ferdowsi's life and career, if only to point out their flaws.

The Ethnic Legend

According to one of these tales, Ferdowsi was born under the rule of the Iranian Samanid princes (A.D. 819–1005) and when they were succeeded by the Turkish Ghaznavids in A.D. 998, he was profoundly upset by the passing of political power to a foreign family. It is further claimed that because the founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty, Sultan Mahmūd (r. 998–1030), was an anti-Iranian Turk, his coming to power constituted a threat to the survival of Persian language and literature. Alarmed by this cultural emergency, Ferdowsi embarked upon his great project of composing the *Shāhnāmeh* as an expression of his nationalist response to the takeover of his country by a foreign overlord, and in so doing, he rescued not only the Persian language but also Iranian's national identity.

This is a fine story, and I have no objections to a fine story, especially one that has all the elements of a great yarn: a powerful villain (Mahmūd), a lone hero (Ferdowsi), an innocent victim on the verge of destruction (Persian culture), and the final victory of good over evil. The problem with it, however, is that, like so many other satisfying tales, it is not true. There are several reasons why. First, we know from Ferdowsi's own words that he completed the first redaction of the *Shāhnāmeh* in A.D. 995, which is three years before Mahmūd ascended the throne.[15] Therefore, our poet's composition of the *Shāhnāmeh* could not be a "reaction" to Mahmūd's takeover of the throne because that takeover was three years into the future. Furthermore, Ferdowsi began work on the *Shāhnāmeh* under the rule of the Samanids in A.D. 980, when Mahmūd was still a child,[16] and finished the poem's first redaction in A.D. 995 when the Samanids were still in power. Therefore, because the versification of the *Shāhnāmeh* began during the reign of an Iranian dynasty and was completed under them, we may not consider it a "nationalist reaction" to the takeover of the country by foreigners. No foreigners were in charge when Ferdowsi completed the first redaction of his work.

Years later, in A.D. 1009 or 1010, Ferdowsi prepared a second edition of the *Shāhnāmeh*, which he dedicated to Mahmūd in such a way that leaves no doubts about his sincere respect for the king. Dedicating the *Shāhnāmeh* to the very man against whom the book is supposed to have been directed is a curious way of expressing dislike and resentment of that man. This scenario is clearly not believable in its present form, and we must consider revising it either in whole or in part.

Although vilified beyond redemption by the majority of classical Persian scholars, Mahmūd of Ghaznah is undoubtedly the greatest patron of Persian literature. He was born in Iran in A.D. 971 from a Persian mother and a completely Persianized Turkish father. His father, who was brought to Iran as a slave, lived all of his life in Iran and died in the city of Ghaznah (in modern day Afghanistan), which in those days was still part of Iran. Like his father, Mahmūd spent all of his life in Iran and led several military campaigns against the neighboring Turkish states.

Let us now consider the king's parentage more closely in order to determine if he could be culturally considered Turkish at all.

Mahmūd's father, Sibuktigīn, was taken to Iran as a slave-boy of 12 from Central Asia by a slave-merchant known as Nasr-i Chāchī.[17] Mr. Chāchī must have primarily dealt in slaves who were destined for military service, because Sibuktigīn himself tells us that when his master crossed the river Oxus, he sold a number of his slaves to the Samanid prince Nūh ibn Mansūr, who was at the time in the city of Gozgānān. This must have happened some time before A.D. 976, when the prince left Gozgānān in

order to take over his father's throne. Sibuktigīn received his military training in Iran from Mr. Chāchī.[18] We know from his own account that he was quite tall and probably somewhat clumsy. This is how he describes his experiences as a slave-soldier in training:

> Before I come into Alptīgin's possession, the master who owned me crossed the Oxus River with me and thirteen of my friends, and brought us first to [the city of] Shuburqān and from there to Gozgānān. [Nūh ibn Mansūr] was at that time the ruler of Gozgānān. They offered us to him [for sale], and although he bought seven of us, I and five others of my mates were not among [the ones that he purchased]. Our master set out for [the town of] Nayshābūr, and later for [the cities of] Marv al-Rūd and Sarakhs, where he sold four other slaves. Two of my companions and I were all that were left. My nickname was "Sibuktigīn the lanky." Three of my master's horses were injured as I rode them, and by the time we arrived at this spot, my fourth mount had also been hurt. My master severely beat me because of this, and had put the saddle upon my back and had made me carry it. I was very sad on account of my condition and bad fortune and feared that no one was going to purchase me. My master had sworn that he was going to make me walk back to Nayshābūr, and he made good his oath. That night I slept with great sorrow, and dreamed of the prophet Elijah upon whom be peace, who came to me, greeted me and asked, "Why are you so sad?" I said: "I'm sad because of my bad fortune." He said: "Don't be depressed. I bring you good tidings. You will be a great and eminent man in the future."[19]

Sibuktigīn was eventually sold to the Samanid slave-general, Alptigīn, when he held the governorship of the vast province of Khurāsān.[20] Since we know that Alptigīn was appointed to that office in A.D. 960,[21] Sibuktigīn must have been sold to him sometime during or shortly after that year.

Sibuktigīn's fortunes must have changed for the better after he came into the service of Alptigīn. He seems to have bypassed the period of basic training of the slave-soldiers, which usually took eight years. We know this because the vizier, Nizām al-Mulk (1018–1093) has preserved a brief account of it for us. Since this is important for our purposes, I will provide a brief translation of its relevant parts.

> This system was still in use at the time of the Samanids [A.D. 819–1005] and slaves were given gradual advancement in rank according to their service and merit. Thus, after the slave was bought, he was made to serve on foot for a year, and was given a Zandījī cloak and boots, but he was not allowed to ride a horse—either in private or in public—during this time at all; and if he did, he was punished for it. Following his year of service on

> foot, the group leader would inform the royal chamberlain [of the slave's progress] and the chamberlain would pass on the information to the king. Thereafter, they would give him a little Turkish mount with a saddle of untanned leather and leather stirrups. After a year of service with horse and whip, they gave him a sword to wear in the third year.[22] In the fourth year, he was given quiver and a bow case that he wore when he rode. In the fifth year he was granted improved equipment and a decorated bridle together with robes and a mace that he hung from a mace ring. In the sixth year his duties were cup-bearing, and serving beverages. He hanged a goblet from his belt [during this time]. In the seventh year he was made a supplies officer and in the eighth year of service was given a single-post, sixteen-peg tent and three newly purchased slaves were put in his charge and was also given the title of the "group leader."[23]

Sibuktigīn must have risen in the ranks very quickly because we find him in command of two hundred slave-soldiers when he was only 18 years of age.[24] And that's how things turned out for the young slave, who would rise to be a great general and a founder of a powerful dynasty.

Cut off from his Turkish roots, Sibuktigīn was culturally Persian because he grew up in Iran and lived there from the age of 12 until his death in A.D. 996. He rapidly rose in the ranks of the Samanid military establishment, was freed, and later married the daughter of the Persian governor of the city of Zābul. He thus became the son-in-law to an old aristocratic Persian family with roots in the nobility of pre-Islamic Persia. All of this means that Sibuktigīn's son, Mahmūd, was on his mother's side an Iranian aristocrat, *not* a Turk. It is precisely because of Mahmūd's maternal connection to the Persian aristocracy of Zābul that his court poets refer to him as "Mahmūd of Zābul." What's more, the poets' testimony is independently corroborated by the great Seljuk vizier, Nizām al-Mulk who certainly had access to the vast Ghaznavid archives, and his testimony has the authority of official records. He confirms that "Sibuktigīn married the daughter of the lord of Zābul (رئيس زاول), and Mahmū is called Zābulī (i.e., Zabolian) for this reason." Now the Arabic word *ra'īs* (رئيس) is often used as a translation of the Persian word *dihqān* (دهقان) that referred to the class of Iran's pre-Islamic landed gentry who administrated the rural parts of the empire for the central government and the great aristocratic houses. Thus, Mahmūd's mother was the daughter of the chief Iranian aristocratic family in the city of Zābul.[25] This evidence is further supported by Mustawfī of Qazvīn, an administrator and historian of the Mongol period who also had access to official records.[26] Therefore, there can be no doubt that Mahmūd's mother was an Iranian aristocrat.

Considering Mahmūd to be an anti-Iranian Turkish ruler who usurped the Persian throne flies in the face of all we know about him. We know

that the king's mother was Iranian and that he was born and raised in Iran. Therefore, calling him a Turk only because his father—who for all practical purposes also grew up in Iran—had Turkish roots is not possible without a toxic dose of male chauvinism that disregards his mother and completely marginalizes her. Furthermore, we know that Mahmūd shared the same traditional upbringing that was typical of the aristocratic children in the Samanid court. Most of these children spent their formative years in the bosom of their Persian mothers and in the care of Iranian women who nurtured them. Mahmūd was no exception. His formative years were spent with his Iranian mother in the Persian environment of his father's harem, which means that his cultural identification was Persian. We know that he was raised by Persian women; a fact that we can infer from information about the childhood of his sons and grandsons. When, in A.D. 1010, Mahmūd went to campaign in the east, he left his two sons, both of whom were 14, and his younger brother, who was 17 at the time, in the care of one of his governors. An Iranian high official who had been present at the time reported to Bayhaqī that his grandmother, a Persian lady of good birth,

> was literate, and knew much about Koranic exegesis and about the history of the prophet upon whom be peace, and in addition she knew how to prepare delectable dishes and drinks. . . . The princes often called on her to tell them stories and read them histories. . . . And I was not very old at the time and was attending Qur'an classes [with the princes] and [after class] used to show them obeisance as well as a child [of my age] could, and return home. Until one day, Prince Masᶜūd ordered his mentor—a man by the name of Basālimī[27]—to teach me something of literature; and he taught me a few odes from the divan of al-Mutanabbī.[28]

We know that this Persian lady had also observed Mahmūd's own childhood because she says to Mahmūd's son: "I recall your father being here during his childhood."[29]

The governor's wife in whose care the princes were placed was also a fine lady whom the boys were quite fond of. Years later, when Mahmūd's son, Masᶜūd, had succeeded his father as king, he remembered this lady warmly, and used to show her great honor when she visited the court to the point of treating her on a par with the queen mother.[30]

There is no doubt that the Ghaznavid princes spent their formative years in the company of women, and that their mothers and caretakers were primarily Persian women. We have the account of the betrothal of one of Mahmūd's grandsons, a boy of only 13. The historian Bayhaqī tells us that upon the conclusion of the marriage ceremony, "the prince

was sent back to the *harem* to his mother," which implies that the prince's usual residence was the Ghazanvid harem where his mother resided.[31] We have already seen that Mahmūd left his sons, who were 14, and his brother, who was 17, behind rather than taking them to war; and that the princes associated with local aristocratic ladies. The account of Prince Mardānshāh's betrothal also indicates that Ghaznavid princes lived in close proximity to their mothers in the royal harem, possibly as late as their mid to late teens. Bayhaqī's explicit statement that "the prince was still quite a child because he was only thirteen" indicates that a boy of 13 could still be thought of as a child. This may go against our presumptions about life in classical Persia, but the fact is that the society was rich enough, and produced enough of a surplus that it could extend the period of childhood at least for the upper classes. Therefore, the Ghaznavid princes must have spent their early life under the influence of their female Iranian caretakers and were profoundly influenced by them. No matter who their fathers were, or what their paternal ethnicity may have been, such aristocratic boys lived in a thoroughly Persian ambience during their formative and teenage years, and were culturally Iranian.

There is no reason to think that Mahmūd's upbringing was any different. His Persian mother, his Iranian nurses, to say nothing of his other Persian relatives, must have transmitted their language and culture to him. Therefore, he considered Persian culture his own culture, and the Persian language his mother tongue. This is why Mahmūd, whom historians are too quick to call Turkish, is in fact Iranian; and this is why he was such a great patron of Persian rather than Turkish literature.

Persian language and culture dominated in the courts of Mahmūd, his brothers, and his sons even after the family was driven into the Indian subcontinent by the invading Seljuk tribes in the middle of the eleventh century A.D.. Indeed, it was the Ghaznavids who brought Persian literature into India, where it remained the language of art and administration until the advent of the British Raj, when English gradually replaced it.

Let us now consider what happened to Mahmūd after he came of age. Of Mahmūd's several wives, the one who bore his successor, Mas^cūd I (r. 1031–1041), was a princess of the ancient Iranian aristocratic family, the house of Farighūn. The Farighūnids were not only connected to the Samanid kings by marriage; they also traced their ancestry to the nobility of pre-Islamic Persia.[32] Therefore, the idea that Mahmūd disliked Ferdowsi because he resented the fiercely Persian sentiments expressed in the *Shāhnāmeh* is pure fantasy. These sentiments were Mahmūd's own feelings, which were routinely expressed in the verses of his own court poets. Let me cite just one instance from the divan of the poet Farrukhī (d. A.D. 1038), both in Persian and in English translation.

خداوندا! جهاندارا! ز خانان دوستی ناید　　که بی رسمند و بی قولند و بدعهدند و بد پیمان
زبانشان نیست با دلشان یکی در دوستی کردن　　تو خود به دانی از هرکس رسوم و عادت ایشان
گر از بیم تو با تو دوستی جویند و نزدیکی　　بدان کان چیست، ایشانرا مخالف دان و دشمن خوان
وگر چون بندگان آیند، خدمت را میان بسته　　گرامی دارشان[33]کان آمدن هست از بن دندان
چو با تو نیست ایشان را توان داوری کردن　　چه چاره ست از تواضع کردن و پذرفتن پیمان
ز دشمن دوستی ناید، اگرچه دوستی جوید　　درین معنی مثل بسیار زد لقمان و جز لقمان
ز ایرانی چگونه شاد خواهد بود تورانی　　پس از چندین بلا کامد ز ایران بر سر توران
هنوز ار بازجویی در زمینشان چشمه ها یابی　　از آن خونها کزیشان ریخت تیغ رستم دستان
بجای آنکه تو کردی بر ایشان در کتر شاها　　حدیث رستم دستان یکی بود از هزارافسان ...
به ترکسان سرائی نیست کز شمشیر تو صد ره　　در آن شیون نکردستند خاتونان ترکستان ...
نیرزند آن همه خانان به پاک اندیشهء خسرو　　مکن زین پس ازیشان یاد و ایشانرا به ایشان مان
وگر گویی ولایتشان بگیرم تا مرا مانَد　　ولایتشان بیابانیست خشک و بیکس و ویران
چه خواهی کرد آن ویرانه های ضایع و بی کس　　ترا ایزد ولایت های خوش داده ست و آبادان ...
زهی اندر جهانداری و بیداری چو افریدون　　زهی اندر نکوکاری و هوشیاری چو نوشروان

My lord, O master of the world! Turkish rulers are not true friends
They lack noble traditions and are unreliable and treacherous.
They speak with forked tongues even to their friends
You know their ways better than anyone.
If they seek to befriend you for fear of you
Know why that is, and think of them as opponents and enemies
And if they come to you, ready to serve
Keep them at a distance, because they loath to come
Since they don't have the power to oppose your will
What choice do they have but to show humility and obedience?
Enemies can't be friends, even if they seek friendship
Much have the wise said about this
How can Turks have good will toward Iranians?
After so many blows that rained upon their heads from Iran?
Even now if one searches their land, one finds
Springs of blood that Rustam's blade freed in their realm
Compared to what you did to them in the battle of Katar sire!
Stories of Rustam seem as silly tales . . .
There is no house in Turkestan in which
The women have not bitterly keened because of your blade . . .
All those Turkish lords are not worth a moment of the king's thought
Think no more of them, and leave them to themselves
And if you would say that I conquer their land to join it to my own,
Their land is but an arid and desolate desert
What good is such barren wasteland to you?
When God has granted you beautiful and prosperous lands? . . .
Lo, you are another Fereydūn in lordship and vigilance
Lo, you are another Nūsharvān in charity and intelligence[34]

In spite of this evidence, like the many-headed Hydra of ancient lore, the legend of Mahmūd's dislike of the *Shāhnāmeh* and his objection to the

poem's treatment of Turks is hard to slay. No sooner does one cut off one of its heads than another grows to take its place. The fact is that Mahmūd considered himself Iranian because he was born of an Iranian mother in Iran, and because even his Turkish father, who was brought to Iran as a boy of 12, was thoroughly Persianized. Therefore, Mahmūd had nothing against Ferdowsi or the *Shāhnāmeh* on ethnic grounds, and we may safely abandon that narrative as false. However, before we can leave this issue, we must address another related legend.

One version of the legend of Mahmūd's opposition to Persian language alleges that the king preferred Arabic to Persian because Arabic was the language of the Qur'an. That one of Mahmūd's viziers, the great Maymandī, who served him from A.D. 1014 to A.D. 1024, ordered that the chancery's correspondence be conducted in Arabic rather than in Persian, is offered as proof of the king's implicit opposition to Persian language. Presumably if the king and his vizier disliked Persian, then they would also dislike the "father" of the Persian language and also his great poem.

The facts are quite different. Before Maymandī's appointment to the office of the grand vizier, this office was held by Fazl ibn Ahmad, who served in this post for nearly 17 years (A.D. 994–1011). During Fazl's administration, the language of the Ghaznavid chancery was primarily Persian. This has led a number of authorities to assume that he disliked the Arabic language. But the truth of the matter is that Fazl was not particularly learned, and Persian, being his mother tongue, was easier for him than Arabic. He had, in other words, no cultural opposition to Arabic or its literature. He just did not know it well enough to conduct official business in it. This is evident from a number of facts. First, both of his sons, Muhammad, who died in his youth, and ᶜAlī, who had the nick name al-Hajjāj and survived both his father and his brother, were quite well known for their literary skill in Arabic. Specimens of their Arabic verse are preserved in a number of classical texts.[35] This implies that their father did not have anything against Arabic, because had he disliked the language, he would not have allowed his sons to study it so well that they achieved their celebrity in Arabic literature. Fazl was not a particularly learned man, and lacked his successor's extensive knowledge of Arabic literature and language. So, the reason Fazl changed the language of the Ghaznavid chancery from Arabic to Persian, and the reason Maymandī changed it back to Arabic was not Fazl's love of Persian or Maymandī's hatred of it. It was simply that Fazl could not conduct the business of the empire in Arabic while Maymandī could. The Ghaznavid administrator, ᶜUtbi (d. A.D. 1036), whose history of the dynasty is an important source of information about that period, confirms that because of his inadequate

command of Arabic, Fazl had ordered the chancery's business to be conducted in Persian. He also reports that after Fazl's death, when the very learned Maymandī succeeded him as the grand vizier, he rescinded his predecessor's decree and reinstated Arabic as the court's language of correspondence. However, Maymandī also allowed an exception for letters that were addressed to persons who could not understand Arabic. He decreed that this correspondence could continue to be conducted in Persian.[36] It is important to recall that the use of Arabic as the official and exclusive language of the chancery was the case even during the reign of the Samanids, whom no one accuses of having anti-Persian sentiments.[37] For instance, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Khwārizmī, who knew Persian quite well and was an ethnic Iranian, composed his encyclopedic *Mafātīh al-ᶜUlūm* (*Keys to Sciences*), which he dedicated to the Samanid vizier, ᶜUtbī (d.982) in A.D. 977, in the Arabic language lest he be thought of as incompetent in the lingua franca of the Muslim empire.[38]

Putting his vizier's attitude toward Persian aside for the moment, Mahmūd's own alleged dislike of Persian does not withstand scrutiny either. Indeed, we are in possession of two compelling pieces of evidence that prove he preferred Persian to Arabic. First, both examples of surviving correspondence that we know were composed by him are in Persian.[39] Second, and to my mind more importantly, the polymath Bīrūnī, who lived in his court and knew the king well, writes that Mahmūd actually *disliked* Arabic. This is an important piece of evidence, which as far as I know has never been cited in this connection before. I will, therefore, provide a translation of the gist of Bīrūnī's passage, and will also include the Arabic text in my endnotes:

> Our religion and our government are Arabic, and religion and government are as twins . . . Sciences of the various parts of the world have been translated into Arabic . . . [and in spite of the fact that] every people prefers its own language to which it is accustomed, [many tend to use Arabic]. I compare this with my own [condition] . . . I learned Arabic and Persian both of which are [foreign languages], which I learned with difficulty [Bīrūnī's native language was Khwarezmian]. But I prefer to be cursed in Arabic than praised in Persian. The truth of my statements are evident to those who have looked into a scientific book that has been translated into Persian, and have seen how the subject of the book has been damaged by this, and how it becomes unintelligible and unusable because Persian language is only fit for narrating stories of kings and for telling evening tales [rather than for science]. And [even] King Yamīn al-Dawla[=Mahmūd]—May God rest his soul—*in spite of his dislike of Arabic*, [had a medical text translated into Arabic rather than into Persian].[40]

Bīrūnī's testimony leaves no doubt that Mahmūd did not like Arabic. In spite of this evidence, which comes from an unimpeachable eyewitness to the goings-on in the Ghazanvid court, Mahmūd and his vizier's dislike of Persian is assumed by many to be true. Let us go on to examine another story about Mahmūd and Ferdowsi: a story that alleges that the king disliked the poet for religious reasons.

The Religious Legend

Mahmūd's alleged hostility to Ferdowsi is sometimes justified by another story, which I shall call the "religious legend." According to this scenario, the king was a Sunni Muslim who intensely disliked Ferdowsi because the poet belonged to the Shiite sect of Islam. This scenario casts Ferdowsi as the victim of Mahmūd's religious zeal, and blames the court's failure to recognize his achievement on the king's doctrinal opposition to the poet's religion.

The problem with this scenario is that it is contradicted by all that we know about Mahmūd's treatment of other Shiites poets and personages. For instance, the great Shiite poet Ghazā'irī of Ray (d. A.D. 1036) vastly benefited from Mahmūd's patronage. In A.D. 1009, the same year in which Ferdowsi completed his second redaction of the *Shāhnāmeh*, Ghazā'irī composed a poem in praise of Mahmūd's victory in one of his campaigns, and the Sultan rewarded him with two sacks of gold. The poet thanked the king in the following words:

> I received two sacks of gold after the victory over Narayan
> Soon will I be granted a hundred sacks and more when Antioch is conquered.[41]

In the same panegyric Ghazā'irī begs Mahmūd to stop showering gifts upon him.[42] What is especially telling in Mahmūd's attitude toward Shiism is that Ghazā'irī ends one of his panegyrics with an allusion to his Shiism, apparently without fear of evoking his patron's displeasure.

According to the historian Bayhaqī (d. 1077), Mahmūd married his daughters,[43] as well as one of his sisters,[44] to Shiite princes. Naturally, if he hated Shiites as much as some scholars claim he did, he would not have done so. In fact, a careful consideration of the texts of the Ghaznavid period proves that not only were political marriages between the Sunni and Shiite princes common, but the whole idea of Sunni-Shiite enmity was considered distasteful and abhorrent to the elite.[45] In view of these facts, the story that Mahmūd disliked Ferdowsi because of the poet's Shiism turns out to be as unreliable as the tale of the king's aversion to him for ethnic reasons.

The Legend of the Personal Insult

There is yet a third explanation of Mahmūd's animosity toward Ferdowsi. This story, which is quoted in a classical Persian text entitled, *The History of Sistān*,[46] alleges that Mahmūd disliked Ferdowsi because of a personal insult that the poet directed against him. Although most Iranian scholars stop short of claiming that this story is literally true, almost all of them use it in a way that implies credibility.[47] Thus, the tale vacillates between myth and reality in that murky space in the academic mind that has to do with psychological need rather than with evidence.[48] The fact that such an absurd piece of fantasy receives the scholastic sanction that it has is proof of its emotional appeal. One can hardly pick up a book or article on Ferdowsi and Mahmūd without encountering a reference to this strange tale.

The tale is related in an interpolated passage inserted into *The History of Sistān*, the earliest parts of which were composed sometime around A.D. 1057. The gist of the story may be translated as follows:

> Ferdowsi versified the Shāhnāmeh and dedicated it to King Mahmūd. He then recited it [for the king] for many days. Mahmūd said: "The whole Shāhnāmeh is no more than a bunch of stories about Rostam. Why, there are a thousand men like him in my host." Ferdowsi responded: "May his majesty live a long life! I know not how many men like Rostam there may be in his forces; but I do know that God almighty created none like Rostam." Having said this, he bowed and left. King Mahmūd said to his vizier: "This rascal implicitly called me a liar." The vizier said: "Then he must be put to death." But as much as they looked for him, he could not be found.[49]

Such a fantastic tale hardly requires refutation, but first let me take a few moments to point out some of its problems.[50] We are expected to believe that mere moments after insulting the king, the octogenarian Ferdowsi exited the court with such speed and agility that the imperial guards could not capture and arrest him.

Eyewitness accounts of the vastness and organization of the Ghaznavid court place this story beyond the most liberal limits of credulity. Here is what we know of the immensity of Mahmūd's court: In his description of an ambassador's visit to the court, which took place on Thursday, December 29, A.D.1031, the historian Bayhaqī, who was an eyewitness to the event, writes that in the morning of the visit four thousand guardsmen, three hundred of the elite slave-soldiers, and hundreds of dignitaries were stationed in the middle of the palace yard. Scores of war-elephants carrying litters of soldiers were arrayed just outside the court and many

armored cavalrymen with their regimental colors, were stationed on both sides of the gate. When the ambassador arrived, a great din of horns and war drums was raised, and he was taken through all of this to the audience hall where he met the king amid great pomp and ceremony.[51]

It is evident from Bayhaqī's account that the Ghaznavid court was so vast that it could accommodate thousands of soldiers, guards, grandees, and other personnel, to say nothing of war-elephants and horses. Entering or exiting from it involved considerable ceremony. It is therefore, hard to believe that in his eighties, Ferdowsi managed to insult the king and leave this court, evading all the king's horses and all the king's men. The account of the encounter between the poet and the prince in the *History of Sistān* is so fantastic that none but the most gullible or the most willing can actually believe it.

But if this story is so unbelievable, then why do so many authorities quote it? I believe the psychological need to turn Ferdowsi into a national hero who gets away with taunting and troubling a "foreign ruler" is so strong that it overwhelms reason, historical evidence, and even common sense. This story may not illustrate much about the relationship between the poet and the king, but it does disclose the mind's endless capacity for believing the unbelievable. It reveals more about the believers than about either Ferdowsi or Mahmūd.

Now that we have dispelled some of the fictitious legends about Ferdowsi's life, let us turn to his masterpiece and see what it means and how it is put together.

CHAPTER 8

Epic Unity: The Case Against Under-Analysis

Previously, in this volume, I focused on Ferdowsi as a man, and on the historical and cultural circumstances that led to the creation of the *Shāhnāmeh*. I suggested ways of sorting fact from fiction in order to help the reader distinguish what may be said with some degree of certainty from the purely fantastical. The next part of this study is devoted to the *Shāhnāmeh* as a work of art. I propose to consider some of the book's artistic features in order to shed light on the way that it is put together as a unified narrative.

We have already seen that Ferdowsi's poem is a verse rendition of a preexisting prose work. That prose text, like all Arabic and Persian literary works of the classical period, had a literary structure that gave it artistic unity and coherence.[1] However, a number of Iranian and foreign scholars have argued that since some of the *Shāhnāmeh* stories are not found in ancillary Arabic and Persian texts, Ferdowsi must have adopted these episodes from sources other than his prose archetype. For instance, Mojtaba Minovi suggests that the poet drew on the Abū Mansūrī text as well as on "other sources and documents." Zabihollah Safa believes that although Ferdowsi did not "invent" any of the stories that are in the *Shāhnāmeh*, he did make use of multiple other "written sources."[2] Only Mohammad T. Bahar, himself a great poet in the tradition of the old Khurāsān poets, emphatically states that Ferdowsi did not invent a word of what is in the *Shāhnāmeh*. Bahar believed that the poet meticulously followed the wording and order of his prose archetype. He blames any differences between Ferdowsi's account of epic tales and what is found in other sources on two possible reasons. One reason may be manuscript variants between the poet's copy of the prose *Shāhnāmeh* and the copies of the book used by the authors of these sources; alternatively, it may be

that Ferdowsi was using a different redaction of the text than the one used by others:

> What I believe is that [the texts of the different] copies of the prose *Shāhnāmeh* were different; and that the final redaction of the text, namely the one prepared by the order of Abū Mansūr son of ᶜAbd al-Razzāq in the city of Tūs before coming into Ferdowsi's possession, was more detailed than other manuscripts of the book. It is [therefore] not unlikely that the poet adopted the narratives of Zāl and Rustam, Bīzhan and Manīzha, and that of Alexander from eastern Iranian sources as he mentions his source for the story of Rustam's death to have been a certain Āzād Sarv, who resided in the city of Marv and had a copy of the stories of Rustam. . . . It is clear to me—having carefully studied the verses of the *Shāhnāmeh*—that Ferdowsi has not made up a single story of the narratives of his book. . . . His aim had always been to put the exact narrative of the [prose] book that he considered a compendium of histories, words, and deeds that formed [Iran's] national epic into verse. [Ferdowsi] aimed to show his skill in poetry by elaborating on similes, allusions, exempla, and in inserting his own sage council [in the narrative], *not* to randomly weave whatever stories he may have heard here and there into a narrative. . . . Given these preliminaries, there may be no doubt that the poet worked from a literary prose archetype that must have been prepared on the basis of ancient sources. When Ferdowsi refers to such narrators as the *dihqān*, Āzād Sarv, Māhū, Bahrām, and others, he is transmitting what existed in his archetype. He merely transmits that information.[3]

Some scholars see a number of clumsy seams in the narrative of the epic, which, they argue, indicate places where external episodes have been arbitrarily inserted into the narrative. Theodor Nöldeke, for instance, believes that Ferdowsi's alleged weaving of diverse narratives into his poem produces the impression that "the different parts of the huge poem are partly only loosely connected with each other."[4]

I believe there are no incongruities in the narrative of the *Shāhnāmeh*. Once the progression of episodes is properly analyzed, the underlying structure shows these episodes to be firmly interwoven. The problem, it seems to me, is not narrative incongruity. It is under-analysis—and a tendency to miss the forest for the trees.

A number of stories are usually cited as interrupting the book's narrative flow: Rustam's Seven Trials, Rustam and Suhrāb, Rustam and the demon Akvān, Bīzhan and Manīzha, and the episode of Furūd in the rule of Kaykhosrow. In this chapter, I will analyze all but one of these stories in order to show how intimately they are related to the logic of the epic's narrative. I will argue that every one of these episodes fulfils a significant function in the *Shāhnāmeh* and is tied to the poem's narrative

logic. None of these tales may be deleted without disrupting the logical structure of the poem as a whole. Since not all readers will know the episodes under discussion, a narrative summary will precede each analysis.

The most important point that must be kept in mind about the *Shāhnāmeh* is that the poem belongs to the genre of elite literature.[5] The required literary craftsmanship, not to mention the level of artistry, must meet standards of careful organization rendered into a highly symbolic discourse typical of other such literary creations in classical Persian and Arabic.[6] The organization of the poem's narrative is designed to facilitate smooth transitions from one story into the next, while weaving these episodes into a complex whole which accrues additional meaning by the juxtapositions and elaborations this structure reinforces in the basic narrative.

But if I am right and the *Shāhnāmeh* is a unified narrative, then who is responsible for its unity? Was it Ferdowsi, or the scholars who compiled his prose archetype that fashioned the poem's unity? I believe that the book's narrative organization is the creation of the authors of its prose archetype. The prose *Shāhnāmeh*'s compilers explicitly state their preoccupation with structure and symbolism in the book's preface:

> There is much in this [book] that appears outlandish. But that is fine [because] when one learns its hidden sense and when that sense is made clear, [those things] appear sensible and acceptable.[7]

Ferdowsi inherited this concern with symbolic expression. He explicitly states at the beginning of his poem that even stories which may appear untrue or fantastic at first glance will make sense when seen as symbolic tales (i: 12: 113–14):

> Don't deem this as mere fancy and legend,
> Think not that the world always turned the same,
> For most of this book accords with sense
> And the rest makes sense as symbolism.

Understanding the context of every *Shāhnāmeh* episode is crucial if one is to decode the symbolic sense of its episodes. Much of what the *Shāhnāmeh* is trying to communicate would be missed if its narrative context is neglected. So the story of Rustam's Seven Trials must first be placed in its proper narrative context.

Two sets of heroic adventures in the *Shāhnāmeh* are commonly known by the title of the "Seven Trials." Both the hero, Rustam, and Prince Isfandiyār must undergo their own seven trials. Rustam's trials occur first in the narrative; Prince Isfandiyār's come much later.

Although there has been much speculation about the question of which tale is older and which has served as the model for the other,[8] these questions do not concern us here. Aside from the fact that the question of "primacy" is irrelevant to our analysis, the motif of heroic trials is part of the biography of so many Iranian epic heroes that it is not a good indicator of genetic relationship. That is to say that tales of Rustam's adventures and Isfandiyār's deeds could have existed side by side from time immemorial. The features of one need not necessarily depend on those of the other. Heroic biography, as we shall see later in this volume, is highly patterned and follows a traditional model.[9] I have already discussed the semiotic significance of Isfandiyār's trials elsewhere,[10] and will here limit myself to an interpretation of Rustam's adventures in terms of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s overall narrative logic and artistic unity.

Oedipus in Māzandarān

In his proem to the story, Ferdowsi signals that the narrative is about fathers and sons, and the replacing of the old with the young (ii: 3: 1–3, 5–8):

> When the fruit-tree grows tall
> —should it be harmed—
> Its leaves wither, and its roots weaken
> And it bends over [in ill health].
> When it [finally] leaves its station [in the garden]
> It surrenders its place to the sapling . . .
> But if an evil sapling grows from good roots,
> Blame not the roots
> When fathers leave the world to their sons,
> They school them in its secrets.
> If [the son] abandons his father's glory and good name
> Then he is truly a stranger, not a son.
> He who strays from the path of the master
> Will deservedly be harmed by the world.

By means of a commonly used rhetorical device called *barāᶜat-i istihlāl* in classical Muslim literary terminology, the poet signals that the story of Rustam's Seven Trials is about transformation and the passing of generations. This rhetorical strategy informs the reader of the following subject material's nature from the wording of the text's introduction. Many classical poets as well as authors of nonpoetic treatises employed this device routinely. Often when the introduction to a classical Persian or Arabic book is the only part of it that has survived, one can guess the

extinct volume's contents by analyzing the wording of its introduction. For instance, a geographical text might have an introduction that contains sentences praising God as the creator of the world, and the architect of the mountains, rivers, forests, and ravines, or exalting his name as he who organized countries and peoples of the world in a certain way. Naturally, medical expositions would have introductions with wording that praises God as he who planned and arranged the marvelous structure that is the human body and its humors. Having made use of this strategy, Ferdowsi goes on to reiterate his point in the first line of the story by saying: "When Kāvūs took over the throne of his father" (ii: 4: 11).

Let me point out what I understand the story of Rustam's Seven Trials to mean at the outset. This will help readers to better judge the inferences that I have drawn from this narrative. I shall argue that the episode of the Seven Trials is a metaphor for transformation. By going through his trials, Rustam comes of age, and is transformed from an immature boy who mindlessly does the biddings of his aged father into a man who replaces him as the chief hero of the court. His trials, in other words, are Rustam's rite of passage. But let me first summarize the story for those readers who might not readily recall it.

Following King Kāvūs's ascension to the Iranian throne, a demon musician comes to the court from the land of Māzandarān, and sings about the beauty of his country so beguilingly that the king is enticed into adding Māzandarān to his possessions. He orders his heroes to prepare for war, and disregarding the council of all of his advisors, attacks Māzandarān with a great army. Māzandarān's chief hero, the White Demon, captures the king and his entourage, blinds them, and keeps them in bondage. When the news of this event reaches Rustam's father, Zāl, who was at the time Iran's chief hero, he sends the young Rustam to the rescue. Rustam travels to Māzandarān through a perilous shortcut, and encounters several hardships on his way that are customarily called "Rustam's Seven Trials." When the hero reaches the king and the other imprisoned Iranians, they tell him that the White Demon has blinded them by sorcery, and only the application of this demon's blood to their eyes can break the spell and restore their sight. Rustam sets out for the demon's lair; after a fierce fight he kills the beast, and brings back its blood to heal the king and his entourage. They then attack Māzandarān again, kill its ruler, and place a character who has been helpful to Rustam on the throne of Māzandarān.

Several striking features of the episode of the Seven Trials are crucial to its proper analysis. First, contrary to the cultural tendency of the pre-Islamic Iranian ethos that associates white color with goodness and with divine beings, the demon in this story is white. Second, in the course of

his adventures, Rustam does not actually go through *seven* trials, and in fact performs no acts of martial importance at all in three of them. Thus, all but his last trial hardly qualify as heroic deeds. Third, Rustam's perilous encounter with the White Demon, is not called a *khān* "trial," in any of the authoritative manuscripts of the poem. It is simply given the title of the hero's fight with the White Demon. Fourth, every one of the episodes in the story of Rustam's Seven Trials has a dreamlike character, and Rustam is often depicted as either sleeping or about to sleep in a number of these so-called trials. Fifth, a close reading of the text forces the conclusion that what is important in this story is not so much the *deed*, but the *process*. Keeping these points in mind, let us look at Rustam's trials more closely.

During his first trial, Rustam arrives at a thicket, where he makes camp, and leaving his horse Rakhsh to graze, he falls asleep (ii: 22: 288–90).

> Some time into the night, a fierce lion
> Came boldly forth to his thicket
> Where he saw an elephantine form sleeping among the reeds,
> And a [charger] was nearby like a distressed lion.
> "First," said the lion, "I must slay the steed,
> The rider, I can have when I please."

However, Rakhsh proves too powerful an adversary for him, and after a fierce fight, kills the cat. Through this whole fight, which one may imagine to have been quite noisy, Rustam remains asleep and wakes up only to scold his horse for having endangered itself by fighting the feline prowler (ii: 22–23: 294–98). Sleeping through Rakhsh's valiant efforts is not much of a heroic deed, and hardly qualifies as a heroic trial in the ordinary sense of the word.

Rustam's second trial involves his passage through a dry, hot desert where he almost expires from dehydration. However, he survives this ordeal because a ram appears and leads him to water (ii: 24–25: 310–20). As soon as he has his fill of water and food, the hero lies down and sleeps again (ii: 25–26: 334–37). This ordinary event is considered Rustam's second trial, but doesn't seem terribly heroic by any standard.

During his third trial, Rustam slays a dragon, which, like the lion of the first trial, comes upon him as he sleeps. Terrified by the serpent, Rustam's horse twice tries to wake his master, but each time the dragon disappears as soon as the hero is roused. Irritated by the repeated interruption of his slumber, Rustam threatens to kill his loyal mount if it persists in waking him up, and falls sleep again. The dragon approaches for a

third time, but when Rustam is awakened, it cannot cloak himself again, and aided by Rakhsh, Rustam quickly dispatches it (ii: 28: 375–76).

The fourth trial brings our hero to a witches' feast, but the witches disappear as soon as they detect Rustam approaching. The hero seats himself at their abundant spread and begins to sing about his hard life. Disguised as a beautiful damsel, a witch joins him. But as soon as Rustam utters the name of God, she changes back to her hideous form, and Rustam kills her before she can do him harm (ii: 29–31: 389–416).[11]

For his fifth trial, the hero uneventfully passes through pitch darkness at the end of which he reaches the land of Māzandarān. The only noteworthy feature of this episode is that the hero emerges from the dense darkness completely drenched in sweat. Once again, he leaves Rakhsh to graze in the fields nearby and lies down to sleep. A local farmer in whose farm the hero's horse has wondered, attempts to punish Rustam, but the hero wakes up, tears the poor fellow's ears off, and goes back to sleep. The farmer complains to the local lord, a demon called Ulād, and Ulād rides out against Rustam with a small force. However, Rustam easily defeats the horsemen and captures Ulād whom he forces to serve as his guide.

The sixth trial consists of a minor skirmish between Rustam and a group of demons, which ends as soon as Rustam tears the head of their leader off with his bare hands. Following the skirmish, the hero arrives at the prison where the Iranians are housed, blind and miserable. King Kāvūs tells him that only the blood of the White Demon can restore their sight and sends him to get the blood. Rustam's final ordeal, his so-called Seventh Trial, is his fight with the White Demon.

Guided by Ulād, the hero reaches the demon's lair where he finds it sleeping. He wakes it up and defeats it in a fierce fight. He then cuts out its liver, brings the organ back to the Iranians and cures them by applying the gore to their sightless eyes (ii: 41–44: 550–601).[12] Although this ordeal is customarily known as Rustam's "Seventh Trial" and has been given that heading in most editions of the poem, the *Shāhnāmeh*'s manuscript tradition usually identifies it as "Rustam's fight with the White Demon," or "Rustam's Slaying of the White Demon."[13] For instance, out of 101 depictions of this scene in the Cambridge *Shāhnāmeh* project, only four illustrations include the words *khān* or *manzil* in their titles. These are usually very late manuscripts and are not particularly authoritative. Therefore, as far as it may be determined from the manuscript tradition, the episode of Rustam's fight with the White Demon was not called a "trial" originally. This is especially striking because all manuscripts use the words *manzil*, "station, stage," or *khān*, "trial," in the titles of the hero's first six trials; but they don't apply the term to this one.[14]

Pairing and Parting

The story of the Seven Trials narrates a pivotal point in Rustam's life. At the time of his trials, the hero is only a teenager who, although possessed of enormous physical power, is still subject to his father's authority and acts as his appendage. Indeed, the pair is often mentioned as a closely associated dyad of which Rustam's father, Zāl, is the prominent member.

In spite of his importance as the chief hero[15] of the Iranian court, by the time Rustam was born Zāl has grown quite old and inactive. Indeed, the Iranian heroes complain of his disengagement, and express their dissatisfaction with his inability to secure the realm (i: 331: 51–53):

> They said harsh things to Zāl
> And complained that you have been lax about your duties.
> Since you have risen to command after the [death of Sām]
> We have not had a day's rest.

In his response to the warriors' protests, Zāl first reminds them of his exploits, and then adds (i: 331–32: 56–61, 63):

> Since I girt the belt of manliness
> No warrior like me has put foot in the stirrup
> Nor could one wield my sword and mace,
> I was tireless in battle night and day,
> But I always dreaded old age.
> Now [alas] the manly back is bowed,
> And I can wield the Kabulian blade no more . . .
> [But lo] Rustam has grown tall
> And deserving of the crown of lordship.

After pointing out that he has grown old and feeble, Zāl reassures the anxious nobles of Rustam's readiness to take his place. Although at the time of his Seven Trials, Rustam is still a mere boy, his father is confident of his ability to carry out the mission, and make his reputation (ii: 18: 235–40):

> Thus said Dastān to Rustam:
> The sword has withered in the sheath!
> We must no longer feel at ease,
> Or rest amid opulence
> The king of the world is in the Dragon's breath
> And the Iranians drawn amid misery
> You must now saddle Rakhsh

And unleash the fury of your sharp blade.
Verily God nurtured you for times such as these.

We must consider the characters and the narrative roles of Rustam and his father before the episode of the Seven Trials in order to put this episode in its proper context.

By the time of his son's seven trials, Zāl is no longer celebrated for his physical prowess. He has evolved into the personification of wisdom, and his official function in the narrative depends more on his sagacity than on his heroism. This has been his fate almost from the beginning. He was born with a full head of "white hair," and is thus symbolically linked with age and wisdom from birth. His real name, *Dastān*, means "artifice, ruse" and his nickname, Zāl—by which he is better known—has been translated as "hoary, old man" on irrefutable etymological grounds.[16] Although age and wisdom are formidable powers in the gerontocratic universe of the *Shāhnāmeh*, heroism in epics depends more on brawn than on brain. Therefore, in one sense, it is precisely because of his great wisdom that Zāl cannot remain a formidable hero. Wisdom inherently shrinks from the kind of violence and brutality that heroes must routinely commit. Thus, although in the period between the death of his father and the coming of age of his son, Zāl must fulfill the office of Iran's "chief hero" almost by default, after the episode of the Seven Trials, he disappears into the background, only to be recalled for his wise council rather than to wage war. Following the Seven Trials, Rustam takes over all of Zāl's heroic functions. But what of Rustam's place in the epic before this episode?

Physically powerful as Rustam has been since birth, prior to his Seven Trials, he is treated as a child who is too inexperienced to serve as the country's *jahān-pahlavān*, "chief hero." He is routinely referred to by such terms as *kūdak-i nārasīd*, "a tender child" and "boy" by friend and foe, and shortly before the episode of his trials, an enemy hero refers to him as: "a youth who is yet to make a name for himself" (i: 347: 24, 32, 35).

In the pretrial period of Rustam's life, neither heroic achievement—his capture of Afrāsiyāb in battle—nor political service—his bringing of Kayqubād to the throne—is enough to grant him the recognition that older court heroes enjoy. This is evident in the scene of King Kayqubād's coronation: Although it was Rustam who rescued the king from his bucolic anonymity and brought him to the throne, he is not even mentioned among the premier court heroes (i: 345: 3–4):

All the lords gathered;
Dastān and the warrior Qāran,

The valiant Khurrād, Gashvād, and Burzīn
They all poured jewels upon the crown of the new [king].

By contrast to the scene above, when King Kāvūs holds court at the end of the episode of the Seven Trials, Rustam is mentioned first among the heroes of the court (ii: 44: 601–4):

When they anointed his eyes by [the demon's] blood,
They became seeing again . . .
They seated him upon the ivory throne,
And suspended the crown over him
He sat upon the throne of Mazandaran,
With Rustam and other heroes [around him]
[Warriors such as] Tūs, Farīburz, Gūdarz, and Gīv,
Ruhhām, Gurgīn, and the brave Bahrām.

By the end of his Seven Trials, Rustam, although not explicitly called a *jahān-pahlavān*, is accorded the trappings of the office and is completely differentiated from his father.

It appears, therefore, that the episode of the Seven Trials is the process through which Rustam achieves individuation and is fully differentiated from his father. As I pointed out before, this is the hero's "coming of age" story, the story of how the "boy" is transformed into the "man." Simultaneously, at the end of this episode, Rustam's father is forced into the background and leaves Rustam to independently operate as Iran's "chief hero."[17]

Rustam's transformation is verbally signaled in this episode by the fact that it is in this story that the hero is referred to by the title of *tājbakhsh*, "Crown Bestowing," for the first time (l. 375). All of these are signaled in the proem of the story because Ferdowsi begins by considering the relationship between fathers and sons, and by his metaphor of the old tree that will give its place to the young shoot.

Two sons—one good, one bad—are prominent in the story. The bad son is the young and impetuous Kāvūs, and the good son is the teenage Rustam. The attitudes of these young men towards their fathers are contrasted at the beginning of the story. Kāvūs is pompous and overconfident (ii: 14: 14), considering himself superior to his forbearers, whom he wishes to surpass in achievement (i: 5: 39–40):

I am greater than Jam, Zahhāk, and Kayqubād
In fortune and in justness.
I must [therefore,] surpass them in achievements [too]
It is meet that kings be ambitious.

Kāvūs's attempt to conquer Māzandarān, a task from which his ancestors shrank in horror, is an expression of his pride. When the old and venerable Zāl comes to the court in order to advise the young king against attacking Māzandarān, he reminds him that none of his forefathers entertained such a dangerous wish even though some were powerful kings with great magical powers (ii: 6: 50–52):

> King Jamshīd, that master of crown and signet
> Who commanded birds, demons, and fairies
> Never [dared] think of Māzandarān
> Nor sought war with the brave demons [of that clime].
> King Fereydūn, possessed of great ken and magic
> Did not entertain such thoughts either.

Kāvūs brushes Zāl's reasoning aside and claims that he is greater than his ancestors in every respect and therefore may attempt what they did not dare to undertake (ii: 10: 123–26):

> Thus did Kāvūs respond to him:
> I am not needless of your council,
> But I am greater than Fereydūn and Jam
> In manliness, glory, and wealth.
> I am also greater than Manūchihr and Kayqubād,
> Who dared not think of Māzandarān.

Zāl, of course, finds the words of the king "utterly nonsensical" (ii: 11: 135). Thus, from the outset Kāvūs is depicted as a vain, callow and arrogant son who considers himself superior to his forefathers. Ferdowsi is aware of the king's character because using the narrator's voice, he calls Kāvūs "arrogant" and "inexperienced" (ii: 7: 75).

In contrast with Kāvūs, the young Rustam displays wisdom and humility beyond his years, and unlike the king, who assumes a competitive stance against his ancestors, the hero plays the role of the obedient and respectful son. He obeys his elders even when they command something unreasonable and dangerous. For instance, when Zāl orders him to rescue the king by going through the perilous path of his Seven Trials (ii: 20: 259–63):

> Rustam said to his father:
> I gird myself to obey,
> But the nobles of yore
> Deemed it not wise to willingly tread toward hell
> Nor would one who is not sick of life

Come to a fierce lion freely.
But consider me prepared and gone.
I need none but God for support.
I will sacrifice my body and soul for my lord
And will crush the witches' hearts and their enchantments.

Even when he tries to implicitly warn his father of the dangers to which the old man's orders will expose him, he resorts to the authority of the "greats of yore" and couches his apprehension in quoting the ancestral ordinance that one should not endanger his own life.

Fathers and Demons

Rustam's father, Zāl, is ordinarily described as an "albino" in the literature because of his white hair. However, this description is not strictly correct. To the extent that albinos lack the pigment "melanin," they are characterized not only by the whiteness of their hairs, but also by paleness of their skins, and pinkness of their eyes. Zāl is not an ordinary albino because *only* the hair on his head is white. His eyebrows, lashes and eyes are clearly described as black: *siyāhash muzha, dīda-hā qīrgūn*, "his lashes black, and his eyes black as tar" (i: 73: 149). He is even described as:*siyah paykar u mū-yi sar chun saman*, "black is his body and his hair is white" (i: 166: 63), by his own father, Sām, who also complains that his son is "two colored" (i: 166: 65). Even Prince Isfandiyār notes the contrast between Zāl's dark skin and white hair, and comments: *tanash tīra bud, rūy o muyash sapīd*, "his body was dark, and his head and [the hair on his] face white" (v: 344: 631). Therefore, at birth, Zāl was not so much an albino as a boy with an old man's hair; a condition that is etymologically reflected in his name.

The White Demon is quite similar to Zāl in several respects. Like Zāl, he is not an albino in the strict sense of the word, but has white hair and dark skin: *ba rang-i shabah rūy, chun barf mūy,* "his skin was black as onyx, and his hair was like snow" (ii: 42: 569). The black color of his body is emphasized later in the story, when he is described as "a black mountain" (ii: 42: 570) whose blackness merged with the darkness of the cave in which he made his lair (ii: 42: 565).

What is striking with respect to this demon's white hair is the fact that demons of the Iranian lore are commonly black, or if not black, of a color other than white. The son of the Evil Spirit, a demon by the name of Khazūrān, is black (i: 23: 33–35, 61), and so is the leader of the demons who rebel against king Tahmūrat (i: 37: 34). Indeed, the very ideas of fierceness and savagery are often connected to "blackness" or "darkness"

in the *Shāhnāmeh*. Even Rustam's fierceness is expressed by describing him as: *mardī chu dīvī siyāh*, "A man like a black demon" (ii: 33: 438).

The unconventional whiteness of the White Demon in the story of the Seven Trials fascinated Theodor Nöldeke, who attempted to explain it by proposing that the White Demon might be a survival of an ancient subterranean White God in Indo-European lore, which has been transformed into the White Demon in Persian epic tradition.[18] Nöldeke's interpretation, ingenious as it is, is also forced and baseless. There is no need to conjure up some prehistoric "White God," in order to account for the color of this demon. *Shāhnāmeh* is a literary work of art, and all of its "oddities" may be explained by literary analysis rather than by philological flights of fancy. The reason for the unusual color of this demon is that he is Zāl's evil aspect. To put it in psychoanalytic terms, for Rustam, the White Demon is the "bad Zāl;" he is the symbolic equivalent of the white-haired father whom the son must engage in an oedipal conflict before he can claim independence. He is the domineering sire's dark side that must be defeated if the boy is ever to become a man.

Zāl and the White Demon are similar, not only in appearance, but also in many other respects. Like his human counterpart, the White Demon is the chief hero of his own country, and like Zāl lives away from the court in his own fiefdom. Like Zāl, to whom Iranian kings turn when in trouble, the Mazandaranian monarch must also turn to the White Demon when his realm is under attack (ii: 15: 191, cf. also ii: 40: 538–39, 546). All of these similarities imply that Zāl's image has been split in this story in order to form a "good" Zāl and a "bad" one. These represent the loving father of the conscious mind and the aggressive father of the unconscious. The White Demon is an imaginatively bizarre antihero born from splitting the mental ideal of the father: it is a necessary structural and psychological component in the development of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s characters and the epic's overall unity. This unsettling parallel protagonist carries forward the epic's structure and characterization, it is most definitely *not* the surviving bits and pieces of some imaginary White God dropped in from another culture's unrelated legends or from ancient lore.

Rustam's battle with the White Demon, therefore, is an oedipal showdown between the hero and his father, during which Rustam symbolically overcomes his father, forces him into the background, and takes his place.[19] Parricide, as Freud told us, must be well-disguised in literature. *Gods* may kill and devour their sires, because they exist beyond moral concerns. Human characters—especially those who are supposed to fulfill important roles in gerontocratic epics—may not overtly violate this taboo.

Trial as Anxiety Dream

If Rustam's slaying of the White Demon is symbolic parricide, then the process that leads to it must be heavily disguised. The fiercely patriarchal universe of classical Persian epic literature would not allow overt parricide. Therefore, Rustam's victorious battle against the evil aspect of his father is not only disguised, but is also removed from the normal epic landscape and transferred to a world of dreamlike atmosphere and scenery. This is why Rustam is depicted as practically sleepwalking through most of his trials.

The dreamlike atmosphere of Rustam's adventures in this section is communicated by the bizarre suspension of an epic tale's customary setting. That is, compared to other trial sequences in Iran's epic literature, which typically show a progressive increase in difficulty of the hero's tasks and in fierceness of his opponents, Rustam's "trials" appear disorderly and confused. They resemble the disjointed parts of a dream that do not fit together in a coherent narrative. For instance, the lion who attacks the sleeping Rustam is a strange beast indeed. He thinks about his options, talks to himself, and considers the pros and cons of his moves before engaging the hero (ii: 22: 290). The dragon of the third trial also turns out to be a contemplative animal (ii: 26: 340–44). These beings resemble the anthropomorphic menagerie of fairy tales and dreams more closely than they do the less fantastic entities of the realm of national epics. Let us consider the dragon of Rustam's third trial more closely because the hero's encounter with it is especially interesting and meaningful.

Unlike other dragons of the *Shāhnāmeh*, this one is endowed by magical powers and is able to disappear and even sink into the ground at will (ii: 26: 346, 363). It also has the power of speech, and engages Rustam in conversation. The interlocution between Rustam and the dragon follows the same pattern of verbal exchange that is usually found between warriors on the battlefield.[20] The wording and the order of the exchanges between Rustam and his foe are quite telling (ii: 27–28: 365–67):

> [Rustam] roared like the spring-clouds,
> And filled the earth with fires of war.
> He said to that dragon: Proclaim your name!
> —Never again will you live as you wish—
> Lest by my hands
> Your soul depart your dark body nameless.

But rather than revealing his name, the dragon boasts of his prowess and asks Rustam to reveal *his* name first. Rustam obliges the beast and says (ii: 28: 372):

> Thus he answered: "I am Rustam,"
> From the line of Dastān son of Sām, and of Nayram.

The interlocution has an important narrative function. By stating his name aloud: *man Rustamam* "I am Rustam," the hero announces his individuality and proclaims his independence from Zāl. However, the wording of his response confirms the genealogical relationships that connect him to his heroic ancestors. He is no longer "Rustam son of Dastān," but "Rustam from Dastān—the son of Sām and of Nayram."[21] His independence is announced in the context of a heroic clan rather than an attachment to his father per se. He distances himself from Zāl without leaving the illustrious clan of which he is a member. Having done this, he can proceed to be more self-affirming, and more emphatic about his independence from Zāl. The next verse underscores his independence (ii: 28: 373):

> *Ba tanhā yakī kīna-var lashkarm,*
> *Ba Rakhsh-i dilāvar jahān bisparam,*
>
> Alone, I am a fierce host.
> Who travels the world upon the dauntless Rakhsh.

In this verse, Rustam portrays an image of himself as a lone knight, wandering the world in magnificent heroic solitude. The gains of the hero's third trial are individuation and independence; the *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative logic reinforces these gains through the circumstances of the fourth trial.

During his fourth trial, the hero comes upon a group of witches feasting in the forest. Rustam's approach scatters the witches who disappear, leaving their ample spread behind. Rustam picks up a lute that lies nearby, and sings about his difficult life, saying: "An unfortunate wanderer is Rustam" (ii: 30: 398). While during his third trial, he announced his name to his foe in the darkness of the night, in his fourth ordeal, he sings it to the whole world in the bright light of the day. The key word in this hemistich is *āvāra*, "wanderer." The word *āvāra* in Persian denotes not only the idea of "wandering," but also those of "loneliness," and "detachment."

The final proof of Rustam's independence, growing maturity, and political importance is signaled in his fifth trial, during which he captures a minor Māzandarānian knight to whom he promises the throne of the country if the man agrees to help him (ii: 34–35, 460–61; 463–68). Naturally, promising the throne presupposes that the person who makes that promise has the political authority to do so. Such a promise may not

be made by a child. Only a knight of the realm who is confident of his political authority and of the king's support can make such a promise. Rustam's promise to put Ulād on the throne of Māzandarān is the implicit confirmation of the fact that his first four trials have transformed him into a statesman endowed with all of his aged father's political authority. It is this transformation that allows him to confidently promise the throne of Māzandarān to his captive.

Let me backtrack a little bit and revisit Rustam's first two trials. Most would agree that Rustam's first and second trials hardly qualify as heroic deeds. In the first, the hero's horse kills a lion, and during the second, God's mercy delivers him from death by dehydration. However, his third, fourth, and fifth trials, namely his encounters with the dragon, the witch, and his capture of his Māzandarānian guide, are logically related. Semiotically, these trials not only signify Rustam's transformation from boy to man, but also free him from the authority of his father Zāl. As far as the general flow of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative is concerned, these trials provide for a smooth transition of heroic authority from one chief hero (Zāl) to another (Rustam). Keeping this point in mind, we can now consider our hero's sixth trial.

Rustam's sixth trial has two components. He routs a gang of minor demons in the less significant martial episode; far more important symbolically, the next one formally sanctions and affirms the achievements of his previous trials. This episode is also a narrative means of signaling the crown's approval of Rustam's new function as Zāl's replacement, and as the court's new "chief hero." Consider the following sequence of events.

Having defeated a detachment of demons that guard the area, Rustam approaches the king's prison (ii: 39: 523–25):

> When the Crown Bestowing hero entered the city
> Rakhsh neighed thunderously.
> The king said to the Iranian [prisoners]
> Our hardship is ended!
> I heard the neighing of Rakhsh
> And my heart and spirit were revived by it.

Then the king calls Rustam: "the wise, warlike hero," *yal-i dānishafrūz-i parkhāshjūy* (l. 526), and by doing so, gives royal sanction to the young hero's newly gained position. This reference to the hero, as well as the epithet "Crown-bestower" that is used to describe him for the first time in this story, signals that Rustam has emerged from his sixth trial a different person than the boy who entered it. The change in Rustam is signaled in his cleverly worded farewell address to the Iranian captives, as he departs

in search of the White Demon. This newly made supreme hero of the court stresses his supremacy in the following words (ii: 40–1: 544–49):

> The hulking hero prepared for war
> And set out to leave that place.
> He said to the Iranians: Be on your guard!
> I am leaving to face the White Demon.
> He is a demon, cunning and brave,
> That is surrounded by a great host.
> If he defeats me,
> Long will you remain in misery and hardship
> But if the lord of the Sun favors me at all,
> And if good fortune gives me power,
> You will find again your land and your throne
> And that royal tree will bring forth fruit.

In this scene, Rustam explicitly ties the survival of the heroes and the throne to his own victory, and establishes himself as the force behind the continuation of courtly and heroic life, as the legitimate successor to his father Zāl. His allusion to the "royal tree" that will only bear fruit if he is victorious over the White Demon not only evokes the image of the tree in the story's exordium, but also implies that without Rustam the very survival of the royal line would be in doubt. This, as the future events show, is no idle boast; the king is still childless and if he is left to perish in the demon's dungeon, the royal line will also come to an end. In fact the very next story in the *Shāhnāmeh*, namely the episode of the War of Hāmāvarān, is the narrative of Kaykāvūs' marriage. At the end of that story the king officially appoints Rustam to the office of the *jahānpahlavān* (l. 340). In contrast to his Māzandarānian campaign, however, Kaykāvūs's war against Hāmāvarān is quite justified. At any rate, at the time of his rescuing the king, Rustam has practically taken over his father's position and has claimed the old man's office of "chief hero," and protector of the Crown.

Another narrative detail in the story confirms the change in the person of Rustam. When Kāvūs sends a message to Iran and asks for help, he addresses the message to Zāl and *explicitly* asks the old hero to come to the rescue (ii: 18: 230: 232):

> When I remember your [wise] advice,
> I often sigh piteously [for rejecting it]
> I heeded not your prudent council,
> And paid for my foolishness
> [Now] if you do not act to remove this harm
> All will be lost.

However, by sending Rustam to rescue the king and his entourage instead of going himself, Zāl symbolically gives up his title of "chief hero," and in so doing, he implicitly appoints his son as his successor (ii: 18: 236–40). But one problem remains in this transition of power from Zāl to Rustam. Although the "good" father willingly gives up his position to the son, the "bad father"—personified as the White Demon—will not meekly consent. He will rather put up a fierce fight.

Parricide in the Cavern

Rustam's encounter with the White Demon is certainly over-determined: that is, it has more than a single meaning or explanation. It is full of sexual symbolism that may be interpreted in standard psychoanalytic fashion. For instance, the cave in which the fight takes place may be justifiably read as a maternal symbol in and about which the two fight, and Rustam's cutting off of the demon's leg in the course of the fight may be interpreted as the symbolic castration that is often found in similar oedipal narratives.[22] Leg/feet are considered phallic symbols in Persian and many other literatures, and the equivalence is common knowledge.[23] What concerns us here is not a psychoanalytic interpretation of the scene, but a study of the story's narrative logic. We will see how this martial victory over the White Demon, who symbolizes Zāl, empowers Rustam to symbolically absorb his father's essence and to replace him. We must backtrack a little to present the evidence for this interpretation.

When Rustam finds the king and his entourage in the White Demon's prison, the king tells him that physicians have determined that his blindness may be cured only by applying "the blood of heart and brains of the White Demon" (ii: 40: 40–1). However, when Rustam finally finds and kills the beast, it is not the beast's "heart and brain" but his "liver," that he extracts (ii: 43: 580–81, 44: 594–97).The Persian expression "heart and brain" means "innards," or "internal organs," in this context. But more importantly, heart, brain, and liver are intimately associated with the essence of a person in Iranian culture, as well as in many others.[24]

If my suggestion that the White Demon symbolizes Zāl is correct, then by taking the demon's liver, heart, and brains, Rustam captures his father's essence, absorbs his most essential qualities, and becomes him. Tellingly, the Persian words, *dil* and *maghz,* although literally meaning "heart" and "brains," also mean "essence." The relentless logic of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative confirms this interpretation in the episode that follows the Seven Trials.

Parricide and Autonomy

The qualitative change in Rustam's personality and functionality following his rescue of the king is confirmed in the subsequent story of Māzandarān's conquest.

Still indulging in the mindless belligerence which had led to his captivity and blindness in Māzandarān, Kāvūs punishes those living in the White Demon's territory by unleashing his army upon them, and then decides to continue with his conquest of Māzandarān. But in contrast to his previous strategy of sudden aggression and indiscriminate massacre of the Māzandarānian populace (ii: 13: 167–70, 174–75), he approaches the campaign according to established traditions of epic conquest. This martial etiquette demands that the invading army first send a message to a potential enemy-ruler and give him a chance to either pay tribute or become a feudatory of the invading king. Rustam's status as a mature member of the heroic fraternity and one who participates in making political decisions is acknowledged for the first time in the exchange of messages. Once the king says that he plans to send an emissary to the king of Māzandarān (ii: L45: 614–15):

> The son of Zāl was pleased by this decision
> And so were the magnates who were his peers.

The phrase "who were his peers" is crucial here. It is crucial because early in this episode Rustam exists on the fringes of the heroic fraternity only as Zāl's son. He is not recognized as a mature member of that community. By the end of the episode, however, this verse explicitly acknowledges his inclusion in the society of court heroes.

The ruler of Māzandarān refuses to give in to the Iranians' demands, and Rustam advises the king to prepare a second, fiercely worded letter so that he may personally deliver it to the enemy's court. Rustam speaks as a royal counselor equal to his father Zāl. He no longer expresses himself as a marginal youth (ii: 48–49: 662–67):

> Thus said the hulking hero to Kāvūs:
> I should leave this assembly because of this insult.
> It is I, who must take a message to him.
> I will utter words as sharp as unsheathed blades.
> A letter must be prepared, keen as a sword,
> With a message like roaring thunder [lit., clouds].
> I will go to him in the guise of an envoy.

> And bring blood to flow by my words.
> King Kāvūs said in answer:
> The royal signet and crown take their luster from you.
> The message that you deliver boldly
> Will surely tear the heart out of elephants and the claws off of lions

The wording of the king's response clearly indicates the profound change in Rustam's status compared to the beginning of the story. The hero who was called *Rustam-i shīr nākhurda sīr*, "the yet unweaned Rustam" at the beginning of this episode (ln. 72), is now addressed as an indispensable member of the court aristocracy that may even acts as the Crown's ambassador. The sentence: "The royal signet and the crown take their luster from you" denotes the dependence of the kingship upon the hero.

By the end of the episode of his Seven Trials, Rustam is undoubtedly a warrior-statesman. His newly gained political and moral authority is stressed in one of the final scenes of the Māzandarān war story, when Kāvūs honors Rustam's promise to his Turanian guide, Ulād, and appoints the man as Māzandarān's new ruler (ii: 62: 844–51). There is a crucial additional detail in this scene which deserves the reader's attention. When Rustam asks Kāvūs to appoint Ulād as the king of Māzandarān, not only does he grant his request, but he does so with a special gesture. The text reads: *ba bar zad jahāndār-i biīdār dast*, "the wise king struck his chest (or side) in obedience" (l. 849). Striking the chest/side is a ritualistic gesture of obeisance that is ordinarily shown by subjects towards their lords in the *Shāhnāmeh*.[25] Kings do not employ this gesture when they grant a wish because it would be considered beneath the dignity of their office. Indeed Kāvūs's use of this gesture when he grants Rustam's wish is the only instance of its employment by a king that I know of. It shows how greatly Rustam is honored at the end of this episode and how profoundly the Throne depends on him.

To sum up, Rustam's early life and career follow two complementary paths in the *Shāhnāmeh*. The overt textual path is a simple chronological progression: his birth, his childhood adventures, the majority of his important exploits under Kāvūs and Kaykhosrow, and finally, his old age and death in the reign of Goshtāsp. A parallel biographical narrative accompanies the chronological story. Within this parallel narrative deceptively autonomous episodes of the hero's life are intricately interwoven. What connects these episodes is a narrative logic that imposes an undeniable artistic unity upon Rustam's epic biography. This artistic unity is entirely lacking in the oral versions of the *Shāhnāmeh* stories, which by virtue of being discrete narratives that float in Iranian oral

tradition, need not maintain a logical connection to a greater whole.[26] It is the careful examination of this richly interwoven tapestry that promises to be the most fruitful avenue of *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship at the outset of the twenty-first century, not chasing some nonexistent "poetic oral tradition" of the neo-Orientalist fantasy.

CHAPTER 9

Sibling Rivalry

Some academics continue to insist that Ferdowsi grafted various stories onto the *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative from outside his prose archetype. One frequent object of this conjecturing is the story of Prince Furūd. Furūd's tale culminates with the protagonist tragically murdered by the heroes of his brother's army. A superficial reading of the story may lead most into thinking that it is an independent episode unrelated to other sections of the epic. However, a careful analysis of the tale in the context of the whole *Shāhnāmeh* shows that this episode fulfills an integral structural, logical, and psychological function.

First, a brief summary: Furūd is king Kaykhosrow's half brother and a son of Prince Siyāvakhsh, who died in his Turanian exile. His story, therefore, must be considered in the context of his father's adventures. Following a serious disagreement with his father, King Kāvūs, Iran's crown prince Siyāvakhsh is forced into voluntary exile in Tūrān, where he marries daughters of two prominent Turanian families. The first of these is Jarīra, the daughter of the Turanian king's great counselor, Pīrān. This woman bears Siyāvakhsh his first son, Furūd. The prince's second and more important wife is Princess Farīgīs, the daughter of the Turanian king Afrāsiyāb. Farīgīs gives birth to Siyāvakhsh's second son, Kaykhosrow.

Siyāvakhsh, however, is executed by the order of his father-in-law, Afrāsiyāb, a little before Kaykhosrow's birth. The king also orders that the pregnant Farīgīs be savagely beaten so that she may abort her unborn son, Kaykhosrow. Although Kaykhosrow is his own grandson, Afrāsiyāb attempts to kill him out of fear that he will one day avenge his father's murder by killing the grandfather. Fortunately, Afrāsiyāb's councilor Pīrān intercedes, and manages to save the mother and her child, and take Farīgīs to his own fiefdom, where she gives birth to Kaykhosrow.

Soon after this the Iranian hero, Gūdarz, dreams that Kaykhosrow is alive in Tūrān, and sends his son Gīv to find the prince and bring him

back to Iran. Gīv travels to Tūrān incognito, and after seven years of wandering and hardship finds Kaykhosrow, and brings him and Farīgīs back to Iran.

Upon arriving in the court, Kaykhosrow takes over the administration of the empire with the blessing of his paternal grandfather Kāvūs, who also wishes to appoint him his successor. However, a number of the Iranian nobles oppose Kaykhosrow's appointment: they fear that because he is half-Turanian, he may have divided loyalties. Although they know that Kaykhosrow is required by moral and princely duty to kill his maternal grandfather in vengeance for his father's murder, they are not sure that he is willing or able to do so. These nobles prefer that Kaykhosrow's uncle Farīburz—Kāvūs's surviving son—be appointed crown prince. Another powerful faction of the nobility, including Rustam and Zāl, however, prefer Kaykhosrow to Farīburz; following a heated debate that almost ends in bloodshed, the two factions reach a compromise, which involves a test of legitimacy. Kaykhosrow manages to pass the test, and is appointed as his grandfather's viceroy and successor.

The important point in all of this is that Kaykhosrow must overcome a crisis of legitimacy from the very beginning of his rule. The story of Furūd in the *Shāhnāmeh* serves as the narrative strategy that resolves this crisis of legitimacy.

Kaykhosrow's eligibility to serve as viceroy is settled by his successful completion of the mutually-agreed-upon test, and he takes over day-to-day administration of the empire. However, a significant faction of the Iranian nobility remains uneasy about his Turanian blood. They demand that he take an oath and swear that he will not allow his blood ties to prevent him from exacting vengeance from his maternal grandfather, Afrāsiyāb. He takes the oath, and sends his armies against the country of his birth, Tūrān.

Following a series of bloody battles in which Rustam plays a central role, Kaykhosrow captures and kills all of his father's murderers, including his grandfather and granduncle. He has fulfilled an important obligation, both to his father and to the aristocratic code that dominates almost every great war in the *Shāhnāmeh*, namely the code of the blood feud, which establishes vengeance as a moral duty.

Folklorists will have recognized the "Hero Pattern" in the previous paragraphs. The next section will give a brief summary of the "Hero Pattern" for those readers who are unfamiliar with folklore scholarship. Understanding what "Hero Pattern" means is necessary before we continue analyzing the story of Furūd and its role in the unity of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative.

The Hero Pattern and the Life of Kaykhosrow

The "Hero Pattern" is a narrative model that generally corresponds to the biographies of most heroes across various traditions. This pattern was first discerned by the British anthropologist Edward B. Tyler (1832–1917), who published a preliminary version of it in the last half of the nineteenth century.[1] Tyler's model was later expanded by the Austrian scholar Johann George von Hahn (1811–1864).[2] Von Hahn presented the stages and events of the life stories of 14 traditional heroes including Kaykhosrow.[3] His work, which was posthumously published in 1876, presents his findings in tabular form. Von Hahn listed the episodes of the heroic life story in an outline that he termed the Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula (*Arische Aussetzungs- und Rückkehr-Formel*). He devised a set of 16 biographical incidents for each of his heroes, and ordered these incidents into four groups. The first group (1–3) concerned the hero's birth; the second group (4–9) dealt with his youth; the third (10–13) included his return; and a final group listed additional events (14–16). The incidents of the heroic life according to von Hahn's scheme are as follows:

1. The hero is born out of wedlock.
2. His mother is a princess residing in her own country.
3. His father is a god or hero from afar.
4. There are tokens and warning of the hero's future greatness.
5. For this reason he is driven from home.
6. He is suckled by wild animals.
7. [Alternatively] he is brought up by a childless shepherd couple.
8. He is of passionate and violent disposition.
9. He seeks service in a foreign country.
10. He returns to his own country.
11. He overcomes his enemies, frees his mother, and seats himself on the throne.

12 He founds cities.

13. The manner of his death is extraordinary.

14 He is accused of incest, and dies young.

15 He injures an inferior, who takes revenge upon him or upon his children.

16. He slays his younger brother.[4]

Five years after the publication of von Hahn's study, the British publisher and folklorist, Alfred Nutt (1856–1910) applied von Hahn's scheme to Celtic folklore and expanded it to include the biographies of

such Irish heroes as Finn, Chuchulain, Arthur and others.[5] A number of other scholars, including Otto Rank (1884–1939), Freud's famous disciple, also studied the biography of heroes. Rank published his study, *Der Mythus von der Geburts des Helden* in 1909, and it was later translated into English as *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*. He considered 15 heroic biographies, and his sample was more diverse than the one used by von Hahn.[6] Later, Fitzroy Richard Somerset, Fourth Baron Raglan (1885–1964) was drawn to the study of the biographies of 21 heroes and devised a scheme of 22 elements for his system. He presented his scheme as a lecture to the English Folklore Society in June of 1934, and published it two years later in a slightly revised form. As Alan Dundes puts it,[7] this revised form of Raglan's talk formed the core of his book, *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*. This book later inspired a school of thought known as the Myth-Ritual theory, or the Cambridge School.[8] Raglan's 22 incident are as follows:

1. His mother is a royal virgin.
2. His father is a king, and
3. Often a near relative of his mother, but
4. The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
5. He is also reputed to be the son of a god.
6. At birth an attempt is made, often by his father, to kill him, but
7. He is spirited away, and
8. Reared by foster parents in a far country.
9. We are told nothing of his childhood, but
10. On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom.
11. After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast,
12. He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and
13. Becomes king.
14. For a time he reigns uneventfully, and
15. Prescribes laws, but
16. Later he loses favor with the gods and/or his subjects, and
17. Is driven from the throne and city.
18. He meets with a mysterious death,
19. Often at the top of a hill.
20. His children, if any, do not succeed him.
21. His body is not buried, but nevertheless
22. He has one or more holy sepulchers.

The biography of Kaykhosrow, including the treatment of his brother in the *Shāhnāmeh* generally conforms to the model that we know as the "Hero Pattern:"

1. Kaykhosrow is born of royal parents, namely Siyāvakhsh and Farīgīs.
2. There is a prophecy about his birth and fate (ii: 345–46: 2118–39).
3. He is raised by shepherds of mount Qalā, away from his homeland (ii: 368–369: 2415–45).
4. He returns home (Gīv brings him back to Iran).
5. He gains victory over demons of the Bahman fortress in Iran.
6. His army slays his brother Furūd.
7. He kills his persecutor (Afrāsiyāb) and avenges his father.
8. He meets his end mysteriously (disappears in snow).
9. He dies atop a mountain or under other unusual circumstances and is not buried, (he ascends into heaven, or according to Persian folklore, still lives, deep in some unknown cave).
10. He is childless and is succeeded by someone other than his children or kinfolks (he appoints the minor hero, Luhrāsp to succeed him).
11. His tomb is not known.[9]

In the context of this biographical pattern, the 3014 distiches in the *Shāhnāmeh* that tell the story of Siyāvakhsh's tragic death are not independent from the narrative of Kaykhosrow's rule and his bloody vengeance for his father's murder. The story of Siyāvakhsh is therefore, merely an elaborate telling of the events that lead to Kaykhosrow's birth and the early attempts to kill him. Similarly, the story of Furūd must be considered a part of Kaykhosrow's heroic biography, a universal pattern outlined in items 1, 2, 3, and 6 above.

The complete tale of Kaykhosrow's life, career and legend, starting with the story of his father Siyāvakhsh and ending with his disappearance in snow, is told in 15,334 distiches or 30,668 lines of poetry in Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition of the text. This is more than the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined, and because of its size, scholars have mistaken its various subsidiary episodes for independent stories. In a case of missing the forest for the trees, they have misconstrued the story of Furūd, which is an integral part of Kaykhosrow's biography, for an independent and incongruous addition to the *Shāhnāmeh*. In other words, the epic tales of Siyāvakhsh, Kaykhosrow's taking power as an effective Iranian ruler (4081 distiches), Furūd (1245 distiches), Kāmūs (2881 distiches), Rustam's slaying of the demon Akvān (186 distiches), the tale of Bīzhan and Manīzha (1279 distiches), the Eleven Heroes (2521 distiches), and the episode of the Great War (3141 distiches) are only components of the greater narrative of Kaykhosrow's life (total 15,334 distiches). The sheer length of this complex narrative and the deceptive independence

of its various components, have made most analysts miss the narrative unity of the whole. Viewed from a genuinely comparative standpoint, however, the story of Furūd is an integral part of Kaykhosrow's heroic biography, and could not have been grafted onto the *Shāhnāmeh* from external sources.

Strictly speaking, the story of Furūd corresponds to incident number 16 in Von Hahn's scheme, according to which the hero "murders his younger brother." Of course, it is not Kaykhosrow himself, but his army that commits the murder. But the outcome is the same: the king's army kills the king's brother. From an analytical point of view it is not important who carries out the murder, because the king's army is a military expression of his will. The fratricide is merely projected upon the army, which is allowed to act on the king's behalf.

Aside from being an integral part of Kaykhosrow's life story, Furūd's murder also contains a political dimension that is intricately related to the *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative logic. We will examine this dimension of the fratricide now, and investigate how the story is related to the rule of Kaykhosrow as a whole. Would it make any difference to the logical progression of events if this story were taken out of the *Shāhnāmeh*? If deleting the story does not disturb the progression of events, then those who claim that this story was grafted onto the poem haphazardly from some source other than Ferdowsi's archetype are right. If, however, it can be shown that the story serves an indispensible narrative function in the greater scheme of things, then the assumption of its externality can be put to rest.

In our summary of the story of Kaykhosrow, we pointed out that his rule begins with a crisis of legitimacy. We saw that a faction of the Iranian nobility was quite opposed to his appointment as crown prince, and preferred that Kāvūs appoint Kaykhosrow's paternal uncle, Farīburz, to the office. Although Kaykhosrow eventually overcame the crisis with the help of another aristocratic faction that favored him, and was acknowledged the rightful successor to the Crown, a significant and nagging problem remains. The problem is that his elder brother, Furūd, remains alive and well in Tūrān. Therefore, although the question of legitimacy was favorably resolved with regard to his Iranian rival, Farīburz, the fact that his elder brother survives in neighboring Tūrān continues to present a challenge. Furūd, in other words, is a loose end. He is able to dispute Kaykhosrow's succession according to the rules of primogenitor. Fortunately for Kaykhosrow, Furūd's death in the hands of the Iranian warriors resolves the problem and removes the potential challenger from the scene. This is the general justification for the existence of Furūd's story in the *Shāhnāmeh*. However, the episode has an additional narrative

function. To the extent that both groups of court heroes, those who opposed Kaykhosrow and those who supported him, take part in the murder of his brother Furūd, the story has the added function of repairing the rift that had developed in the ranks of the Persian aristocracy. Members of both camps unite behind their new king as his brother's killers.

The Tale

The gist of the story of Furūd, for those who may not recall it, is as follows: Kaykhosrow sends an army into Tūrān in order to exact revenge for the murder of his father, Siyāvakhsh. He puts his army under Prince Tūs, whom he orders to avoid going through Furūd's territory. However, although he has promised the king to follow his orders, Tūs takes the army by Furūd's fortress against Kaykhosrow's wishes and the advice of the other Iranian warriors. Meanwhile, Furūd takes one of his warriors, a man by the name of Tukhār, up a hill, and asks him to identify the approaching Iranian warriors for him. Tūs sees Furūd and Tukhār on the mountain, and sends the hero Bahrām to either capture or kill them. Bahrām rides up to Furūd, and the prince reveals his identity to him, gives him a bejeweled mace, and sends him back to invite Tūs to Furūd's fortress for a feast. But when Bahrām returns and tells Tūs that the man on the mountaintop is the king's half brother, the warlord scolds him for not having brought his head. Predictably, the crisis intensifies from this point.

Tūs sends his son-in-law against Furūd, but Furūd shoots the man dead with a well-placed arrow. Tūs's son attacks next, and Furūd kills him too. Finally Tūs rides against Furūd himself, but the prince's arrows slay his horse, and Tūs is forced to withdraw on foot. The sight of a noble prince unhorsed, unites all Iranians in an immediate attack against Furūd. During a fierce battle Furūd's arm is severed, and he rides back into his fortress, where he dies of his injuries. Furūd's women throw themselves off the fortress walls to avoid capture by the Iranians. His mother then kills all of the prince's fine horses, sets fire to the fortress, and returns to her son's bedside, where she embraces his son's corpse and commits suicide by stabbing herself. The Persians enter the fortress, see the slain prince who closely resembled his father and his brother, and mourn him. They then bury him, and continue into Tūrān.

Following this event, the Iranian army is ambushed and many of them are killed by the Turanians. They return to the court defeated and in shame. Kaykhosrow scolds the warriors for having caused the death of his brother by their disobedience, but soon forgives them. He once again

puts his army under the command of Tūs, and sends them out against Tūrān.

Projecting Fratricide

Kaykhosrow's choice of Tūs as the commander of the Iranian army deserves careful consideration. Tūs was the leader of the aristocratic faction that opposed Kaykhosrow's appointment as viceroy and crown prince. Although the choice of Tūs as the commander in chief of Kaykhosrow's forces appears to be illogical at first glance, it proves to be a shrewd move in the long run. Let's consider it more closely.

Tūs is known for rashness, stupidity, and pride. His appointment seems especially odd because many warriors of greater capability and loyalty were available to Kaykhosrow. But he bypasses them all and picks the man who not only opposed him but is also the least intelligent and most pompous blue-blooded beast in the court. Once Kaykhosrow puts the army under Tūs's command, the die is cast. Although he promises to avoid Furūd's fiefdom, Tūs predictably breaks his promise and takes the Persian army by the prince's fortress.

When Furūd is informed of the approaching Iranian army, he consults his mother about what he should do (iii: 32: 70–79):

> The young Furūd came to his mother
> And said: "O wise mother!
> A host has come from Iran with elephants and cymbals,
> With the noble Tūs in command.
> What say you? What preparations should be made
> Lest he suddenly attacks?"
> Jarīra said to him: "O warrior
> May you never face that day!
> In Iran, your brother is the new king
> He is the guardian of the world and the sagacious Kaykhosrow,
> He knows you well by name and lineage
> *You both are of the blood and seed of the same father*
> *Pīrān gave me to him [i.e., Siyāvakhsh] as wife first*
> He would not else have sought a Turanian wife.
> *Your lineage on both sides*
> *Is royal and noble.*
> Now, since your brother seeks vengeance,
> In order to soothe Siyāvakhsh's soul,
> *You should be leading the quest for vengeance,*
> *In girding yourself and in assaulting.*
> If he seeks vengeance from his grandfather
> Revenge is more fitting for you" (my italics).

Although the lady's response superficially suggests that Furūd should join forces with his brother's army in order to avenge his father, the wording of her statements conveys another message at the same time. She tells Furūd "you both are of the blood and seed of the same father," and thus establishes her son's royal lineage as equal to that of Kaykhosrow. Furthermore, she adds that although both brothers are equally noble, Siyāvakhsh married her first, which makes Furūd the older brother who should be "leading the quest for vengeance." She thus assigns Furūd primacy over Kaykhosrow and implies that by the rights of primogenitor, it is Furūd who should succeed Siyāvakhsh as the legitimate ruler of Iran, *not* the younger Kaykhosrow.[10] She tells her son to prepare a feast for the Persian heroes before joining forces with them to avenge his father. Furūd heeds his mother's advice and tells the Iranian hero Bahrām who comes to meet him on the mountaintop (iii: 39: 194–97):

> I will provide a feast such as I can,
> And I will happily meet the warrior [Tūs]
> Horses, swords, maces and belts
> Will I bestow and much more besides.
> Then, grandly at the head of this host,
> Will I ride to Tūrān for revenge.
> Lo, seeking vengeance best befits me,
> I, who am like the raging fire of Burzīn in battle.

Furūd's proposal to host a feast and bestow all manner of gifts upon the Iranian nobles, parallels what his brother Kaykhosrow has already done before sending his army into Tūrān (iii:13:167–71). During that feast, Kaykhosrow granted many gifts upon his warriors and charged each of them with a specific mission. Furūd verbally reproduces that scene, and in so doing, sets himself up as Kaykhosrow's equal. Furthermore, he proposes to lead the army into Tūrān, saying:

> Then, grandly at the head of this host,
> Will I ride to Tūrān for revenge.

By proposing to put himself in charge of Kaykhosrow's forces, he exposes his desire to be their prince, and by implication, challenges his younger brother, Kaykhosrow.

There are numerous other striking parallels between Kaykhosrow and Furūd in this episode. For instance, the hero Gīv, who was sent to bring Kaykhosrow back to Iran, asks him to bare his shoulder so that

he may see the royal birthmark that distinguishes all princes of his line (ii:424:78–83):

> Gīv said: O'lord of warriors
> What sign of [your] royal glory do you bear?
> The mark [on the body of] Siyāvakhsh was well known
> It was a black mole like a dot upon the flower of the prince's body.
> Bare your arm and show me
> Your sign must be exposed for all to see
> The prince bared his body
> And Gīv saw that black mark
> Which was inherited [by the princes] from the time of Kayqubād
> And was the sign of the legitimacy of the princes of that house
> Gīv bowed as soon as he beheld that mark
> And wept and revealed his identity.

Similarly, when Tūs sends Gīv's brother Bahrām to find out the identity of Furūd, Bahrām asks the prince to prove his identity by presenting similar proof (iii.38–39:180–84, 186):

> Then Bahrām addressed him saying: "O fortune's favourite!
> Are you the fruit of that royal tree?
> Are you Furūd, young prince! May you be eternal and fortunate!"
> He answered: "Yes, verily I am Furūd
> A shoot has grown forth from that fallen Cypress"
> Bahrām rejoined: "Show me the mark of Siyāvakhsh
> On your body uncovered!"
> Furūd displayed his bare arm to Bahrām.
> On it was a mole of ambergris on rosy flesh. . . .
> Bahrām perceived that he is from the line of Qubād
> Through Siyāvakhsh.

Having confirmed the identity of the prince, Bahrām returns to the Iranian camp and informs Tūs that the warrior upon the mountain is none other than the king's half brother Furūd. From this moment, most of the Persian warriors behave like a pack of mindless idiots. First, Tūs scolds Bahrām (iii: 41: 227–32):

> The ruthless Tūs responded, saying:
> I am the commander of this host
> I ordered you to bring him to me
> Without asking an explanation for his deed.
> If he is a prince, then who am I?

What am I here for?
I find naught in the willful Gūdarzians
But that which harms the host.
You were frightened by a worthless horseman—
He was no fierce lion on the mountaintop!

Tūs then asks for volunteers to ride against Furūd, and many warriors rush toward the mountain. But Bahrām calls most of them back by telling them that it is their king's brother against whom they ride. Only Tūs's son-in-law, Rīvnīz rides on.

What is telling in Tūs's reaction to Bahrām's news is that he reproduces his opposition to Kaykhosrow's appointment as crown prince. Except that here it is not Kaykhosrow against whom he argues, but Kaykhosrow's brother Furūd. The general's insulting reference to the men of Gūdarzian clan—who had taken Kaykhosrow's side in the original conflict—reiterates that we are witnessing a duplication of the legitimacy crisis a covert version of the conflict between Kaykhosrow and his older half brother Furūd. But in this version of the crisis, Tūs—who originally opposed Kaykhosrow—is his ally.

The symbolic implications of the different warriors who ride against Furūd underscore the concerns over legitimacy and succession that underlie this conflict. The first warrior whom Furūd kills is Tūs's son-in-law, Rīvnīz. The name, Rīvnīz, happens to also be the name of one of Kāvūs's sons. Thus, just as Kaykhosrow eliminated his uncle Farīburz, whom Tūs's party supported, Furūd eliminates his uncle Rīvnīz, by killing his namesake. Furthermore, previously the heroes of the court had split into two factions over the appointment of Kaykhosrow at the royal palace. Now, as Tūs orders his warriors to ride from the Iranian camp against Furūd, Bahrām calls most of them back, announcing that the man on the mountaintop is Siyāvakhsh's son and their king's half brother (iii: 42: 243–47):

Many valiant men galloped forth
To make war on Furūd,
But brave Bahrām spoke to them, saying:
"Consider not this matter lightly
He on yonder mountaintop
Is Kaykhosrow's kin
One hair of whom is worth a hundred [like] Tūs
He who has never seen the face of Siyāvakhsh
Will find solace in seeing the face of his [son]."
When Bahrām revealed Furūd's identity
The heroes returned from mid-way.

Without these reinforcements, Tūs's son Zarasp, and the foolish prince himself, attack Furūd. But Furūd kills the son and unhorses the father by shooting his mount. The grieving and humiliated old noble is forced to hobble back to camp, amid the jeering of Furūd's women on the ramparts of his castle. This is too much for the Iranian warriors to take. Gīv, the hero who rescued Kaykhosrow from Tūrān, prepares to attack Furūd. He dons the armor of Furūd's father, Siyāvakhsh, which was given to him by Kaykhosrow, and faults Furūd's behavior (iii: 47–48: 322–31):

> The noble Gīv was grievously distressed that
> The valiant general had come back on foot.
> He said: "This exceeds all bounds.
> Surely our warriors lose face by it.
> Even though he is royalty with earrings,
> Why should he so belittle such a great host?
> It is not right that we acquiesce
> With whatever he chooses to do.
> If Tūs behaved harshly once
> Furūd filled the world with pain.
> We would sacrifice our souls for Siyāvakhsh,
> But we must not allow this injury to pass.
> He destroyed the noble Zarasp
> That highborn horseman of Nozar's line!
> Rīvnīz's body is drenched in blood!
> What more shame than this is there?
> Be he Jamshīd's own son or Qubād's own marrow,
> He witlessly opened a new door [into tumult]."
> Thus he spoke, donning his armor hurriedly
> As though his skin could no longer contain him.

The scene of Gīv's assault upon Furūd's mountaintop has multiple significations. On the one hand, Gīv reacts as an Iranian warrior who feels slighted by the unhorsing of Tūs. On the other hand, he is Kaykhosrow's symbolic father, who takes his side and sanctions his fratricide by joining the fray. Gīv's donning of Siyāvakhsh's invulnerable armor signals his symbolic transformation. Moreover, his special relationship to Furūd's brother and rival, Kaykhosrow, is emphasized in the words of Tukhār, when he tells the prince how Gīv humiliated his maternal grandfather, Pīrān and how he routed the Turanian forces (iii: 48–49: 339–50).

> "Tell me who this noble horseman is,
> Whose arm and sword will soon be mourned?"
> Tukhār glanced from their high perch,
> And by his unwise words sowed thorns in the meadow.

He said, "This is the raging dragon,
Whose breath topples the flying birds,
[The man] who bound the arms of your grandfather Pīrān,
And broke three Turanian hosts!
He unfathered many a child
And treaded upon mountains, rivers, and deserts,
Many a father too he unsonned,
[A hero] who tramples underfoot the lion's mane.
It was he, who brought your brother to Iran,
And crossed the [mighty] Jeyhūn [river] without a boat.
They call him Gīv—he is the very elephant,
And the raging Nile on the day of battle.
When you set your thumbstall to the bow-string
Your arrow will not pierce his mail,
He dons the armor of Siyāvakhsh
And fears neither javelins nor arrows of white poplar.
So draw your bow well and let your arrow fly at his mount
Perchance you can wound the great beast.
Unhorsed, perhaps he may withdraw
Carrying his shield, as did their general."

Considered in the context of Gīv and his clan's forceful support for Kaykhosrow, their participation in Furūd's murder is both logical and expected. By killing their king's elder brother, they eliminate his only remaining rival for the throne and nip another potential crisis of legitimacy in the bud. Therefore, viewed in the context of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative logic, the story of Furūd is absolutely essential to the logical progression of events, and may not be viewed as a secondary addition to the epic.

To sum up, although the question of Kaykhosrow's legitimacy in Iran is concluded by his conquest of the Bahman Fortress, his legitimacy in Tūrān, where he goes to avenge his father, is threatened by his elder brother who lives there. Kaykhosrow's sole living rival is eliminated by his warriors who capture Furūd's fortress in an episode that nicely parallels his capture of the Bahman fortress in Iran, and kill the rival on his behalf. There is remarkable symmetry in the epic's narrative with regard to resolving the question of Kaykhosrow's legitimacy in Iran and Tūrān.

The *Shāhnāmeh* is literature, not history. It is pointless to look for historical parallels between its stories and the imagined accounts of Parthian, Sassanid, or more ancient dynasties. It points up Ferdowsi's place in the world pantheon as a *poet*—not the "historian" of ancient Iran that many seemingly want him to be. Forcing Ferdowsi into the mold of a historian brings to mind the pertinent observation of Sir William Davenant (1606–1668) who wrote: "How much pleasure they lose who take away the liberty of a poet, and fetter his feet in the shackles of a historian."[11]

CHAPTER 10

Killing Demons, Deposing Kings: The Akvān Episode

The story of Rustam's fight with the demon Akvān is another episode that some commentators believe has been grafted to the *Shānāmeh*'s narrative from outside its prose archetype. Although on the face of it, their claim may appear correct, careful consideration of the story's details establishes that the episode is intimately related to the overall logic of the epic's narrative. Before elaborating on the story, let's note that this episode includes motif "K581.1, Drowning punishment for turtle (eel, crab)," which is often associated with tale-type 1310 in folk traditions around the world.[1] Of course, this fact alone does not establish any claim about the narrative's orality or textuality. Formal literature often borrows motifs from folklore, just as formal music will often borrow from folk music. But no Western critic would claim that Wagner or Mahler compose folk music. Folk motifs are a common heritage of the human condition; but their use doesn't turn literature into folklore.

In the course of this chapter, I will show that the semiotic significance of the story of Rustam's fight with the demon Akvān logically and intimately connects it with the episode of Bīzhan and Manīzha, which follows it in the sequence of the *Shāhnāmeh* episodes. I will further argue that these two narratives form a logical dyad in the larger context of the epic's narrative; they also serve as initial motifs that foretell of Kaykhosrow's eventual victory over Afrāsiyāb. First, a summary of the story for those who might not remember it.

The Tale

According to the *Shāhnāmeh*, one of Kaykhosrow's horsemasters comes to court, complaining that a wild onager has been attacking the royal herds (onagers are wild donkeys—smaller and much less powerful than horses).

The king realizes that the assailant is no ordinary onager, and must be a demon in animal guise. He dispatches Rustam to hunt the menacing animal. Rustam rides to the royal pasture on the border between Iran and Tūrān, and spots the onager. However, when he tries to hunt it, the animal magically disappears, and the hero realizes that it must be the demon Akvān in animal form. No matter how hard he tries, the onager manages to evade him. After several days of futile chase, the exhausted hero makes camp and falls sleep. Akvān seizes the opportunity, rushes to his side, tears up the earth on which he is sleeping, and lifts it into the air. Rustam wakes up and finds himself suspended in midair over Akvān's head. At this point Akvān asks the hero if he wants to be thrown against the mountain or cast into the sea. Fearing that being cast against the rocks might kill him, and knowing that the demon will do the opposite of whatever he asks him to do, Rustam tricks Akvān. Pretending to have panicked, he cries out: "Whatever you do, don't throw me into the sea" (motif: K581.1.). Predictably, the demon does exactly that, and flings the hero into the waves.

Rustam swims ashore; at first his horse, Rakhsh, is missing, but he finds him in a nearby herd of Afrāsiyāb's horses, busily mounting the Turanian king's mares (iii: 249: 89–90). The hero saddles his steed and proceeds to drive Afrāsiyāb's herd of horses toward Iran. When Afrāsiyāb's horse-keepers try to stop him, he kills some of them, injures others, and rides on with his prize. The Turanian monarch happens to arrive with his army and four of his royal elephants. The horse-keepers tell him that Rustam has driven off with the royal herd and Afrāsiyāb and his men give chase. However, Rustam puts them all to flight, and also captures Afrāsiyāb's four white elephants. He then returns to the pasture where he had spotted the demon Akvān before, and this time manages to kill him. Having managed all of this on his own, Rustam drives Afrāsiyāb's herd of horses and the four white elephants to Iran. He divides the captured mounts among the heroes of the Iranian court, and makes a gift of the royal elephants to the king.

Mares, Maidens, and Meaning

The story of Rustam and Akvān covers 186 verses in Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition of the poem.[2] Of these, relatively few—a little over 50 distiches—are devoted to Rustam's actual fight with Akvān. The other 136 distiches concern the hero's raiding and capturing of Afrāsiyāb's horses and elephants. Clearly the fight with Akvān is not the story's main message. Something else is going on here. Something that may be discovered by looking beyond this story's surface structure into the rich tapestry of its symbolism.

The episode's exordium explicitly states that the story of Rustam and Akvān must be interpreted symbolically. Using the narrator's voice, Ferdowsi explains that although tales of demons and other such fantastic beings may repulse rational men, they often make sense symbolically. Therefore, he asks his readers to look beyond literal appearances and understand the story's symbolic sense (iii: 288–89: 13–18):

> The world is filled with wonders to see,
> But none has means to judge them.
> Your soul is wonderful, and your body is too,
> So we must first begin with the study of our selves.
> The turning firmament above
> Is ever mutable.
> You agree not with this [tale] that has been told
> By the dihqān from the ancient times.
> For men of wisdom who hear it,
> Shrink from this, and tend to learning.
> But when you think of its [symbolic] meaning
> Then you acquiesce and will not judge it harshly.

Later in the episode, the poet returns to the story's symbolism and explains that he uses demonic characters to explore humanity's dark side (iii: 296–97: 134–35):

> Know that demons stand for men of evil character
> Those who are not mindful of God,
> Whosoever transgresses the ways of decency,
> Should be deemed a demon, not a man.
> Wisdom rejects these tales
> When it does not quite apprehend their inner sense.

Ferdowsi could not have been more explicit about informing his readers of the symbolic significance of the story of Rustam and Akvān. Let us heed his advice and consider this tale's symbolism.

The tale of Akvān forms a syntactic dyad with the story of illicit love between the Iranian hero Bīzhan and Afrāsiyāb's daughter Manīzha. In terms of sequence, these stories are placed just before the narrative of the Great War between Iran and Tūrān, which end in the capture and execution of Afrāsiyāb. The stories of Akvān and Bīzhan and Manīzha are transitional tales that describe Afrāsiyāb's loss of his dominions as king and as warrior. The loss of kingship is symbolically foretold when Rustam defeats Afrāsiyāb's army and steals away his white elephants, which are royal symbols. Afrāsiyāb's loss of honor as a warrior is symbolized by the

loss of control over his daughter and other women in the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha.

The fact that possessions and women were the spoils of war in ancient warfare hardly needs documentation. Victors expropriate the belongings and the women of those whom they vanquish in battle. Therefore, to the extent that the story of Akvān tells of Afrāsiyāb's loss of his possessions, and Bīzhan and Manīzha's story relates the loss of his women, the sequence of these narratives in the *Shāhnāmeh* presages his approaching doom.

But what does loss of horses and elephants have to do with the loss of dominion? To the extent that Afrāsiyāb is a warrior-king, the most important of his possessions are those that have either martial or royal signification. These are his horses (the warrior's mounts) and his white elephants (royal mounts).[3] Therefore, Rustam's capture of Afrāsiyāb's horses and white elephants is tantamount to the king's loss of his emblems of warriorship and rule. Similarly, Bīzhan's illicit affair with Afrāsiyāb's daughter in the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha, and the Iranian heroes' capture of Afrāsiyāb's concubines at the conclusion of that episode, symbolize the loss of his women, and therefore his manhood, to the enemy. The interesting scene of Rustam's horse Rakhsh mounting Afrāsiyāb's mares in the episode of Rustam and Akvān presages this eventuality (iii: 294: 90).

The transitional quality of both stories is communicated by their location. Rustam's fight with Akvān and his raiding of Afrāsiyāb's herds takes place at the border between Iran and Tūrān. Similarly, in the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha, the lovers meet in a meadow at the border between Iran and Tūrān.

The peripheral setting of the events in both stories is striking. During his fight with Akvān, the demon throws Rustam into the sea, and when the hero swims ashore, he wonders into the Turanian territory on foot where he finds his horse mounting the mares in Afrāsiyāb's herds. The image of the "shore," as the peripheral space between land and water, underscores the important motif of boundaries in the narrative. The stories are about violations of borders, of transitions from one stage into another. They foreshadow the looming violation of the Turanian space by the Iranian forces, and symbolically communicate the transitional state of Afrāsiyāb's life, whose rule and territory will soon be subjected to invasion, with his women and honor violated, and his position changed from the position of a powerful king to that of a helpless fugitive. The central message of Akvān's story, therefore, is not Rustam's fight with the demon. It is rather his capture of Afrāsiyāb's herd of horses and his four royal elephants. We must concentrate on Rustam's raid if we are to decode

Tūrān's final demise and the exacting of vengeance for Siyāvakhsh. This is implied in Rustam's parting words to the king at the end of Akvan's story (iii: 299: 171–75):

> (On the third day) the hulking hero decided
> To return home happy and victorious
> "I yearn for Zāl, son of Sām"—he said.
> "I shall quickly depart, but return soon.
> We must prepare for vengeance
> Because taking horses and herds
> Should not distract us from avenging Siyāvakhsh."

As Rustam points out, the taking of Afrāsiyāb's herds and war-elephants are purely preliminary steps in a sequence of events.

Let us consider where we stand at the end of Akvān's episode Rustam has raided Afrāsiyāb's herds and has by force of arms expropriated his insignia of warriorship (horses) and royal dominion (white elephants). Afrāsiyāb has been "unhorsed" and pushed to the very edge of extinction because his martial and royal aspects have been placed in doubt.

The relentless logic of *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative follows the story of Afrāsiyāb's martial defeat in the episode of Akvān with the tale of Bīzhan and Manīzha, during which his manhood is also challenged. In this episode Iranian warriors expropriate Turanian women individually and collectively. Bīzhan carries on an illicit sexual affair with Afrāsiyāb's daughter, then Rustam and his warriors manage to symbolically effeminize and castrate the king when they raid Afrāsiyāb's harem and carry away his concubines at the story's conclusion. The sexual victory of the Iranians over the Turanian monarch and his men is signaled earlier in the story, in the scene of Rustam's horse busily mounting the mares in Afrāsiyāb's herds. What Rakhsh does to the Turanian monarch's mares, will be later repeated in what Bīzhan and other warriors will do to his daughter and to the women of his household.

The Iranian infringement upon Turanian space grows progressively more violent, demeaning, and offensive in the course of the narratives linking Akvān with Bīzhan and Manīzha. Even nonpsychoanalysts will agree that these events symbolize the emasculation of the Turanians, and portend their approaching doom.

CHAPTER 11

Of Lusting and Ousting

The story of Bīzhan's affair with Afrāsiyāb's daughter, Manīzha, reintroduces the metaphor of the boundary that underpinned the episode of Rustam's fight with Akvān. It nearly completes Afrāsiyāb's metaphorical defeat and—as pointed out in the previous chapter—effeminizes the Turanian warriors, thus signaling their final defeat.

This is the gist of the story: Inhabitants of a border-town between Iran and Tūrān send an envoy to the Iranian court and ask King Kaykhosrow to rid them of the herds of wild boars that damage their crops. Kaykhosrow sends the heroes Bīzhan and Gurgīn to hunt the boars. Jealous of Bīzhan's hunting prowess, Gurgīn plans to do away with him so that he alone can take credit for the mission's success. He takes Bīzhan to the camping grounds of the Turanian princess Manīzha. Manīzha falls in love with Bīzhan at first sight. She invites him to her tent where she puts a sleeping potion in his drink, and abducts him to her quarters at Afrāsiyāb's palace. When Bīzhan regains consciousness in the luxurious surroundings of Manīzha's residence, he does what any other young hero would do, and begins drinking, making love to Manīzha, and generally having a good time.

Afrāsiyāb is informed of the goings-on in his daughter's quarters; he has Bīzhan arrested, put in chains, and thrown into a well, which is then sealed with a huge boulder that the demon Akvān had dragged out of the China Sea. Afrāsiyāb makes a public spectacle of shame over his daughter's behavior: he disowns Manīzha, strips her of all her royal finery, and expels her from the court, telling her that since she loves Bīzhan so much, she should beg for food and feed him in his well. Reduced to abject poverty, the faithful Manīzha spends her days begging for food in the streets, then feeds her lover through a small opening.

Bīzhan's hunting partner, Gurgīn returns to Iran and insists that his companion was kidnapped by a magical onager during their hunting trip. Bīzhan's father, Gīv, refuses to believe Gurgīn's story, and begs the king to determine his son's whereabouts by means of his magical

powers. Kaykhosrow looks into his magical cup, locates Bīzhan, and sends Rustam to the rescue.

Disguised as merchants, Rustam and a small band of Iranian warriors travel to Tūrān and set up shop near Bīzhan's well. Manīzha comes to the Iranian camp to beg for food and eventually leads Rustam to the well. The hero uses his prodigious strength to lift Akvan's huge boulder from the mouth of the well, and rescues Bīzhan.

Bīzhan joins Rustam and the seven Iranian warriors who had accompanied the old hero to Turan and they raid Afrāsiyāb's inner court. Once in the court, they kill the guards, and capture all of Afrāsiyāb's women along with a great deal of treasure, and set out for Iran. Afrāsiyāb, who has managed to escape the slaughter, hurriedly puts an army together and gives chase. But the Iranians defeat his forces and take the Tūrānian treasures and women to Iran.

We noted in our discussion of Rustam's fight with the demon Akvān, that the episodes of Akvān and Bīzhan and Manīzha form a narrative dyad that is indispensible to the narrative logic of the *Shāhnāmeh*. The two elements in this episode that recall the story of Akvān are the magic onager, and Akvān's boulder. These overt narrative markers signify the relationship between the two narratives.

Capture of Women as Castration

In the overall narrative of the *Shāhnāmeh*, the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha precedes the series of wars which end in Afrāsiyāb's defeat and execution. It marks the beginning of the Turanian king's demise, and for this reason it is full of hints and intimations of his defeat and death. At the end of Akvan's story, Rustam captures Afrāsiyāb's horses and white elephants. We interpreted that capture as the symbolic expression of the Turanian ruler's loss of martial control over his domain. At the end of the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha, a small band of Iranian warriors penetrate Afrāsiyāb's harem and captures his women. One hardly needs to be a Freudian in order to see in these two narratives the progressive subjugation of Afrāsiyāb through defeat and symbolic castration.[1] Adding the implicit message of the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha to what we have already deduced from the tale of Rustam and Akvān, we find that the process of Afrāsiyāb's defeat proceeds through these stages before it ends in his death. The Turanian king's losses are symbolically communicated in a progression of events that has an inescapable narrative logic:

1. Rustam raids his domain and steals away his horses in the story of Akvān. By this action, he symbolically *unhorses* the Turanian ruler by depriving him of his mounts.

2. Rustam also takes away Afrāsiyāb's white elephants, his royal mounts. By doing so, he symbolically dethrones the Turanian king.
3. In the episode of Bīzhan and Manīzha, the Iranian heroes invade Afrāsiyāb's most private space, his harem, and steal his women. By doing so, they symbolically castrate him.

Whereas the narrative outcome of the story of Akvān is Afrāsiyāb's loss of his heroic and royal possessions, the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha takes his humiliation one step further. The Iranian warriors' raiding of Afrāsiyāb's harem and their capture of his women amounts to sexual *penetration*—the negation of his manhood. The narrative could not be blunter in its symbolic emasculation of the Turanian aristocracy. This is the most fruitful context for consideration and analysis of Bīzhan's illicit affair with Manīzha.

The implications of Manīzha's affair with Bīzhan are emphasized in Ferdowsi's words that describe the princess after she is driven out of her father's court. She comes to Rustam "naked and whimpering" (iii: 372: 909–10):

> Manīzha heard about [Rustam's] caravan,
> And rushed into the city.
> Naked and whimpering, that daughter of Afrāsiyāb
> She came to Rustam, her eyes filled with tears.

The poem stresses Manīzha's "nakedness" once again when she reveals her identity to Rustam (iii: 373–74: 940–42):

> I am Manīzha, the daughter of Afrāsiyāb,
> Not even the sun ever beheld me naked.
> But now with eyes filled with bitter tears and my heart all pain,
> I roam from door to door in shame,
> And thus gather lowly bread.
> Such has God turned my fortune!

Afrāsiyāb's harsh treatment of the daughter who has dishonored him damages the king himself more than the poor girl. He orders that she be stripped of her royal accoutrements, and cast out into the street "naked" (iii: 334: 388–92). He thus exposes his own daughter to the gaze of the whole world. If she had bared herself to one man for love, Afrāsiyāb savagely disrobes her for all to see and, in doing so, makes his own shame public.

The Turanian king expresses his outrage over the seduction to his vizier Pīrān, and says that the young hero has dishonored him and has turned him into an object of gossip and ridicule (iii: 332: 366–71):

> You know not what Bīzhan has done to me
> He has disgraced me in Iran and Tūrān
> See you not how dishonored I have become in old age,
> By the disgraceful conduct of my daughter?
> The names of my women-folk
> Have become the common talk of town.
> For this disgrace that is upon me
> I will be eternally an object of ridicule for my troops and people.
> If he is allowed to live,
> I will be blamed from every side.
> I shall be left wretched and dishonored,
> And tears of shame will ever flow from my eyes.

What Afrāsiyāb fails to see, of course, is that it was neither Bīzhan nor Manīzha who made his shame public. By casting his daughter out, and by making her affair common knowledge, it was Afrāsiyāb himself who made a private shame public.

In scene after scene, the story makes friend and foe conspire to dishonor and demean the Turanian king, because dishonor is the prelude to his demise. For instance, following his rescue of Bīzhan, Rustam proclaims (iii: 383: 1087):

> Now will I do such exploits at his gate
> That his whole country shall laugh at him the next day.

Later, when Rustam and his warriors enter Afrāsiyāb's inner court during a nocturnal raid, the old hero ridicules the king by referring to Bīzhan's sexual relationship with his daughter through a cutting reference to Bīzhan as Afrāsiyāb's son-in-law (iii: 384: 1097–98):

> I shattered through your prison, door and bar,
> Where that huge boulder stood as your guard.
> Bīzhan is completely free from bonds
> Let no one thus maltreat a son-in-law!

The idea of the sexual supremacy of the victor over the vanquished is symbolically reiterated in the next scene. Overwhelmed by the invading band of Iranian warriors, Afrāsiyāb and his palace guards take flight. Rustam enters the king's harem, seizes his women, and gives them away to his warriors as prizes (iii: 358–86: 1110–13):

> The lord of Rakhsh rode into the palace
> And gave away all of Afrāsiyāb's possessions.

> The beautiful women who attended the king,
> Were all holding hands with the warriors.
> Royal steeds of fine saddles
> With bejeweled saddle horns,
> Were taken from the court and did not linger in Tūrān.

It is noteworthy that in the hemistich: *girifta hama dast-i gurdān ba dast*, "all of them holding the hands of the warriors in their hands," the subject of the sentence is not the Persian warriors, but the Turanian women who are portrayed as willingly holding hands with their Iranian captors. The scene is softened from one of forceful capture of Afrāsiyāb's women to one of voluntary liaisons between Iranian warriors and Turanian ladies, thus mirroring what already transpired between Bīzhan and Manīzha. The depiction of Afrāsiyāb's women willingly accompanying their captors to Iran is a negation of the Turanian lord's manhood and a symbolic expression of the emasculation that he and his warriors suffered in fighting the Iranians. Of course, all the Turanians are aware that these events have an even more profound implication.

Following the raid into the king's harem and their defeat, the Turanian warriors come to Afrāsiyāb and encourage him to gather his forces and launch a retaliatory attack on Iran for the dishonor that they have been made to suffer. In their pleading with Afrāsiyāb, the Turanian warriors acknowledge that Bīzhan's illicit relationship with Manīzha and their defeat by Rustam have effeminized them (iii:387: 1132–35):

> Things with us have passed all bounds!
> What must be done with this business now?
> There will be a lasting stigma upon the king
> From what Bīzhan has done.
> *The Iranians will no longer consider us men*
> *But will call us women armed.*
> Thereat Afrasiyab raged like a leopard,
> And bade them fight for their dishonor (my italics).

The Beginning of the End

To sum up, the stories of Rustam and Akvān, and Bīzhan and Manīzha, symbolically narrate Afrāsiyāb's gradual loss of both dominion and potency. In the first tale, told in the symbolic language of Rustam's fight with a demon, the Turanian ruler is deprived of his authority when Rustam drives away his horses and his royal elephants. In the second story, he loses honor by losing his women: first, through Bīzhan's sexual liaison with his daughter, and later, through the Iranian warriors' expropriation

of his harem. Afrāsiyāb and his warriors are thus symbolically castrated, and their approaching doom is signaled in no uncertain terms.

In our analysis of the Kaykhosrow's biography as an instance of what folklorists call the Hero Pattern, we saw that the stories of Siyāvakhsh through the end of Kaykhosrow's life, which includes the narratives of Furūd, Akvān, and Bīzhan and Manīzha, constitute a single narrative. They are different elements in Kaykhosrow's heroic biography. Therefore, aside from being interesting stories in their own right, the tales of Akvān and Bīzhan and Manīzha are mere elaborations of the eleventh incident in von Hahn's model of the heroic biography. That is, they represent the hero's slaying of his persecutor—who in this case happens to also be his maternal grandfather. Viewed in the context of the traditional hero's biography, nothing in the story of Kaykhosrow's rule is superfluous. Therefore, the notion that the stories of Furūd, Rustam and Akvān, or Bīzhan and Manīzha may not be organically related to the general flow of the poem's narrative is an error born of under-analysis. The heroic biography of Kaykhosrow in the *Shāhnāmeh* is so long that one might miss the forest for the trees, and mistake its component elements for independent tales.

Careful consideration of the available evidence shows that no episode in the *Shāhnāmeh* is grafted to it as an afterthought or from a source other than Ferdowsi's prose archetype. The narrative seams or cracks that some students of the epic have imagined are not in the poem itself. They are in the analytical models that have been applied to it. The *Shāhnāmeh* has an unmistakable literary unity that was consciously put into it by the literati who produced its prose archetype. Ferdowsi simply elaborated and built upon that unity and inherent narrative logic; he did not invent it.

Perceptions of inconsistency and disunity in the *Shāhnāmeh* result from either under-analyzing the epic's narratives or from paying inadequate attention to its cultural context and literary architecture. The unsupported claims of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s disunity or its alleged orality reveal more about the ideological and cultural prejudices and blind spots of those who make them than they do about the *Shāhnāmeh*. In the face of considerable evidence favoring Ferdowsi's dependence on a prose archetype, it is difficult to argue that he adopted material from anywhere but the prose *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr that was his exclusive literary source. No credible evidence points to Ferdowsi adding anything, either from other written sources or from the oral tradition of his time, to the *Shāhnāmeh*. The various episodes of Iran's national poem are firmly connected to one another and form a coherent and unified organic whole. The poem has an incontestable and carefully constructed narrative logic that becomes obvious under careful analysis. Judging the character of

an iceberg by its protruding tip—as the captain of the Titanic taught us—can be fatal. Judging the nearly 50, 000 distiches of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s coherent narrative by reading it piecemeal, although less disastrous, leads to misapprehension. In these chapters, I hope to have given my readers at least a glimpse of how interconnected and artistically unified the different episodes in the *Shāhnāmeh* are. I hope to have also suggested some fruitful avenues of further research.

Conclusion: *Shāhnāmeh* and the Tyranny of Eurocentrism

I pointed out early in this volume that all scholarship emerges from a cultural background, and that Western studies of Iran's national epic must be understood in the context of their profound Eurocentrism. The Eurocentric feature of Western *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship presupposes the "Western" to be the norm, while it measures and redefines the "Oriental" against that norm. What's more, it does so regardless of historical context, cultural circumstance, or even in the face of substantial contrary evidence. In this respect, most Western scholars tend to mirror their governments' behavior in a mutual interpretation of the "Oriental." Their interpretive stance does not depend on evidence per se, because evidence does not matter in a relationship that is almost exclusively based on power, force, and the sense of entitlement that goes with their exercise. Evidence in such relationships is not necessary because it can be manufactured. After all, if a sovereign state may be invaded on the basis of manufactured evidence, violations of scholastic norms in an esoteric field of learning would hardly present a problem. The attitude of Western scholars toward the Oriental is very similar to the attitude of the Western politician toward the non-Western. Context matters little and evidence even less. Both groups operate on the same my-way-or-the-highway ideological paradigm of American Exceptionalism.

Two parallel tendencies in Western *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship demonstrate the callousness and arrogance with which this scholarship approaches Iran's national epic. First, it evaluates and understands Iran's most iconic and literary poem in terms of the preliterate and oral epics of the West. Second, assuming that Western context as normative, it employs inapplicable and improper criteria to the study of a text that was created under drastically different circumstances. All of this is achieved by making unrealistic assumptions about the text and by manufacturing evidence. Let me provide a specific example of the Western approach, in this final chapter, and point out some of the technical problems that such an approach would create in the highly specialized area of editing

the *Shāhnāmeh*. In order to make my rather technical points as clearly as possible, I must repeat some of the evidence and arguments that I have presented before and discuss them from a different perspective.

Buried in his foreword to Olga Davidson's *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings*, which was published in the *Myth and Poetics Series*, Gregory Nagy, the series editor, writes about Ferdowsi's prose archetype:

> The story is told in the Shāhnāma that this archetypal Book of Kings became lost in time and disintegrated, only to be recovered all at once and literally reintegrated through *oral performance* [my italics]. The oral performers are mōbads, wise men assembled by a wise vizier from every corner of the empire, each holding a "fragment" of the long-lost Book of Kings. The vizier lines up the mōbads, and each recites his fragment in order. The Book is thus reassembled by this assembly.[1]

Those familiar with the background of the *Iliad's* and *Odyssey's* compilation will recognize that this scenario essentially repeats a storyline familiar from Homeric scholarship. According to a pseudo-Platonic dialogue, which is named after the Athenian ruler, Hipparchus (527–514B.C.), Homer's poems were compiled in the following way:

> Hipparchus who was the eldest and wisest of Pisistratus's sons, and who, among the many goodly proofs of wisdom that he showed, first brought the poems of Homer into this country of ours, and compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaea to recite them in relay, one man following on another, as they still do.[2]

Nagy is simply taking a version of an incident that he is familiar with from the history of Greek epics, and applying it to the history of Iran's national poem. As we shall see, there is no cultural or contextual evidence to justify any supposition that the *Shāhnāmeh* was compiled in the manner that Nagy suggests. As we have seen in chapters 3 and 4, Ferdowsi worked from a literary text, *not* from any bardic recitation.

Homer's poems hail from the first millennium B.C., when Greek culture was still in its oral phase. The *Shāhnāmeh* is the product of Iran's highly literate and textual culture of nearly two millennia later. There is a habit of thought that assumes "the Oriental" is an earlier, simpler, cruder state of "the Occidental." Still, losing track of time, and blithely placing Persian epic poetry 2,000 years behind Greek, seems awfully absentminded. In any case, Nagy's statements about the way the *Shāhnāmeh* was created is at best a figment of the Western imagination, and at worst a fabrication. It has no basis in textual record or in the history of the *Shāhnāmeh*.

In fact, there is no mention of oral performance in any surviving Persian and Arabic texts about the *Shāhnāmeh*. What the texts say about the composition of Ferdowsi's archetype is that a number of learned men and their *books* were brought together to compile a history of Iran, and that's all. It was a literary endeavor in a literary society that valued books quite highly. Here's what the preface of Ferdowsi's archetype, which dates from A.D. 957, says about the manner that the prose *Shāhnāmeh* was compiled:

> He [i.e., the general AbūMansūr] commanded his councilor Abū Mansūr Ma^c^marī to gather owners of books from among the lower aristocracy, the learned, and the men of experience from various cities, and his servant prepared firmans [lit. letters] according to his orders, and sent agents to the various cities of Khorasan and brought wise men from there and from other climes.[3]

And here is the verse account given in the *Shāhnāmeh* about the same event (i: 12: 115–19):

> There was a book of old
> Filled with many stories
> It was scattered among the wise
> Each of whom had a part of it
> There was a noble lord
> A man of courage, greatness, wisdom, and generosity
> Curious about the ancient times
> Who [wanted] to gather all the stories of the past
> He gathered the aged wise of every clime
> And compiled this book.

There is absolutely no mention of "performance" or of "lining up" of anyone to recite anything here. It is true that Ferdowsi says that the wise *told* stories of ancient kings. However, for technical reasons that shall not detain us here, the verb *biguftand* "they said" has absolutely nothing to do with orality.[4] It is still common practice among Persians who quote verses from the divans of the classical poets to preface their quotation by saying: "so and so *mīgūyad* [says]." The assertion that the "vizier lines up" these people is pure fantasy. No evidence stating or even implying any such lineup exists in the massive Persian and classical Arabic sources from Ferdowsi's era. Professor Nagy simply imposes the cultural circumstances that prevailed in Homeric Greece upon classical Iran.

The confusion between classical Iran and Homeric Greece has of late mutated into the more strange idea of equating the cultural and

intellectual circumstances of medieval Europe with those of classical Iran. These confusions that I have already challenged in this volume have led to a number of false assumptions; two of which are quite prevalent. First, that the *Shāhnāmeh* may be analyzed in terms of the Oral Formulaic Theory as the Homeric texts have been. Second, that the *Shāhnāmeh*'s text may be subjected to the same assumptions underlying the editing of some medieval European texts. These notions carry the implication that the text of Iran's national epic may be treated as though it were wholly or partly derived from a "poetic oral tradition." That assumption then justifies editing the *Shāhnāmeh* with techniques that were developed for "orally derived" vernacular texts of the European Middle Ages.

I have already published my reasons why the Oral Formulaic approach is inapplicable to the *Shāhnāmeh*; and there is no need to repeat the arguments here.[5] I would only add that efforts seeking to prove that the *Shāhnāmeh* is "oral," or "orally derived," through reference to a number of "formulaic" expressions in the poem are fruitless because formula density is no longer viewed as proof of orality. This is recognized by John Miles Foley, the editor of *Oral Tradition*, and a universally recognized authority in the field of Oral Formulaic scholarship. Foley writes:

> The Parry/Lord theory is an approximation founded on analogy, not an externally supported proof; one can no more champion unalloyed orality for manuscript texts on the basis of formulaic density than one can proscriptively deny that such an observed phraseological texture affects the meaning of a text. If a certain type of theme occurs or does not occur in a narrative work, that presence or absence alone cannot prove the text originally oral or originally written. Life, and the traditional poetries with which I am familiar, are more complicated than that.[6]

In spite of this, some Western students of the poem continue to assign orality to it on the basis of its formular phrases.[7] But their approach fails to distinguish between "literary formulas," of which an abundance exists in classical Persian, and "oral formulas" that belong to the realm of folklore.[8] Despite the fact that no historical evidence of a "poetic oral tradition" for New Persian exists, statements about *Shāhnāmeh*'s dependence on a poetic oral tradition continue to be made. For instance, in his paper on the sources of the *Shāhnāmeh*, Dick Davis declares:

> For the legendary part of the poem (up to the advent of the Sassanians), Ferdowsi in all probability used versified oral, rather than written prose, sources, or if he used written sources they were in verse and derived from an oral tradition.[9]

Jalāl Khaleghi-Motlagh responded to Davis's assertions in detail,[10] but apparently to no avail: such assertions seem motivated by Eurocentric bias rather than by reason or evidence. Disregarding Khalehgi-Motlagh's cogent criticism and relying on analogy alone, Davis characterized Iranian scholars' views of the *Shāhnāmeh* as verging on "the hagiographical," and made the following observation concerning the epic's manuscript tradition:

> The manuscripts of the poem vary enormously, especially in its most famous passages. The situation is much more like that of, say, the corpus of medieval French narrative poems than it is like that of the Homeric text. An obvious way forward would be to accept that the poem is irreducibly multitextual.[11]

Although such an assertion would require manuscript evidence in order to be acceptable, none is presented.

Those familiar with the history of editorial theory in the West immediately recognize that Davis's statements allude to the work of Paul Zumthor and the *mouvance* movement in medieval studies. Similar views were voiced a few years earlier by Olga Davidson:

> The concept of *mouvance*, [. . .] was formulated by the medievalist Paul Zumthor. According to this formulation, medieval texts that derive from oral traditions are not a finished product, *un achèvement*, but a text in progress, *un texte en train de se faire*. No matter how many times a text derived from oral traditions is written down, it will change or *move*: hence the term *mouvance*. Following both Zumthor and Pickens, Gregory Nagy has applied the concept of *mouvance* to the history of the Greek Homeric text: both the papyrus fragments (from the Hellenistic and Roman periods) and the medieval manuscripts of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* preserve a number of variant readings that are demonstrably authentic from the standpoint of the formulaic system that generates Homeric diction. In any given case, where two or more authenticated variant readings are attested, Nagy argues that the editor's task is to establish which variant was used at which historical point in the evolution of the text, not to guess which is "superior" and which is "inferior."[12]

Before evaluating the relevance of these observations, a brief detour into editorial theory is necessary to introduce Zumthor and the implications of his ideas for editorial theory. We must also place the concept of *mouvance* in its proper intellectual and historical contexts. Lacking linguistic competence in any of the medieval European languages that this idea was developed from, and unable to directly consult the relevant manuscripts,

I have liberally drawn on the published works of numerous Western medievalists to support my arguments.[13]

What is *Mouvance?*

In order to understand what the term *mouvance* implies and how it can influence editorial technique, we must start with classical editing. During a Cambridge lecture for the Classical Society in 1921, the British poet and classicist, Alfred E. Housman (1859 – 1936) defined textual criticism as "the science of discovering error in texts and the art of removing it."[14] This definition is correct for literary works that have specific authors. It presumes that a fixed text that best mirrors an author's intentions exists behind the different manuscripts of a work. The more a text is copied, the more errors are likely to enter into it. The more these copying errors find their way into a text, the farther it moves from what its author originally composed and intended to circulate. Therefore, the task for editors of such texts is to reverse the process of scribal corruption and "restore the words of the ancients as closely as possible to their original form."[15] This is generally true for most classical literatures, and is certainly applicable to the editing of Greek and Latin literary, scientific, and philosophical manuscripts.

This situation changed with the rise of vernacular literatures in medieval Europe. These different forms of native *written* European literatures in languages other than Latin, were first produced in roughly the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D.[16] Now a different class of literary works had appeared in which the text was not fixed. Given the cultural context of their production and transmission, which was heavily influenced by the oral tradition, these works existed somewhere between orality and textuality. They did not have stable texts and changed with every reproduction in a different way. For this reason, Housman's dictum is not applicable to them, and they may not easily yield to the editorial techniques that were developed for correcting fixed texts. Carol Braun Pasternack has cleverly used the term "inscribed texts"[17] for those medieval vernacular works with strong oral characteristics in order to distinguish them from standard literary traditions. In short, typical medieval vernacular works are products of an interaction between orality and textuality; between written verse for readers and narrative song for singers.

The mutability of most medieval literary works has important implications; not only for which one of their forms may be "correct," but also for the question of authorship. It is now generally agreed that the notions of the "author" and the "authorial text," which imply the idea of a fixed text, were irrelevant for much of medieval Europe's vernacular literature. Michel Foucault was quite aware of this

situation. His 1969 lecture for the *Société française de Philosofie* pointed out that medieval European vernacular material required a different way of considering the idea of "authorship:"

> The author function is not universal or constant in all discourse. Even within our civilization, the same types of texts have not always required authors; there was a time when those texts which we now call "literary" (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author.[18]

One might even argue that the idea of the "author" declined with classical literature itself after the barbarian invasions, remaining largely dormant in Western Europe until its gradual revival around the fourteenth century. Chaucer's statement at the end of his *Troilus and Criseyde* is often interpreted as one of the earliest instances of its resurgence:

> *Go, Litel book, go, litel myn tragedye,*
> *Ther god thi makere yit, or that he dye,*
> *So sende myght to make in som comedye!*
> *But, litel book, no makyng thow nenvie,*
> *But subgit be to alle poesie;*
> *And kis the steppes, where as thow seest space*
> *Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.*[19]
>
> Go little book, go little tragedy,
> Where God may send thy maker, ere he die,
> The power to make a work of comedy;
> But, little book, it's not for thee to vie
> With others, but be subject, as am I,
> To poesy itself, and kiss the gracious
> Footsteps of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Statius.[20]

Chaucer's proprietary feelings toward his words is also seen in his admonition to his scribe, Adam, extant in only a single manuscript (Cambridge Trinity College MS R. 3. 20), in which he curses Adam if he does not improve the accuracy of his copying:

> Adam scriveyn, if evere it thee befalle
> Boece or Troylus for to wryten newe,
> Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scale,
> But after my makyng thow wryte more trewe;
> So ofte adaye I mot thy werk renewe,
> It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,
> And al is thorugh thy negligence and rape.[21]

> Adam my scribe, if you it should ever happen
> that you write Boece or Troilus anew,
> may you have scabs and scales under your locks,
> unless you copy in true fashion in accord with my lines.
> So often I must renew your work,
> and correct and rub and scrape;
> And all is through your negligence and haste.[22]

Prior to the fourteenth century, such authorial claims of possession and control were quite uncommon. Indeed, it was not until the late seventeenth century, when the British House of Lords ruled on the case of *Donaldson v. Becket*, that the question of literary property was even formally addressed in Europe.[23] But if the idea of authorship was not well developed, who created the medieval vernacular works that have survived?

Prior to the evolution of the idea of the author, vernacular medieval European literature existed as the collective creative activities of singers, performers, and scribes, *not* as a specific person's intellectual property. This can be further explained by drawing on Carol Braun Pasternack's work on Old English poetry.

Pasternack argues that modern readers are misled by the format in which Old English verse is encountered. Today, Old English poems appear pristinely in pages of scholarly editions that are laid out in a highly formalized configuration. The poems are given titles and are laid out in numbered lines that are visually divided into sentences and verse-paragraphs, with clear beginnings, middles, and ends.[24] In reality, original manuscripts of Old English poems do not have titles, and may be deficient from the beginning, middle or end. Braun Pasternack explains the situation with actual Old English manuscripts succinctly:

> Old English verse was inscribed to be read aloud . . . [It] was considerably more dependent on the ear than on the eye. In printed poetry, especially free verse, we rely on the eye more than on the sounds of the words to scan rhythms and structures: indeed, the voice follows the eye, which watches for capitals, line divisions and punctuation. In the manuscripts of Old English verse, however, words fill the page from left to right margin, and the reader must hear the alliterative and stress patterns to sense the verse units and the syntactic rhythms to sense the clauses and periods. This method of layout requires that the reader be familiar with aural patterns and be prepared to interpret the structures of the texts.[25]

A similar situation exists in Old French literary texts, which according to Zumthor "were destined to be sung" with the rhythmic and melodic factors profoundly influencing "the textual functioning."[26] Because of

the important role of oral factors, cadence, melody, and so on, upon the reading of these texts, they did not have to be laid out on the page visually. Their readers "heard" them as they read them. Therefore not only layout, but also punctuation marks, in the sense that we understand and depend on them today, were not necessary, and are in fact quite rare in actual manuscripts of Old English verse. These manuscripts, like many others in vernacular tongues, are copied as blocks of texts often in an uninterrupted chain of letters that is called *scriptio continua.* According to Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, to the extent that Old English texts were "inscribed texts," they did not need punctuation because, "early readers of Old English verse read by applying oral techniques for the reception of a message to the decoding of a written text."[27] They knew when to pause and when to move on because of their familiarity with the way Old English verse was sung in the oral tradition. As a result,

> in many respects, inscribed texts function without authors: the poet, oral or stylus-in-hand, has left the scene, a scribe has intervened, and the language of the texts conveys the imprint of tradition rather than of an author. A significant, if ironic aspect of these "traditional" rather than "authored" texts is their openness to new constructions of texts by subsequent poets, performers or scribes, and to varied constructions of meaning by readers. This openness derives in part from the way in which the texts couple features of the oral and the written.[28]

Given the cultural context of Old English poetry therefore, the readers, the performers, and the scribes of these texts heard them in their heads, and interfered with them as they read, performed, or copied them. These features of medieval European vernacular texts profoundly influenced the way they were produced. It is true that like every other text, manuscripts of medieval European poems were copied by scribes. However, because the medieval scribe was a product of an oral culture, he "reproduced" his exemplar differently from the way Muslim scribes copied their texts. Using his familiarity with the system of oral formulas on which he had cut his teeth, the European scribe did not passively copy. He also improvised while copying.[29] Therefore, medieval European poems did not have a "fixed" text, because each scribe was at the same time the author of his own redaction or scribal version of what he copied.[30]

This characteristic of medieval European poetic texts has resulted in a lack of "fixity," and an inherent "variability" in them. To the extent that these texts survive in specific written manuscripts, they belong to the literary tradition. However, to the extent that their layout, their enormous variability, and their cultural context were deeply influenced by orality,

they are "oral" texts. Some scholars, therefore, have located medieval verse somewhere between fully oral and fully written. Alger N. Doane, for example, writes about Old English:

> That [Old English poetry] is writing at all is accidental, extrinsic to its main existence in ongoing oral traditions; hence it was never intended to feed into a lineage of writing.[31]

All that we know about the historical, contextual, and cultural background of Western European medieval vernacular literature forces two major conclusions. These texts were group products, created by different people who contributed to their creation during the processes of copying, performance, or recitation. As texts they were inherently variable, because there was neither an author nor a fixed form to anchor them. Therefore, it is reasonable to observe that their scribes participated in transmitting these poems, and that these texts may be considered products of a collaborative effort among their "authors"—if one may employ that word—and the scribes who "drawing on their familiarity with the techniques of formulaic composition" recomposed them during copying.[32] In other words, the collaborative aspect of this poetry's transmission, in which the scribe, the author, and the performer/reader, were joined together, renders the notions of "authorial intention," and "the fixed text" irrelevant.[33] For this reason, students of medieval European literatures may justifiably assess the variants that they find in their manuscripts differently from the way the editors of literary Persian or Arabic texts assess their variants.

Those familiar with reproduction of texts in classical Iran know that these conditions were not at all similar to those under which medieval European copyists worked. Once a classical Persian text was composed by its specific and often well-known author, it was done. From that point on, copying only moved it away from its definitive form, much as classical Latin texts were moved away from their archetypal form by repeated copying. But for now, let us stay with the fluidity of vernacular texts in medieval Europe. We will consider the implication of textual instability in Old French literature, to better understand the term *mouvance.*

French medievalists used the term *mouvance* to refer to the textual variability encountered in their manuscripts. The scholar most closely associated with the popularization and promotion of this concept was the Swiss medievalist, Paul Zumthor (1915 – 1995), who taught at the universities of Amsterdam and Paris until 1972, and later moved to the University of Montreal where he taught until his retirement in 1980. Zumthor's most important contribution to medieval studies may be his *Essai de poétique médiévale* from 1972, which was subsequently translated

for U.S. publication.[34] It should be noted that although the credit for popularizing the *mouvance* concept rightly goes to Zumthor, earlier scholars had already noticed the variability of medieval French verse manuscripts.

In medieval French studies, the term *mouvance* denotes "the propensity for change characteristic of any medieval work."[35] In 1955 Rychner had already used the word *mouvant* (the present participle of the verb *mouvoir*), in order to "describe the instability of oral epic texts subject to continual improvisation by performer-composers."[36] Four years later, in the course of a lecture at the *Colloque do Liège,* Martín de Riquer referred to "l'état mouvant des textes des chanson de gestes" (Speer, p. 317, n. 14). In 1960, Rychner came back to the idea that he had voiced five years earlier, and revived the archaic word *muance*, which in Old French meant "change, variation," in the sense of the varieties of transformations that renew, and at the same time corrupt works that had perhaps existed as fixed literary originals prior to these transformations.[37] None of these scholars, as Mary Blakely Speer points out, formulated the idea of change inherent in medieval French verse transmission into a theory. Though a number of scholarly manuscript editions based on this idea were published, none recommended the establishment of new editorial procedures or guidelines based on this concept.[38] The task of formulating *mouvance* as a theoretical concept with implications for textual criticism was left to Zumthor, who tackled the question in a number of influential works. Zumthor defined *mouvance*—strangely enough in the index to his book—as:

> That character of a work which—to the extent that we can consider something to be a work before the era of the printed book—results from a quasi-abstraction, insofar as those concrete texts which constitute the work's real existence present through the play of variants and re-workings something like a ceaseless vibration and a fundamental instability.[39]

He argued that "the notion of textual authenticity, as understood by philologists, seems to have been unknown, especially in vernacular texts . . . before the very end of the fifteenth century."[40] According to Zumthor, as far as medieval vernacular literature is concerned:

> The term *work* cannot . . . be understood in its modern sense. It refers, however, to something that undoubtedly had real existence, as a complex but easily recognizable entity, made up of the sum of material witnesses to current versions. These were the synthesis of signs used by successive "authors" (singers, reciters, scribes) and of the text's own existence in the letter. The form-meaning nexus thus generated is thereby constantly called in question. The work is fundamentally unstable. Properly speaking it has

> no end; it merely accepts to come to an end, at a given point, for whatever reasons. The work exists outside and hierarchically above its textual manifestations . . . It will be understood that I do not mean by this to indicate the archetype of a chronological stemma. We are dealing with something existing on a different plane.
>
> Thus conceived the work is dynamic by definition. It grows, changes, and decays. The multiplicity and diversity of texts that bear witness to it are like special effects within the system. What we see in each of the written utterances to which the poetry can be reduced by analysis is less something complete in itself than the text still in the process of creation; not an essence, but something coming into being; rather a constantly renewed attempt to get at meaning than a meaning finally fixed; not a structure, but a phase in the structuring process.[41]

In the vernacular literature of medieval Europe, therefore, we encounter Pasternack's "inscribed texts" rather than the kind of texts that most classical editors are accustomed to.

Medieval texts' essential "variability," and the belief that each "variant" is in one sense a no less "authentic" alternative, has led some editors of medieval French to transmit several different versions of the works. The texts of these works are set side by side in order to give a better sense of the variability affecting that work's manuscript tradition. Some consider these editions, called "multitext editions," to be preferable to standard editions for medieval French verse. To this way of thinking, after all, the absence of an acknowledged "author" makes reconstructing "his" exact words pointless and ahistorical. Therefore, it is thought that multitext editions best reflect and preserve the characteristic fluidity of the textual tradition that is inherent to medieval French poetry.

Regardless of this theory's merits, the relatively small size of most medieval texts makes their multitext editions feasible. For instance, the oldest and longest of the manuscripts of *La vie de Sainte Marie l'Egyptienne*, its (version T) in Dembowski's fine edition, has only 1532 verses.[42] The limited size of troubadourish productions is typical of other Romance languages. The early Spanish poems, the *Poema de Fernán González,* the *Mocedades de Rodrigo*, and the *Cantar de Mio Cid* are 2,990; and 1,164; and 3,730 verses long respectively.[43]

Orange Juice from Apples

As this admittedly brief summary shows, the entire concept of *mouvance* hangs on the assumption of an orally influenced process of textual transmission.[44] In other words, a living poetic oral tradition that can actually influence the behavior of those who read and copy texts must exist before

mouvance can come into play. This oral context was completely absent in the Iran of Ferdowsi's time. There was no tradition of "sung" or "performative" epics in Persian language that could influence the work of the Iranian scribes. More importantly, as we shall see in the next section, ideas of the "author" as well as "authorial proprietorship" were quite developed in the classical Middle East. Finally, the layout of classical Persian poetic texts was quintessentially visual rather than "aural." However, a discussion of text layout in classical Persian and Arabic manuscripts would take us far afield. Suffice to say that prose and poetry are clearly distinguishable in the overwhelming majority of these manuscripts.

Variant spelling and dialect diversity were two additional factors that contributed to the textual instability of medieval European texts. Let's use Middle English as a means of demonstrating this point. Standardization of English spelling is a relatively recent phenomenon. Students of Middle English (that is, the form of English, which came into use from the beginning of the twelfth to the middle of the fifteenth century A.D.),[45] have great difficulty adjusting to the fact that a given Middle English word may be spelled differently throughout the same text, even in manuscripts that are copied by the same scribe. For instance, the word *neuer* "never," may be spelled as *naure, nœure, ner, neure* in the same manuscript.[46]

The effects of unstable spelling upon textual transmission is further complicated by the influence of dialect variations in Middle English. Margaret M. Roseborough lists the following dialect variation for the simple sentence, "I will say" in the fourteenth century: *I wil sai* (Northern), *I wil seyn* (East Midland), *I wol saie* (West Midland), *ich wule sigge* (South Western), *ich wyle zigge* (Kentish).[47] Chaucer was bothered by the deleterious effects of these factors, and complained at the end of his *Trouilus and Criseyde*:

And for there is so gret diversite
In Englissh, and in writyng of oure tonge,
So prey I god that non myswrite the,
Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge.
And red wherso thow be, or ells songe,
That thow be understonde, god I biseche.—
But, yit to purpos of my rather speche.[48]

And since there is such great diversity
In English, and our writing is so young,
I pray to God that none may mangle thee,
Or wrench thy metre by default of tongue;
And wheresoever thou be read, or sung,
I beg of God that thou be understood!
And now to close my story as I should.[49]

The overwhelming majority of words in Persian have had the same spelling for the past thousand years. Moreover, spelling of Persian was fully standardized at least five centuries before the time of Chaucer and his complaining about spelling variability and dialectic diversity in English. Standard Persian was quite old and established at that point. This relative conservatism has continued to the present day, when most Persians who have received a decent high school education can easily read classical Persian texts that were composed a thousand years ago.

Classical Muslim authors were not concerned with variant spellings, dialects, or aural interferences with their texts. Similarly, Muslim scribes of the classical period did not hail from an oral culture, and did not operate like scribes of Old English or medieval French, with one ear to the mental memory of a song. In classical Persian, both spelling and language were thoroughly standardized. Neither the scribes nor their readers expected to deal with varied spelling of words or different dialectal variations in what they copied or read. To give a concrete example, in Persian the word "sorrow" has been expressed by the loan-word غم, and has been pronounced *gham* since the ninth century A.D. By contrast, the word "sorrow" in Middle English, may be spelled as: *soru, sorow, zorowe,* and *zorze*.[50]

Classical Muslim authors and copyists produced and transmitted their texts under drastically different cultural circumstances than their contemporaneous European counterparts. Those who argue that the conditions under which European scribes and authors worked have anything to do with the circumstances of classical Islam fail to take cultural and historical evidence into account. In a piece entitled, "Comments on H. R. Jauss's Article," Paul Zumthor refers to "blind modernism."[51] This idea is described as an "unthinking imposition of modern principles of literature on medieval writings."[52] Drawing upon these insights, we might hypothesize that those who unthinkingly impose medieval European principles of textual transmission and authorship upon classical Islam are suffering from "blind medievalism." Assuming Western culture to be the norm, they blindly impose their Eurocentric notions upon the Orient with total disregard for the vast chasm of culture and practice that separated medieval Europe from classical Islam. They somehow suppose that classical Muslim literatures were produced in the same way as medieval European texts, though all evidence points to two cultures as distant in historical circumstances as they were in geography.

Author and Authorial Proprietorship in Classical Iran

Almost all the works of medieval European vernacular literature lack a singular "author" in the sense that that word is commonly understood.

This fact forms the basis of the *mouvance* theory, and justifies its application within this context. Medieval European texts did not spring from the minds of specific authors; they are products of a tradition that hovers between oral and written expression. As Zumthor puts it:

> Well into the fourteenth century a very large number of surviving texts are anonymous in the current state of our knowledge, and will remain so because of the way they have been transmitted to us. Even when a name appears, whether as "signature" or by scribal tradition, we are usually dealing with very common first names, like Pierre, Raoul, or Guillaume, which therefore tell us nothing. . . . A toponym as part of a name may indicate a place of origin (Marie de France) or domicile (Chrestien de Troyes) or feudal dependence (Bernart de Ventadorn). . . . Moreover there is a frequent failure to distinguish clearly between the categories of author, reciter, and scribe, as in the case of Turold, who signed the Oxford manuscript of *La Chanson de Roland*. It would perhaps be safer, except when there is clear proof otherwise, that the word "author" covers all three of these overlapping meanings. . . . In the early period, pre-1100, the very notion of authorship seems to disappear. . . . Authorship at this date implies continuation, not invention.[53]

Bernard Cerquigline is more emphatic:

> The author is not a medieval concept . . . Although the emergence of the figure and practice of the writer can be shown starting in the fourteenth century, what looks like a functional anachronism is attached to the expression *medieval author*.[54]

There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. An attempt at a finalization of the text is evident in the works of such French poets as Guillaume de Machaut (1300–1377) and Charles d'Orléan (1394–1465), as well as in such Middle English works as *Seinte Katerine* and the Wycliffite sermons.[55] But generally, the author cannot be clearly distinguished from either the scribe or the performer of a medieval European vernacular text. Tim William Machan suggests a different solution to the problem of authorial identity in medieval literary culture. Machan argues against the humanist notion of defined authorship and suggests that medieval culture considered a work's *res*, rather than its *verba*, to be essential. Neither the actual wording, nor the layout of a medieval work in manuscript are integral to its text.

> [Machan insists] on maintaining a distinction between individual composition (*dictare*) and scribal production (*scribere*), but the idea of trying

> to establish an authorial text consisting of the words the author actually wrote would seem to be, from Machan's point of view, a modern academic exercise ultimately irrelevant to an understanding of Middle English literary culture.[56]

These theories of authorial anonymity in medieval European literature cannot be extended to the culture of classical Islam. In this very different and distinct artistic context, composers of lyric and narrative verse were known as the creators of specific works. They were not anonymous scribes; their names—and a fair amount of biographical information about them—were known to both *literati* and artistic patrons. Biographical dictionaries about poets, scholars, and other authors appeared as early as the ninth century A.D. among Muslims. Ibn Sallām al-Jumahī's (d. A.D. 847) *Tabaqāt al-Fuhūl al-Shu^carā'* (*The Classes of Master Poets*) and the great biographical dictionary of literary figures by Yāqūt (A.D. 1179–1229), are only two of the many in which poets and literati of the classical Muslim lands are identified in entries that sometime run to over 100 pages of information.[57] Ibn al-Nadīm, a bibliophile and stationer in Baghdad, who composed his famous *al-Fihrist* (*Catalogue*) in the tenth century A.D., has preserved the names of many classical authors who produced narrative works in prose and in poetry. Among these, he mentions Ibn al-Muqaffa^c (d. ca. A.D. 759), Sahl ibn Hārūn (d. A.D. 830), ^cAlī ibn Dāwūd (mid-eighth century A.D.), and the official, Jahshiyārī (d. A.D. 942), who compiled a collection of Arabic, Persian, Greek, and other tales.[58] Classical Muslim scholars who consulted any works were mindful of their authors' identities. They carefully distinguished anonymous works from those of known authorship, because authorial identity was an important factor in assessing the dependability of sources. Collections of unknown authorship did not enjoy the same authority as those whose authors were known.

Aside from works that are devoted to biography or bibliography, information about classical Muslim authors is embedded in many historical and geographical sources. Histories of great metropolitan centers, such as Baghdad, Nayshāpūr, Sīstān, Damascus, and other places—as well as a number of geographical texts—contain important biographical information about literary figures. All this negates the idea that theories of anonymous authorship can be adopted from medieval European literary tradition and mindlessly applied to classical Muslim literatures. This dangerous oversimplification of historic and cultural contexts misinterprets and distorts the achievements of an entire civilization. I have mentioned "blind medievalism" before; here again it cannot lead to insight, only misunderstanding.

The fact that authors of classical Persian and Arabic texts are generally far from anonymous has important implications. Classical Muslim literature soon developed the notion of "authorial proprietorship," a concept that did not appear in Europe until the eighteenth century.[59] Although no specific "copyright" laws existed per se in classical Persian and Arabic, the idea of the proprietary rights of authors may be inferred from many statements that are scattered throughout Islam's classical canon. These rights, as the following account implies, were apparently understood to be part of the author's estate.

Shortly after the year A.D. 1058, when the historian Bayhaqī was writing his monumental history of the Ghaznavid period, he found it necessary to liberally quote from the works of another historian, Mahmūd-i warrāq (Mahmūd the Stationer). We will examine the passage in which he reports Mahmūd's inheritors' reaction to his own appropriation of their father's work. This demonstrates that Mahmūd's children claimed proprietary control over their father's works, and that Bayhaqī implicitly recognized their proprietary rights:

> On Saturday July 9th 1031 [a great flood destroyed] the bazaars of Ghaznain . . . the citadel and the fortress of which were built by ᶜAmr (879–901 AD), the brother of Yaᶜqūb (867–879 AD), and the details of [their construction] are beautifully recounted by master Mahmūd the Stationer in the history that he composed in the year 1058. [Mahmūd] covered the events of several thousand years in his history [and brought his narrative] to the year 1018 [AD], where he stopped because [he knew that] I start [my narrative] from this date. Mahmūd was quite trustworthy and dependable . . . and I used ten or fifteen of his fine works concerning different subjects. When his children found out [about my use of these books], they sent word to me, saying "we who are his children do not wish that you use any more of our father's works than you have already used. I therefore felt obliged to stop."[60]

Bayhaqī's report implies that the proprietary rights of Mahmūd the Stationer are recognized in Iran during the first half of the eleventh century A.D.. This is some six hundred years before the *Donaldson v. Becket* decision by the British House of Lords laid the grounds for subsequent copyright law in Europe. We should also note Ferdowsi's own lament at the end of his great epic, about how men of means copied his work with no other payment but praise. Implicit in his complaint is the sense of entitlement to some financial reward for the work of narrative poetry that he produced (viii: 486: 877–82):

> When five and sixty years had passed me by
> I thought more anxiously of pain and suffering [of old age]

> I felt in need of [selling] the history of kings
> When evil fortune came into view.
> Great men and noble men of learning
> All, copied my work out for free.
> I over-looked their [deed] from afar,
> As though they had hired me [to produce this work]
> Naught but their praises was my lot
> I was much distressed by this [useless] tribute.
> The mouths of ancient money-bags were tied,
> And that mortified my fervent heart.

Given this evidence those who claim a "tradition" rather than a specific genius behind Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*, are simply wrong. Neo-Orientalist assertions that "tradition" allegedly played a role in the *Shāhnāmeh*'s narrative transmission depend not on scholarship, but on Eurocentric prejudice; they reflect a one-size-fits-all mentality that takes no account of either context or culture.

Cultivated native linguistic facility is of major importance in classical Persian studies. Many editors of classical Persian are "native speakers" of that language. They are fine poets who compose in the classical style, which remains a viable genre in contemporary Iranian literature. The aesthetic judgment of artist-scholars matters—especially in a living artistic tradition. Classical Persian is not a dead language like Old French or Middle English. Many contemporary editors such as Khaleghi-Motlagh, Mahmoud Farrokh, Habīb Yaghmā'ī, Muhammad Taqī Bahar, and Foruzanfar, are also fine poets in the classical tradition. Disregarding this important context, most Western *Shāhnāmeh* critics try to present themselves as innovators resolving old conundrums in a complex field. Far too often, this means simply employing inappropriate criteria that might be effective in analyzing other literary and historical epochs, but do not apply to Classical Persian. Using the traditional arguments of oral formulacism to claim that analyses of the *Shāhnāmeh* within a highly developed literary tradition is excessively "traditional"—and therefore wrong, leads to nothing more than jumping from the lap of one tradition into the bosom of another. Haphazard imposition of Western criteria from unrelated eras to classical Persian texts does not constitute "comparativism." More forceful—and far less diplomatic—terms come to mind.

Moreover, because most Western students of the *Shāhnāmeh* have no hands-on experience with actual editing of classical Persian, they do not suggest innovations that have grown out of practical experience. Instead they tend to impose upon the *Shāhnāmeh* a set of Western criteria that has been developed for an entirely different medieval textual tradition. Relevant contextual, cultural, and historical evidence is routinely

disregarded in this approach because the underlying motivation is not elucidation. Too often, their proscriptions amount to an imposition of Western experience and ideas—betraying an arrogant desire to subjugate the non-Western to the Western. Proponents of these views tend to dismiss native scholars' objections that a highly literate poet, writing in a highly developed literary culture, cannot be judged by the standards applied to oral creators in ancient or backward historical epochs. These ethnocentric scholars dismiss this legitimate criticism of their flawed conceptions as nationalist and hagiologic nonsense. But nationalism, which in Western political discourse has evolved from expressions of independence into a desire for dominance, is a double-edged blade. It cuts both ways.[61]

Scholars of any textual tradition, especially those who want to opine on textual editing, will do well to keep Tim William Machan's wise advice in mind. Machan wrote:

> In determining whether a model of oral composition is useful for interpreting a manuscript tradition it would be important to take into consideration the cultural and literary ideologies which inform the manuscripts as they are reflected in their production, transmission, and reception.[62]

A consideration of the cultural context of production and transmission of *Shāhnāmeh* manuscripts is crucial for understanding the poem. This important aspect of the task is routinely neglected and has been replaced by improperly drawn analogies in the West. Trapped in its Eurocentric echo-chamber, Western *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship imposes principles and methods developed for a medieval European corpus upon the *Shāhnāmeh*, often making quite indefensible pronouncements.

The rules by which we should analyze classical Persian literary and textual traditions should be deduced from the characteristics of this tradition itself—not by the imposition of Western standards—however legitimate those standards might be for the texts and contexts for and in which they are formulated. Unfortunately, the same my-way-or-the-highway mentality, which animates American interactions with the rest of the world, also drives much of the *Shāhnāmeh* scholarship in the United States. The direction and nature of most Western *Shāhnāmeh* studies seems determined by the same crusading temperament that dominates discourse with Iran in the Western halls of power and academe alike. It is decided by that ideological twist of mind that—to paraphrase John le Caré—must fabricate when it runs out of information, but continues to want to maintain its ascendancy. Western contempt for Muslim civilizations is expressed in the guise of comparative scholarship along

a pseudo-intellectual line of attack that follows in the crimson wake of the West's revived attempts at empire. The victims of this academic onslaught are not defenseless civilians of Iraq and Afghanistan on whose mangled and bloodied corpses the West satisfies her Teutonic blood-lust. Unlike her military counterpart who tears into the flesh, the academic crusader tears into the soul and assaults the core of her victims' culture and identity. Time will tell if the West can ever accept other peoples and other cultures as they are, and stop considering "civilization" to be the imposition of Western hegemony on everything in sight.

Notes

Preface

1. See http:// .sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/04/01/BAGLHC1NOC1. DTL.

Introduction

1. Ernst Robert Curtius (1886–1956), author of the classic *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,* translated by W. R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), was one of a handful who risked everything. He hid a Jewish departmental secretary right through to the war's end. Of the non-Jewish German scientists who were not actually married to Jews, only one physicist, Erwin Schrödinger, voluntarily left the country in objection to Nazi policies. Among German historians, only Theodor Ernst Mommsen (1905–1958), a namesake and grandson of Germany's preeminent historian of Rome, Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903) and a nephew of the sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920)—his mother Clara was Max's sister—left Germany because of the Nazi policies. See Norman Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages* (New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1991) pp. 88–89 and p. 193.
2. Cantor, *Inventing,* p. 89.
3. See for instance, Norman Podhoretz, "The Case for Bombing Iran," *Commentary,* 123.6 (June 2007): 17–23; and compare the statements of the Israeli historian, Benny Morris, on the need to launch a preemptive nuclear strike on Iran in: http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1167467762531 and http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/18/opinion/18morris.html?pagewanted=2&_r=2. For an opposing view see David Bromwich's response at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-bromwich/benny-morris-justifies-is_b_113725.html.
4. See for instance, Morteza Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity* (New York: Paragon House, 1993); and Hamid Algar's review of it in *Contemporary Sociology*, 23.2 (1994): 259–60.
5. Theodor Nöldeke *The Iranian National Epic or the Shahnamah*, translated by L. Th. Bogdanov (Bombay: K. B. Cama Oriental Institute, 1930) pp. 81–82, n. 1.
6. See Charles Nicholl, *The Lodger, Shakespeare: His Life on Silver Street* (New York: Viking, 2007) p. 26, and cf. pp. 242–43.

7. I rely on Heda Jason's definitions in her excellent handbook, *Ethnopoetry—Form, Content, Function* (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1977) pp. 30–2.
8. See William L. Hanaway, Jr. "The Iranian Epics," in *Heroic Epic and Saga: An Introduction to the World's Great Folk Epics*, ed. Felix J. Oinas (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978) pp. 77–78.
9. Alexander Heidel (ed.), *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of the Creation* 2nd edition, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951).
10. Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics, Translated and with a Commentary by George Whalley*, edited by John Baxter and Patrick Atherton (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) pp. 123–29.
11. See:
"گفتگو با محمد جعفر محجوب" مصاحبه کننده فرید قدسی. کلک، بهمن و اسفند 1371، ش 36/35، ص 78.
12. I hasten to add that although the stories of Alexander, or the prose epic called *Firūz-shāhnāmeh*, and for that matter, the story of *Samak-i ᶜAyyār* are conventionally designated as "romances" in Western studies of Persian literature, we have no actual reason to believe that they are in fact "romances." Nothing in the texts of these books actually *defines* them as "romance." It has simply become a matter of convention for Western scholarship to call them by that term. The Persian word that refers to these types of narratives, as well as to the Shahnameh and other versified classical and modern Persian stories is the word *dāstān*. In fact, for over a thousand years the most common meaning of the word *dāstān* has been "story," referring to narratives in both verse and prose.
13. R. Howard Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God: The Norman Conquest of 1066 and the Bayeux Tapestry* (New York: Random House, 2006) p. 73.
14. See Henry A. Giroux, *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007) pp. 14–15.
15. See *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong., 1st Sess., December 13, 1967, vol. 113, pt. 27, pp. 36181–9184. Reprinted in *Super-State: Readings in the Military-Industrial Complex*, edited by Herbert I. Schiller and Joseph D. Phillips (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1970) pp. 173–78, see p. 175.
16. Andrew J. Bacevich. *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 150–1.
17. See Bacevich's *New American Militarism*, pp. 147–74 where he traces the roots of Bush's doctrine of preemptive war. See also his *Washington Rules* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2010), especially Chapter 2 and also p. 15.

1 *Shāhnāmeh* and the Presumptive Authority of the West

1. See, William Jones, "Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations," in *The Works of Sir William Jones with the Life of the Author by Lord Teignmouth*, 13 volumes (London: Printed for John Stockdale, Piccadilly; and John Walker, Paternoster–Row, 1807) vol. 10, pp. 354–55.

2. William Jones, *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon, 2 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) vol. 2, pp. 606–7.
3. William Ouseley. *Persian Miscellanies*. (London: Printed for Richard White 1795), p.97.
4. See:
   نگاه کنید به: اسلامی ندوشن، *زندگی و مرگ پهلوانان در شاهنامه*، چاپ سوم، تهران: توس، 1349، ص 319.
5. The influential book was based on Krohn's lectures in Oslo during the winter of 1924–1925, which was first published in German in 1926 as *Die folkloristische Arbeitsmethode* and was later translated into English by Roger L. Welsh as *Folklore Methodology* (Austin, TX: AFS Bibliographic and Special Series no.21, 1971). My references to Krohn in this essay are to the English translation of the book. For an excellent brief history of this method before the Krohns, see Archer Taylor, "Precursors of the Finnish Method of Folklore Study," *Modern Philology* 25 (1927–1928): 481–91. For a survey of the method see Christine Goldberg, "The Historic-Geographic Method: Past and Future," *Journal of Folklore Research*, 21 (1984): 1–18. A more recent application of the method may be found in Steven Swann Jones's *The New Comparative Method: Structural and Symbolic Analysis of the Allomotifs of "Snow White,* FFC no. 247 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1990). More references are provided in Jan Harold Brunvand's *The Study of American Folklore, An Introduction* (New York and London: Norton, 1991).
6. Krohn, *Folklore Methodology,* p. 126.
7. Ibid., p. 127.
8. Ibid., p. 128.
9. Ibid., p. 129.
10. Krohn does allow for the influence of borrowing: "It must be taken into account that two independent traditions can take on a common identical characteristic through borrowing from one by the other or even from a third tradition." Krohn, *Folklore Methodology*, p. 129.
11. Krohn, *Folklore Methodology*, p. 146.
12. William R. Halliday, *Greek and Roman Folklore* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1927), p. 147, n.1; and cf. p. 85.
13. For reasons that I will discuss later in this essay, the tendency to see Greek traits in every epic tale is rooted in the European habit of assuming the direction of diffusion to be from the Greek (= European or more civilized) to the Oriental (= Eastern, or uncivilized). Folklorists have long been proponents as well as critics of this habit. See Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (Berkley and London: University of California Press, 1977), p. 438, and for the chief arguments of its opponents see Richard Dorson, *The British Folklorists, A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) pp. 304–5 and Krohn, *Folklore Methodology*, p. 145.
14. Dick Davis, "The Problem of Ferdowsi's Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol.116, 1996, No.1, 48–49.
15. Henri-Jean, Martin, *The History and Power of Writing*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) p. 116. This

book was originally published in French as *Histoire et pouvoirs de l'écrit* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin) 1988.

16. Although medievalists believe that the sack of Rome by Alaric in A.D. 410 was not as devastating as originally thought, and that most of the murder and mayhem was committed by slaves who "got even" with their owners, the Vandals' conquest of Rome in A.D. 455 was a completely different affair. According to James Westfall Thompson (1864–1941):

    > The Vandal sack of Rome was a disaster far more terrible than that of 410. Then human life and the Christian churches were spared; now they were not. For fourteen days the city was methodically riffled. The imperial palace, the Temple of Jupiter, churches, and dwellings were gutted. The Vandals even stripped the gilded tiles from the roofs of the temples. The relics brought by Titus from Jerusalem—works of art, plate, and furniture—were carried away, along with thousands of the wretched people who were enslaved. The grand old patrician families were broken up, their wealth dissipated. The political glory of Rome departed.

    See J. W. Thompson, *The Middle Ages, 300–1500* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1972, [originally published in 1932]) p. 101.
17. The great Oxford historian R. H. C. Davis (1918–1991) puts the matter quite nicely:

    > It would, in short, be a great mistake to consider the barbarian invasions as a cataclysmic event. "Barbarization" was a very gradual and a very complex development, and it is impossible to say when the Roman Empire came to an end, for from a strictly legal point of view it continued to exist at Constantinople until 1453. The battle of Hadrianople (378 AD) and the sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth (410 AD) were, like the deposition of Romulus Augustus, single events that were important not so much for their own sakes as for their symbolic value. They were like milestones marking the distance that had already been covered on the road to the new Europe.

    See his *A History of Medieval Europe From Constantine to Saint Louis* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1971) p. 26.
18. See Theodor E. Mommsen, "St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of the *City of God*," in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Eugene F. Rice Jr. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959, p. 266. This paper originally appeared in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12(1951): 346–74.
19. Theodor E. Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages'," in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, p. 106. This paper was originally published in *Speculum* 17 (1942): 226–42.
20. See Anthony Grafton's essay on "Middle Ages" in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, general editor Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Scribner, 1982–1989).
21. Davis, *History of Medieval Europe*, p. 27.
22. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages* (New York: William Morrow and Company Inc, 1991) p. 20.
23. Davis, *History of Medieval Europe*, p. 203.

24. Davis, *History of Medieval Europe*, p. 62.
25. Though many Western medievalists of note have spent a great deal of time and energy in an effort to rehabilitate medieval Europe and have produced an admirable body of scholarship that challenges the prejudicial notions of the Middle Ages that were inherited from the Renaissance humanists, the fact remains that compared to the Muslim civilization of the seventh through the thirteenth centuries, Europe was no more than a backward and primitive place. For challenges to the old ideas about medieval Europe see: Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927); Sir Richard Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953); and J. R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970) among others. The ideas come forth best in the debate about the Renaissance. For a summary of different medievalists' views on this issue see Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought; Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948).
26. Joseph R. Strayer, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages, A Short History*, 2nd edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974) p. 4.
27. W. F. H. Nicolaisen, "Introduction," in *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. F. H. Nicolaisen (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995) pp. 1–6.
28. I have assessed and refuted some of Davis's views in M. Omidsalar, "Could al-Thaᶜālibī have used the Shāhnāma as a Source?" *Der Islam* 76(1998): 163–71.
29. See M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979) pp. 1–2.
30. Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages, A Completely Revised and Expanded Edition of Medieval History: The Life and Death of a Civilization* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) pp. 139–40.
31. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, p. 225.
32. Cantor, *Inventing*, pp. 25–26.
33. Cited in Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages,* p. 142.
34. See:

    نگاه کنید به: جعفر آقایان چاوشی، ”عوامل اوج و حضیض علوم در تمدن اسلامی،“ *آئینهء میراث*، سال چهارم، شمارهء 4، بهار 1381، صص 3–11
35. Kelly, Thomas. *Early Public Libraries: A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain before 1850* (London: Library Association, 1966) p. 16.
36. G. H. Putnam, *Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages*, 2 volumes, New York: Hillary House Publishers Ltd., 1962 (this is a reprint of the 1896–1897 edition), vol. 1, p. 133. The original and full context of the letter is found in the report of the correspondence between Geoffrey, John the abbot, and Peter, which is reported in greater detail in Rev. Samuel R. Maitland, *The Dark Ages: A Series of Essays Intended to Illustrate the State of Religion and Literature in the Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Centuries* (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1844) pp.199–201.

37. I have already presented data that contrasts the shared poetic language of the literati of Khorāsān with the artless language of the popular epics, and have demonstrated how the diction of the literary epics differs from the bucolic expression of the popular poems. See

محمود امیدسالار، "بیان ادبی و بیان عامیانه در حماسه های فارسی،" *گلستان* ج 2، 1998، ش 1، صص 85–112. این مقاله در امیدسالار، *جستارهای شاهنامه شناسی*، صص 438–461 تجدید چاپ شده است.

38. See:

ابن قتیبه، *عیون الاخبار*، 4 جلد در 2 مجلد، تجدید چاپ طبع دارالکتب، 1963، ج 3، ص 221: "و قرأتُ فی الآیین: أن رجلاً من خدم دار المملکة أوصی ابنه فقال: ... و لا تجلس علی حائط أو باب أو تکتب علیهما فتلعَن."

39. See:

ابوالفرج الاصفهانی، *کتاب ادب الغرباء*، تصحیح صلاح الدین المنجّد، بیروت، 1972، نگاه کنید به صص 32–35و 55و 60و 62–63و 74و 84–85و 94و 98–99 و بسیاری مواضع دیگر.

40. See:

ابوالفرج الاصفهانی، *ادب الغرباء*، ص 72.

41. See:

منوچهری، *دیوان منوچهری*. به تصحیح م. دبیرسیاقی، تهران: زوّار، 1370، ص 3.

42. See:

الزمخشری، *ربیع الابرار و نصوص الاخبار*، 4 مجلد، بغداد: مطبعة العانی، 1980، ج 1، ص 522: "کان معلم یقعد أبناء المیاسیر فی الظلّ و أبناء الفقراء فی الشمس و یقول: یا اهل الجنة ابزقوا علی أهل النار."

43. See:

نگاه کنید به یادداشتهای دکتر وداد القاضی بر تصحیح خودش از *البصائر والذخائر*، 10 مجلد، بیروت: دارصادر، 1988، ج 9 صص 316–317

44. See:

بیهقی، ابوالفضل *تاریخ بیهقی*. به تصحیح ع. فیّاض، مشهد: دانشگاه فردوسی، 2536، ص 909.

45. See Bayhaqī, pp. 907–8.

46. See:

شمس قیس رازی. *المعجم فی معاییر اشعار العجم*، به تصحیح محمد قزوینی، بیروت 1909 صص 434–440 . قس شمس الدین محمد بن قیس الرّازی، *کتاب المعجم فی معاییر اشعار العجم*، به تصحیح محمد بن عبدالوهّاب قزوینی، با مقابله با شش نسخهء خطی قدیمی و تصحیح مجدد مدرّس رضوی، تهران: کتابفروشی تهران، 1338، صص 464–479.

47. See:

ابوالشرف ناصح بن ظفر جرفادقانی، *ترجمهء تاریخ یمینی*، به تصحیح جعفر شعار، چاپ سوم، تهران: شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، 1374، ص 487.

48. See:

کتاب تاریخ قم تألیف حسن بن محمد بن حسن قمّی در سال 378 قمری به عربی. ترجمهء حسن بن علی بن حسن بن عبدالملک قمّی بفارسی در سال 805–806 قمری، تصحیح و تحشیهء سید جلال الدین طهرانی مدرّس علم معقول و متخصص در علم فلک و ریاضیّات عالیه، تهران: توس، 1361، صص 13–15.

49. See, Bayhaqī, p. 905.

50. See:

الجاحظ، عمرو بن بحر. *الحیوان*. 8 مجلدات، بتحقیق و شرح عبدالسلام محمد هارون. الطبعة الثانیة، قاهره: مطبعة البابی الحلبی، [1969]، ج 1 ص 88.

51. See:

عنصر المعالی کیکاووس بن اسکندر بن قابوس بن وشمگیر بن زیار، *قابوس نامه*، به اهتمام و تصحیح غلامحسین یوسفی، چاپ پنجم، تهران: شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، 1368، ص 159: "و جز بر خطّ معتمدان اعتماد مکن، هر کتابی را و هر جزوی را مقدّم مدار."

52. See:

ابن اسفندیار، *تاریخ طبرستان*، به تصحیح عباس اقبال، تهران: بی ناشر، 1320، ص 4.

53. See, Ibn Isfandiyār, pp. 83, 85.
54. See:

البصائر و الذخائر، ج 1، صص 2–5؛ ج 9، صص 268–270.

55. See:

البصائر و الذخائر، ج 9 صص 64–98؛ نیز نگاه کنید به ضمیمهء این مجلد، صص 271–272.

56. See for instance:

ابن الندیم. *کتابالفهرست*. تحقیق رضا تجدد. تهران: اساطیر، 1381: "رایته بخط السکری نحو عشرین ورقة ...کتبتُ نسبه من خط ابی الحسن بن الکوفی ... و رأیته بخط الحلوانی" (ص 86)؛ "قرأت بخط احمد بن الحارث الخراز" (ص 106)؛ "قرأت بخط ابن الکوفی قال ... و من غیر خط ابن الکوفی" (ص 117)؛ نیز نگاه کنید به ص 149 در ذکر ابن حاجب النعمان و بسیاری موارد دیگر. تقریباً صفحه یی نیست که در آن از ذکر خطوط منسوبه یا قابل استناد بودن منبعی از منابعش خالی باشد.

57. See:

الخطیب البغدادی، *تقیید العلم*، به تصحیح یوسف عشّ، چاپ دوم، دارالعلم السنة النبویة، 1975، صص 5 به بعد.

58. Franz Rosenthal, "Of Making Many Books There is no End: The Classical Muslim View," in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East,* ed. George N. Atiyeh, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995) pp. 35–36.
59. Rāghib's death is placed in AH 502 (A.D. 1108) in the *EI*[2]; but for reasons that need not detain us here he passed away between AH 396 (A.D. 1005) and AH 401 (A.D. 1010).
60. See also:

الراغب الاصبهانی، *محاضرات الأدباء و محاورات الشعراء و البلغاء*، 2 مجلد، بیروت: بی ناشر، بی تاریخ، ج 1، ص 106. همین داستان بدون ذکر نام ابن کیسان باز هم نقل شده است. نگاه کنید به زمخشری، *ربیع الابرار*، ج 1 ص 619.

61. See M. Omidsalar, "Orality, Mouvance, and Editorial Theory in Shāhnāma Studies," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 27(2002): 249–66. For information about the state of European libraries of the Middle Ages see: Thomas Kelly, *Early Public Libraries*; James Thompson, *A History of the Principles of Librarianship* (London: C. Bingley, 1977); See George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981); Makdisi's other seminal book, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990); Ramona Bressie, "Libraries of the British Isles in the Anglo-Saxon Period," in *The Medieval Library*, ed. J. W. Thompson (New York: Hafner Pub. Co., 1957).

2 An Epic's Journey: A Brief History of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s Transmission

1. Ilya Gershevitch, "Old Iranian Literature," in *Handbuch der Orientalistik. Vierter Band Iranistik. Zweiter Abschnitt Literature*, ed. Bertold Spuler (Leiden: Brill, 1968) p. 21.
2. Gershevitch, "Old Iranian Literature," pp. 20–21.
3. The frequency of such references to the heroic personages of ancient Iranian lore has led one scholar to refer to *Yt* 19 as a "short history of Iranian monarchy,

an abridged Shāhnāmeh." See James Darmesteter, "The Zend-Avesta. Part I: The Vendidad," in *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. Max Müller, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965, vol. 2, p. 286. See also his *Le Zend-Avesta, 3 volumes,* Paris: Librairie d'Ameriqueet d'Orient, 1960, vol. 2, p. 363.

4. Theodor Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic or the Shahnamah*, translated by Leonid Th. Bogdanov (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1979) p. 5 (reprint of the Bombay edition Bombay: K. B. Cama Oriental Institute, 1930).
5. For an online text of the Persica see: http://hum.ucalgary.ca/wheckel/sources/ktesias.pdf#search=%22%22The%20Persika%20of%20Ktesias%22.
6. *Diodorus of Sicily*, 12 volumes, translated by C. H. Oldfather, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960, vol. 1, p. 459. Cf. also *Diodorus*, vol. 1, p. 424.
7. See Robert Drews, *The Greek Accounts of Eastern History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) p. 111 and p. 198, n. 66. Drews takes issue with Christensen and others who have interpreted Ctesias's *Records of Kings* as the precursor of the Shahnameh, see: A. Christensen, *Les Gestes des rois dans les traditions de l'Iran antique*, Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1963, pp. 116–22. However, his rejection of these scholars' arguments that connect the ancient "records" is a bit forced. There is no doubt that Christensen and others may have overstated their positions; but Drews too overstates his. One need not establish the existence of specific stories common to Ctesias's so-called royal records and the Shāhnāmeh in order to establish that there was a written tradition of kings.
8. Drews, *Greek Accounts,* p. 111.
9. The Middle Persian compound X^watāynāmag, also written Khudāynāmag, is made of two parts: X^watāy, (cf. New Persian Xudā,), meaning "lord, king, god", and nāmag, meaning "book."
10. For example see Theodor Nöldeke's magisterial, *The Iranian National Epic*, pp. 23–26, 28–29.
11. See for instance:

مجتبی مینوی. *فردوسی و شعر او*. تهران، دهخدا، 1354، ص 50–51: "چنین استنباط میشود
که در عهد خسرو انوشروان مجموعه ای در باب تاریخ گذشتهء ایران تهیه شده و موجود بوده است که قسمت راجع به
دورهء ساسانیان آن تا حدّی تاریخی و مبتنی بر اسناد بوده و قسمت ماقبل آن از نوعی بوده است که ما افسانه
و داستان و اساطیر پیشینیان می نامیم. ولی در نظر مردم آن روزگار تمامی آنها در یک حکم بوده است چه بین تاریخ و
اساطیر تفاوتی نمی گذاشته اند."

"It appears that during the rule of Khosrow I [531–579] a compendium of Iranian history had been prepared, of which the part that concerned Sassanid period was relatively realistic and based on archival reports, but the parts that preceded this section were chiefly of the kind of narrative that we call ancient fables, legends, and myths. However, the people of that era viewed all of these [narrative] to be of uniform [authority] because history and myth were not clearly differentiated."

نیز نگاه کنید به: ذبیح الله صفا، *حماسه سرائی در ایران*. چاپ چهارم، تهران: امیرکبیر، 1363، صص 60–61

12. See:

حمزة بن الحسن الاصفهانی، *کتاب تاریخ سنی ملوک الأرض و الأنبیاء*، به تصحیح سید جواد ایرانی تبریزی، برلین:
مطبعهء کاویانی، 1922، ص 19.

13. See:

    حمزه، ص 15.

14. The term *oicotype* was borrowed from botany by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow, who used it to mean the local forms of a tale-type or other item of narrative folklore. Unlike the "tale-type" the *oicotype*is closely tied to a locality. See Carl W. von Sydow, "Folk-Tale Studies and Philology: Some Points of View," in C. W. von Sydow, *Selected Papers on Folklore*, New York: Arno Press, 1977, pp. 189–220.
15. It has become something of a fad among Western Iranists to assume that the Sassanid aristocracy was either illiterate or marginally literate. This assumption is based on Eurocentric notions dependant on information about the state of literacy among the aristocracy of Europe at the time. This underlying presumption postulates that the general illiteracy of medieval European aristocracy means that the Iranian aristocracy of the Late Antiquity must also have been illiterate. However, a study of source materials shows that almost every important Sassanid King in the Shahnameh makes a point of advising his nobles to take special care about educating their sons. For instance the founder of the dynasty, Ardashir I (224–302) has the following to say about how his aristocracy should raise their children (vi: 226–27: 478–81):

    همه گوش دارید پندِ مرا   سخن گفتنِ سودمندِ مرا
    بود بر دل هر کسی ارجمند   که یابند ازو ایمنی از گزند
    چو فرزند باشد به فرهنگ دار   زمانه ز بازی بر او تنگ دار

    Ardashir's educational policy is clear from the following verses (vi: 222: 404–9):

    چو بی مایه گشتی یکی مایه دار   وزان آگهی یافتی شهریار
    چو بایست برساختی کار اوی   نماندی چنان تیره بازار اوی...
    همان کودکش را به فرهنگیان   سپردی چو بودی ورا هنگِ آن
    به هر برزنی در دبستان بدی   همان خانِ آتش پرستان بُدی

    Bahrām V (A.D. 420–438), when only seven years of age, asks the Arab prince in whose charge he lived to provide him with proper education and three learned men to teach him writing as well as hunting and fighting are brought to him (vi: 368: 95–99 and 369: 110–13):

    چنین گفت کای مهترِ سرفراز   ز من کودک شیرخواره مساز
    به داننده فرهنگیانم سپـــــار   چو کارست، بیکار خوارم مدار
    بدو گفت منذر که ای سرفراز   به فرهنگ نوزت نیامد نیاز
    چو هنگام فرهنگ باشد ترا   به دانایی آهنگ باشد ترا،
    به ایوان نمانم که بازی کنی   به بازی همی سرفرازی کنی...
    سه موبد نگه کرد فرهنگ جوی   که در شورستان بودشان آبروی
    یکی تا دبیری بیاموزدش   دل از تیرگی ها برافروزدش
    دگر آنک نخچیرِ بازان و یوز   بیاموزدش کان بوَد دلفروز
    و دیگر که چوگان و تیر و کمان   همان گردش و پیچ با بدگمان...

    Later in the story the Shāhnāma makes it clear that Bahrām was literate (vi: 599: 2404–5):

    به نوّی جهاندار عهدی نبشت   چو خورشیدِ تابان به باغ بهشت
    یکی پهلوی نامه از خطّ شاه   فرستاده آورد و بنمود راه

Similarly, the Emperor, Kavād I (A.D. 488–96/498–531) appoints his son to the throne by a document that he writes himself and warns his nobles that "he who sees Kavād's handwriting" should obey the orders in the document. This implies that the nobles were also literate and could tell the handwriting of the king from that of others. Tedious as it may be, this point must be stressed, because it seems a favorite pastime of Western neo-Orientalists to assume that Persian Emperors were illiterate; an assumption with which they do not make of any of the Roman Emperors. Be that as it may, the verses are the following in Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition (vii: 81: 358–364):

ز شاهیش چون سال بگذشت چل   غمِ روزِ مرگ اندرآمد به دل،
یکی نامه بنبشت پس بر حریر   برآن خطِ شایسته، خود بُد دبیر
نخست آفرین کرد بر دادگـــــر   که دارد ازو دین و هم زو هنر
بباشد همه بی گمان هرچ گفت   چه بر آشکار و چه اندر نهفت
سرِ پادشاهیش را کس ندید   نشد خوار هرکس که او را گزید
هر آنکس که بینید خطِّ قباد   بجز پندِ دانا مگیرید یاد
به کسری سپردم سزاوار تخت   پس از مرگِ ما او بوَد نیک بخت

The existence of public schools in which texts—religious or otherwise—were taught is quite explicit in the *Shahnameh*. We've already seen evidence of Ardashir's educational policy and his building of many schools in his realm (6: 222: 409). In the reign of Khosrow I (A.D. 531–79) also, we find reference to a religious school in which pupils learned their lessons from books (vii: 169–70: 1005–8):

بیامد همی گردِ مرو او بجُست   یکی موبدی دید با زند و اُست
همی کودکان را بیاموخت زند   به تندی و خشم و به بانگِ بلند
یکی کودکی مهتر اندر برش   پژوهندهء زند و اُستا سرش
همی خواندندیش بوزرجمهر   **نهاده بر آن دفتر از مهر چهر**

The scribes of the Sassanid court were known not only for their bureaucratic skills but also for their fine calligraphy. This is stressed both in the reign of Ardashir and that of Khosrow I (see vi: 215: 316–19, vi: 216: 320; and vii: 213: 1492–99):

به دیوانش کارآگهان داشتی   به بی دانشان کار نگذاشتی
بلاغت نگاه داشتندی و خطّ   کسی کو بدی چیره تر یک نقط
چو برداشتی آن سخن رهنمون   شهنشاه کردیش روزی فزون
کسی را که کمتر بدی خط و ویر   نرفتی به دیوانِ شاه اردشیر
سویِ کارداران شدندی به کار   قلم زن بماندی برِ شهریار . . .
چو خواهی که رنج تو آید به بر   از آموزگاران مبرتاب سر
دبیری بیاموز فرزند را   چو هستی بوَد خویش و پیوند را
دبیری رساند جوان را به تخت   کند ناسزا را سزاوارِ بخت
دبیری ست از پیشه ها ارجمند   کزو مرد افگنده گردد بلند
چو با آلت و رای باشد دبیر   نشیند برِ پادشا ناگزیر
تن خویش آژیر دارد ز رنج   بیابد بی اندازه از شاه گنج
بلاغت چو با خطّ گرد آیدش   بر اندیشه معنی بیفزایدش
ز لفظ آن گزیند که کوتاه تر   به خط آن نماید که دلخواه تر

The sheer size of the Persian empire, which under the Sassanid rulers stretched over a vast territory, would have made managing it without the benefit of a highly literate administrative class, and by extension a well-educated aristocracy, virtually impossible.

16. That local histories included heroic legends may be inferred from some passages of the *History of Balᶜamī*, composed by the Samanid vizier and historian, Abū ᶜAlī Muhammad b. Abu al-Fazl-i Balᶜamī in 352 AH/ A.D. 963, where he relates the story of a military siege in the time of the epic ruler, Manūchihr from a book devoted to the history and superiority of cities:

    I have read in other chronicles that are independent of this book [i.e., *Tabarī's History*], in the *Book of Superiority of Cities*, in [the chapter concerning] the virtues of the city of Āmul, . . . that King Afrāsiyāb and his army laid siege to the province of Tabarīstān for ten years. During this time, King Manūchihr was in the city of Āmul with his whole host, [and the city was so rich in provisions] that except for pepper, they needed no supplies from outside [its walls].

    ابو علی محمد بن محمد بن بلعمی، *تاریخ بلعمی* به تصحیح محمد تقی بهار و بکوشش محمد پروین گنابادی، 2 مجلد، چاپ دوم، تهران: زوّار، 1353، ج 1 صص 346–347.

17. See:

    ابو عبدالله الحسن بن الحسین؟ *البیزره*، به تصحیح محمد کردعلی، دمشق، 1372، صص 29–30،
    نیز نگاه کنید به: عمر بن البحر الجاحظ، *الحیوان*، 8 مجلد، به تصحیح عبدالسلام محمد هارون، چاپ دوم قاهره، 1384، ج 7، ص 179

18. We know of the *Garshāspnāma's* prose original because that prose account was used by Balᶜamī more than 100 years before it was set to verse by Asadī of Tūs. Balᶜamī's reference to the story of the hero Garshāsp's birth agrees with the *Garshāspnāma's* account verbatim (1: 132–33):

    According to Persian accounts other than the present book [i.e., *Tabarī's History*], Jam escaped [Zahhāk] and reached Zāvulistān after many adventures. It is said that the daughter of the king of Zāvulistān met him and married him without her father's knowledge, as her father had given her the right to choose her own husband. After Jam consummated his marriage, [the princess] gave birth to a son, whom they named Tūr. Thereafter, [Jam] escaped to India and was [finally] killed there. His son, Tūr begat a son, whom he named Shīdasp, and Shīdasp begat a son, whom he named Tuvurg, and Tuvurg begat a son, whom he named Shahm, and Shahm begat a son whom he named Athrat, who begat a son whom he named Garshāsp, and he begat a son, whom he named Narīmān, and he begat a son, whom he named Sām, and he begat a son whom he named Dastān, and Dastān begat a son whom he named Rustam, and he begat a son whom he named Farāmarz. The stories, chronicles, and adventures of this family are quite numerous and popular; and Abū al-Mu'ayyad relates them in his great *Shāhnāmeh*.

19. For Jāhez's complaints about the interference of copyists and translators with the texts that they copy or translate see:

عمرو بن البحر الجاحظ، *الحیوان*، 8 مجلد، به تحقیق و شرح عبدالسلام محمد هارون، چاپ دوم، قاهره، 1965/1384، ج 1 ص 79، ج 6، ص 19؛ و قس *مجمل التواریخ و القصص*، ص 38.

20. Hira is a city in present-day Iraq a bit southeast of Najaf. It was an important political center during the rule of the Sassanid Empire.
21. See:

تقی زاده، حسن. *فردوسی و شاهنامهء او*. باهتمام حبیب یغمائی، تهران: انجمن آثار ملی، 1349، ص 72.

22. See:

طرسوسی، ابوطاهر محمد بن حسن بن علی بن موسی، *دارابنامهء طرسوسی*، به تصحیح ذبیح الله صفا، دو مجلد، چاپ سوم، تهران، 1347، صص 13–14.

23. See:

صفا، *حماسه سرائی*، صص 45، 565.

24. See:

مجتبی مینوی، "فردوسی و مقام او،" در *نقد حال*، چاپ دوم، تهران، 1358، ص 115. مجتبی مینوی، *فردوسی و شعر او*، ص 50. محمد محمدی ملایری، *فرهنگ ایرانی پیش از اسلام و آثار آن در تمدن اسلامی و ادبیات عربی*، چاپ سوم، تهران، 1374، ص 181. محمد امین ریاحی، *سرچشمه های فردوسی شناسی*. تهران: پژوهشگاه، 1372، ص 70 زیرنویس 1.

25. The assumption that Nazr relied on "oral" informants is partly motivated by the Persian racist views of the Arabs. These views come through loud and clear in Professor Mohammadi's observation that the reason the Arabs learned Iranian tales rather than their philosophy and other learning is their inherent simplemindedness (see pp.180–81 of his فرهنگ ایرانی). Needless to say, this idea should not be dignified by an attempt at refutation.
26. *Das Leben Muhammad's nach Muhammed Ibn Ishākbearbeitet von Abd el-Malik Ibn Hischām*, herausgegeben von Dr. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, 3 vols. Göttingen, 1858, p. 191.
27. *Das Leben Muhammed's,* p. 235.
28. For other versions of this report see:

السیرة النبویة لابن هشام بشرح الوزیر المغربی. تحقیق سهیل زکار، 2 مجلد. بیروت: دارالفکر للطباعة و النشر، 1992/1412، ج 1 ص 240 نیز *سیرة ابن اسحاق المسمّاة بکتاب المُبتدا و المَبعَث و المَغازی تألیف محمّد بن إسحاق بن یَسار (85–151 هـ)*. تحقیق و تعلیق محمد حمیدالله، رباط: معهد الدراسات و الأبحاث للتعریب، 1976/1396، ص: ز، و قس ص 182

29. See:

ابوزکریاء یحیی بن زیاد الفرّاء، *معانی القرآن*، تصحیح عبدالفتّاح اسماعیل شلبی، 3 مجلد، قاهره، 1973، ج 2، ص 326

30. See:

ابوالحسن علی بن محمد بن حبیب الماوردی البصری، *النُکَت وَ العُیون*، راجعه و علـَق علیَـه السیّد بن عبدالمقصود بن عبدالرحیم، 6 جلد، بیروت: دارالکتب العلمیة، 1992؛ ج 4، ص328

31. See:

"و از مردمان کس هست—و آن نضر حارثست—که بزمین پارسیان ببازرگانی رفته بود و افسانه های رستم و افراسیاب بخریده بود و به مکّه آورده بود آنرا پیش مهتران قریش می خواند. ایشان را خوش می آمد و آن می شنیدند و قرآن نمی شنیدند." نگاه کنید به: *تفسیر قرآن مجید، نسخهء محفوظ در کتابخانهء دانشگاه کمبریج*، به تصحیح جلال متینی، 2 جلد، تهران، 1349، ج 1، صص 485–486

32. I have intentionally excluded the vast literature that concentrates on prophetic traditions (*hadith)* because it is so extensive that even a cursory study

falls beyond the limited confines of this book. However, those who are interested in taking the testimony of the *hadith* sources into account may want to look at:

البیهقی، شعب الایمان: باب فی حفظ اللسان، فصل فی ترک قرائت کتب الاعاجم، بیروت 1990، ج 4، ص 305

Where Beyhaqi refers to Nazr as a person who used to purchase books that contained histories of kings of Persia:

".کان یشتری کتاباً فیها تواریخ ملوک الفرس"

33. See:

"و قیل الآیة نزلت فی النضر بن الحارث بن کلدة، **کان اشتری کتاباً فیها** احادیث الفرس من حدیث رستم و اسفندیار فکان یلهیهم بذلک و یطرف به لیصد عن سماع القرآن" نگاه کنید به: شیخ الطائفة ابوجعفر محمد بن الحسن بن علی الطوسی، *تفسیر التبیان*، 10 مجلد، به تصحیح احمد حبیب قصیر العاملی، نجف 1382، ج8 در تفسیر آیهء 6 از سورهء لقمان

34. See:

"کان النضر بن الحارث **یشتری کتاباً فیها** الأخبار الأعاجم و یحدّث بها أهل مکة مضادة لمحمد (ص)" نگاه کنید به: ابومحمد مکّی بن ابی طالب القیسی، *تفسیر المشکل من غریب القرآن العظیم علی الیجاز و الاختصار*، به تصحیح هُدی الطویل المرعشلی، بیروت: دارالنور الاسلامی، 1984، ص 284

35. See:

"این آیت در شأن نضر حارث آمده است. وی مردی بودی به مکه. به غایت دشمن داشتی رسول خدای را. به حیره رسیده بود **لختی کتب از قصه های رستم و اسفندیار و وقایع و مقامات و مقالات عجم** بدست آورده بود. آنرا همی خواندی. هرگه کی رسول قصهء آدم خواندی، وی قصهء رستم خواندی پیش اتباع خویش. گفتی: گر محمد رسول است، من هم رسول ام، و گر وی کتابی میخواند، من نیز کتابی می خوانم و گر وی دینی می ورزد، من نیز دینی می ورزم" نگاه کنید به: ابوبکر عتیق سورابادی، *تفسیر قرآن کریم: عکس نسخهء مکتوب به سال 523 محفوظ در کتابخانهء دیوان هند*، تهران، 1345، ص 261

36. See:

ابوالفضل رشید الدین میبدی، *کشف الاسرار و عدّة الابرار*، ده مجلد، به تصحیح علی اصغر حکمت، چاپ سوم، تهران، 2537، ج 7، ص 486: "النضر بن الحارث ... مردی بازرگان بود سفر کردی بدیار عجم و **در زمین عجم اخبار پیشینیان، قصهء رستم و اسفندیار و امثال ایشان بخرید** و قریش را گفت: محمد آنچه میگوید از قصهء پیشینیان چون عاد و ثمود همچنانست که من بشما آوردم از اخبار رستم و اسفندیار و اکاسره. قریش استماع قرآن درباقی کردند و همه روی بوی آوردند و آن قصه های عجم می شنیدند." نیز نگاه کنید به: ج 4، صص 34–35: "و گفته اند که این آیت [یعنی آیهء 31 از سورهء انفال] در شأن نضر بن الحارث آمد... که وی مردی بازرگان بود و بدریای فارس و نواحی حیره بسی گشته بود و اخبار عجم خوانده و احادیث کلیله و امثال آن بدست آورده و با مستهزیان قریش بنشستیدی و آن اخبار عجم خواندن گرفتی پس چون مصطفی قرآن خواندی و ذکر قصهء پیشینیان و امتهای گذشته در آن بودی، این نضر گفتی من نیز مانند این که محمد میخواند بیارم و بگویم که این هم چون احادیث کلیله و دمنه است و افسانهء پیشینیان."

37. See his statement:

" و من یشتری حکایة رستم و بهرام و یحتاج الیها کیف یکون مستغنیاً عن الحکمة" نگاه کنید به: فخرالدین محمد بن عمر الرازی، *مفاتیح الغیب المشتهر بالتفسیر الکبیر للامام محمد الرازی فخرالدین ابن العلامة ضیاء الدین عمر المشتهر بخطیب الریّ رحمه الله و نفع به المسلمین و بهامشه تفسیر العلامة ابی السعود*، 8 مجلد، قاهره؟: المطبعة العامرة، 1890/1308، ج 6، ص 574

38. See:

"فی النضر بن الحارث... کان یتـّجر فیخرج الی فارس **فیشتری اخبارالاعاجم** و یحدث بها قریشاً و یقول لهم انّ محمداً یحدّثکم بحدیث عاد و ثمود و انا احدّثکم بحدیث رستم و اسفندیار و اخبار الاکاسرة" نگاه کنید به: ابوعلی الفضل بن الحسن الطبرسی، *مجمع البیان لعلوم القرآن*، 9 مجلد، قاهرة، 1395، ج 8، ص 83

39. See:

"نزلت فی النضر بن الحارث و ذلک انّه کان تاجراً الی فارس، **فکان یشتری اخبارالاعاجم** فیحدّث بها قریشاً و یقول لهم ان محمداً یحدّثکم بحدیث عاد و ثمود و انا اُحدّثکم بحدیث رستم و اسفندیار واخبارالاکاسرة، فیستملحون

حدیثه و یترکون استماع القرآن" نگاه کنید به ابوالفرج عبدالرحمن بن الجوزی، *زادالمسیر فی علم التفسیر*، 9 مجلد، بیروت، 1964، ج 6، صص 315–316

40. See:

ابوالفتوح رازی، *روض الجنان و روح الجنان فی تفسیر القرآن*، مجلدات متفرقه به تصحیح محمد جعفر یاحقی و محمد مهدی ناصح، مشهد، 1366،ج 15 ص 279: "مقاتل و کلبی گفتند آیت در نضر بن الحارث بن علقمة بن کلدة بن عبدالدار بن قصیّ آمد که او به پارس رفتی به تجارت. **این کتابهای اخبار و قصص پارسیان و سیر و مقامات و حروب ایشان بخریدی** و با مکه آمدی و بر مشرکان می خواندی و می گفتی: آنچه محمد می گوید هم ازین جنس است. آن قصهء عاد و ثمود است و این قصهء رستم و اسفندیار و عرب را آن خوش می آمد برای آن که غریب بود و به آن مشغول می شدند و سماع قرآن رها میکردند."

41. See:

"...لهو الحدیث: الغناء نزلت فی قرشی اشتری مغنیة و قیل الاسمار الکسرویة اشتراها النضر بن الحارث المقتول فی اسری بدر "نگاه کنید به امام محمود بن ابی الحسن النیسابوری، *ایجاز البیان عن معانی القرآن*، 2 مجلد، به تصحیح حنیف بن حسن القاسمی، بیروت، 1995، ج 2، ص 658

42. See:

"نزلت فی النضر بن الحارث و **کان یشتری اخبارالأکاسرة** فیمیلون الی حدیثه و یترکون سماع القرآن" نگاه کنید به: ابوالبرکات عبدالله بن احمد بن محمود النسفی، *تفسیر النسفی*، 4 مجلد، قاهره، 1966–1968، ج 3، ص 278

43. See:

"و قیل نزلت فی النضر بن الحارث **لانـّه اشتری کتب الاعاجم رستم و اسفندیار** فکان یجلس بمکة فاذا قالت قریش ان محمداً قال کذا، ضحک منه و حدّثهم باحادیث ملوک الفرس و یقول حدیثی هذا احسن من حدیث محمد، حکـّاه الفرّاء و الکلبی و غیرهما" نگاه کنید به: محمد بن احمد القرطبی، *الجامع لاحکام القرآن*، 22 مجلد، به تصحیح محمد ابراهیم الخفناوی و محمود حامد عثمان، قاهره، 1994، ج 14، ص 55،

44. See:

"قیل نزلت فی النضر بن الحارث بن کلدة و کان یتّجر فیأتی الحیرة و **یشتری اخبارالعجم** و یحدّث بها قریشاً و یقول ان محمداً یحدثکم بحدیث عاد و ثمود و أنا أحدّثکم بحدیث رستم و اسفندیار و أخبارالاکاسرة" نگاه کنید به: علی بن محمد الخازن البغدادی، *تفسیر القرآن الجلیل المسمّی لباب التأویل فی معانی التنزیل و قد حلی هامش هذا الکتاب بالتفسیر المسمی بمدارک التنزیل و حقائق التأویل تالیف الامام الجلیل العلامة ابی البرکات عبدالله بن احمد بن محمود النسفی*، 4 مجلد، بیروت، بی تاریخ، ج 3، ص 438

45. See:

محمود امیدسالار، "علامه قزوینی، شاهنامه، و اشاعهء داستانهای حماسی ایران در میان اعراب جاهلی،" در *فصلنامهء گلستان*، سال سوم، ش 3 و 4، پائیز و زمستان 1378، صص 93–113؛ نیز نگاه کنید به: میرجلال الدین محدّث، *تعلیقات نقض*، 2 مجلد، تهران، 1358، ج 2، صص 992–993، 997–999

46. It is always difficult to convey the possibility of misreading one Persian or Arabic word as another in *transliteration*. Thus, when I report that the manuscript variant for *samar* in al-ᶜIqd al-Farid is *siyar*, the reader who may not be familiar with Arabic script may not appreciate the full implication of the statement. But those readers who know the Arabic script will immediately understand how easily one may confuse the form سمر for the word سير especially in manuscripts that use dots sparingly.

47. See:

"...و اخطأوا فی التأویل. انما نزلت هذه الآیة فی قوم کانوا یشترون الکتب من اخبارالسمر (نسخه بدل: السیر) و الاحادیث القدیمة و یـُضاهون بها القرآن و یقولون انها افضل منه" نگاه کنید به: العقد الفرید، 8 مجلد به تصحیح ا. امین، قاهره، 1962، ج 6، ص 9 و در طبع جدید بیروت، 1983، ج 7، صص 7–8

48. See:

"و منهم النضر بن الحارث بن کلدة بن عبدمناف بن عبدالدار، کان اشرّ قریش فی تکذیب النبی (ص) والاذی له و لأصحابه و کان ینظر فی کتب الفرس و یخالط الیهود و النصاری و کان یقول: انما یأتیکم محمد باساطیر الاولین، فنزلت فیه عدّة آیات." نگاه کنید به: محمد بن شاکر بن احمد الکتبی، *عیون التواریخ*، به تصحیح حسام الدین القدسی، قاهره، 1980، ج 1، ص 67

49. For excellent discussions of the spread of Persian language among the pre-Islamic Arabs see:
    آذرتاش آذرنوش، *راههای نفوذ فارسی در فرهنگ و زبان عرب جاهلی*، چاپ دوم با تجدید نظر، تهران: توس، 1374؛ نیز *چالش میان فارسی و عربی: سده های نخست*، تهران: نشر نی، 1385.
50. See for instance:
    محمد محمدی ملایری، *تاریخ و فرهنگ ایران در دوران انتقال از عصر ساسانی به عصر اسلامی*، چاپ اول، تهران: انتشارات یزدان، 1372، ج 1، صص 199–307
51. See for instance his quotations from Ardashir's epistles (1: 13) as well as his retelling of numerous conflicts between Iranians and their traditional enemies, such as the Trasoxianian Turks (e.g., 1: 117–21) and others (e.g, 1: 178–79), which he quotes from the *Chronicles of Persians*. He also quotes from unspecified "books of the Persians" frequently (e.g., 1: 10, 40, 47, 339) as well as from a number of specific books such as Kitāb al-ā'in (1: 8, 62, 112, 151, 313), Kitāb al-Tāj (e.g., 1: 13, 15, 45, 59, 84, 96), and the Arabic translation of Khosrow Aparviz II (A.D. 591–628) to his son Kavād II Shiruy (628) (e.g., 1: 31, 59, 288) and so on. See:
    ابو محمد عبدالله بن مسلم بن قتیبه، *عیون الاخبار*، 4 مجلد در 2 جلد. قاهره: دارالکتب، 1965.
52. See:
    ابوالحسن علی بن حسین مسعودی، *مروج الذهب*، 2 مجلد، ترجمهء ابوالقاسم پاینده، چاپ سوم، تهران: شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، 1365، نگاه کنید به ج 1 صص 190، 242، و مخصوصاً 221، 229، 270، 274.
53. Muhammad b. Ishāq al-Nadim, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture I,* 2 volumes, edited and translated by Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970) (Records of Civilization: Sources and studies, no. 83), vol. 2, p. 713. Since Dodge's Arabic translation is a bit rocky and since a better edition of the text—not what the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* terms a mere Persian translation—is available now, I will also provide the Arabic text here:
    "أول من صنف الخرافات و جعل لها كتباً و أودعها الخزائن و جعل بعض ذلک على السنة الحیوان، الفرس الأول. ثم اغرق فی ذلک ملوک الأشغانية، و هم الطبقة الثالثة من ملوک الفرس. ثم زاد ذلک و اتسع فی ایام ملوک الساسانية، و نقلته العرب الى اللغة العربية، و تناوله الفصحاء و البلغاء، فهذبوه و نمقوه و صنفوا فی معناه ما يشبهه." نگاه کنید به *کتاب الفهرست للندیم*، به تصحیح رضا تجدد، تهران، 1350، ص 363.
54. See Masūdī's مروج الذهب, vol.1, p. 230.
55. Dodge's more literal but less accurate translation reads: "The Names of the Books Which the Persians Composed about Biography, and the Evening Stories about Their Kings Which Were True." See Dodge, vol. 2, p. 716. The actual Arabic text reads:
    "اسماء الکتب التی الفها الفرس فی السیر و الاسمار الصحیحة التی لملوکهم." *الفهرست*، ص 364.
56. See:
    الفهرست، ص 364: "کتاب هزاردستان، کتاب بوسفاس و فیلوس (؟)، کتاب ححد خسروا، کتاب المرئن، کتاب خرافه و نزهة، کتاب الدّب و الثعلب، کتاب الروزبه الیتیم، کتاب مسکر زنانه و شاه زنان، کتاب نمرود ملک بابل، کتاب خلیل ودعه."

    Many of these titles are incorrect because the scribes who did not know Persian corrupted the original forms of the titles in the course of copying the text of the *al-Fihrist*.
57. See:
    نگاه کنید به سید حسن تقی زاده، *فردوسی و شاهنامهء او*، به اهتمام حبیب یغمائی، تهران: سلسلهء انتشارات انجمن آثار ملی، 1349، صص 69–86.

58. See:

ابن اسفندیار، *تاریخ طبرستان*، به تصحیح عباس اقبال آشتیانی، تهران، 1320 ص 301:

کجا اند اصحاب طریقت و ارباب حقیقت تا در این تاریخ بعد از آن که **سمر و خبر را بباصره مطالعه فرمایند** بصیرت برگمارند چه طبرستان با آنکه کو گیاهست از زمین چندین ملوک و امرا و علما را با چندان کوشش و کشش مآل جلال حال بکجا رسید و از آن امارات نه کشتی ماند و از آن عمارات نه خشتی.“

59. See:

فرخی. *دیوان فرخی*. بتصحیح م. دبیرسیاقی، تهران:زوّار، 1363،، ص 61:

شجاعت تو همی بسترد ز دفترها　　　حدیث رستم دستان و نام سام سوار

60. See:

دیوان فرخی، ص 65:

همه حدیث ز محمودنامه خواند و بس　　　همان که قصهء شهنامه خواندی هموار

61. See:

دیوان فرخی، ص 117:

به خوب سیرتیش گر بخواهدی کندی　　　مصنفی بزمانی دوصد کتاب سیر

3 At Home: The *Shāhnāmeh* in New Persian

1. See:

صفا، حماسه *سرائی*، صص 160–163؛ تقی زاده. *فردوسی و شعر او*. صص 142–146.

2. Maqdasī, Mutahhar b. Tāhir, *Kitāb al-bad^c wa al-tārīkh li abī zayd ahmad b. sahl al-balkhī*. 4 volumes ed. C. Huart, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1903). The texts of Maqdasī's references to Mas^cūdī are as follows (vol. 3, p. 138):

زعمت الأعاجم فی کتابها والله أعلم بحقّها و باطلها أنّ اوّل من ملک من بنی آدم اسمه کیومرّث و أنّه کان عریاناً یسیح فی الأرض و کان ملکه ثلاثین سنة و قد قال المسعودیّ فی قصیدته المحبَّرة بالفارسیة:

نخستین کیومرث آمذ بشاهی　　　گرفتش بگیتی درون پیش گاهی

چو سی سالی بگیتی پادشا بوذ　　　کی فرمانش به هر جائی روا بوذ

و انّما ذکرتُ هذه الأبیات لأنـّی رأیت الفرس یعظـّمون هذه الأبیات و القصیدة و یصوّرونها و یرونها کتاریخ لهم.

"Persians believe in the [following that is written] in their books—and God knows of truth or falsehood of it—that the first of the children of Adam to have ruled as king was Kayūmars, and he was naked and roamed the earth, and the length of his rule was thirty years. And Mas^cudi says in his delightful elegy:

First Kayūmars came to rule as king
And took over the leadership of the world
He was king some thirty years
During which his commands were obeyed far and wide.

And I quoted these verses here because I noticed that the Persians consider these verses and this elegy important and adorn [its manuscripts] by illustrations, and relate it as their history."

The second place in his history where al-Maqdasī refers to Mas^cūdī's poem is the following (vol. 3, p. 173):

و یقول المسعودی فی آخر قصیدته بالفارسیة:

سپری شذ نشان خسروانا　　　چو کام خویش راندند در جهانا

And Mas^cūdī says at the end of his elegy:

[All] traces of [the Iranian] kings came to pass
After they ruled over the world unopposed.

3. Al-Tha[c]ālibī, *Histoire des Rois des Perses.* Texte Arabe Publié et Traduit par H. Zotenberg (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900) pp. 10 and 388:
و زعم المسعودی فی مزدوجته بالفارسیة انّ طهمورث بنی قهندز مرو (ص 10)؛...و ذکر المسعودی المروزی فی مزدوجته الفارسیة (ص 388).

4. The text of al-Tha[c]ālibi is as follows (p. 388):
و قال قد قتلت فرامرز و ادرکت به الثأر المنیم فما المعنی فی قتل هذا الشیخ الذّی قد خلق عمره و انطوی عیشه و لم یبق منه الّا شفافة و حشاشة فوافق کلامه حسن رأی بهمن فیه و تذکّره خدمة زال فعفا عنه و امر بردّه الی منزله و الافراج له عن مسکة من ماله و ذکر المسعودی المروزیّ فی مزدوجته الفارسیّة انّه قتله و لم یُبق علی احد من ذویه.
"And he [Peshotan] said to him [i.e., to Bahman]: verily you killed Farāmarz and avenged your father; then what is the meaning of killing this old man whose life has reached its end and has not much longer to live? [Peshotan's] words that reminded Bahman of Zāl's services [to the throne] influenced Bahman, who forgave Zāl, and ordered him to be taken back to his home and be given as much as he needs to live on. [However] Mas[c]ūdī of Marv has related in his Persian poem that [Bahman] killed Zāl, and left none of his line alive."
Earlier in the book, in his discussion of the reign of Tahmūrath, Tha[c]ālibī once again quotes Mas[c]ūdī and writes (p. 10):
و زعم المسعودی فی مزدوجته بالفارسیة انّ طهمورث بنی قهندز مرو
"In his Persian poem, Mas[c]ūdī believes that Tahmūrth built the citadel of Marv."

5. In this essay, I have used the new and superior Iranian critical edition of Bīrūnī's Arabic work, edited by P. Azka'i. However, I have also provided the page numbers to the older edition of the German scholar E. Sachau (1845–1930), who published the standard edition of the text in 1878. See *Chronologie Orientalischer Völker*, (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1878). See:
ابوریحان محمد بن احمد البیرونی، *الآثار الباقیة عن القرون الخالیة*، تحقیق و تعلیق پرویز اذکائی، تهران: میراث مکتوب 2001/1380، ص 114، (قس زاخاو ص 99): "...و قد ذکر ابوعلی محمد بن احمد البلخی الشاعر فی *الشاهنامة* هذا الحدیث فی بدو الانسان"
"And Abu [c]Alī Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Balkhī the poet has [also] mentioned this story about the creation of man in the Shāhnāmeh."

6. See:
"کالوس: مردم خربط باشد. ابوالمؤید بلخی گفت: ملول مردم کالوس و بی محل باشد + مکن نگارا این خو و طبع را بگذار." ابومنصور احمد بن علی اسدی طوسی، *لغت فرس. بر اساس نسخهء دانشگاه پنجاب (لاهور) و مقابله با یازده نسخهء دیگر و فرهنگهای معتبر قدیم فارسی*، به تصحیح و تحشیهء فتح الله مجتبائی–علی اشرف صادقی، تهران: خوارزمی، 1365، ص 125

7. *See:*
تاریخ سیستان (تألیف در حدود 445–725)، به تصحیح ملک الشعراء بهار، چاپ دوم، تهران: کلالهء خاور، 1352 صص 1، 5

8. See:
حکیم ابونصر علی بن احمد اسدی طوسی، *گرشاسب نامه*، به اهتمام حبیب یغمائی، چاپ دوم، تهران: 1354

ز کردار گرشاسب اندر جهان	یکی نامه بد یادگار از مهـــــان
پر از دانش و پند آموزگـــار	هم از راز چرخ و هم از روزگار
(ص 19 ب 1–2)	
به شهنامه فردوسی نغز گوی	که از پیش گویندگان برد گـــوی
بسی یاد رزم یلان کـــرده بود	ازین داستان یـــاد نـــاورده بود

نهالی بد این رسته هم زان درخت	شده خشک و بی بار و پژمرده سخت
من اکنون ز طبعم بهار آورم	مرین شاخ نـــو را به بـــار آورم
بباد هنر گل کفانـــم بـــر اوی	ز ابر سخــن در فشـــانم بــر اوی
(ص 20 ب 16–20)	
دبیر وی آورد زی من پیـــام	گزین دهخدا لؤلوی نیک نـــــام
که گوید همی شاه فرهنگ جوی	بنام من این نامه را بازگـــــوی
اگر زانک فردوسی این را نگفت	تو با گفتهء خویش گردانش جفت
دو گویا چنین خواست تا شد زطوس	چنان شد نگوئی تو باشد فسوس
کنون گر سپهرم نسازد کمیـــــن	بگویم به فرمان شـــــاه زمیـــن
(ص 21 بب 31–35)	

9. See:
"اخبار سیستان از اول که بنا کردند ... و فضایل آن بر دیگر شهرها چنانک یافته شد اندر کتاب گرشاسب" *تاریخ سیستان*، ص 1؛ "بوالمؤید اندر کتاب گرشاسب گوید که جون کیخسرو بآذربادگان رفت و رستم دستان با وی، و آن تاریکی و پتیارهء دیوان بفرّ ایزد تعالی بدید" *تاریخ سیستان*، ص 35.

10. See:
امیدسالار، محمود. "عجایب الدنیا و ابوالمؤید بلخی؟" *ایرانشناسی*، سال 16، شمارهء 2، تابستان 1383، صص 269–275

11. *See:*
مجمل التواریخ والقصص، ص 2: "... هرچند محالست نظم حکیم فردوسی و اسدی و دیگران و نثر ابوالمؤید البلخی نقل کردن که سبیل آن چنان باشد که فردوسی گفت:

چو چشمه بر ژرف دریا بری   به دیوانگی ماند آن داوری

12. See:
"[رستم] را پسری آمد فرامرز نام کرد و حدیثها و اخبارها و سرگذشتهای ایشان بسیارست و بسیار گویند. ابوالمؤید البلخی یاد کند بشاهنامهء بزرگ" نگاه کنید به: ابوعلی محمد بن محمد بن بلعمی، *تاریخ بلعمی*، دو مجلد. به تصحیح محمد تقی بهار ملک الشعراء، بکوشش محمد پروین گنابادی، چاپ دوم، تهران: زوار، 1353، ج 1 ص 133

13. See:
"ترا ای پسر، تخمهء بزرگ و شریفست وز هر دو طرف کریم الطرفینی و پیوستهء ملوک جهانی: جدّت ملک شمس المعالی قابوس بن وَشمگیر بود که نبیرهء آغش وهادان بود و آغش وهادان ملک گیلان بود بروزگار کیخسرو و ابوالمؤید بلخی ذکر او در شاه نامه آورده است." نگاه کنید به: عنصرالمعالی کیکاوس بن اسکندر بن قابوس بن وشمگیر بن زیار، *قابوس نامه*، به اهتمام و تصحیح غلامحسین یوسفی، چاپ پنجم، تهران: شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، 1368 ص 4.

14. See:
شهمردان بن ابی الخیر، *نزهت نامهء علائی*، به تصحیح فرهنگ جهانپور، تهران: مؤسسهء مطالعات و تحقیقات فرهنگی، 1362، ص 342

15. See:
"و از نثر ابوالمؤید چون اخبار نریمان و سام و کیقباد و افراسیاب و اخبار لهراسف و آغش وهادان و کی شکن" نگاه کنید به *مجمل التواریخ و القصص*، بتصحیح ملک الشعراء بهار، تهران: کلالهء خاور، 1318 ص 2.
The fact that this author refers to the stories of Narīmān, Sām, Āghash, and Kay Shikan, none of which exists in the *Shāhnāmeh*, implies that Abū al-Muayyad's "Great Shāhnāmeh" was probably quite extensive and included many tales that are not found in Ferdowsi's epic.

16. Referring to the birth of Manūchihr, Ibn Isfandiyār writes:
"پیش فریدون شدند و او را [یعنی منوچهر را] بردند. گفت: مانَد چهرش چهر ایرج و خواهد کینش، چنانکه در شاهنامه های نظم و نثر فردوسی و مؤیدی شرح دادند کین ایرج بازخواست" نگاه کنید به: ابن اسفندیار، *تاریخ طبرستان*، به تصحیح عباس اقبال، سه جلد در یک مجلد، تهران: بی تاریخ (تاریخ مقدمه 1320)، ص 60

17. See:

قزوینی، محمد. ”مقدمهء قدیم شاهنامه“ *هزارهء فردوسی*، (چاپ افست طبع 1313 شمسی)، تهران: چاپخانهء دو هزار، 1362؛ نیز در *بیست مقالهء قزوینی*، به کوشش عباس اقبال و ابراهیم پورداود، دو جلد در یک مجلد، چاپ دوم، تهران: دنیای کتاب، 1363، صص 1–99

18. See:

”طوسیان از راه بژخَرو و پـُشنقان و خالـَنجوی در آمدند، بسیار مردم، بیشتر پیاده و بی نظام که سالارشان مقدّمی بودی تارودی از مدبرانِ بقایای عبدالرّزاقیان“ نگاه کنید به: بیهقی، *تاریخ بیهقی*، ص 551

19. See Bayhaqī, p. 552.
20. See Qazvīnī's essay on the Old Introduction to the Shāhnāmeh, pp. 33–36.
21. The text reads: چون شاج پسرِ خراسانی but this is certainly a corruption resulting from the repetition of the word پسر "son of" in this passage. The scribes of those manuscripts that repeat the word پسر here must have written it by dittography, and Professor Qazvini, who sometimes follows his exemplar more faithfully than may be justified, has adopted the reading of those of his manuscripts that have the word, while assigning the text of his witness "A" to the critical apparatus. Needless to say, I don't agree with his text at this point.
22. Here too, on the evidence of some manuscripts that have پدید آورد and others which have جدا کرد I would have restored the text to پدید کرد which would have been more archaic and more in agreement with the syntax of the tenth century Persian.
23. See Qazvīnī's essay on the Old Introduction to the Shāhnāmeh, p. 39.
24. See:

امیدسالار، محمود. ”تصحیح و توضیح عبارتی از مقدمهء شاهنامهء ابومنصوری،“ در *ایرانشناسی*، سال 16 شمارهء 3، پائیز 1383، صص 487–494

25. I pointed out the need for a revised edition of this preface to Professor Khaleghi-Motlagh, who agreed to prepare a new critical edition of the text based on better manuscripts. However, whether this project has been actively undertaken is not known. Professor Touraj Daryaee has also expressed an interest in preparing a new critical edition of this important text.
26. For instance, Qazvini, Taqizāeh, Nöldeke, Zotenberg, Foruzanfar, Bahār, Riyāhi, Khaleghi-Motlagh, Mahdavi Damghani, and the present author to name but a few. See: Theodor Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic or the Shahnamah,* translated by L. Th. Bogdanov . Bombay: K. B. Cama Oriental Institute, 1930, § 15; Abū Mansūr ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Muhammad b. Ismāᶜīl al-Thaᶜālibī, *Histoire des Rois de Perses*, ed. H. Zotenberg (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1900) pp. xiii–xli; and see the following Persian sources:

قزوینی، *مقدمه*، طبع 1363، صص 20–26؛ تقی زاده. *فردوسی و شاهنامهء او*،، صص 17، 158–175؛ بهار، محمد تقی، ”فردوسی“ *باختر*، ج 1، شماره 12/11، سال 1313، صص 806–809؛ فروزانفر، بدیع الزمان. میاحثی از *تاریخ ادبیات ایران*، با مقدمه، توضیحات و تعلیقات عنایت الله مجیدی، تهران: دهخدا، 1354، صص 65–68؛ خالقی مطلق، جلال. ”در پیرامون منابع فردوسی،“ *ایران شناسی*، سال 10، شماره 3، پائیز 1377، صص 512–540؛ نیز ”دو نامه در بارهء بدیهه سرائی شفاهی و شاهنامه،“ *ایران شناسی*، سال 9، شمارهء 1، بهار 1376، صص 38–51؛ مهدوی دامغانی، احمد، ”داستان ضامن آهو و گردآورندهء شاهنامهء منثور،“ در *حاصل اوقات: مجموعه ای از مقالات استاد دکتر احمد مهدوی دامغانی*، به اهتمام علی محمد سجادی، تهران: سروش، 1381، صص 451–460؛ امیدسالار، محمود. ”هفت خان رستم، بیژن و منیژه و نکاتی در بارهء منابع و شعر فردوسی،“ *ایران شناسی*، سال 10، شمارهء 3، پائیز 1377، صص 540–548؛ صفا، *حماسه*

سرائی در ایران، صص 99–107؛ ریاحی، سرچشمه های فردوسی شناسی، صص 22–23؛ محیط طباطبائی، "ابومنصور محمد: بانی نظم شاهنامه،" در فردوسی و شاهنامه، تهران: امیرکبیر، 1369، صص 213–223

27. See for instance, Olga M. Davidson, "The Crown-Bestower and the Iranian Book of Kings," in *Acta Iranica: Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*. 10 (1985): 117, 123–26, and her *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) pp. 42–53; and also her *Comparative Literature and Classical Persian Poetics* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2000) almost all of which argue for an oral poetic tradition behind the *Shāhnāmeh*. See also Dick Davis, "The Problem of Ferdowsi's Sources," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 116(1996):48–57.
28. See:

"و قال صاحب کتاب شاه نامه" (غرر السیر، ص 263)؛ "... و وافقه فی هذه الروایة صاحب کتاب شاه نامه الـّا انّه خالفه فی مدة الملک" (غرر السیر، ص 457).

29. See the introduction to his edition of the text, pp. xxv–xl.
30. D. Davis, "The Problem of Ferdowsi's Sources," pp. 48–58.
31. See:

حسینی، محمد. "شاهنامهء فردوسی و شاهنامهء ثعالبی،" در ناموارهء دکتر محمود افشار، ج 9، 1375، صص 5057–5069

32. D. Davis, "The Problem of Ferdowsi's Sources," p. 53
33. See the evidence in M. Omidsalar, "Could al-Tha[c]ālibi have used the Shahnameh as a Source?" *Der Islam*, 75(1998): 338–46.
34. See:

بیرونی، التفهیم لأوائل الصناعة التنجیم، به تصحیح جلال الدین همائی، تهران: انجمن آثار ملی، 1353، صص 38–39 مقدمه

35. See:

"و وجدنا تواریخ هذا القسم الثانی فی کتاب شاهنامه المعمول لابی منصور ابن عبدالرزّاق" الآثار الباقیه، ص 331 (= طبع زاخائو: ص 116)؛ "و إن جمعنا ما اشتمَل علیه کتاب الشاهنامه فی هذاالقسم الثانی" ص 134 (زاخائو: 118)؛ قس ص 144 (زاخائو: 129).

36. See:

"کما فُعِلَ لإبن عبدالرزّاق الطوسی من افتعال نسب له فی الشاهنامه ینتمی به الی منوشجهر" بیرونی، ص 45 (زاخائو:38). قس قزوینی، "مقدمهء قدیم" صص 77–78.

37. See v: 76–174: 14–1028; cf. Moscow 6: 67–135: 14–1022; and Mohl 4: 180–224: 14–1036.
38. See:

محمد جواد شریعت، دیوان ابومنصور محمّد بن احمد دقیقی طوسی، تهران: اساطیر، 1373، صص 18، 28–30، قس صفا، تاریخ ادبیات در ایران: از آغاز تا عهد اسلامی، ص 416

39. See:

ازرقی هروی، دیوان ازرقی، به تصحیح سعید نفیسی، تهران، 1336، ص 91:

هرکه بیند شهریارا پندهای سندباد	نیک داند کاندر او دشوار باشد شاعری
من معانی های او را یاور دانش کنم	گر کند بخت تو شاها خاطرم را یاوری

Professor Mahjoob however, believes that Azraqī never completed the versification of the book, and merely versified parts of it. See:

عضد یزدی، سندبادنامهء منظوم، به تصحیح محمد جعفر مججوب، تهران: توس، 1381، ص 19

It is especially interesting that Professor Mahjoob asked a contemporary poet by the name of Mr. Mohammad-e Jalali-yi Chimeh to versify

the lacuna in the poetic manuscript from the prose version of Zahīrī of Samarqan (late sixth to early seventh century AH/ late twelfth to early thirteenth century A.D.). I quote what he writes in his introduction (p. 87) about this issue:

پیشتر گفته ایم که از منظومهء سندبادنامه جز نسخه ای یگانه در دست نیست و آن دست نویس نیز از بد حادثه
گرفتار سقط و نقصان شده و برگ هائی از آن به تاراج حادثه رفته است. اگر نسخهء منثور سندبادنامه در
دست نبود ناگزیر می بایست به همان نسخهء ناقص راضی شد و کتاب را با افتادگی هایی که داشت به خواستاران
عرضه کرد. اما سندبادنامهء منثور تا حدّ قابل ملاحظه ای این نقائص را جبران میکند. بنده نخست در نظر داشت
مطالب سقط شده را از روی سندبادنامهء ظهیری سمرقندی استخراج کند و با حذف اطناب ها و صنعتگری های
آن، حاقّ مطلب را در مواضع سقط بیاورد. سپس با خود اندیشید که اگر شاعری این مطالب را به نظم آورد و به
صورتی قابل قبول عرضه دارد، متن به مراتب پاکیزه تر و پیراسته تر از آب در میاید و درین باب با بعضی از
دوستان شاعر خود رای زد. سرانجام شاعر باقریحه آقای محمد جلالی چیمه (م. سحر) مقیم پاریس که تا کنون
اثری ازیشان در تهران انتشار نیافته اما بیرون از ایران آثاری انتشار داده و جایی شایسته در میان گویندگان
احراز کرده اند، به انجام دادن این مهم رضا دادند و با بر خود نهادن رنجی دراز و صرف ماهها وقت تمام آن
سقط ها را از روی نسخهء منثور به نظم آوردند.

Professor Mahjoob has pointed out that 538 verses out of this tales 4159 verses—or almost 13 percent of the total poem—are the new verses that have been composed by Mr. Chimeh. These have been set in italics in the text so that the reader may not confuse them with the original. I shall quote a section of the book in which the old and the new verses are presented side by side, so that the reader may understand how the book is laid out. This shows how remarkably conservative Persian language has been, and how a modern Persian poet living in twenty-first-century Paris can compose verse that is virtually indistinguishable from the original work of a poet who died in the fourteenth century A.D. In this quotation the verses by the contemporary poet Mr. Chimeh are put in italics in order to make them distinguishable from the verses of ᶜAzud-i Yazdī (p. 116):

پس آنگه برون آمد از بارگاه   مهیّای تعلیمِ فرزندِ شاه
بفرمود تا اوستادان کـــــــار   به دانش بنایی کنند استوار
برآرند بر طرحِ جانانه ای   دگرگون بنا، کعب گون خانه ای
بنائی که باشد سزاوار علم   وزآن گرمی آید به بازار علـــم
چو گشت آن بنا پاک و پیراسته   به اسبابِ تعلیـــم آراستـــــــــه
بفرمود تا سطح عالی سرا   یکی مهره کردند صیقل نما
به رنگی چو آیینه نیرنگ او   شده تیره آیینه از رنگ او
به سطحی رقومِ بروجِ فلک   دَرَج با دقایق همه یک به یک
ثوابت که چند است و سیـّار چند   هبوط و وبال و حضیض و بلند
رقم کرد و این نقش ها را نگاشت   چو پرداخت، پس دست ازآن بازداشت

40. See:

دیوان ازرقی، ص 76؛ ذبیح الله صفا، *تاریخ ادبیات در ایران، جلد دوم: از میانهء قرن پنجم تا آغاز قرن هفتم هجری*، چاپ ششم، تهران: ابن سینا، 1352، ص 435؛ قس ریاحی، *سرچشمه ها*، ص 211؛ دبیرسیاقی، *زندگینامه*، ص 208.

قصهء منثور خاشاکی بوَد تاریک و پست   گوهری گردد چو منظوم اندر آید بر زبان
از قصصهائی که در شاهنامه پیدا کرده اند   نظم فردوسی به کار آید، نه رزم هفتخوان

41. See:

گرشاسبنامه، صص 20–21 ابیات 16–19 و 31–35:

به شهنامه فردوسی نغز گوی … که از پیش گویندگان برد گوی
بسی یاد رزم یلان کرده بـود … ازین داستان یاد ناورده بــود
نهالی بـُد این رسته هم زان درخت … شده خشک و بی بار و پژمرده سخت
من اکنون ز طبعم بهار آورم … مرین شاخ نو را به بار آورم
به باد هنر گل کـَفــانم بر اوی … ز ابر سخن در فشانم بر اوی
برش میوهء دانش آرم بـــرون … کنم آفرین شهنشه فـــــزون...
دبیر وی آورد زی من پیـــــام … گزین دهخدا لؤلوی نیک نام
که گوید همی شاه فرهنگ جوی … به نام من این نامه را بازگوی
اگر زانک فردوسی این را نگفت … تو با گفتهء خویش گردانش جفت
دو گویا چنین خواست تا شد ز طوس … چنان شد نگویی تو باشد فسوس
کنون گر سپهرم نسازد کمین … بگویم به فرمان شاه زمین

42. See:

مجمل التواریخ، ص 92: ”درین روزگار زال زر بمرد و در هیچ کتاب این ذکر نیافتم مگر در *بهمن نامه*، آن نسخه که حکیم ایرانشاه بن ابی الخیر نظم کرده است.“

Indeed the evidence for well-known narratives in verse of which the prose original has been lost is quite extensive. I cite one more piece of evidence from Nizāmī's Laylī and Majnūn:

نظامی گنجوی، *لیلی و مجنون*، به تصحیح اژدر علی اوغلی اصغر زاده، ف. بابایف، مسکو، 1965، صص 43–44

فرزند محمد نظامی … آن بر دل من چو جان گرامی
این نسخه چو دل نهاد بر دست … در پهلوی من چو سایه بنسشت
خسرو شیرین چو یاد کردی … چندین دل خلق شاد کردی
لیلی مجنون ببایدت گفت … تا گوهر قیمتی شود جفت
این نامهء نغز گفته بهتر … طاووس جوانه جفته بهتر
خاصه ملکی چو شاه شروان … شروان چه که شهریار ایران
این نامه به نامه از تو درخواست … بنشین و طراز نامه کن راست
[نظامی پاسخ میدهد:]
این آیت اگر چه هست مشهور … تفسیر نشاط هست ازو دور
پر شیفتگی و بند و زنجیر … باشد سخن برهنه دلگیر
وآرایش کردنی ز حد بیش … رخسارهء قصه را کند ریش
بر خشکی ریگ و سختی کوه … تا چند سخن رود در اندوه
باید سخن از نشاط سازی … تا بیت کند به قصه بازی
این بود کز ابتدای حالت … کس گرد نگشتش از ملالت
گوینده ز نظم آن پر افشاند … تا این غایت نگفته زان ماند ...
[پسرش پاسخ میدهد]:
گفت ای سخن تو همسر من … یعنی لقبش برادر من
در گفتن قصه یی چنین چُست … اندیشهء نظم را مکن سست
هرجا که بدست عشق خوانست … این قصه بر او نمک فشانست
گرچه نمک تمام دارد … بر سفره کباب خام دارد
چون سفتهء خارش تو گردد … پخته به گزارش تو گردد
زیباروئی بدین نکوئی … وآنگاه بدین برهنه روئی
کس دُر نه به قدر او فشاندست … زین روی برهنه روی ماندست

43. I believe fragments of the prose Shahnameh survive as quotations in the works of a number of classical Persian authors. However, a discussion of these fragments would take us too far afield.

44. See:

گرشاسپنامه، صص 13–14، ابیات 15–21، 24–26

به بگماز یک روز نزدیک خویش   مرا هردو مهتر نشاندند پیش
بسی یاد نام نکو رانده شـــــــد   بسی دفتر باستان خوانده شد
ز هرگونه رایی فگندند بــــُـن   پس آنگه گشادند بند سخـــن
که فردوسی طوسی پاک مغـــــز   بداده ست داد سخن های نغز
به شهنامه گیتی بیاراستــه ســـت   بدان نامه نام نکو خواسته ست
تو هم شهری او را و هم پیشه ای   هم اندر سخن چابک اندیشه ای
بدان همره از نامهء باستـــــان   به شعر آر خرّم یکی داستـــان...
تو زین داستان گنجـــی اندر جهان   بمانی که هرگز نگردد نهـــان
همش هرکسی یابد از آدمــــــی   هم از برگرفتن نگیرد کمـــــی
بــُوی مانده فرزند، ایـــدر به جای   که همواره نام تو ماند به پـــای

45. See:

عضد یزدی، *سندبادنامه*، ص 98

46. The text has چشمِ بخت which I think is a corruption of چشمِ تخت. Otherwise the rhyme will be repeated, and that is not the kind of error that a poet like Azudī of Yazd is likely to commit. The error is so glaring that it might be a typo.

47. See:

نظامی گنجوی، *لیلی و مجنون*، ص 41:

در حال رسید قاصد از راه   آورد مثال حضرت شاه
بنوشته به خطّ خوب خویشم   ده پانزده سطر نغز بیشم...
کای محرم حلقهء غلامی   جادو سخنِ جهان، نظامی !
از چاشنی دم سحر خیز   سـِحری دگر از سخن برانگیز...
خواهم که به یاد عشق مجنون   رانی سخنی چو درّ مکنون
چون لیلی بکر اگر توانی   بکری دو سه در سخن نشانی
تا خوانم و گویم این شکر بین   جنبانم سر که تاج سر بین
بالای هزار عشق نامه   آراسته شد به نوک خامه
شاه همه نامه هاست این حرف   شاید که درو سخن کنی صرف
در زیور پارسی و تازی   این تازه عروس را طرازی
دانی که من آن سخن شناسم   کابیات نو از کهن شناسم
بنگر که ز حقّهء تفکر   در مرسلهء که می کشی دُر
ترکی صفتی وفای ما نیست   ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست

Nizāmi's son's encouraging words, addressed to his father, leaves no doubt that the practice of versifyingpreviously existing prose works was quite common. Interestingly enough, according to the poet's son, a prose story is like raw meat, while one that has been put into verse is like a kabob (pp. 43–45):

فرزند، محمدِ نظـامــی   آن بر دلِ من چو جان گرامی
این نسخه چو دل نهاد بر دست   در پهلوی من چو سایه بنشست
خسرو شیرین چو یاد کردی   چندین دل خلق شاد کردی
لیلی مجنون بیایدت گفت   تا گوهر قیمتی شود جفت
این نامهء نغز گفته بهتر   طاووس جوانه جفته بهتر
خاصه ملکی چو شاهِ شروان   شروان چه که شهریار ایران
این نامه به نامه از تو درخواست   بنشین و طرازِ نامه کن راست...

گفت ای سخن تو همسر من   یعنی لقبش برادر من
در گفتن قصه یی چنین چست   اندیشهء نظم را مکن سست
هرجا که بدست عشق خوانی ست   این قصه بر او نمک نفشانیست
گرچه نمک تمام دارد   بر سفره کباب خام دارد
چون سفتهء خارش تو گردد   پخته به گزارش تو گردد
زیبا روئی بدین نکوئی   وآنگاه بدین برهنه روئی
کس در نه بقدر او فشانده ست   زین روی برهنه روی مانده ست

48. See:

نظامی گنجوی، *شرفنامه*، به تصحیح بهروز ثروتیان، تهران: توس، 1368، صص 535–536:

چو دیدم که بر تخت فیروزمند   به سرسبزی بخت شد سربلند
نثاری نبودم سزاوار اوی   که ریزم به اورنگ شهوار اوی
هم از آب حیوان اسکنـدری   زلالی چنین ساختم گوهری
هم از ساختن بازپرداختم   به درگاه او پیشکش ساختم...
نظامی که خود را غلام تو کرد   سخن را گزارش به نام تو کرد
همان پیش تخت تو مهمان کشید   که آن مور پیش سلیمان کشید...
به نام تو زان کردم این نامه را   که زرین کند نقش تو خامه را
زر پیلوار از تو مقصود نیست   که پیل تو چون پیل محمود نیست
ببخشی تو بی آن که خواهد کسی   خزینه فراوان و خلعت بسی
گر این نامه را من به زر گفتمی   به عمری کجا گوهری سفتمی
همانا که عشقم بر این کار داشت   چو من کمزنان عشق بسیار داشت
مرا داد توفیق گفتن خدای   ترا باد تأیید و فرهنگ و رای

49. For this prince see

عباس اقبال آشتیانی. *تاریخ مفصل ایران از صدر اسلام تا انقراض قاجاریه*. به کوشش محمد دبیرسیاقی (تهران: خیام، 1346) صص 567–568.

50. See the text in the British Library manuscript no. Or. 2780, which contains several epic poems, the *Garshāspnāmeh*, the *Shahnshāhnāmeh*, the *Bahman-nāmeh*, and the *Kūshnāmeh*. Since the manuscript is not readily available to most readers, I will quote the relevant verses from a reproduction in my possession (ff. 42r, 42v, 133r), making my corrections of the relatively corrupt text in brackets:

گرفتند گیتی به خمّ کمند   کیومرث و طهمورث دیوبند
دمی چند یکچند خرّم زدند   برفتند چون چشم برهم زدند
بافسوس خود را مپرور، مکن!   اگر نام خواهی بپرور سَخُن
به بیچاره گفتند یک داستان   بگوی و بمان در جهان جاودان
جهان ترک چون دید، از آنجا بگوی   که هم نام یابی و هم آبروی
نگشتم ز گفتِ خردمند مرد   برآوردم از جانِ اندیشه گرد
جهان را اگر بنگری بیشتر   به افسانه بردند مردم به سر
ز فرمانِ یرلغ که یارد گذشت   بدل خواه او بوم و بر، کوه و دشت
در اندیشهء کارِ خون خوردنم   یکی بارِ چون کوه در گردنم
مرا مایه کم بود و بسیار کار   بترسیدم از گردش روزگار...
اگر پاک یزدان کند یاوری   نگویم بجز پارسی و دری [ظ: پارسیِ دری]
همه پارسی این نگفتست کس   اگر سخته یی هست، اینست و بس
اگر تیغ دستان سپر افگند   درین راه سیمرغ پر افگند
چو گفتی به سر بر اگر می بری   ترا هرچه باید همه دُر دَریّ
بدست آیدت، در تگ و پویه باش   دو رنگی نکو نیست، یک رویه باش

دل آنگه که دیده پر از خون کنم　　سخن را که می پرورم چون کنم [42v]
که بر چشم خسرو چو شیرین شود　　زهی نیک نامی اگر این شود
بفریاد امیدست یزدان رسد　　که داند که روزی به پایان رسد

در تسمیهء شاهنشاه نامه بنام شاهنشاه اعظم ابوسعید طاب ثراه

شهنشاه نامه نهم نام این　　بنام شهنشاهِ روی زمین
خداوند گیتی و دیهیم و گاه　　جهان جهان آفرین را پناه
جوانبخت و فرمانروا بوسعید　　جهان آفرینش ز جان آفرید
در بزم [ظ: گه بزم] کو سرفرازی کند　　دو صد همچو محمود، ایازی کند [133r]
مرا پادشاه جهان بوسعید　　میان سخن پرو[ر]ان برکشید . . .
مرا گفت: بشتاب! کاری بکن　　ز ما کس نماند، بماند سَخُن
بگو سرگذشتی که داری بدست　　مکین هیچ اندیشه داننده هست . . .
دو سه داستان خواندم و گفت زود　　بپایان رسان گر نه چرخ کبود،
که داند چه نیرنگ و دستان کند　　دلش هرچه خواهد همه آن کند
چنان شد که فرمود، بربست رخت　　گهی خاک بستر بوَد گاه تخت
نیازرد موری خنک جان او　　شده پیش ازین نامه پایانِ او
درین گفت و گو شد مرا هشت سال　　گر احمد بنالد، که گوید منال؟ . . .
چو از سال شد هفصد و سی و هشت　　ستم دیده این نامه را در نوشت
کسی را که این داستان در برست　　به سرچشمه یی بر چو اسکندرست
میان سیاهیست این چشمه سار　　یکی ره برَد بر سرش از هزار
سخن در جهان یادگاری خوشست　　بگوشه بخوانش که یاری خوش است
نیابد ازین یار آزار کس　　نگوید سخن ها ز پیش و ز پس
کشیدم کمانی نه تاب و نه توش　　که رستم نیارد کشیدن بدوش
مرا خاک پاک و سخن این چنین　　ز تبریز نه از خراسان زمین
ازان کوه و کوماله زین آب و خاک　　چنین پارسی کس نگفتست پاک
یکی نیست جز نام، تازی در او　　نگه چون کند کس ببازی در او
ز اندیشه فرسوده شد جان و تن　　که باشد که نامی بماند ز من
رسد نام فردا به فریادرس　　جهان آفرینا! به فریاد رس! . . .
بماناد بسیار مسعود شاه　　که زیبای تختست و آرز [ظ: ارزِ] کلاه
همیشه دل و جان او شاد باد　　سر دشمنانش ابر دار باد

51. See:

نظامی گنجوی، *هفت پیکر*، متن علمی و انتقادی بقلم طاهر احمد اوغلی محرّم اوف، مسکو: ادارهء انتشارات دانش شعبهء ادبیات خاور، 1987، صص 28–31:

جستم از نامه های نغز نورد　　آنچه دل را گشاده داند کرد،
هرچه تاریخ شهریاران بود　　در یکی نامه اختیار آن بود،
چابک اندیشه ای رسیده نخست　　همه را نظم داده بود درست
مانده زان لعل ریزه لختی گرد　　هریکی زان قراضه چیزی کرد
من از آن خرده چون گهر سنجی　　برتراشیدم این چنین گنجی . . .
آنچ ازو نیم گفته بـُد، گفتم　　گوهر نیم سفته را سفتم
و آنچ دیدم که راست بود و درست　　ماندمش هم برآن قرار نخست
جهد کردم که در چنین ترکیب　　باشد آرایشی ز نقد غریب
بازجستم ز نامه های نهان　　که پراکنده بود گرد جهان
زان سخن ها که تازی است و دری　　در سواد بخاری و طبری
وز دگر نسخه ها پرآکنده　　هر دُری در دفینی افکنده
هر ورق کاوفتاد در دستم　　همه را در خریطه یی بستم
چون از آن جمله در سواد قلم　　گشت سرجمله ام گزیده به هم

گفتمش گفتنی که بپسندند   نه که فرزانگان برو خندند...
در سخا و سخن چه می پیچم   کار بر طالع است من هیچم
نسبت عقربی است با قوسی   بخل محمود و بذل فردوسی
اسدی را که بودلف بنواخت   طالع و طالعی به هم در ساخت

52. See:

شرفنامه، صص 91–2؛

سخن گوی پیشینه دانای طوس   که آراست روی سخن چون عروس
در آن نامه کان گوهر سفته راند   بسی گفتنی های ناگفته ماند
اگر هرچه کردندی از باستان   بگفتی، دراز آمدی داستان
نگفت آنچه رغبت پذیرش نبود   همان گفت کز وی گزیرش نبود
دگر از پی دوستان زلـّه کرد   که حلوا به تنها نشایست خورد

همان، صص 93:

شنیدم که در نامهء خسروان   سخن گفت خواهی چو آب روان
مشو ناپسندیده را پیش باز   که در پردهء کژ نیابند ساز

Referring to Ferdowsi and his prose archetype he says (p. 118):

دگر گونه دهقان آذر پرست   به دارا کند کِشتِ او [یعنی اسکندر] بازبست
ز تاریخ ها چون گرفتم قیاس   هم از نامهء مرد ایزدشناس [= فردوسی] ...
چنین گوید آن پیر دیرینه سال   ز تاریخ شاهان پیشینه حال

53. See (v: 175–78):

چو این نامه افتاد در دست من   به ماهی گراینده شد شست من
نگه کردم این نظم سست آمدم   بسی بیت ناتندرست آمدم
من این زان بگفتم که تا شهریار   بداند سخن گفتن نابکار
دو گوهر بد این با دو گوهر فروش   کنون شاه دارد به گفتار گوش
سخن چون بدین گونه بایدت گفت   مگوی و مکن رنج با طبع جفت...
چو طبعی نباشد چو آب روان   مبر پیش این نامهء خسروان...
یکی نامه بود از گه باستان   سخن های آن برمنش راستان
فسانه کهن بود و منثور بود   طبایع ز پیوند آن دور بود
گذشته برو سالیان شش هزار   --گر ایدونک پرسش نماید، شمار——
نبردی به پیوند او کس گمان   پراندیشه گشت این دل شادمان
گرفتم به گوینده بر آفرین   که پیوند را راه داد اندرین
اگرچه نپیوست جز اندکی   ز رزم و ز بزم از هزاران یکی
همو بود گوینده را راهبر   که شاهی نشاند ابر گاه بر
همی یافت از مهتران ارج و گنج   ز خویِ بدِ خویش بودی به رنج
به نقل اندرون سست گشتش سخن   ازو نو نشد روزگار کهن
من این نامه فرّخ گرفتم به فال   همی رنج بردم به بسیار سال
ندیدم سرافراز بخشنده یی   به گاه کیان بر، درخشنده یی
همم این سخن بر دل آسان نبود   جز از خامشی هیچ درمان نبود
یکی باغ دیدم سراسر درخت   نشستنگه مردم نیک بخت
به جایی نبد هیچ پیدا درش   چن از نام شاهی نبد افسرش
گذر درخور [متن: که اندرخور] باغ بایستمی   اگر تنگ بودی نشایستمی
سخن را نگهداشتم سال بیست   بدان تا سزاوار این رنج کیست
ابوالقاسم آن شهریار جهان   کزو تازه شد تاج شاهنشاهان...
بیامد نشست از بر تخت داد   جهاندار چون او که دارد به یاد
سر نامه را نام او تاج گشت   به فرّش دل تیره چون عاج گشت

54. I think this verse is misunderstood. The hemistich: سوی تخت شاه جهان کرد روی refers, not to the Iranian king, but is a metaphor for God. Ferdowsi turns to the divine throne, and asks—perhaps by divination or what is called استخاره— if he should take up the project that Daqiqi had left unfinished.
55. For a discussion of the identity of Ferdowsi's patron see the following papers by Professor Khaleghi:
    جلال خالقی مطلق، ''یکی مهتری بود گردن فراز: تأملی در دیباچهء شاهنامه،'' *مجلهء دانشکدهء ادبیات و علوم انسانی دانشگاه فردوسی*، 1356، سال 2، صص 197–215؛ نیز از همو: ''جوان بود و از گوهر پهلوان،'' *ناموارهء دکتر محمود افشار*، ج 1، تهران: بنیاد موقوفات دکتر محمود افشار یزدی، 1364، صص 332–358

4 A Fierce Fidelity: Ferdowsi and His Archetype

1. The following abridged list contains only the most important of these scholars:
   بدیع الزمان فروزانفر، *تاریخ ادبیات ایران (بعد از اسلام تا پایان تیموریان) با گفتاری از عبدالحسین زرین کوب*، به کوشش عنایت الله مجیدی، تهران: سازمان چاپ و انتشارات وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی، 1383، صص 203؛ بدیع الزمان فروزانفر، تقریرات استاد بدیع الزمان فروزانفر در شعبهء زبان و ادبیات فارسی دانشکدهء ادبیات دانشگاه تهران (1320 تا 1322 شمسی) دربارهء تاریخ ادبیات ایران، تند نویسی و مقدمه و حواشی و فهارس از دکتر سید محمد دبیرسیاقی، تهران 1386، ص 239؛ محمد محیط طباطبائی، *فردوسی و شاهنامه*: مجموعهء مقالات، تهران: امیرکبیر، 1369، ص 275؛ دبیح الله صفا، تاریخ ادبیات در ایران از آغاز تا عهد اسلامی، ج 1، ص 463؛ ذبیح الله صفا، حماسه سرائی در ایرانصص177–179؛ مجتبی مینوی، فردوسی و شعر او، ص 66
2. See:
   منوچهر مرتضوی، فردوسی و شاهنامه، چاپ دوم، تهران: مؤسسهء مطالعات و تحقیقات فرهنگی، 1372، صص 14–15، جلال خالقی مطلق، ''دو نامه در بارهء بدیهه سرائی ...''، صص 43–45؛ نیز از همو ''در پیرامون منابع فردوسی،'' صص 513–515.
3. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, Zotenberg has provided a long list of these correspondences. See his introduction to *Histoire de Rois des Perses*, pp. xxv–xliii.
4. See:
   ملک الشعراء بهار، ''فردوسی،'' *باختر*، ش 12/11، مهر–آبان 1313، صص 806، 817–819.
5. Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic or the Shahnamah*, translated by L. Th. Bogdanov . Bombay: K. B. Cama Oriental Institute, 1930, pp. 28, 62 ff.
6. Shapur Shahbazi, *Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography*, (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1991) p. 132.
7. See:
   ژول مول. *مقدمهء مول برشاهنامهء فردوسی*، 8 ج، چاپ دوم، تهران: جیبی، 1354، صص 24–26.
8. See (iv: 174: 73–77):

   کنون زین سپس نامهء باستان   بپیوندم از گفتهء راستان
   چو پیش آورم گردش روزگار   نباید مرا پندِ آموزگار
   چو پیگار کیخسرو آمد پدید   ز من جادوی ها بباید شنید
   بدین داستان دُرّ بارم همی   به سنگ اندرون لاله کارم همی
   کنون خطبه یی یافتم پیش ازآن   که مغزِ سخن یافتم بیش از آن:

   The only way we can attribute this proem to Ferdowsi himself is to read بافتم "I wove," instead of یافتم "I found" in the first hemistich of the last

distich. Even then, he is merely stating that he is elaborating on a preexisting proem.

9. These verses are rendered as follows in the Warners' translation:

    I now resume mine old-world legendry
    From true traditions. As time's course I see
    I need none other to admonish me.
    The combatings of Kai Khusrau arise
    Before me: ye must hear my witcheries,
    For I shall shower pearls as I descant,
    And in among the rocks my tulips plant,
    Now have I got a theme long known to me
    Such that the marrow of my speech 'twill be.

10. See:

    جلال خالقی مطلق، *یادداشت های شاهنامه*، بخش دوم، نیویورک: بنیاد میراث ایران، 2006، ص 162
    توضیحات بیت 77 از داستان جنگ بزرگ کیخسرو. "میگوید: اکنون پیش ازینکه به سرودن داستان بپردازم،
    خطبه ای برای آن یافتم، چون در سخن مغز بسیار دیدم، یعنی: سخن بامغز در پند و اندرز بیش از آن دارم
    که ناگفته بگذرم.

11. It must be kept in mind that the distinction between what is "literary" and what is "historical" or even "scientific" in classical Persian is often blurred. Historians such as Bayhaqī (385–470/995–1077), Gardīzī, who composed his history between 421–423/ 1030–1032, and especially later historians of the Seljuq and Mongol periods wrote in the belletristic style of literary authors. Our common contemporary lines of literary, academic and journalistic demarcation cannot always be imposed upon the surviving texts of classical Islam.

12. See:

    بیهقی، *تاریخ بیهقی*: ص 110: "و اخبار این پادشاه براندم تا اینجا و واجب چنان کردی که از آن روز که او را
    خبر رسید که برادرش را بتگیناباد فرو گرفتند من گفتمی که او بر تخت ملک نشست. اما نگفتم که هنوز این ملک
    چون مستوفزی بود و روی ببلخ داشت و اکنون امروز که ببلخ رسید و کار ها همه بر قرار باز آمد راندنِ تاریخ از
    لونی دیگر باید. و *نخست خطبه یی خواهم نبشت* و چند فصل سخن بدان پیوست، آنگاه تاریخ روزگار همایون او
    براند، که این کتابی خواهد بود علی حِدَه."

13. See:

    بیهقی، *تاریخ بیهقی*، صص 111–112: " غرض من آن است که تاریخ نامه یی بنویسم و بنائی بزرگ افراشته
    گردانم چنانکه ذکر آن تا آخر روزگار باقی ماند ...و چون در تاریخ شرط کردم که در اول نشستن هر پادشاهی
    خطبه یی بنویسم، پس به راندنِ تاریخ مشغول گردم، اکنون آن شرط نگاه دارم بمشیةالله و عونه. در *کتاب نقض*
    هم که از متون کلامی شیعه است، و در حدود سال 1165/560 نوشته شده است، مؤلف دانشمندِ کتاب، شیخ
    عبدالجلیل قزوینی می فرماید: "...آنگه بعد از تسمیه ابتدا کرده است به خطبه یی به تازی و این مایه از
    عرف معلوم نکرده که کتاب به پارسی را خطبه به تازی معهود و معتاد نباشد". نگاه کنید به: نصیرالدین
    ابوالرّشید عبدالجلیل قزوینی رازی، *نقض معروف به بعض مثالب النواصب فی نقض "بعض فضائح الرّوافض"*،
    به تصحیح استاد فقید میرجلال الدین محدّث، تهران: انجمن آثار ملی، 1358، ص 7.

14. Some of these are the proem before the story of the war with Māzandarān (ii: 3: 1–10), the episode of Rustam and the Seven Paladins (ii: 103:1–6), the story of Rustam and Suhrāb (ii: 117–118:1–6), the tale of Gīv's Toils in Tūrān (ii: 419–420: 1–22), and many others.

15. See (ii: 100–1: 437–41 and 103: 7):

بدین داستان گفتم آن کم شنود ... چنین رسم هرگز کسی را نبود
چنین بود آیین شاه جهان ... چنین بود رسم سر پهلوان
همه داد کرد و همه داد دید ... ازیرا که گیتی همه باد دید
کجا پادشا دادگر بود و بس ... نیازش نیاید به فریاد کس
چو با مرگ کوشش نداردت سود ... کنون رزم رستم بباید شنود...
کنون از ره رستم جنگجوی ... یکی داستانست با رنگ و بوی

It is important to note that the word شنودن "to hear" should not mislead the reader into thinking that Ferdowsi had heard the tale of the war of Hāmāvarān. This is a literary use of "to hear" which really means "to read." For instance, the surviving preface to the old Abū Mansūr *Shāhnāmeh* states: "Thus did we hear from the books of Ibn al-Muqaffa[c] and Hamza of Isfahān":

"و اندر نامهء پسر مقفع و حمزه اصفهانی و مانندگان ایذون شنیدیم..." محمد قزوینی، *بیست مقاله*، ج 2، صص 52–3

The author of the *Mujmal al-Tawārīkh wa al-Qisas*, also writes in this manner: his use of the words *rāvī*, "narrator" or *guftan*, "to tell", do not necessarily imply an oral source:

اخبار ملوک و اکاسره و شاهان و بزرگان ما تقدّم ظاهرست بیرون از تاریخ جریر ... و راویان پیشین نقل کرده اند از کتابهای فارسیان" (ص 2)؛ "مغان چنین گویند و آنرا حقیقتی نیست و از آنچ بر اصلست و راویان بر آن متفقند در سیرها و تواریخ، جمله آنست که شرح دادم" (ص 38)؛ " و حمزهء اصفهانی گوید من در تاریخ آل ساسان رنج بردم به درست کردن (ص 10).

16. Here are a few examples of the agreement between the two texts. The Dāmād Ibrāhīm Pāshā's manuscript of the Arabic text, (ms. no. 916; copied on March 21, 1201 A.D.), has been used here, but the page numbers from Zotenberg's exhaustive catalogue of these verbatim agreements have also been provided. In the story of Zāl and Rūdāba, the hero brings a letter from his father Sām to king Manūchihr, in which the hero had requested the king's permission for his son to marry Rūdāba. The *Shāhnāmeh* reads (i: 245: 1190–95):

ازو بستد آن نامهء پهلوان ... بخندید و شد شاد و روشن روان...
ببردند خوالیگران خوان زر ... شهنشاه بنشست با زال زر

He took the hero's letter from him; smiled and was delighted...
Then food was brought and the king sat at the table with Zāl

The Arabic text reads (Zotenberg, p. 98):

و عرض الكتاب فلمّا أعارَه لَحظَـهُ تَبَسَّمَ ضاحكاً و دعا بالمائدة

Later, when Zāl wants to leave the court because he misses Rūdāba and wants to get back to her, he says to the king (i: 253: 1283–88):

بیامد کمر بسته زال دلیر ... به پیش شهنشاه چن نرّه شیر
به دستوری بازگشتن ز در ... شدن نزدِ سالار فرّخ پدر
به شاه جهان گفت کای نیک خوی ... مرا چهر سام آمده ست آرزوی
چو بوسیدم این پایهء تخت عاج ... دلم گشت روشن بدین برز و تاج
بدوگفت شاه ای جوانمردِ گرد ... یک امروز نیزت بباید شمرد
ترا بویهء دخت مهراب خواست ... دلت را هش سام و کاول کجاست

The Arabic reads (f 35 r.; Zotenberg, p. 98):

ثمّ لمـّا كان بعدَ شهرٍ استـأذَنَ زال فى الانصراف و وَصـَفَ شوقـَهُ الى والدِهِ و ضحک المَلک و قال إنـّـکَ لـَستَ تـَشتاقُ أباکَ و إنـّـما تـَشتاقُ إبنـَتَ مهرابَ

Which may be translated as: "Then after a month, Zāl asked for permission to return and explained that he is longing to rejoin his father. And the king laughed and said: You don't long for your father. You are longing for the daughter of Mihrāb."

Earlier in the story of Fereydūn's rule, during the scene in which Manūchihr chases his uncle Salm in the battlefield, and kills him to avenge the murder of his father Iraj, the *Shāhnāmeh* reads (i::151:988–991):

رسید آنگهی تنگ در شاه روم — خروشید کای مرد بیداد شوم
بکشتی برادر ز بهر کلاه — کله یافتی! چند پویی به راه؟
کنون تاجت آوردم ای شاه و تخت — به بار آمد آن خسروانی درخت
ز تاج بزرگی گریزان مشو — فریدونت گاهی بیاراست نو

He reached close to the Lord of the Western climes
And called out: O' cruel and evil man
You killed your brother for the crown
Here's the crown! Why are you running from it?
I brought you, O' Prince, the crown and the throne.
You are about to reap the fruit of that royal tree
Do not escape the crown of lordship
Fereydūn has prepared a new throne for you.

The Arabic text for this scene reads (Zotenberg, p. 63, cf. Damad Ibrahim Pasha ms. 1916, f. 25r):

[سلم] إنهَزَمَ فى جَيشـِهِ و تـَبَعـَهُ منوچهر فى عسكَره و صـَاحَ به فقال: أيـّها الملک مـَا هذا الهَرَب؟ و قد أتـَيتـُکَ بالتاج الذى قتـَلتَ ايرَج مِن اجلـِهِ لاضعه على رأسک

"Salm escaped towards his forces, but Manūchihr followed him and cried out: "What is this fleeing my Lord, while I bring you the crown for which you killed Iraj in order to place it on your head."

17. For instance see Shahbazi, *Ferdowsi, A Critical Biography*, pp. 118–28. Also:
ریاحی، *سرچشمه های فردوسی شناسی*، صص 4–24 ؛ مینوی، *فردوسی و شعر او*، صص 29–48

5 Why the *Shāhnāmeh*?

1. See:
نگاه کنید به فروزانفر، *مباحثی از تاریخ ادبیات ایران*، صص 38، 42–43. "بعداً ابوالفضل محمد بن عبدالله بلعمی (فوت 10 صفر 329 معادل با 19 نوامبر 940 میلادی) که وزیر نصر بن احمد سامانی بود کلیله را از عربی به فارسی ترجمه کرد." نگاه کنید به سعید نفیسی، *محیط زندگی و احوال و اشعار رودکی*، چاپ دوم، تهران: امیرکبیر، 1336، صص 425–427.

2 See:
ذبیح الله صفا، *تاریخ ادبیات در ایران: از آغاز عهد اسلامی تا دورهء سلجوقی*،، ص 174.

3. See:
مقدمهء همائی بر بیرونی، *کتاب التفهیم لأوائل صناعة التنجیم*، صص 110–111.

4. See:
حکیم میسری، *دانشنامه در علم پزشکی*، باهتمام دکتر برات زنجانی، تهران: موسسه مطالعات اسلامی دانشگاه مک گیل با همکاری دانشگاه تهران، 1366، ص 6.

و پس گفتم زمین ماست ایران	که بیش از مردمانش پارسی دان
وگر تازی کنم نیکو نباشد	که هرکس را ازو نیرو نباشد
دری گویمش تا هرکس بداند	و هرکس بر زبانش بر براند
کنون پیر خردمندش بخواند	همه راه پزشکی زو بداند . . .
دگر این نامه را با سود بسیار	بماند بر زبان بر رفته هموار
سوی پیر و جوان بر گفته ماند	همیشه بر زفان بر رفته ماند

5. One shudders to think what the Iranian left would have made of Leonardo da Vinci's decision to offer his services to the illegitimate son of Pope Alexander VI, Cesare Borgia, who was widely known for his viciousness and cruelty. However, "to work for Cesare was no doubt to Leonardo simply a sensible decision. He had done this kind of thing before and he would do it again. Neither intrigue, politics, power nor ideology seem ever to have been involved. Leonardo's only motive was to make himself free to be Leonardo." See Sherwin B. Nuland, *Leonardo da Vinci* (New York: Lipper/Viking, 2000) p. 69.

6 The Man in the Myths

1. See:
   یاقوت بن عبدالله الحموی الرّومی البغدادی، *معجم البلدان*، 5 جلد، بیروت: دارصادر، 1955، ج 1، ص 321 ذیل باز: "و باز ایضاً قریة بین طوس و نیسابور خرج منها جماعة اخری، و تعرّب فیقال لها*فاز* بالفاء."
2. For information on Ferdowsi's home town see:
   رجبعلی لبّاف خانیکی، "جایگاه تاریخی پاژ،"*فصلنامهء پاژ*، ج 1، ش 1، بهار 1387.2008، صص 9–27.
3. See:
   نظامی عروضی، احمد بن عمر، *چهارمقاله*، به تصحیح محمد قزوینی با تصحیح مجدد و شرح لغات و عبارات و توضیح نکات ادبی، به کوشش دکتر محمد معین، چاپ سوم، تهران: زوّار 1385، ص 75: استاد ابوالقاسم فردوسی از دهاقین طوس بود از دیهی که ان دیه را باز خوانند . . . بزرگ دیهی است و از وی هزار مرد بیرون آید."
4. Concerning the scholars who resided in Pāzh or were born in the city see:
   مهدی سیّدی، "نگاهی دیگر به پاژ، زادگاه فردوسی،"*فصلنامهء پاژ*، ج1، ش 1،
   بهار 1387/2008 صص 27–41
5. For a detailed explanation of these dates see: Shapur Shahbazi, *Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography*, (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1991), pp. 25–30. In the Shāhnāmeh see (vi: 276: 9):

می لعل پیش آور ای روزبه	که شد سال گوینده بر شست و سه

   Also (vi: 341: 657–659):

چو آدینه هرمزد بهمن بوَد	برین کار فرّخ نشیمن بوَد
می لعل پیش آورم هاشمی	ز بیشی که خنبَش نگیرد کمی

6. See
   مهدوی دامغانی، احمد، "تجلیّات قرآن مجید و احادیث شریفه در شاهنامه" در *حاصل اوقات*، صص 357–370؛ همو "مضامین مشابه شاهنامه و دیگر مراجع ادبی یا مذهبی پیش از فردوسی،" همان، صص 541–556
7. An interesting collection of legends about Ferdowsi have been brought together by Professor Matini. See:
   متینی، جلال، "فردوسی در هاله یی از افسانه ها،" در *مجلهء دانشکدهء ادبیات و علوم انسانی دانشگاه فردوسی*، سال 14، ش. 1، صص 1–29.

8. See:

جلال خالقی مطلق، ”نگاهی تازه به زندگی نامهء فردوسی،“ *نامهء ایران باستان*، سال 6، ش 2/1، ص 3.

9. See (vii: 88: 11–12):

خروشان شد آن نرگسان دژم　　　همی گیرد از رنج او پشت خم
دل شاد و بی غم پر از درد گشت　　　چنین روزِ ما ناجوانمرد گشت

I am grateful to my friend, Dr. Homayoon Shidnia MD, who made the diagnosis of dacryocystitis.

10. I will provide the following pieces as evidence. However, since my argument depends on the wording of the poets' complaint about old age, it would be pointless to provide a translation. In chronological order, the examples are the following: First from Rūdakī (d. A.D. 940 or 941):

مرا بسود و فرو ریخت هرچه دندان بود　　　نبود دندان، لا، بل چراغ تابان بود
سپید سیم زده بود و درّ و مرجان بود　　　ستارهء سحری بود و قطره باران بود
یکی نماند کنون زان، همه بسود و بریخت　　　چه نحس بود، همانا که نحس کیوان بود...
همی چه دانی، ای ماهرویِ مشکین موی　　　که حال بنده ازین پیش بر چه سامان بود
به زلف چوگان نازش همی کنی تو بدو　　　ندیدی آنگه او را که زلف چوگان بود
شد آن زمانه که رویش بسان دیبا بود　　　شد آن زمانه که مویش بسان قطران بود...
کنون زمانه دگر گشت و من دگر گشتم　　　عصا بیار که وقت عصا و انبان بود

به نقل از *پیشاهنگان شعر پارسی*. به کوشش محمد دبیرسیاقی (تهران: جیبی، 1351)، صص 32–35 با حذف برخی ابیات.

Our second example comes from the poetry of Kisā'ī of Marv (b. A.D. 952), who lived at the same time as Ferdowsi. It shows how specific about their ailments these early poets could be:

پیری مرا به زرگری افگند، ای شگفت!　　　بی گاهِ دود، زردم و همواره سُرف سُرف
زرگر فروفشاند کرفِ سیه به سیم　　　من باز برفشانم سیم سره به کرف...

In another poem that Kisā'ī composed on Wednesday, February, 21, A.D. 953, he writes:

به سیصد و چهل و یک رسید نوبت سال　　　چهار شنبه و سه روز باقی از شوّال
بیامدم به جهان تا چه گویم و چه کنم　　　سرود گویم و شادی کنم به نعمت و مال ...
دریغ فرّ جوانی، دریغ عمر لطیف　　　دریغ صورت نیکو، دریغ حسن و جمال
کجا شد آن همه خوبی، کجا شد آن همه عشق　　　کجا شده آن همه نیرو، کجا شد آن همه حال؟
سرم به گونهء شیر است و دل به گونهء قیر　　　رخم به گونهء نیل است و تن به گونهء نال
نهیب مرگ بلرزاندم همی شب و روز　　　چو کودکانِ بد آموز را، نهیب دوال

به نقل از محمد امین ریاحی. *کسائی مروزی: زندگی، اندیشه و شعر او* (چاپ سوم، تهران: توس، 1370)، صص 79–81 با حذف برخی از ابیات.

For other specific examples of such poetry, see:

ناصر خسرو، *دیوان ناصر خسرو*. باهتمام و تصحیح مجتبی مینوی، چاپ سوم، تهران: دنیای کتاب، 1372، صص 236–237، 257–258، 474–475؛ نیز مسعود سعد سلمان. *دیوان مسعود سعد*. به تصحیح مهدی نوریان، 2 مجلد، اصفهان: انتشارات کمال، 1364، ج 2، صص 837–838 (در باب هشتاد سالگی و پنجاه و ،هفت سالگی)، و صصص 858–859 در باب پیری بطور مطلق. مولوی هم در مثنوی میفرماید (چاپ نیکلسن دفتر پنجم، ص 62):

آن رخی که تاب او بد ماه وار　　　شد بپیری همچو پشت سوسمار
وان سر و فرق گَش شعشع شده　　　وقت پیری ناخوش و اصلع شده
وان قد صف درِّ نازان چون سنان　　　گشته در پیری دوتا همچون کمان
رنگ لاله گشته رنگ زعفران　　　زور شیرش گشته چون زهرهء زنان

آنک مردی در بغل کردی به فن　　　می بگیرندش بغل وقت شدن
این خود آثار غم و پژمردگیست　　　هریکی زینها رسولِ مردگیست.

11. This need not detain us here, but I find the argument that alleges filicidal tendencies to Persian culture and to the *Shāhnāmeh* because they contain stories in which fathers kill their sons both simple-minded and superficial. Fathers or father surrogates kill their sons in the *Shāhnāmeh* at least as often as sons or son surrogates kill their fathers. See M. Omidsalar, "Rustam's Seven Trials and the Logic of Epic Narrative in the Shāhnāma," in *Asian Folklore Studies*, 60(2002): 1–35; and M. Omidsalar, "The Dragon Fight in the National Persian Epic," *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 14(1987): 1–14.
12. The sources that have assigned the story to Ferdowsi's daughter are:

    نظامی عروضی سمرقندی، *کلیات چهار مقاله*، به سعی و اهتمام و تصحیح علامه محمد بن عبدالوهاب قزوینی، چاپ دوم، تهران: اشراقی، بی تاریخ. چاپ افست از روی چاپ بریل 1909، صص 47–51؛ عبدالرحمان جامی، *بهارستان*، به تصحیح اسماعیل حاکمی، تهران: مؤسسهء اطلاعات، 1367، صص 93–95؛ حکیم شاه محمد بن مبارک قزوینی، *ترجمهء مجالس النفائس*، به اهتمام علی اصغر حکمت، تهران، 1323، صص 343–345؛ زین الدین محمود واصفی، *بدایع الوقایع*، به تصحیح الکساندر بلدف، تهران: بنیاد فرهنگ، 1349، ج 1، صص 350–361.

    At least one authority ascribes the refusal of the royal gift to Ferdowsi's sister:

    دولتشاه سمرقندی، *تذکرةالشعراء* به تصحیح ادوارد براون، چاپ محمد عباسی، تهران: بارانی، 1337، صص 57–62.

    And a number of sources attribute the refusal to either the poet's sister or daughter without committing to one or the other:

    "مقدمهء بایسنغری،" در ریاحی، *سرچشمه ها*، ص 415؛ احمد بن جلال الدین محمد فصیح خوافی، *مجمل فصیحی*، به اهتمام محمود فرّخ، 3 مجلد، مشهد: کتابفروشی باستان، ج 2، صص 129–140؛ لطفعلی بیک آذر، *آتشکده*، چاپ سنگی، بمبئی، 1277 صص 72–82.
13. See:

    نظامی عروضی ،*کلیّات چهار مقاله*، به تصحیح قزوینی، صص 47–51
14. For a discussion of the folk versions of this satire and the suggestion that it may have analogues in tales about Virgil (70–19 B.C.) and Emperor Augustus (63 B.C.–A.D. 19) in European folklore, see:

    محمود امیدسالار، "در بارهء بیتی از هجونامهء فردوسی، *ایران نامه*، ج 5، ش 3، صص 479–489. این مقاله در *جستارهای شاهنامه شناسی و مباحث ادبی*،، صص 66–78 تجدید چاپ شده است.
15. According to some sources, the reward that was sent to Ferdowsi was a cash reward, and according to others, the king sent him an elephant-load of indigo equivalent in value to the original reward of sixty thousand gold coins. Some versions of the story even reconcile the poet and the king at the end. See:

    دبیرسیاقی، سید محمد *زندگینامهء فردوسی و سرگذشت شاهنامه*، چاپ دوم، تهران: قطره، 1384، ص 140؛ ریاحی، *سرچشمه ها*، ص 206.

    For various permutations in the story of the Sultan's reward and Ferdowsi's reaction, see the selection of original texts that has been collected in the following book:

    ریاحی، *سرچشمه ها*، صص 171–472، نیز دبیرسیاقی، *زندگینامه، صص 202–323*
16. See:

    یغمائی، در مقدمهء *فردوسی و شاهنامهء او*، ص 31.

17. These verses are found in the introduction to the story of Bīzhan and Manīzha. See (iii: 304–6: 15–23):

    بدان تنگی اندر بجستم ز جای   **یکی مهربان بودم اندر سرای**
    خروشیدم و خواستم زو چراغ   بیاورد شمع و بیامد به بـــاغ
    می آورد و نار و ترنج و بهی   زدوده یکی جام شاهنشهـــی
    مرا گفت: شمعت چه باید همی   شب تیره خوابت نیـــایـد همی؟
    بپیمای می تا یکی داستـــان   ز دفترت برخوانـــم از باستان
    پر از چاره و مهر و نیرنگ و جنگ   همه از درِ مرد فرهنگ و سنگ
    بدان سرو بـُن گفتم ای ماه روی   مرا امشب این داستان بازگـــوی
    مرا گفت: گر چون ز من بشنوی   به شعر آری از دفتـــر پهلوی
    همی گویم و هـــم پذیرم سپاس   کنون بشنو ای یـــار نیـــکی شناس

    (شاهنامهء خالقی، دفتر سوم، صص 304–306 ابیات 15–23 از داستان بیژن و منیژه؛ شاهنامهء مول، ج 2 ص 147–148 ابیات 15–39؛ اختلاف تعداد ابیات به این خاطرست که در طبع مول ابیات الحاقی زیادست).
18. Shahbazi, *Ferdowsi; A Critical Biography*, p. 28, n. 40.
19. The practice of referring to one's wife with euphemisms such as *manzil*, "the house", or by the name of one's son developed much later in Persian folk practice.
20. See:

    بیرونی، *کتاب التفهیم لأوائل صناعة التنجیم*، ، ص 38.
21. For instance:

    "امیر محمود رضی الله عنه چون دیدار کرد با قدرخان و دوستی مؤکد گردید بعقد و به عهد ... مواضعت برین جمله بود که حرّه زینب رحمةالله علیها [یعنی دختر سلطان محمود] از جانب ما نامزد یغان تگین بوَد" *تاریخ بیهقی*، ص 246، ایضاً نگاه کنید به صص 692–694؛ نیز: "و حـُرّه گوهر [یعنی دختر سلطان مسعود بن محمود] نامزد امیر احمد شد" (همان، ص 894)؛ نیز: "چنین نبشت بوریحان [یعنی ابوریحان بیرونی] که ... و میان او و امیر محمود دوستی محکم شد و عهد کردند و حـُـرّهء کالـِـجی را دختر امیر سبکتگین [یعنی خواهر سلطان محمود را] آنجا آوردند" (همان، ص 907)

    Bayhaqī repeatedly mentions Mahmud's other sister, Hurra-yi Khuttalī, who was politically quite influential in the Ghaznavid court. See *History of Bayhaqī*, pp. 13–14, 19, 87, 146, 334, 862, 895.
22. See:

    "و این یادگار همچنین کردم مر **ریحانة بنت الحسین الخوارزمی** را که خواهنده او بود بر طریق پرسیدن و جواب دادن." نگاه کنید به: *التفهیم لاوائل الصناعت التنجیم*، ص 2.
23. The motif of the brave woman who survives her fallen son, father, husband, or brother is well known in international folklore. The most famous of them is Oedipus's daughter Antigone. In the Persian textual tradition, the mothers of the vizier, Hasanak, and ᶜAbdullāh b. Zubair come to mind. See Bayhaqī's *History of Baihaqī*, pp. 236–41.
24. See (vii: 265–66: 2156–60):

    شبستان او را نگه کن نخست   بد و نیک باید که دانی درست
    به آرایش چهره و فرّ و زیب   نباید که گیرندت اندر فریب
    پس پردهء او بسی دخترست   که با فرّ و بالا و با افسرست
    پرستار زاده نیاید به کار   اگر چند باشد پدر شهریار
    نگر تا کدامست با شرم و داد   به مادر که دارد ز خاتون نژاد

    The king expresses the idea earlier in the story (vii: 262: 2126–28):

    I will dispatch a wise man who shall look
    On all his women-folk and shall select

The most illustrious and dear to him,
See what her own maternal grandsire was,
And her own quality of royal birth.

کسی را فرستم که دارد خرد　　شبستان او سربسر بنگرد
یکی برگزیند که نامی ترست　　به خاقان چین بر گرامی ترست
ببیند که تا چون بود مادرش　　بُده ست از نژاد کیان گوهرش

25. See verses 2156–62 of the story of rule of Anūshīravān in the new critical edition of the poem (vii: 265–66), also lines 2130–35. In the Moscow edition, see vol. 8, p. 178; and in the Iranian reprint of Mohl's edition see vol. 6, p. 172, ll. 2190–95.
26. In the story of the rule of Hormozd, son of Anūshīravān, the same ambassador reminisces again about how he was told to choose a princess whose mother was not a concubine (viii: 494–95: 349–62):

چن آمد بر شاه مرد کهن　　دلی پر ز دانش، سری پر سخن
بپرسید هرمز ز مهران شتاد　　کزین ترک جنگی چه داری به یاد؟
چنین داد پاسخ بدو مردِ پیر　　که ای شاه گوینده و یادگیر
بدانگه کجا مادرت را ز چین　　فرستاد خاقان به ایران زمین
به خواهندگی من بدم پیشرو　　صد و بیست مرد از دلیران گو
پدرت آن جهاندارِ دانایِ راست　　ز خاقان **پرستارزاده** نخواست
مرا گفت: جز دخت خاتون مخواه　　نزیبد **پرستار** در پیشگاه
برفتم بنزدیک خاقان چین　　به شاهی برو خواندم آفرین
ورا دختری پنج بُد چون بهار　　سراسر پر از بوی و رنگ و نگار
مرا در شبستان فرستاد شاه　　شدم من در آن نامور پیشگاه
رخ دختران را بیاراستند　　سرِ زلف بر گل بپیراستند
مگر مادرت، بر سر افسر نداشت　　همان یاره و طوق و گوهر نداشت
ازیشان جز او دخت خاتون نبود　　به پیرایه و رنگ و افسون نبود
که خاتون چینی ز فغفور بود　　به گوهر ز کردارِ بد دور بود

27. For a discussion of different authorities' views of this satire see:
مهدی درخشان، "بیت های الحاقی و منسوب به فردوسی در هجو سلطان محمود،" در *نمیرم ازین پس که من زنده ام: مجموعهء مقالات کنگرهء جهانی بزرگداشت فردوسی (هزارهء تدوین شاهنامه) دی ماه 1369 دانشگاه تهران*، به کوشش غلامرضا ستوده، تهران: انتشارات دانشگاه تهران، 1374، صص 283–292 و نیز از همو "اشعاری تازه از فردوسی در هجو سلطان محمود،" در *مجموعهء سخنرانی های هفتمین کنگرهء تحقیقات ایرانی، تهران: انتشارات دانشگاه شهید بهشتی (ملی سابق)*، 1355، ج 1، صص 258–283.
28. Professor Dabirsiyaqi has discussed the issue in some detail and has provided reference to the work of other Iranian *Shāhnāmeh* scholars who have challenged the authenticity of this satire. See:
سید محمد دبیرسیاقی، *زندگینامه*، صص 331.
29. A massive amount of ink has been spilled about Ferdowsi's religion. Some of the more interesting studies have been listed in Shahbazi's *Ferdowsi, A Critical Biography*, pp. 49–59; see also:
حافظ محمودخان شیرانی، *در شناخت فردوسی*، تهران، 1369، صص 161–221؛ محمد محیط طباطبائی، *فردوسی و شاهنامه*، صص 29–131
30. See (i: 10–11: 94–104):

به گفتار پیغمبرت راه جوی　　دل از تیرگی ها بدین آب شوی
چه گفت آن خداوند تنزیل و وحی　　خداوند امر و خداوند نهی
که من شارستانم علیّم در است　　درست این سخن گفت پیغمبرست

گواهی دهم این سخن راز اوست	تو گویی دو گوشم برآواز اوست
حکیم این جهان را چو دریا نهاد	برانگیخته موج ازو تند باد
چو هفتاد کشتی بر او ساخته	همه بادبانها برافراخته
یکی پهن کشتی بسان عروس	همچو چشم خروس
محمّد بدو اندرون با علی	همان اهل بیت نبی و وصیّ
اگر چشم داری به دیگر سرای	به نزد نبیّ و وصی گیر جای
گرت زین بد آید گناه من است	چنین است و این دین و راه من ست
برین زادم و هم برین بگذرم	چنان دان که خاک پی حیدرم

31. The most common form of the tradition is: انا مدینة العلم و علیّ بابها . For specific references to the compendia of prophetic traditions see: امیدسالار، جستارها، صص 106–122 , also the following:

حمید فرزام، "اخلاق اسلامی در شاهنامهء فردوسی،" در *نمیرم ازین پس*، صص 701–717؛ محیط طباطبائی، *فردوسی و شاهنامه* صص 29–131، احمد مهدوی دامغانی، *حاصل اوقات* صص 557–600 و همچنین 541–556.

32. In his excellent and brief paper on Ferdowsi's religion, Professor Mahdavi Damghani writes:

از همان زمان معاویه [شیعیان] از حضرت امیر المؤمنین علی علیه السلام با کلمهء "وصیّ" تعبیر می کردند زیرا لفظ وصیّ به معنائی که شیعه از آن اراده میکند به اصطلاح منطقیان تنها لفظ جامع و مانعی است که معرّف شیعه و جمیع مبانی اعتقادی اوست و هیچ فرقه دیگری حتی فرقهء شیعهء زیدی کلمهء وصی را به آن معنی که مراد و مقصود شیعیان امامی است منظور نمی کنند ... ازین رو لفظ وصی آنچنان رمز تشیّع و معرف شیعی بودن آن کس که کلمهء "وصیّ" را بصورت معرفه (با الف و لام: الوصیّ ...) در گفته و نوشتهء عربی خود به کار می برد گردید که لغویان عامه برای منصرف کردن آن لفظ از معنی و مراد شیعه و تخصیص آن به همان معنی لغوی و اصطلاحی آن (یعنی اصطلاح حقوقی و فقهی) در کتب لغت آورده اند که: الوصیّ (توجه بفرمائید به همین صورت معرفه با الف و لام) کَـغَـنَی "لقب" علی بن ابی طالب—رضی الله تعالی عنه—سُمّی به لاتـّصال نسبه و سببه و سمته برسول الله (ص) [به نقل از *لسان العرب*]. نگاه کنید به: احمد مهدوی دامغانی، "مذهب فردوسی" در *حاصل اوقات*، صص 575–576

33. See the Arabic translation, vol. 1, p. 8—where a number of interpolated verses in praise of the other caliphs have also been included; and vol. 2, p. 276, where the date of the completion of the poem is given as 384 AH/A.D. 994, which means the translation was made from the poem's first redaction.
34. These are the verses in which these concepts have been mentioned:

ن والقلم و ما یَسطـُرُونَ (سورة القلم 1)

By the pen! By all they write.

اقرا وَ رَبـّکَ الاکرَمُ. ألـّذی عَلـّمَ بِالقـَلـَمِ (سورة العلق 3–4)

Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by [means of] the pen.

بل هو قرآنٌ مجیدٌ فی لوح مَحفوظ (سورة البروج 21–22)

This is truly a glorious Qur'an written on a preserved Tablet.

The translations are taken from *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). There may be a slight difference in the numbering of verses in different editions of the Koran, but there is no difference in the text at all.

35. See (v: 562: 422):

دو گیتی پدید آمد از کـاف و نـون	چرا نه به فرمان او در، نه چون

قس گرشاسپنامه، ص 1 ب 1:

سپاس از خدا ایزد رهنمای   که از کاف و نون کرد گیتی به پای

نیز ص 329 ب 11–14:

نخست از سخن یاد دادار کرد   که از نیست هست او پدیدار کرد
بدو پایدارست هردو جهان   ز دیدار او نیست چیزی نهان
تن و جان و روز و شب و چیز و جای   زمین اختر و چرخ و هردو سرای
چو کن گفته شد بود بی چه و چون   هنوزش نپیوسته با کاف نون

36. The idea of God creating the world by issuing the command: "Be!," which as I said is expressed by the Arabic imperative *kun*, is expressed several times in the Qur'an (2: 117; 3: 42, 52; 6: 73; 16: 42; 19: 36; 36: 82; 40: 70). I will quote only a couple of the verses here so that the reader may get an idea of their general message:

بدیع السماوات والارض و اذا قضی امراً فإنّما یَقولُ لهُ کُن فیَکون

He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth, and when He decrees something, He says only "Be," and it is.

و هوَ الذی خلق السماوات و الارضَ بالحقّ و یومَ یَقُولُ کن فیَکون قوله الحقّ و لهُ المُلکُ یومَ یُنفَخُ فی الصّور عالم الغیب و الشهادة و هو الحکیم الخبیر

It is He who created the heavens and the earth for a true purpose. On the Day when He says "Be," it will be: His word is the truth. All control on the Day the Trumpet is blown belongs to Him. He knows the seen and the unseen: He is the All Wise, the All Aware

37. See (i: 8: 75):

ز یاقوتِ سرخ ست چرخ کبود   نه از آب و باد و نه از گرد و دود

این عقیده در *مرصاد العباد* نجم الدین دایه بدین صورت آمده است که: "خداوند چون خواست هستی را بیافریند نخست قطعه ای یاقوت سرخ خلق کرد، پس بنظر هیبت در آن نگریست، آن یاقوت از هیبت آن نظر دوپاره گشت. پاره یی بخار شد و به سوی بالا بر شد و از آن آسمانها پدیدار گردید و پاره یی دیگر به سوی پائین سرازیر گشت و از آن زمین ایجاد گشت." به نقل از دبیرسیاقی، *زندگینامهء فردوسی*، ص 412.

38. See (vii: 167: 981):

نگر خواب را بیهده نشمری   یکی بهره دانش ز پیغمبری

For a more detailed documentation of Ferdowsi's familiarity with and dependence on traditional texts of Islam see:

احمد مهدوی دامغانی، "مضامین مشابه شاهنامه ئ دیگر مراجع ادبی یا مذهبی پیش از فردوسی، در *حاصل اوقات*، صص 541–556؛ نیز مقالهء استاد مهدوی به عنوان "مذهب فردوسی" همان، صص 557–600؛ محمود امیدسالار، "بعضی احادیث نبوی در شاهنامه" در *جستارهای شاهنامه شناسی و مباحث ادبی*، تهران: بنیاد موقوفات دکتر محمود افشار، 1381، صص 106–122؛

39. Professor Afshar told me of Bahār's addiction to opium in the spring of 2007 in Tehran.

40. See:

محمد تقی بهار، "فردوسی،" *باختر*، سال 1، شمارهء 11–12 مهر–آبان 1313، صص 780–783: "باری استاد ما با کمال ناکامی و مرارت و تنگدستی و مشقت این کتاب را می ساخته و تنها مایهء دلگرمی و وسیلهء خوشی او یکی امیدواری بیافتن صلتی از پادشاه غزنین و دیگر نقد تر و حقیقی تر از آن، بقول خودش می لعل بوده است. واقعاً گاهی استاد شراب مینوشیده است زیرا مکرر و بطوری تصریح به این معنی دارد که از بیانات شاعرانه گذشته و بحقیقت پیوسته است."

41. See (vii: 445–46: 4324–28):

چو سالت شد ای پیر بر شست و یک　　　می و جام و آرام شد بی نمک
نبندد دل ادر سپنجی سرای　　　خردیافته مردم پاکرای
به گاه پسیجیدن مرگ می　　　چو پیراهن شعر باشد به دی
فسرده تن اندر میان گناه　　　روان سوی فردوس گم کرده راه
ز یاران کسی ماند و چندی گذشت　　　تو با جام، همراه مانده به دشت

I have slightly changed the text of the last hemistich based on the contentsof some manuscripts whose readings I prefer, in order to achieve a smoother English translation. However, the general sense of these lines remains the same even without my editorial meddling.

7 The Poet, the Prince, and the Language

1. See Bernard Lewis, "Iran in History," a lecture delivered under the auspices of the Mortimer and Raymond Sackler Institute of Advanced Studies at Tel Aviv University, on January 18, 1999; http://www.dayan.org/mel/lewis.pdf.
2. S. M. Stern, "Yacqūb the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment," in *History and Culture in the Medieval Muslim World*, S. M. Stern (Foreword by F. W. Zimmermann) (London: Variarum Reprints, 1984) pp. 535–55. This paper was originally published in *Iran and Islam. In Memory of the Late V. Minorsky,* ed. C. E. Bosworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971) pp. 535–55.
3. Monophysitism is the Christian doctrine that considers the human and the divine nature of Christ to be so united as to form a unity. Monophysitism is the opposite of Nestorianism, which holds that Jesus' two persons, that is, the divine person as "the Son of God" and his human person exist in two distinct subsistent natures of which one is fully human and the other fully divine. See Joseph Strayer, (ed.), *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 10 volumes (New York: Scribner 1989) (s.v. Monophysitism and Nestorianism). Monophysitism was popular in Syria, the Levant, Egypt and Anatolia, while Nestorianism was the official doctrine of the Byzantine Church.
4. For the concept of "clientage" see Alfred v. Kremer, *Kulturgeschichte des Orients unter den Chalifen,* vol. 2, pp. 154 ff; Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* 2 volumes, edited by S. M. Stern and translated from the German by C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1966) vol. 1, pp. 101–36; Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs from the Earliest Times to the Present,* 5th revised edition (London: Macmillan & Co., 1953) pp. 26–27; Bertold Spuler, *The Muslim World, A Historical Survey Pt. I: The Age of the Caliphs,* trans. by F. R. C. Bagley (Leiden: Brill, 1960) pp. 39–40; S. KhudaBukhs, *Politics in Islam, von Kremer's Staatsidee des Islam Enlarged and Amplified,* 4th edition (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1961); W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) (reprint of the 1968 edition), pp. 7–9.
5. The word قبستُ in the first hemistich of the third line is quite possibly a corruption of an original ورثتُ and I have followed that assumption in my

English translations. I am grateful to Professor Mahdavi Damghani for this suggestion.

المجانی الحدیثة عن مجانی الأب شیخو. جدّدها اختیاراً و دَرساً و شرحاً و تبویباً لجنة من الأساتذة. طبعة ثانیة منقحة و مزید علیها، 5 مجلد، بیروت: المطبعة الکاثولیکیة، 1960، ج 3، ص 204:

قومیَ استولوا علی الدّهر فتیً   و مشوا فوقَ رؤوس الحقَبِ …
و أبی کسری علی إیوانه   أینَ فی النّاسِ ابٌ مثلُ ابی؟ …
قد قبستُ المجدَ من خیر ابٍ   و قبستُ الدینَ من خیر نبی
و ضَمَمتُ الفخرَ من أطرافِهِ   سؤدُدَ الفُرسِ و دینَ العرب

Addressing a probably imaginary Persian woman, he writes in one of his odes:

أتعلمینَ یابنة الأعاجم   کم لأخیکِ فی الهوی من لائم؟
یهُبُّ یلحاه بوجهٍ طَلَقٍ   ینطق عن قلب حسودٍ راغم
و هو مع المجد علی سبیله   ماضٍ مضاءَ المشرفیّ الصارم
ممتثلاً ما سنّه آباؤه   إنّ الشبول شَبَهُ الضراغم
من أیکةٍ مذ غرستها فارسٌ   ما لان غمزاً فرعُها لعاجم …
شتّانَ رأسٌ یفخر التاج به   وأروُسٌ تفخر بالعمائم

See also the well documented arguments of Professor Azarnush in:

آذرتاش آذرنوش، *چالش میان فارسی و عربی : سده های نخست*. تهران: نشر نی، 1385، صص133–174.

6. See A. J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) ode no. 16.
7. See:

آذرنوش، *چالش میان فارسی و عربی*.ص 246:

و نادَیتُ من مَروٍ و بَلخٍ فوارساً   لهم حَسَبٌ فی الأکرمین حَسیبُ
فیا حَسرتا لا دارُ قومی قَریبَةٌ   فیکثر منهم ناصری فیُطیبُ
و إنَّ ابی ساسانُ کسری بن هُرمُز   و خاقانُ لی لو تَعلَمین نَسیبُ
مَلَکنا رقابَ الناس فی الشِرکَ کلّهم   لنا تابعٌ طَوعُ القیادِ جنیبُ
نَسومُکُمُ خَسفاً و نقضی علیکم   بما شاء منّا مُخطِیٌ و مُصیبُ
فلمّا اتی الاسلام و انشَرَحَت له   صدورٌ به نحو الأنام تتیب
تبعنا رسول الله حتی کانَّما   سماءٌ علینا بالرجالِ تَصُوب

8. The most accessible collection of folkloristic accounts of Ferdowsi and his epic may be found in:

سید ابوالقاسم انجوی، سید ابوالقاسم. *فردوسی نامه*، 3 مجلد، چاپ دوم، تهران: علمی، 3631

9. See:

فروغی، محمد علی، *مقالات فروغی دربارهء شاهنامه و فردوسی*، به اهتمام حبیب یغمائی، تهران: انجمن آثار ملی، 1351، صص 21–24 ، نیز: ”ایرانیان همواره معتقد بوده اند که پادشاهان عظیم الشأن مانند جمشید و فریدون و کیقباد و کیخسرو داشته و مردمان نامی مانند کاوه و قارن و گیو و گودرز و رستم و اسفندیار در میان ایشان بوده که جان و مال و عرض و ناموس اجدادشان را در مقابل دشمنان مشترک مانند ضحاک و افراسیاب و غیره محافظت نموده **به عبارت اخری هرجماعتی که کاوه و رستم و گیو و بیژن و ایرج و منوچهر و کیخسرو و کیقباد و امثال آنان را از خود می دانستند ایرانی محسوب بودند و این جهت جامعه رشتهء اتصال و مایهء اتحاد قومیت و ملیت ایشان بوده است.**“ (صص 40–41).

10. Joseph. J. Ellis, *His Excellency George Washington*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004) p. xi.
11. For references see Heda Jason, *Motif, Type and Genre: A Manual for Compilation of Indices and A Bibliography of Indices and Indexing*,

(Helsinki: SuomalainenTiedeakatemia, 2000 (FF Communications no. 273)) pp. 170 (item *79), 177 (item *120), 186 (item *174), 232 (item 196).

12. I have discussed this in some detail. See:

محمود امیدسالار، "ز شیر شتر خوردن و سوسمار" *ایرانشناسی*، ج 13، 2002، صص 773–76.

13. This number is generated from adding the number of verses in the published divans of the four poets: Daqīqī (d. 365/976): 1384 distiches, Farrukhī (d. 429/1038): 8832 distiches, ᶜUnsurī (d. 431/1040): 3519 distiches, and Manūchihrī (d. 432/1041): 2815 distiches. I have not included the surviving verse of the many poets who lived and worked before Ferdowsi's time. See:

دیوان دقیقی طوسی بانظمام فرهنگ بسامدی، باهتمام محمد جواد شریعت، چاپ دوم، تهران:اساطیر، 1373؛
دیوان حکیم فرّخی سیستانی، بکوشش محمد دبیرسیاقی، چاپ سوم با تجدید نظر کامل، تهران: زوّار، 1363؛
دیوان استاد عنصری بلخی، به کوشش سید محمد دبیرسیاقی، چاپ دوم، تهران: سنائی، 1363؛
دیوان منوچهری دامغانی، به کوشش سید محمد دبیرسیاقی، تهران: زوّار، 1370

14. See for instance:

نگاه کنید به *ترجمهء تفسیر طبری*، هفت جلد. باهتمام حبیب یغمائی، تهران: دانشگاه تهران، 1339 ،
،نیز به *تاریخنامهء طبری*، به تصحیح محمد روشن، 3 مجلد، تهران: البرز 1373 و همچنین *تاریخ بلعمی*
به تصحیح ملک الشعراء بهار و بکوشش محمد پروین گنابادی، 2 مجلد، تهران: زوّار، 1353

15. The *Shāhnāmeh* manuscripts that descend from the poem's first redaction end by a verse in which the date of its completion is given as 384 hijri or A.D. 995:

سرآمد کنون قصهء یزدگرد — به ماه سفندارمذ روز ارد
ز هجرت سه صدسال و هشتاد و چار — به نام جهان داورِ کردگار

Some manuscripts record the second verse as:

ز هجرت شده سیصد از روزگار — چو هشتاد و چار از برش برشمار

Still others have the following verse in place of the second line:

گذشته از آن سال سیصد شمار — برو بر فزون بود هشتاد و چار

For the specifics of these manuscripts see:

محمد امین ریاحی، *سرچشمه های فردوسی شناسی*، صص 44–45؛ جلال خالقی مطلق، "معرفی و ارزیابی برخی از دستنویسهای شاهنامه،" *ایران نامه*، سال 3، 1364، صص 378–406، نیز سال 4، صص 16–47، و صص 225–255.

16. Mahmūd was born in the year A.D. 970. In his *Tabaqāt-i Nāsirī* (composed 1259–60), Minhāj-i Sirāj gives the day of his birth as the night of *āshūrā'*, that is, the 10th of the month of Muharram, in the year 371 (July 21, 981 A.D.), which he also says fell on "the seventh year of the rule of Bilkātigin" (vol. 1, p. 228). Since Bilkātigin ascended the throne of Ghaznah in 355/966, the year of Mahmūd's birth must have fallen on *hijri* years 361 or 362 (A.D. 971 or 972), rather than on 371 (A.D. 981) as Minhāj reports. I imagine the numeral 70 in the year 371 in Minhāj's account is a corruption of 60 in the original Arabic rendition of the year. That is instead of writing سنه احدی و ستین و ثلث مائة the scribe wrote سنه احدی و سبعین و ثلث مائه. The corruption of سبعین to ستین and vice versa is quite common in manuscripts. Furthermore, since we know that Mahmūd's father appointed the child Mahmūd as his deputy in Ghaznah, when he left for his expedition to Bust in 367 (A.D. 977 or 978), Mahmūd must have been around, and the date of his birth may not be placed in the year 371/982. See Clifford E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids, Their Empire in Afghanistan and*

Eastern Iran 994:104 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963) p. 42, see also:

منهاج سراج، *طبقات ناصری یا تاریخ ایران و اسلام*، تصحیح و مقابلهء عبدالحیّ حبیبی، دو جلد در یک مجلد، تهران: دنیای کتاب، 1363، ج 1، ص 228؛ نیز عباس اقبال آشتیانی، *تاریخ مفصّل ایران*، به کوشش دکتر محمد دبیرسیاقی، تهران: خیام (بی تاریخ)، صص 254، 264–265

Furthermore, since the date of Mahmūd's death, 23rd of Rabī[c] al-Thānī of 421 AH (May 6, 1030 A.D.) is certain, and since we know that he was 60 or 61 years old at the time of his death, the date of his birth must be 360 or 361 or A.D.970 or 971, which is the time when Ferdowsi began to versify the *Shāhnāmeh*.

17. The name of this man is given as Nasr-i Hājī in the *Tabqāt-i Nāsirī*, 1: 226 on the authority of the lost parts of *Bayhaqī's History*. But I believe the name حاجی is a corruption of چاچی because the letter چ was written as ج with one instead of three dots in many manuscripts. The reason this conjecture is not unreasonable is a statement in the treatise called پندنامهء سبکتگین (*Sibuktigīn's Book of Advice*), the most complete form of which is preserved in a history called *Majma[c] al-Ansāb* (ca. 733/1332). Sibuktigīn specifies in this text that the name of the man who purchased him was Nasr-i Chāchī and explains the name by pointing out that he was a native of the city of Chāch in Transoxiana:

محمد بن علی بن محمد شبانکاره ای، *مجمع الانساب*، به تصحیح میرهاشم محدّث، تهران: امیرکبیر، 1363، ص 38:بازرگانی بود مسلمان نیکو اعتقاد نام او نصر چاچی، از شهر چاچ سمرقند بود. مرا با ده غلام دیگر بخرید.

For more on the life of Sibuktigīn see Muhammad Nāzim, *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazan*, Lahore: Kalil and Co., 1973, pp. 28–33; *Majma[c] al-Ans*āb, pp. 34–47.

18. Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 40.
19. Bayhaqī, pp. 254–55.
20. See:

نظام الملک، *سیر الملوک (سیاست نامه)*، به اهتمام هیوبرت دارک، چاپ سوم، تهران: شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، 1372، ص 142

21. See:

عباس اقبال، *تاریخ مفصل ایران*. ص 236

22. The word قراجوری, which appears as قراچولی and قراچوری in different classical source, must be a variety of sword (see Bayhaqī's history, p. 407). I don't know exactly what kind of sword it referred to, but I know that Hubert Darke's translation of it as "a belt" is incorrect. See *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings* translated by Hubert Darke (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960) p. 106.
23. See:

نظام الملک، *سیر الملوک (سیاست نامه)*، ص 141:

24. See:

نظام الملک، *سیر الملوک*، ص 143.

25. In his *Siyāsat Nāmah*, Nizām al-Mulk writes:

سبکتگین ... دختر رئیس زاولستان را بزنی کرد و محمود را ازین سبب زاولی گویند. نگاه کنید به: نظام الملک. *سیاستنامه*. با تصحیح مجدد و تعلیقات و مقدمه به کوشش مرتضی مدرسی. تهران: زوّار 2537، ص 138.

برای مدارک دیگر درین خصوص نگاه کنید به: امیدسالار، محمود، ''شاهنامهء فردوسی و هویت فرهنگی محمود غزنوی،'' در *جستارهای شاهنامه شناسی و مباحث ادبی، پژوهش و نگارش محمود امیدسالار*، تهران: بنیاد موقوفات دکتر محمود افشار، 1381، صص 243–261

26. See:

حمدالله مستوفی قزوینی، *تاریخ گزیده،* به تصحیح عبدالحسین نوائی، چاپ دوم، تهران: امیرکبیر، 1362، ص 391:
''مادرش [یعنی مادر محمود] دختر رئیس زاول بود و او را بدین سبب زاولی خواندند.''

27. The pronunciation of this name is not known. Dihkhudā hypothesizes that it is a corruption of Sālimī.
28. Bayhaqī, p. 133. Although the text reads : "و من سخت بزرگ بودم بدبیرستان قرآن خواندن رفتمی" meaning: "And I was quite old and attended Koranic school," because in the next sentence the narrator goes on to say: "و خدمتی کردمی چنانکه کودکان کنند" meaning, "and I showed obeisance as children might", I think the first sentence is corrupt. The correct form must be: "و من سخت بزرگ نبودمی..." meaning "And I was not quite old [enough yet]", otherwise the sentence: "and I showed them obeisance as children might" would not make sense.
29. Bayhaqī, p. 135.
30. Bayhaqī, pp. 134–35.
31. See Bayhaqī, pp. 691–692.
32. Nāzim, *Life*, p. 33. Bayhaqī (p. 252) refers to the governor of Gozgānān, Abū al-Hārith-i Farighūn, as: "Mahmūd's father in law" (خُسُرِ سلطان محمود). See also:

ابوالشرف ناصح بن ظفر جرفادقانی، *ترجمهء تاریخ یمینی*. به اهتمام جعفر شعار، چاپ سوم، تهران: انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، 1373، صص 294–295:

ولایت جوزجان در مدّت ملک آل سامان، آل فریغون را بود اباً عن جدّ ... و ابوالحارث احمد بن محمد غرّهء دلت و جمال جملت و طراز حلت ایشان بود ... و امیر ناصرالدین [یعنی سبکتگین] کریمه ای از کرایم او از بهر پسر خود خواسته بود و او نیز درّی یتیم از بحر جلال ناصر الدین از بهر پسر خویش ابونصر حاصل کرده.''

نیز نگاه کنید به *تاریخ سیستان*، ص 251 حاشیهء 3.

33. I have no doubt that the words گرامی دارشان "honor them" in this verse are a corruption of کرانی دارشان "keep them at a distance," but will not argue the point here.
34. Farrukhī's divan, pp. 256–257
35. See Jurfādqānī, pp. 340–342
36. See [c]Utbī's *History,* pp. 345–346.
37. See:

بدیع الزمان فروزانفر، *مباحثی از تاریخ ادبیات ایران*، ص 179.

38. See:

نگاه کنید به محمدی ملایری، *تاریخ و فرهنگ ایران*، ج 2، صص 118–119

39. We have the texts of two of his correspondences. One is preserved by his scribe, the famous Bayhaqī (d. 470; A.D. 1077) in his history, and another is quoted by Ibn Funduq (d. 565; A.D. 1170), the author of the *History of Bayhaq*. See

تاریخ بیهقی، ص 147؛ نیز نگاه کنید به: محمود امیدسالار، ''متن یک نامهء بازیافته از روزگار سلطان محمود غزنوی،'' در *جستارهای شاهنامه شناسی*، صص 412–415.

40. See:

ابوریحان بیرونی، *کتاب الصیدنه فی الطبّ*، به تصحیح عباس زریاب خوئی، تهران: مرکز نشر دانشگاهی، 1370، ص 14 (این بخش را از عربی قدری به شرح تر نقل میکنم):

دیننا و الدّولة عربیّان، و الدین [والدّولة] التوأمان ... و ان کانت کلّ امّة تستحلی لغتها الّتی ألِفتها و اعتادَتها ... و اقیس هذا بنفسی و هی مطبوعة علی لغة لو خلّد بها علم لاستغرب استغراب البعیر علی المیزاب و الزّرافة فی الکراب ثمّ منتقلة الی العربیّة و الفارسیة فانا فی کلّ واحدة دخیل و لها متکلف، و الهجو بالعربیّة احبّ الیّ من المدح بالفارسیة. و یستعرف مصداق قولی من تأمّل کتاب علم قد نُقِلَ الی الفارسیّ کیف ذهب رونقه و کسف باله و اسودّ وجهه و زال الانتفاع به اذلاتصلح هذه اللغة الـّا للاخبار الکسرویّة و الاسمار اللیلیّة. و کان الامیر یمین الدولة رحمه الله، علی بغضه للعربیّة باحَثَ احدّ بطانته یوماً فی امر اطبّائه ...

41. See ᶜUnsurī's divan, p. 179.

دو بدره زر بگرفتم به فتح نارائن به فتح رومیه صد بدره گیرم و خرطال

42. Quoted in ᶜUnsurī's divan, pp. 174–179, 189–192:

روا بوَد که ز بَس بار شکر نعمت شاه فغان کنم که ملالم گرفت زین اموال ...
بس ای ملک، که نه لؤلؤ فروختم به سلم بس ای ملک که نه گوهر فروختم به جوال
بس ای ملک که ازین شاعری و شعر مرا ملک فریب بخوانند و جادویِ محتال ...
بس ای ملک که ضیاع من و عقار مرا نه آفتاب مساحت کند نه باد شمال ...
بس ای ملک که دو دستِ ترا به گاه عطا نه با زمانه قیاس و نه بر گذشته مثال ...
بس ای ملک که من از بس عطات سیرشدم نه زانکه نعمت بر من حرام گشت و وبال

In another *qasīda*, the poet responds to ᶜUnsurī's critique of his verse by emphasizing Mahmūd's generosity once again, pp. 189–192. I quote some of the verses of this *qasida* are:

پیام داد به من بنده دوش باد شمال ز حضرت ملک مال بخش دشمن مال
که شعر شکر به حضرت رسید بپسندید خدایگان جهان خسرو خجسته خصال ...
در خزانهء جود ملک تعنّت خصم چگونه بندد و آن ایزدی در اقبال
نخست بیت چو آغاز مدح خواهی کرد جواب بدره دهد بیت را به بیت المال

43. Bayhaqī writes:

''چون امیر محمود رضی الله عنه با منوچهر والی گرگان عهد و عقد استوار کرده و حرّه یی را نامزد کرد تا آنجا برند ... و من که بوالفضلم بدان وقت شانزده ساله بودم بودم دیدم خواجه را که بیامد و تکلـّفی کرده بودند ... و حرّه را آنجا بردند.'' *تاریخ بیهقی، ص 264*

44. According to Bayhaqī, p. 907:

''چنین نبشت بوریحان در مشاهیر خوارزم که خوارزمشاه بوالعباس مأمون بن مأمون رحمةالله علیه بازپسین امیری بود که خاندان پس از گذشتن او برافتاد ... و میان او و امیر محمود دوستی محکم شد و عهد کردند و حرّهء کالجی را دختر امیر سبکتگین، آنجا آوردند و در پردهء امیر ابوالعباس قرار گرفت و مکاتبات و ملاطفات و مهادات پیوسته گشت.''

45. See for instance the extensive discussion of the subject in:

نصیرالدین ابوالرّشید عبدالجلیل قزوینی رازی. *نقض*، صص 261–262: 261–262:

عجیب است که این نصیحت و قول بزرگان دین که بخواجهء نوسنّی رسیده است که با رافضیان صحبت نشاید کردن و بر ایشان اعتماد نباید کردن، پنداری این سخن بهارون الرشید و بمامون خلیفه نرسیده بود تا بمشورتِ علی یقطین و فضل بن سهل ذوالریاستین چندانی اعتماد کرده بودند در ترتیب خلافت و امیرالمؤمنینی و این خبر پنداری به سلطان ملکشاه نرسیده بود تا دختر خود را خاتون سلقم را باصفهبد علی شیعی میداد و بر مجدالملک قمی اعتماد کرده بود، و بسلطان برکیارق نرسیده بود تا بر گفت و مشورت رئیس ابواسحاق مشکوی اعتماد کرده بود، و این خبر علماء سنت با سلطان سنجر نگفته بودند ... تا او بر شرف بوطاهر وزیر قمی و بر معین الدین ابونصر کاشی اعتماد کرده بود، و این خبر پنداری بنظام الملک ابوعلی الحسن ابن علی بن اسحاق نرسیده بود که سرِ همه سنیان بود تا بشفاعت دختر را بپسر سید مرتضی قمی میداد و دختر امیر شرفشاه جعفری را برای پسرش امیر عمر میخواست و سلطان مسعود ازین سخن بیگانه بوده تا که وقتی دختر ملک رئیس صدقهء شاعی میخواست و وقتی دختر سلطان محمود را بشاه رستم علی بن شهریار میداد، پنداری که خلفا و سلاطین و امرا و وزرای عالم همه جاهل بودند.

46. See: *History of Sīstān*, pp. 7–8.
47. See for instance the following:

ذبیح الله صفا، تاریخ ادبیات در ایران: جلد اول، از آغاز عهد اسلامی تا دورهء سلجوقی.ص 481:

اختلاف عقیدهء محمود و فردوسی بر سر مسائل نژادی و ملی: فردوسی محققاً ایرانی میهن پرستی بوده و در شاهنامه نیز بحکم شرایط حماسهء ملی ناگزیر همواره دشمنان ایران را مانند تازیکان و ترکان ببدی یاد مینموده است ... و بالعکس از ایرانیان همواره بنیکی سخن میگفته و این امر ظاهراً مایهء کدورت خاطر محمود که گویا مانند هر پادشاه اجنبی ایران و ممالک اسلامی ببیان افتخارات ملل خوش دل نبود گردیده و این مطلب هم از اشعار فردوسی و هم از یک حکایت تاریخ سیستان بخوبی مدلل میگردد (حکایت را نقل میکند) مینوی، مجتبی، فردوسی و شعر او، صص 42–43.

غلامحسین یوسفی، فرخی سیستانی: بحثی در شرح احوال و روزگار و شعر او، چاپ دوم، تهران: علمی، 1368، صص 184–185:

برای ناکامی فردوسی علل مختلفی نوشته اند که چون از بعضی از روایات نامستند بگذریم برخی موجبات دیگر هریک بجای خود اثری داشته است. از جمله اختلاف طرز تفکر فردوسی است که شاعری وطن دوست بوده و همهء شاهنامهء او در تجلیل ایران و ایرانیست، با سلطانی ترک نژاد مانند محمود که با او همفکر و همدل نبوده است. این مطلب را هم از اشعار فردوسی ... میتوان درک کرد و هم از داستان زیر که در تاریخ سیستان آمده است (داستان را نقل میکند) ازین حکایت که نموداری از حقیقت میتواند باشد، میتوان بخوبی احساس کرد که در نظر فردوسی ... رستم مظهر کامل پهلوانی و قهرمان حماسهء جاوید اوست و حال آنکه در چشم محمود— که پادشاهی بیگانه است—چون او هزار مرد در میان سپاهیان سلطانی میتوان جست بعلاوه فردوسی که مانند مؤلف تاریخ سیستان غیر درباری و شاید به این مناسبت در بیان عقیده و نظر خود بی پرواست ناچار این خواری را در حق رستم قهرمان والامقام خود تحمل نمی کند و چنان دلیرانه سخن میگوید.

محمد امین ریاحی، سرچشمه های فردوسی شناسی، صص 91: ”در تاریخ سیستان که قسمت کهن آن فقط یک نسل بعد از فردوسی نوشته شده و اعتماد تام دارد چنین میخوانیم (و داستان را نقل میکند)“. اما همو در ص 188 آنجا که داستان را از تاریخ سیستان آورده، در توضیح آن می نویسد: ”مراد از ذکر این شواهد این نیست که بگوییم آنچه در تاریخ سیستان است عیناً اتفاق افتاده، بلکه می خواهیم بگوییم که در سالهای نزدیک به عصر فردوسی، بیمهری محمود را در باره بزرگترین شاعر ایران برخاسته از ستایشهای او از پهلوانان ایران می پنداشته اند و این استنباط درستی بوده است.“

48. For a catalogue of tales about Ferdowsi in classical Persian see:

جلال متینی، ”فردوسی در هاله ای از افسانه ها،“ صص 1–32.

49. See *History of Sīstān*, pp.

و حدیث رستم بر آن جمله است که بوالقاسم فردوسی شاهنامه بشعر کرد، و بر نام سلطان محمود کرد و چندین روز همی برخواند. محمود گفت همه شاهنامه خود هیچ نیست مگر حدیث رستم و اندر سپاه من هزار مرد چون رستم هست. بوالقاسم گفت: زندگانی خداوند درازباد، ندانم اندر سپاه او چند مرد چون رستم باشد، اما این دانم که خدای تعالی خویشتن را هیچ بنده چون رستم دیگر نیافرید. این بگفت و زمین بوسه کرد و برفت. ملک محمود وزیر را گفت: این مردک مرا بتعریض دروغزن خواند. وزیرش گفت: بباید کشت. هرچند طلب کردند نیافتند. چون بگفت و رنج خویش ظایع کرد و برفت هیچ عطانایافته تا بغربت فرمان یافت.

50. Of the Iranian scholars, I only know of one, Professor Dabirsiyaqi, who systematically questions the story. See:

سید محمد دبیرسیاقی، *زندگینامهء فردوسی*، صص 332–334.

51. Bayhaqī, pp. 382–383:

چون صبح بدمید چهار هزار غلام سرائی در دو طرف سرایِ امارت بچند رسته بایستادند؛ دو هزار با کلاه دوشاخ و کمرهای گران ده معالیق بودند و با هر غلامی عمودی سیمین و دوهزار با کلاه چهارپر بودند و کیش و کمر و شمشیر و شغا و نیم لنگ بر میان بسته و هرغلامی کمانی و سه چوبه تیر بر دست. و همگان با قباهای دیبای شوشتری بودند. و غلامی سیصد از خاصگان در رستهای صفه نزدیک امیر بایستادند با جامه های فاخرتر و کلاه های دوشاخ و کمرهای بزر و عمودهای زرین و چند تن آن بودند که با کمرها بودند مرصّع بجواهر و سپری پنجاه و شصت بدر بداشتند در میان سرای دیلمان، و همهء بزرگان درگاه و ولایت داران و حجاب با کلاه های دو شاخ و کمر زر بودند، و بیرونِ سرای مرتبه داران بایستادند. و بسیار پیلان بداشتند. و لشکر بر سلاح و

برگستوان و جامه های دیبای گوناگون با عماریها و سلاح ها بدو رویه بایستادند با علامتها تا رسول را در میان
ایشان گذرانیده آید. رسولدار برفت با جنیبتیان و قومی انبوه و رسول را برنشاندند و آوردند و آواز بوق دهل و
کاسه پیل بخاست گفتی روز قیامت است و رسول را بگذرانیدند و متحیر گشت برین تکلفهای عظیم و چیزی دید
که در عمر خویش ندیده بود و مدهوش و متحیر گشت و در کوشک شد، و امیر رضی الله عنه بر تخت بود پیش
صفه، سلام کرد رسول خلیفه، و با سیاه بود. و خواجهء بزرگ احمد حسن جواب داد و جز وی کسی نشسته نبود
پیش امیر، دیگران بجمله برپای بودند و رسول را حاجب بوالنضر بازو بگرفت و بنشاند امیر آواز داد که خداوند
امیرالمؤمنین را چون ماندی؟ رسول گفت: ایزد عزّ ذکره مزد دهاد سلطان معظّم را بگذشته شدن امام القادر بالله
امیر المؤمنین اناراللہ برهانه ... خواجهء بزرگ فصلی سخن بگفت بتازی سخت نیکو درین معنی و اشارت کرد
در آن فصل سوی رسول تا نامه برساند. رسول برخاست و نامه در خریطهء دیبای سیاه پیش تخت برد و بدست
امیر داد و بازگشت و همانجا که نشانده بودند بنشست. امیر خواجه بونصر را آواز داد. پیش تخت شد و نامه بستد
.و بازپس آمد و روی فراتخت بایستاد و خریطه بگشاد و نامه بخواند

8 Epic Unity: The Case Against Under-Analysis

1. For a detailed discussion of the structure of Ferdowsi's prose archetype see:
   محمود امیدسالار، ”تصحیح و توضیح عبارتی از مقدمهء شاهنامهء ابومنصوری،“ صص 487–493
2. For instance, see:
   مجتبی مینوی، *فردوسی و شعر او*، صص 66–70 ؛
   نیز نگاه کنید به: ذبیح الله صفا، *حماسه سرائی در ایران*،، صص 193–206.
3. See:
   نگاه کنید به: ملک الشعراء بهار، ”فردوسی“ *باختر*، شمارهء 11–12، مهر-
   آبان 1313، صص 764–765، 806، 718–719.
4. Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic or the Shahnamah,* translated by L. Th. Bogdanov . Bombay: K. B. Cama Oriental Institute, 1930, p. 7
5. For a comparison of the courtly and folk dictions in Persian epic poetry see:
   محمود امیدسالار، ”بیان ادبی و بیان عامیانه در حماسه های فارسی،“ در محمود امیدسالار،
   جستارهای شاهنامه شناسی و مباحث ادبی، صص 438–461.
6. See Heda Jason, *Ethnopoetry: Form, Content, Function* (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1977) p. 31.
7. See:
   محمد قزوینی، بیست مقاله، ج 2، ص 37: ”و چیز ها اندرین نامه بیابند که سهمگین نمایذ و این نیکوست
   چون مغز او بدانی و ترا درست گردد و دلپذیر آید“.
8. For a brief discussion of the views that assign primacy to one or the other of these two sets of adventures, see Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic*, pp. 72–73.
9. Aside from Rustam's life, trials occur in the adventures of Garshāsp, Sām, Farāmarz, Burzū, and even Goshtāsp. In Goshtāsp's case however, the sequential hardships that he experiences are not specifically called *khān* "trial."
10. See:
    نگاه کنید به: محمود امیدسالار، ”راز روئین تنی اسفندیار،“ *ایران نامه*، ج 1، صص 245–284
11. This is motif: G271.2.3. "Name of deity breaks witch's spell"; see Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk-Literature*, 6 volumes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955–1958).
12. Compare motifs D 1505.14, "animal liver cures blindness;" and D 1505.19, "giant's gall restores sight."

13. See http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/shahnama/faces/cardview/card/cescene:425716088. Naturally, I can only speak for those manuscripts that I've consulted over the years and those that have been made available on the website of the *Shāhnāmeh* project at Cambridge.
14. See ii: 21, note 8; ii: 22, note 16; ii: 23, note 12; ii: 26, note 6; ii: 29, note 16; ii: 31, note 19; ii: 37, note 20.
15. The term that I have translated as the "Chief Hero," is *Jahān Pahlavān* in Persian. The title literally means "world hero," but practically conveys the idea of the chief hero of the Iranian court. He is a man who combines great physical prowess with moral and political authority. Before Zāl, his father Sām held the office that Rustam assumed during the life of his father.
16. Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic*, p. 17 and note 4 on that page.
17. For instance see l. 193 in the story of the "War of Hāmāvarān", l.293–97 in Rustam and Suhrāb, and lines 595–96 in the story of Siyāvakhsh among others.
18. Nöldeke, Th. "Der weisse Dēv von Māzandarān," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 18(1915): 597–600.
19. Often the sexual aspects of the father-son combat in oedipal narratives are extremely well-disguised. In the case of Rustam's fight with the White Demon, the sexual content is disguised in the following manner: Although a maternal character is not overtly present in the story, the fact that the demon is sleeping in a cave when Rustam encounters him may symbolize the sleeping father. The sleeping father in turn implies the father who sleeps with the mother, and the cave may represent the displaced maternal genitals. Naturally, in such a model, Rustam's amputation of the demon's leg during their fight might be interpreted as the son's castration of his father. But regardless of whether one chooses to introduce sexual elements into the analysis or not, the symbolic father-son rivalry, and the victory of the son over the father in this narrative may not be easily dismissed.
20. There is only one other instance of a meeting between a human and a dragon in the *Shāhnāmeh* where verbal communication is even mentioned. However, in that scene, the encounter between the sorcerer king, Fereydun, and his sons, the dragon does not utter a word. It is the youngest of the sons who addresses the beast. Moreover, the dragon is not really an animal, but the king who has transformed himself into a dragon in order to test his sons.
21. Nayram is a short form for Narīmān, who was Rustam's ancestor.
22. See ii: 42: 570–73:

سوی رستم آمد چو کوهی سیاه　　از آهنش ساعد، وز آهن کلاه
ازو شد دل پیلتن پر نهیب　　بترسید کامد به تنگی نشیب
برآشفته بر سان پیل ژیـــان　　یکی تیغِ تیزش بزد بر میان
ز نیروی رستم ز بـــالای اوی　　بینداخت یک ران و یک پای اوی

The text has او instead of اوی in the last verse. However, for textual reasons that need not detain us here, and according to Khaleghi-Motlagh's own suggestion, I have changed the text accordingly. See Khaleghi-Motlagh's notes to the text, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 439.

23. For a theoretical discussion of how folklorists of psychoanalytic persuasion should interpret symbols see Alan Dundes, "The Symbolic Equivalence of Allomotifs in the Rabit-Herd (AT 570)," in *Parsing Through Customs: Essays by a Freudian Folklorist*, ed. A. Dundes (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) pp. 167–78. The poet Suzani of Samarqand (d. 562/1167) satirizes a man who had assailed him in a poem in which he had mistakenly called him by the wrong name, in the following obscene verses:

    نامم محمد است و مرا حمزه خوانده ای   از نام حمزه فال گرفتم به از سخنت

    از حا حلالزاده و از میم مردِ مرد   از زی زناکننده و از ها هلاک تنت

    از چار حرفِ حمزه معانی چنین طلب   ای پای پنجمِ خرِ حمزه به کسّ زنت

    نگاه کنید به: سوزنی سمرقندی، *دیوان حکیم سوزنی سمرقندی*، به تصحیح دکتر ناصرالدین شاه حسینی، تهران: امیرکبیر، 1388، ص 446.
24. See Richard B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 84–9; 162–63; 505; see also the informative discussion of the matter in Weston La Barre, *Muelos: A Stone Age Superstition About Sexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
25. For examples of this gesture see the *Shāhnāmeh*, i: 320: 511; ii: 323: 1780; iii: 14: 199 of which I quote only three instances here because I don't want to overburden the footnotes.

    به بر زد برین کار کشواد دست   منم گفت یازان بدین کار شست

    به بر زد سیاوش بدان کار دست   به زین اندر آمد ز تختِ نشست

    بزد دست بیژن برآن هم به بر   بیامد برِ شاهِ پیروزگر

    The Sanskrit scholar, Professor Robert Goldman told me years ago that as a sign of their volunteering for a mission, the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* make the following similar gesture: They raise one arm and strike their armpit or side fiercely with their hand, thus making a great noise.
26. The semiliterary, coffeehouse versions of these tales (*naqqālī*) fall between their disjointed oral versions and the coherent literary form in the *Shāhnāmeh*. The coffeehouse versions, although less restrictive than the literary variant of the *Shāhnāmeh*, are also less free than the strictly folkloristic versions. They display a greater tendency to adhere to the logic of the epic's narrative and the intricate interconnectedness of its episodes.

9 Sibling Rivalry

1. See Edward B. Tyler, *Primitive Culture*, 5th edition (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958 [1871]) vol. 1, pp. 281–82. The germ of Tyler's idea is already discernable in his "Wild Men and Beast-Children," *Anthropological Review*, 1(May 1863): 21–32.
2. Tyler, "Wild Men and Beast-Children," 21–32. Von Hahn's idea was translated by Henry Wilson in John C. Dunlop, *History of Prose Fiction*, revised edition, trans. H. Wilson (London: Bell, 1888), and was attached to the end of the first volume of this work.

3. See Alfred Nutt, "The Aryan Expulsion-and-Return-Formula in the Folk and Hero Tales of the Celts," *Folk-Lore Record*, 4(1881): 2.
4. Nutt, "The Aryan Expulsion-and-Return-Formula,", 1–2; also see Alan Dundes' introductory essay to Lord Raglan's "The Hero of Tradition," in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), pp. 142–43.
5. Nutt, "The Aryan Expulsion-and-Return-Formula.".
6. Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, translated by F. Robbins and Smith Ely Jelliffe (series Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs, no. 18, New York: The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, 1914. This book was reprinted (New York: Brunner, 1952), and again as part of Otto Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings*, ed. Philip Freund (New York: Vintage Books, 1959) pp. 3–96. An expanded edition of Rank's book was later published under the title of *Der Mythus von der Geburt des Helden: Versuch einer Psychologischen Mythendeutung* (Leipzig and Vienna: Franz Deuticke, 1922). This revised edition was recently translated into English and published in the United States. See *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: A Psychological Exploration of Myth*, translated by G. C. Richter and E. James Lieberman; with an introductory essay by Robert A. Segal (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).
7. See Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*. p. 142.
8. Lord Raglan's work, *The Hero* (London: Methuen, 1936) does not refer to Rank's previous scholarship. Its earlier manifestation was published as "The Hero of Tradition" in *Folk-Lore* 45(September 1934): 212–231. For an excellent study of the Myth-Ritual theory see Joseph Fontenrose, *The Ritual Theory of Myth*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.
9. For the text of Persian legends according to which Kaykhosrow is still alive, see:

   سید ابوالقاسم انجوی شیرازی، *مردم و قهرمانان شاهنامه*، صص 168–182؛ نیز سید ابوالقاسم انجوی شیرازی، *مردم و شاهنامه*، صص 266–297

10. See iii: 32: 85–87:

    که اندر جهان چون سیاوخش نیز   نبندد کمر یک جهانبخش نیز
    به گردی و مردی و فرّ و نژاد   به اورنگ و فرهنگ و سنگ و به داد
    تو پور چنان نامور مهتـــــری   ز تخم کیانی و کی منظـــــــری

11. Quoted by Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*, see *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), vol. 7, pt. 2, p. 127.

10 Killing Demons, Deposing Kings: The Akvān Episode

1. "*Drowning the Crayfish as Punishment.* Eel, crab, turtle, etc. express fear of water and are thrown in", or 1310A, "*Briar-patch Punishment for Rabbit.* By expressing fear of being thrown into the briar-patch he induces his captor to do so. He runs off." See Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types*

of the Folktale, (FF Communications No.184), 3rd printing (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1973) and cf. Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004) type 175, which is sometime combined with this story. See also, Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 volumes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955–1958) s.v. motif “K581.1.”

2. It has 237 verses in Mohl, and 193 verses in the Moscow editions.
3. The importance of elephants, especially white elephants, in pre-Islamic literature of Iran, and the idea that white elephants symbolize chieftaincy and kingship are quite well attested in Zoroastrian and classical Persian literatures. Here are a few of many examples: In the Middle Persian story of Ardashir I (A.D. 224–240), we are told that his maternal grandfather, Pāpak dreams that one of his shepherds is riding on a great white elephant and all who are around him show him obeisance. His dream interpreters tell him that the white elephant symbolizes lordship and power and victory. See:

کارنامهء اردشیر بابکان، به تصحیح بهرام فره وشی، تهران: انتشارات دانشگاه تهران، 1354، صص 5–7.
تاریخنامهء طبری، ج 1، ص 435: ”و بوران دخت مردی را بیرون کرد از بزرگان عجم ... و سی پیل با وی بفرستاد و اندر آن پیلان یکی پیل سپید بود که از پرویز مانده بود و از همهء پیلان بزرگتر بود.“
در شاهنامه پیران برای پذیرائی از سیاوخش چهار پیل سپید فراهم میکند، ج 2، ص 282 ب 1223.
در داستان کاموس کشانی هم پادشاه چین به هنگام جنگ بر پیل سپید سوارست، ج 3، ص 238 ب 2180.
در داستان اسکندر نیز صریحاً پیل در خواب سمبل شاه محسوب میشود، ج 6، ص 15 ب 172–175.
بابک هم در خواب می بیند که ساسان، جدّ ساسانیان بر پیل سوار میشود، و خوابگزاران دربار به او می گویند که این علامت به سلطنت رسیدن او یا یکی از فرزندان اوست، ج 6، صص 140–141 ب 99–100، 108–113.
نیز نگاه کنید به*گرشاسپنامه*، ص 199–200 (هدایائی که گرشاسپ برای ضحاک فراهم میکند) و محمد بن محمود بن احمد طوسی. *عجایب المخلوقات*. به اهتمام منوچهر ستوده، تهران: انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، 1382، ص 545: فیل را ملوکان دارند و در ایام قادسیه و جسر مهران و قیس الناطف و جلولاء و یوم نهاوند، پیلان جمع بودند.“

11 Of Lusting and Ousting

1. For interesting essays on the relationship between war, games, and feminization of the opponent see Alan Dundes, “Traditional Male Combat: From Game to War,” in *From Game to War and Other Psychoanalytic Essays on Folklore*, ed. A. Dundes (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997) pp. 25–46.

Conclusion: *Shāhnāmeh* and the Tyranny of Eurocentrism

1. See his foreword to Olga M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) p. ix.
2. Plato, *Works with an English Translations. VIII: Charmides, Alcibiades I and II, Hipparchus, The Lovers, Theages, Minos, Epinomis*, translated by W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1914) vol. 8, p. 289.

3. See Qazvini's *Bīst maqāla*, pp. 34–35. For an older translation, see V. Minorsky, "The Older Preface to the Shāh-nāma," in *Iranica, Twenty Articles* (Tehran: University Tehran Press, 1964) p. 266. The Persian wording that I have used in Qazvini's *Bīst maqāla* is as follows:
پس دستور خویش ابومنصور المعمری را بفرموذ تا خداوندان کتب را از دهقانان و فرزانگان و جهاندیدگان از شهرها بیاوردند و چاکر او ابومنصور المعمری بفرمان او نامه کرد و کس فرستاد بشهرهای خراسان و هشیاران از آنجا بیاورد و از هرجای.
4. I do not intend to get into side issues here, and only remark in passing that the role of a classical Persian and Arabic *rāvi* is often confused with an oral storyteller or reciter in recent Western scholarship. A *rāvi* was, in fact, a presenter or performer who worked from written texts that were memorized and painstakingly reproduced verbatim. See Fuat Sezgin, *Geschicte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 24 volumes (Leiden: Brill, 1967–1990) vol. 2, p. 27 quoted in:
ایمن فؤاد سیّد، *الکتاب العربی المخطوط و علم المخطوطات*، 2 ج، القاهرة: الدارالمصریة اللبنانیة، 1997، ج 1، ص 79.
5. See M. Omidsalar, "Orality, Mouvance, and Editorial Theory in Shāhnāma Studies," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27(2002): 245–83. A revised version of this paper together with another study on the subject in Persian and an essay on storytelling and narrating of the *Shāhnāmeh* by Dr. A. Irani was published in Tehran as supplement no.17 to the journal, *Āyene-ye Miras* in 1388/2009. This supplement was later reprinted by the Ferdowsi Foundation and the Research Center for the Written Heritage as an independent bilingual volume in Tehran. See M. Omidsalar, *Eastern Texts, Western Techniques: European Editorial Theory and the Editing of Classical Persian* (Tehran: Ferdowsi Foundation, 2010).
6. John Miles Foley, "Orality, Textuality, and Interpretation," in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages.* Ed. A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, p. 36.
7. See for instance, Olga Davidson's, *Poet and Hero*, pp. 171–83.
8. See:
امیدسالار، *جستارهای شاهنامه شناسی*، صص 440–448.
9. Davis, "The Problem of Ferdowsi's Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 116.1 (1996): 48–57.
10. See for instance:
خالقی مطلق، "در پیرامون منابع فردوسی،" *ایران شناسی*، ج 10 ش 3، صص 512–540.
11. Davis's review of *Shāhnāma: The Visual Languae of the Persian "Book of Kings," Speculum* 81.3 (2006): 862.
12. Olga Davidson, "The Text of Ferdowsi's Shāhnāma and the Burden of the Past," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 118.1 (1998): 64.
13. Mary B. Speer, "Wrestling with Change: Old French Textual Criticism and Mouvance," *Olifant* 7.4 (1980): 311–27; also see her comments in "Textual Criticism Redivivus," *L'Esprit Créateur* 23.1 (1983): 43–44; and cf. her discussion of the concept in her "Old French Literature," in *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D. C. Greetham (New York: MLA, 1995), pp. 402–5; See also, Peter F. Dembowski, "The 'French' Tradition of Textual Philology and its Relevance to the Editing of Medieval Texts," *Modern Philology*,

90.4 (1993): 512–32; Roy Rosenstein, "*Mouvance* and the Editor as Scribe: *Trascrittore Tradittore*?" *Romanic Review*, 80.2 (1989): 157–70.
14. A. E. Housman, "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism," *Proceedings of the Classical Association*, 18(1921): 67–84. The quotation occurs on p. 68.
15. L. D. Reynolds, and N. G Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*. 2nd revised edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) p. 212.
16. There are a number of interesting papers dealing with the European vernacular literature in *Mosaic* 8.4 (1975)4, which is devoted to the rise of the vernacular literatures in medieval Europe. Zumthor's own contribution to this volume, "Birth of a Language and Birth of a Literature," *Mosaic,* 8.4 (1975): 195–206 is of considerable theoretical interest.
17. Carol Braun Pasternack, *The Textuality of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.
18. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited and translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, 4th printing (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986) pp. 113–39, see p. 125.
19. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Book of Trouilus and Criseyde*, ed. Robert Kilburn Root (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945) p. 402.
20. The English translation is from Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, translated into modern English by Nevill Coghill, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1971) pp. 306–7.
21. A. J. Minnis, V. J. Scattergood, and J. J. Smith, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Shorter Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) p. 501.
22. Prose English translation by Gerard NeCastro. See http://www.umm.maine.edu/faculty/necastro/chaucer/translation.
23. Mark Rose, "The Author as Proprietor: *Donaldson v. Becket* and the Genealogy of Modern Authorship," *Representations*, 23(Summer 1988): 51–85, see 51.
24. Pasternack, *Textuality*, p. 1.
25. Pasternack, *Textualty*, p. 9.
26. Zumthor, "Birth of a Language and Birth of a Literature," p. 204.
27. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 21, cited in Pasternack, *Textuality,* p. 5.
28. Pasternack, *Textuality,*, pp. 12–13.
29. Pasternack, *Textuality,* pp. 7–8, and see also M. Lapidge, "Textual Criticism and the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 73(1991):17–45, especially 41–42.
30. Lapidge, "Textual Criticism," p. 30.
31. A. N. Doane, "Oral Texts, Intertexts, and Intratexts: Editing Old English," in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, eds. E. Rothstein and J. Clayton (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) pp. 75–113, the quotation is from p. 86, quoted in Pasternack, *Textuality,* p. 3.

32. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, p. 7, see also p. 21.
33. Ibid., p. 193.
34. Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, translated by Ph. Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) pp. 41–49; see especially, p. 48.
35. Mary B. Speer, "Wrestling with Change," 317
36. Jean Rychner, *La Chanson de geste: essai sur l'art épique de jongleurs*, PRF (Geneva: Droz, 1955) 29, 32, 33, 48; cited in Speer, "Wrestling with Change," 317.
37. Speer, "Wrestling with Change," 317, and see Jean Rychner, *Contribution à l'étude des fabliaux: variantes, remaniements, dégradations* (Neuchātel: Faculté des Lettres, 1960) I, 131.
38. For a list of such works see Speer, "Wrestling with Change," 316.
39. Zumthor, *Essai de Poétique Médiévale*, P(aris: Êditions du Seuil, 1972) p. 507.

    > Le caractère de l'oeuvre qui, commetelle, avantl'âge du livre, ressortd'une quasi-abstraction, les textesconcrets qui la réalisent-présentant, par le jeu des variantesetremaniements, commeuneincessante vibration et uneinstabilitéfondamentale.

    quoted in Speer, "Wrestling with Change," 317. English translation from Doane, "Oral Texts," p. 105, note 3.
40. Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, p. 46.
41. Zumthor, *Essai de Poétique Médiévale*, p. 73; English translation from Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, pp. 47–48.
42. Speer, "Textual Criticism", 40–42.
43. See Ruth H. Webber's "Review of John S. Geary's *Formulaic Diction in the Poema de Fernán González and the Mocedades de Rodrigo: A Computer-Aided Analysis," Modern Philology*, 80.3 (1983): 301.
44. Paul Zumthor, *La letter et la voix de la "litterature" médiévale*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987, see especially the section entitled "Intervocalité et mouvance" on pages 160–68.
45. David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 30.
46. Crystal, *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, p. 40.
47. Margaret M. Roseborough, *An Outline of Middle English Grammar* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1970) see Appendix I.
48. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Book of Trouilus and Criseyde*, 1945, p. 402.
49. The English translation is from Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, pp. 306–7.
50. Margaret M. Roseborough, *Outline of Middle English Grammar*, Appendix I.
51. Paul Zumthor, "Comments on H. R. Jauss's Article," *New Literary History*, 10.2 (1979): 371.
52. A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, London: Scholar Press, 1984, p. 219.
53. Zumthor, *Toward A Medieval Poetic*, pp. 40–43.

54. Bernard Cequigline, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) p. 8. See also his arguments on p. 61.
55. See Zumthor, *Toward A Medieval Poetics*, p. 47, and Tim William Machan, "Editing, Orality, and Late Middle English Texts," in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, eds. A. N. Doane, and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) pp. 229–46, p. 241.
56. Douglas Moffat with Vincent P. McCarren, "A Bibliographical Essay on Editing Methods and Authorial and Scribal Intention," in *A Guide to Editing Middle English*, eds. Vincent P. McCarren and Douglas Moffat (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998) pp. 25–57, see p. 47. Machan's arguments are laid out in his *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1994), see p. 162.
57. See:
    ياقوت بن عبدالله الحموى، معجم الادباء: ارشاد الاريب الى معرفة الاديب، تحقيق احسان عباس، 7 ج، الطبعة الاولى، بيروت: دارالغرب الاسلامى، 1993؛ محمد بن سلـّام الجمحى، طبقات فحول الشعراء، قرأه و شرحه محمود محمّد شاكر، 8 ج، القاهرة: مطبعة الميدانى، 1973(؟).
58. See the Arabic text of *al-Fihrist*, pp. 363–64.
59. Mark Rose, "The Author as Proprietor," p. 51.
60. For the Persian text see *Bayhaqī's History*, pp. 341–342..
61. See for instance, John M. Graham, "National Identity and the Politics of Publishing the Troubadours," in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, eds. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 57–95, and Per Nykrog's "A Warrior Scholar at the Collège de France: Joseph Bédier," in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 286–308.
62. Tim William Machan, "Editing, Orality, and Late Middle English Texts," pp. 242–43.

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