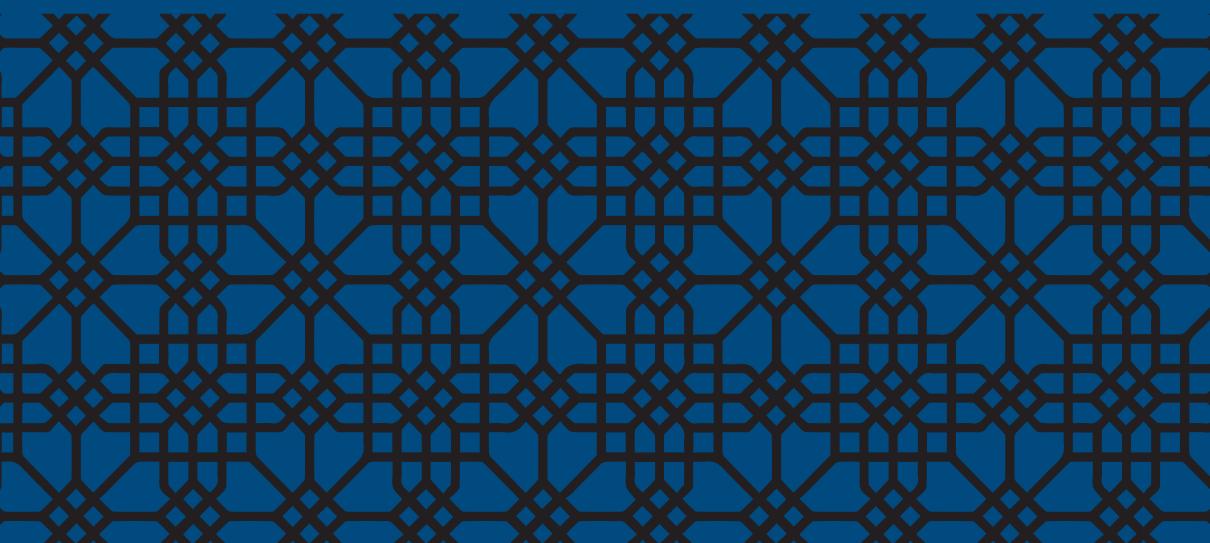# Materials for a History of the Persian Narrative Tradition

Two Characters: Farhād and Turandot

Paola Orsatti

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Abstract

This book gathers together two essays. The first deals with the origins of the character of Farhād, the unlucky lover of Shīrīn, who – in the Persian narrative tradition – digs a route through Mount Bīsutūn and accomplishes other admirable works. The essay suggests that Farhād, as we know him from long narrative poems, historical chronicles, and reports by geographers and travelers, is the issue of a conflation between the legendary character of the Master of Mount Bīsutūn and a historical personage, Farrahān, the general-in-chief of the Sasanid king Khusraw II Parvīz's army (r. 590-628 EC), as this figure was re-elaborated in a number of later legends.

The second essay identifies a character named 'Būrān-dukht' as the prototype from which Turandot, the heroine of the tale well-known in Europe from Puccini's opera (1926), springs. Two historical personages, both called Būrān or Būrān-dukht, are relevant in this line of development: the first is the daughter of the Sasanid king Khusraw II Parvīz (r. 580-628 CE), who was queen of Persia for a short period (630-631 CE); the other is the daughter of Ḥasan b. Sahl, wife of Caliph al-Maʾmūn (813-833 CE).

Keywords Persian narrative tradition. Origins of literary characters. Turandot. Farhād. Farrahān Shahr-barāz. Niẓāmī. Būrān-dukht. The Turandot tale.

To my husband Mansoor Farahpoor from Hamadan
painter and sculptor,
and to all my Iranian family

Materials for a History of the Persian Narrative Tradition
Two Characters: Farhād and Turandot

Paola Orsatti

Table of Contents

Preface

I gather here and publish together two essays relating to the study of characters in medieval Persian narrative literature.

The first essay deals with the origins of the character of Farhād, the unlucky lover of Shīrīn, who – in the Persian tradition – digs a route through Mount Bīsutūn and accomplishes other works whose remains are located in the area surrounding the ancient route linking Hamadan, in western Iran, with Qaṣr-i Shīrīn and Baghdad. In this study it is suggested that the literary character of Farhād is the issue of a conflation between the legendary character of the Master of Mount Bīsutūn and a historical personage, Farrahān, the general-in-chief of the Sasanid king Khusraw II Parvīz's army (r. 590-628 CE), as this figure was re-elaborated in a number of later legends. The second essay identifies a character named 'Būrān-dukht' as the prototype from which the Turandot of European tales (or at least her name) springs; and individuates two historical personages, both called Būrān or Būrān-dukht, as the historical-legendary figures from which Būrān-dukht /Turandot took her name and some of her features: the first is the daughter of Khusraw Parvīz, who became queen of Persia for a short period (630-631 CE); the other is the daughter of Ḥasan b. Sahl, wife of Caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833 CE).

Both studies have been conducted with the same method, and represent two parallel upshots of the same stream of research focusing on the transformation of historical or semi-historical figures into literary characters. Indeed, many of the literary characters studied here can be considered, at least in part, as transformations of historical figures – though it should not be forgotten that the treatment of 'historical' figures in medieval works is not exempt from legendary or ideologically-oriented re-elaborations, from the very beginning of their written transmission. Unlike other researches aiming at recon-

structing a supposed 'historical kernel' from ancient legends, this research starts from literary characters and their possible historical or legendary kernel in order to understand their literary function in Persian literature.

In this research, the following texts, belonging to different literary genres, have been exploited: long narrative poems, historical chronicles, reports by geographers and travellers, works of *adab*. Taking due account of the differences between texts it is possible to reconstruct a better outline of a literary character, whose image has often come down to us as scattered in a myriad of fragments. The aim is that of contributing to a better understanding of the Persian medieval narrative tradition.

I studied the characters of the Persian narrative tradition – especially as this tradition is attested in long narrative poems in the Mathnavī form – by following the development of a character from one text to another. Indeed, my work moves from a reading of the texts aimed at noticing any possible intertextual references, in the belief that the meaning of a character in a given text can be better understood by analysing the function of the same character in other texts. Indeed intertextuality, intended both as a deliberate choice by an author and as an unconscious mechanism that determines the development of a narrative from one text to the other, plays an important role in Persian and other Islamic literatures, and may help explain the genesis of literary characters.

I have tried to avoid any possible subjective reading and interpretation by adopting a philological attitude towards the analysed texts. The merging of the Farhād of Mount Bīsutūn with the figure of Khusraw's general is attested by a passage from an early New Persian text quoted in the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, the *Pīrūz-nāma*, which speaks of a certain 'General Farhād' in connection with the stone works at Ṭāq-i Bustān. Given that in the *Mujmal* the same personage is also quoted among the important dignitaries of Khusraw Parvīz's court, as the general-in-chief of his army, 'General Farhād' in this text seems not to be just a lapsus or a mistake by the copyist. A number of legendary developments related to Farrahān ('Farhād' in the *Mujmal*), afterwards usurper of the throne of Persia, confirm this hypothesis: Farrahān is presented as the unrequited wooer of Queen Būrān – a figure which in some texts is partially interchangeable with Shīrīn. As to the name 'Turān-dukht', from which the 'Turandot' of European tales is thought to originate, this name is not attested in Islamic sources except as a misspelling (*taṣḥīf*) of the form 'Būrān-dukht'. The ensuing research, then, tries to answer the question: who exactly is Būrān-dukht?

In my reading of the texts a leading idea has been that of distinguishing the 'form' of a character, i.e. his name and formal role (often coinciding with his historical or legendary identity), from his narrative function. Indeed, different characters, with different names (as for ex-

ample Shīrīn and the first Būrān, i.e. Khusraw's daughter), may play the same narrative function, and – in whole or in part – may merge into one another. Moreover, not rarely different characters may give birth to a single new or superordinate character on the basis of some of the features pertaining to the original, more or less historical, personages. It is for this reason that, in the second essay gathered in this book, devoted to the study of the character of Būrān-dukht, I consider the two historical personages called Būrān or Būrān-dukht, as well as a number of other different historical or legendary characters, such as Shīrīn and her aunt Mihīn Bānū, as having lent some of their features to the superordinate character of 'Būrān-dukht'; the latter being then a kind of label referring to a more general character formed by different features pertaining to different literary, legendary, or historical figures.

Indeed, another leading idea of this research is that only rarely literary characters do represent a simple and unanalysable phenomenon; most often they are composed of a set of narrative features (partially coinciding with the themes and motifs of the traditional typological analysis of the plots) which contribute to the outline of the character itself. In the different texts the various features of a figures (e.g. 'the woman delaying her wedding', 'the woman who resorts to riddles and enigmatic expressions during intimacy', 'the unrequited suitor', etc.) may be put together in different ways, with emphasis on one or more features rather than on others; and can migrate from one character to another. Every new assemblage of narrative features may give birth to new characters and narrative developments, or to variants of the same character. I am going to explain what I mean by summing up some of the conclusions of my study.

Shīrīn is certainly not only the positive figure portrayed in Niẓāmī's poem *Khusraw va Shīrīn*. In Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* she is an unsuitable bride for a king, a woman of low origins, who kills her rival with poison. Far from being a princess or a queen, she is only one of Khusraw's handmaidens in the historical chronicle by Balʿamī, and is one of the women of Khusraw's harem in the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*. She is an (at least initially) infertile woman in the Byzantine chronicle by Theophylact Simocatta and in an anecdote narrated, on the basis of a tradition reported by Ibn al-Kalbī, in the chronicle by Ṭabarī. The latter anecdote lets us even suspect her of being indirectly responsible for the Arab conquest of Persia. In the Persian moral literature (not analysed in these essays), she becomes an exemplum illustrating the advice that a king should never let a woman or one of his wives interfere in matters of the reign. On the other hand, in Niẓāmī's poem Shīrīn is the niece of Mihīn Bānū, and lives in a kingdom of women placed between Armenia and the city of Bardaʿ, in Arrān. Niẓāmī's assertion that Bardaʿ's ancient name was Harūm discloses another feature of the character of Shīrīn: indeed, Harūm was the name of the legendary country of the Amazons. Because of her location, and for some traits of

her character, Shīrīn then also embodies the character of the misogamist woman. Only by retracing more ancient stages in the development of Shīrīn's figure is it possible to understand the different – often contradictory – features of her literary character in the different texts.

Būrān, or Būrān-dukht, Khusraw Parvīz's daughter and queen of Persia, is considered in historical sources as a wise and combative queen, equal to any man. In Ṭarsūsī's *Dārāb-nāma* the daughter of Dārāb – the last Persian king, defeated by Alexander – is quite surprisingly called Būrān-dukht; she refuses to marry Alexander and fights not against the Arabs, as Būrān does according to historical texts, but against Alexander and the Greek conquerors. Only the reference to the historical or semi-historical character of Būrān (Khusraw's daughter) may explain the character of Būrān-dukht in the *Dārāb-nāma*: both share the feature of being the daughter of the last Persian king before an epochal change in Iranian history. In the latter text Būrān-dukht even develops a fabulous feature: she has a slight moustache on her lip and looks like a man. Not only does she embody the type of the misogamist woman, but her feature of being a combative queen develops further into having a masculine aspect as well. In Jamālī's poem *Mihr va Nigār* (805/1403), composed in response to Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, it is Būrān – though under the made-up name of Nigār – who is the heroine of the story. She is the Lady of the Castle – one of the features pertaining to the character of Shīrīn: she lives in an ancient castle in the desert, close to the royal court of Madāyin (the Qaṣr-i Shīrīn of tradition, of course) and cannot marry any man being bound by a promise to her cousin, who has in the meantime been kidnapped by brigands and has disappeared. This narrative development in Jamālī's poem explains the (initial) misogamy of Nigār/Būrān; otherwise, why should a princess live alone in a castle, refusing to marry? The character of Būrān, or Būrān-dukht, represents then another type of misogamist woman; indeed Būrān, who in Ṭarsūsī's *Dārāb-nāma* delays her wedding with Alexander, even rejects or kills her suitor in some legends analysed in the first essay, on the character of Farhād.

The other Būrān or Būrān-dukht, the daughter of Ḥasan b. Sahl and wife of Caliph al-Maʾmūn, is a cultivated and clever woman who, in later anecdotes, is able to suggest to the caliph something concerning her personal situation in an indirect and allusive way, thus managing to defer their union. Not only does she embody the feature of misogamy – which she shares with Shīrīn and the first Būrān – but her character is also connected with narratives involving the presence of enigmatic expressions, true enigmas, or non-verbal riddles through objects (as are the pearls in Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī's tale about Maʾmūn's marriage with Būrān).

The anonymous princess in Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale in the poem *Haft paykar* (593/1197) represents the merging between the character of the misogamist woman, living alone in her castle (as Shīrīn, and Jamālī's Nigār do), and the anonymous heroine of a series of folk-tales

which, from Persian and Turkish literature, arrive as far as Europe, in Pétis de la Croix's tale collection *Les Mille et un Jours* (1710-12). The presence of the pearls as symbolic objects in the mute, enigmatic exchange between the princess and her suitor may be a trace of a 'genetic' affinity, or derivation, of this beautiful tale from anecdotes revolving around the union between Būrān-dukht and Ma'mūn, especially as this anecdote is narrated by the other Niẓāmī, Niẓāmī 'Arūẓī (551/1156 ca).

The bond connecting together all these characters – from Shīrīn, through the two Būrāns, until the princess in Niẓāmī's tale – may appear slight. However, only such a link allows us to understand the last anecdote analysed in the second essay, taken from 'Awfī's collection of tales. This curious anecdote, revolving around Ma'mūn and Būrān, can be fully understood only in reference to Shīrīn's story as recounted by Ibn al-Kalbī/Ṭabarī.

As to Farhād, it is possible to trace not only the different features of the character, which correspond to different 'specializations' of his personage, but it is also possible to outline a chronology of their development – at least as far as the texts analysed for this research let us know – from that of being the Master of Mount Bīsutūn, to Farhād as the artist of the site of Ṭāq-i Bustān, until the romantic development of Farhād as enamoured of Shīrīn. Probably only in this last stage of development of the character was the influence of legends relating to Khusraw's general Farrahān relevant. A confirmation of the conflation between the two personages is offered by the character of 'The King of Syria' in late Persian poems of love and adventure – that represent a parallel and, probably, more ancient literary stream than that of Niẓāmī's poem *Khusraw va Shīrīn*. The King of Syria (in Khwājū Kirmānī's *Gul va Nawrūz*, composed in 742/1341), or the son of the King of Syria (in Salmān Sāvajī's *Jamshīd va Khwarshīd*, composed in 763/1372) cannot be other than a late re-elaboration of the character of Farrahān. From a functional point of view, however, he corresponds to Farhād in Niẓāmī's poem and the poems in response to the latter: indeed, he is the rival of the protagonist, corresponding to Khusraw in the other poems.

Part I
Farhād, Farrahān, and the King of Syria

1 Farhād the Master

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 The Backdrop of the Character and His Name. – 3 Farhād in the Sources. – 4 Farhād and Ṭāq-i Bustān. – 4.1 Ṭāq-i Bustān and the Master in the Romantic Tradition. – 4.2 Ṭāq-i Bustān and the Master in the Historical and Geographical Tradition. – 5 Farhād as a Constructor of Channels. – 6 Farhād and Mount Bīsutūn. – 7 Farhād as Enamoured of Shīrīn. – 8 Farhād as a Foreigner: His Social Status and Fatherland. – 9 Conclusions.

1   Introduction

This study aims to investigate the origins of the character of Farhād, starting from a brief review of the sources referring to him and the hypotheses put forward concerning the birth of the character and his name. The origins of this character, the *Kūh-kan* (Mountain Excavator) for love of Shīrīn in the Persian romantic tradition, seem to be quite recent.[1] Indeed, unlike other more or less historical characters of the Persian narrative tradition, Farhād is unknown to the Byzantine, Armenian, and Syriac sources, as well as to the *Shāhnāma* and the earliest Arabic texts. He is first mentioned in Abū Dulaf's travelogue (in a passage dating from 340/951), and in the Persian adaptation of Ṭabarī's chronicle by Balʿamī (begun in 352/963 CE). The character of Farhād plays for the first time a significant role in the plot of Niẓāmī's poem *Khusraw va Shīrīn* (composed between 571/1176 and 576/1181, with later additions), and from there spreads into the Persian and Turkish narrative

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[1]   On the character of Farhād, see the groundbreaking study by Duda, *Ferhād und Schīrīn*, in particular 4-11, on the history of the legend of Farhād and Shīrīn before Niẓāmī; and Aliev, *Legenda o Khosrove i Širin*, 73-81, who offers a review of the Persian and Arabic sources for this character. For other studies on the origins of the character see below. 'Romantic tradition' is used here in reference to the literary tradition of long narrative poems of amatory content, in the Mathnavi form.

tradition and in other literatures of the Islamic world.[2] This poem, which narrates the love story between the Sasanid king Khusraw II Parvīz (r. 590-628 CE) and the beautiful Shīrīn, herself originally a historical character,[3] is placed in a precise temporal frame: the period spanning from the troubled events that preceded Khusraw's accession to the throne of Persia (June 590) till his murder brought about by a conspiracy of noble-men (February 628) and the accession of his son Shīrūy or Shīrūya to the throne (Qubād II, r. February-September 628).

As will be shown, Farhād is a composite figure. In what follows, a survey of the different literary and non-literary (geographical or historical) sources is provided, in order to distinguish the different constitutive layers of the character. It should be stressed that the two types of sources cannot be rigidly separated, as there is a continuous interaction happening between literary and non-literary works.

2   The Backdrop of the Character and His Name

The character of Farhād and its origins are closely linked to the area surrounding the ancient route linking Hamadan to Baghdad. This area is rich in the vestigia of past epochs of Iranian history (see **fig. 1** below). It stretches from the mountainous passage of Bīsutūn – with the relief and inscription of Darius and a number of other archeological remains[4] – to the Sasanid site of Ṭāq-i Bustān, some ten kilometers north-east of Kirmanshah, at the end of the western spurs of Mount Bīsutūn. This area also includes, further westwards, Qaṣr-i Shīrīn, a site – today in Iraqi territory – where the ruins of Sasanid buildings are still visible.[5]

The character of Farhād is also linked to the presence of springs and channels,[6] and to the physical conformation of the territory: anyone travelling from Hamadan to Kirmanshah cannot but be struck – on ap-

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2   See Duda, *Ferhād und Schīrīn*, 77-129; Burrill, "The Farhād and Shīrīn Story"; and Moayyad, s.v. "Farhād". A catalogue of authors following in the wake of Niẓāmī's poems, with a bibliography of their works, is given by Aliev, *Temy i sjužety Nizami v literaturakh narodov Vostoka*.

3   On the historical character of Shīrīn see Scarcia, *Scirin*; and Baum, *Schirin Christin – Königin – Liebesmythos*.

4   See Luschey, s.v. "Bīsutūn II. Archeology".

5   See Streck (J. Lassner), s.v. "Ḳasr-i Shīrīn"; Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 63.

6   For channels in the region around Kirmanshah see Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter…*, 480-1. Luschey, "Bisutun. Geschichte und Forschungsgeschichte", 138, has identified a channel in the area of Bīsutūn as Farhād's legendary channel of milk (see also below, and fn. 53).
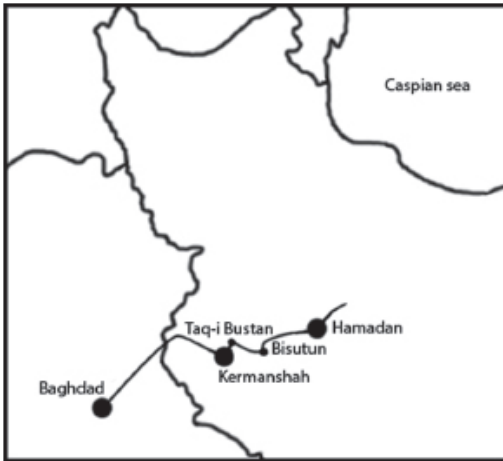
proaching Mount Bīsutūn – by the impressive profile of the mountain, which appears as if it had been cut vertically. Among the geographers writing in Arabic, al-Iṣṭakhrī in his *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik* (written around the mid-tenth century), writes: "Bīsutūn: an inaccessible mountain whose peak cannot be climbed. [...] Its shape, from its highest to its lowest point, is as smooth as if it had been hewed";[7] a description repeated – almost in the same words – by other subsequent authors.[8]

This area full of archeological remains is also connected to ancient literary traditions, such as the legend of queen Semiramis.[9] The road linking Ecbatana (Hamadan), through Mount Bīsutūn, to the West, is called in Greek sources 'the road of Semiramis';[10] and the name Mount Bīsutūn has in Arabic sources, *Sinn Sumayra* (The tooth of Semiramis), represents a meaningful survival of her legend.[11] Semiramis is described in Greek sources (Ctesias of Cnidus as referred to by Diodorus of Sicily's *Bibliotheca historica*, II, 4-20) as a powerful queen, as strong and wise as a man, under whose orders a number of

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[7] Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, 230.

[8] See for example al-Qazwīnī (thirteenth century) in his *ʿAjāyib al-makhlūqāt*, 154, s.v. "Jabal Bīsutūn".

[9] On her legend in connection with the legend of Shīrīn see Eilers, "Semiramis", especially 47-67.

[10] See Eilers, "Semiramis", 20, 53 and 64.

[11] See Eilers, "Semiramis", 64 and fn.120a. Schwarz (*Iran im Mittelalter*, 4: 452) and Le Strange (*The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 188), instead, wrongly consider the mountain called *Sinn Sumayra* by Arabic authors as a different mountain from Mount Bīsutūn.

engineering works were accomplished. Among them there is the construction of roads, bridges, and tunnels, and – in particular – a channel through Mount Alvand (Orontes) to bring water to Ecbatana. The relation between Semiramis and the character of Shīrīn, who commissions Farhād to build a channel to bring milk from the high mountain pastures to her castle, in the arid region of Qaṣr-i Shirin, is evident.[12]

The origins of the character of Farhād, therefore, are probably related to the natural characteristics of the area, and to the archeological remains and engineering works spread throughout the region. Farhād came to be considered the creator of all of them; a sort of *genius loci* who would explain the natural, artistic and engineering wonders, as well as – possibly – also bringing to mind a character in the ancient legend of Semiramis: that of Onnes, Semiramis's husband (see ch. 2, § 3).

As to the character's name, an interesting hypothesis has been put forward by Wilhelm Eilers. The New Persian proper name Farhād is generally explained as the issue of Middle Persian *frahād*, from Old Iranian **fra-dāta-* (Young Avestan *fraδāta-* 'favored, enhanced').[13] While recalling this etymology, Eilers also supposes an origin of the character's name from the past participle *frahaxt* 'educated, learned; the Master'; and conjectures a merging of the two etymologies. Indeed, the form *frahaxt* (written <frhht>, from *frahaxtan* 'to educate, teach, instruct') may have evolved into *frahāt* because of a phonetic change *-axt > -āt* attested in various Persian dialects; or may have been read *frahāt* through mere graphic confusion.[14] According to Eilers, then, Farhād is not so much a proper name, as a title referring to the salient feature of this character: the Master.[15]

One of the questions still requiring further study concerns the possible bond between the Farhād of Mount Bīsutūn and the different, more or less legendary heroes bearing the same name.[16] Indeed Fradāta, Φραδάτης/Φραάτης in Greek sources, is the name of a number of Parthian kings whose possible relevance for the birth and development of the character of Farhād has still to be ascertained in detail.[17]

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[12] Eilers, "Semiramis", in particular 53-4.

[13] Gignoux, *Noms propres sassanides en moyen-perse épigraphique*, 86, no. 373.

[14] Indeed, <hh> of the Pahlavi script can both represent *hx*, as in the participle <frhht> *frahaxt*, and *h'*, as in the reading *frahāt* supposed by Eilers.

[15] Eilers, "Semiramis", 48-9 and fn. 85.

[16] See Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, 101-2, s.v. "Frahāta" [sic for *Fradāta*]. See also Wolff, *Glossar zu Firdosis Schahname*, 613, s.v. "Farhād[1-3]".

[17] Moayyad ("Farhād", 257) defines Farhād as one of "the Parthian princes who are transformed in the Iranian national epic into warrior-heroes at the Kayanian court", thus connecting the figure of Farhād with the homonymous heroes of the Kayanian myth.

3 Farhād in the Sources

Different sources, pertaining to different literary genres, have been reviewed in connection with the development of the character of Farhād.[18] Among the Persian romantic poems, those analysed are (in chronological order): Niẓāmī's poem *Khusraw va Shīrīn*; Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī's poem *Shīrīn va Khusraw* (composed in 698/1299); ʿĀrif Ardabīlī's poem *Farhād-nāma* (771/1369); and Hātifī's poem *Shīrīn va Khusraw*, written between 889/1484 and 895/1490. Among early Arabic geographical and historical sources, some of which are earlier than Niẓāmī's poem, those of interest for this research are the abridged redaction of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Faqīh al-Hamadānī's *Kitāb al-buldān*, originally composed around 290/903,[19] as well as the second *risāla* of Abū Dulaf, who travelled in Persia in the years 331/943-341/952.[20] Later authors writing in Arabic generally limit themselves to repeating the accounts of Ibn al-Faqīh and Abū Dulaf.[21] Moreover, the case of Zakariyā al-Qazwīnī's works *ʿAjāyib al-makhlūqāt* and *Kitāb āthār al-bilād* (thirteenth century) is particularly significant in that they are by then so deeply influenced by Niẓāmī's narrative that they can probably be neglected in the study of the origins of the legend of Farhād.[22] Among early Persian historical

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[18]   I do not know any extensive research on the figure of Farhād in Persian lyrical poetry. According to H. Moayyad, one of the earliest references to Farhād in lyrical poetry is a line by Āġājī Bukhārī, a contemporary of Daqīqī (second half of the tenth century), quoted in the *Lughat-i Furs* (ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl [Āshtiyānī], 382, s.v. "mītīn" 'axe, pick'), in which "the Samanid poet compares the alacrity with which his beloved rushes into his arms to the speed with which Farhād's chisel falls on Bīsotūn" ("Farhād", 257). This line (*ba tundī čunān uftad bar bar-am/ki mītīn-i Farhād bar Bīsutūn*) is also quoted in recent anthologies of early poetry such as Maḥmūd Mudabbirī, *Šarḥ-i aḥvāl va ašʿār-i šāʿirān-i bī dīvān dar qarnhā-yi 3-4-5-i hijrī-yi qamarī*, Tehran, 1370/1991, 195 (who refers to the *Lughat-i Furs*, Ṣiḥāḥ al-Furs, Surūrī's *Majmaʿ al-Furs*, and the *Farhang-i Vafāʾī*) and Aḥmad Idārāčī Gīlānī, *Šāʿirān-i ʿaṣr-i Rūdakī*, Tehran, 1370/1991, 158 (I thank Anna Livia Beelaert for these references); but is quoted neither in Gilbert Lazard's *Les premiers poètes persans (IXe–Xe siècles)*, Vol. 2: *Textes persans*, nor in other editions of Asadī's *Lughat-i Furs*, such as that by F. Mujtabāʾī and ʿA.A. Ṣādiqī. According to Dihkhudā, s.v. "mītīn", this line is also attributed to Rūdakī. In Dihkhudā's *Lughat-nāma* another line concerning Farhād's hard work with his axe, attributed to Farrukhī, is also quoted (*čandān-ki ba šamšīr-i tu bad-xwāh fakandī/ Farhād magar ki nafakand-ast ba mītīn*).

[19]   Textual problems concerning possible changes and additions by the eleventh-century editor of the work are not dealt with here.

[20]   See Minorsky, s.v. "Abū Dulaf, Misʿar b. Muhalhil al-Khazradjī al-Yanbuʿī".

[21]   See for example Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 3 (1868): 250-3, s.v. "Shibdāz", and 4 (1869): 112-14, s.v. "Qaṣr Shīrīn".

[22]   See the report given by al-Qazwīnī, s.v. "Jabal Bīsutūn", in his *ʿAjāyib al-makhlūqāt*, 154-6; and in his *Kitāb āthār al-bilād*, 229-33 and 295-7, s.v. "Qaṣr Shīrīn". Concerning the story of Farhād the relationship between Niẓāmī's narrative and al-Qazwīnī's report should be studied in detail: al-Qazwīnī in both his *ʿAjāyib al-makhlūqāt*, 154, and in his *Kitāb āthār al-bilād*, 229, refers to "the chronicles of the Persians" (*tawārīkh al-ʿAjam*) as his source; and it is difficult that with this expression he could have meant Niẓāmī's

sources, the following are relevant: the Persian reworking of Ṭabarī's chronicle by Balʿamī (begun in 352/963 CE); the anonymous Persian chronicle *Mujmal al-tavārīkh vaʾl qiṣaṣ* (composed in 520/1126 ca); and the *Nuzhat al-qulūb* by Mustawfī Qazvīnī (730/1340).

From these texts, different traditions concerning Farhād emerge, which correspond to different layers and different narrative features of this character.

4   Farhād and Ṭāq-i Bustān

In her invaluable research on Ṭāq-i Bustān and the growth of the legend of Farhād, Priscilla Soucek reviews the early sources describing the site, and discusses the identity of the figures in the reliefs according to the sources, and the artist who sculpted them.[23] The connection of Farhād with the site must be quite recent: in the current state of knowledge, Niẓāmī seems to be the first author explicitly attributing the realization of the Ṭāq-i Bustān reliefs to Farhād.[24]

4.1   Ṭāq-i Bustān and the Master in the Romantic Tradition

In Niẓāmī's poem Farhād is a twofold character.[25] From one side he is a skilled sculptor and a master (*ustād*), an architect and engineer (*muhandis*), who had studied astronomy and geometry in China together with Shāpūr, Khusraw's counsellor and a skilled painter – Shāpūr himself introduces Farhād to Shīrīn in these terms.[26] From the other side he is a workman, skilled in using his adze and endowed with extraordinary strength and a mountain-like body who, by Khusraw's order and for love of Shīrīn, digs a route across Mount

poem. Between Niẓāmī's and al-Qazwīnī's narrative some slight differences can also be seen. Al-Qazwīnī had a direct knowledge of the region of Mount Bīsutūn, whose area and archeological remains he also describes as an eyewitness.

23   Soucek, "Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān".

24   Soucek ("Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān", 45) writes: "He [Niẓāmī] merged the traditions regarding the sculptor and workman of Ṭāq-i Būstān with those about Farhād, the noble lover of Shīrīn. Whether or not he was the first to attribute the carving of the sculptures at Ṭāq-i Būstān to Farhād, it was from his account that later authors drew and developed this theme".

25   The story of Farhād and Shīrīn occupies eight chapters (51-58) in Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ed. Tharvatiyān.

26   See Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 51, 15-21. In references to the text of Niẓāmī's poem the first cipher refers to the chapter in the Tharvatiyān edition, and the following to the number of the verse line(s) within each chapter.

Bīsutūn.[27] Indeed, according to Niẓāmī, Khusraw – when informed of Farhād's love for Shīrīn – orders his rival to perform an impossible task, hoping to get rid of him: to cut a route through Mount Bīsutūn. Before setting about the task, Farhād sculpts the images of Shīrīn, Khusraw and Khusraw's famous horse, Shabdīz, on one side of the mountain (see **figs. 2-3** below), corresponding to the reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān according to popular belief (Niẓāmī, however, does not mention any toponym).[28] As already stated, this is, at present, the first attestation of the tradition according to which Farhād is the sculptor of these reliefs.

Niẓāmī's account, which locates the reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān close to Mount Bīsutūn and to Shīrīn's castle (Qaṣr-i Shīrīn), shows that the poet had never seen the places he alludes to (see **fig. 1** above). Indeed Niẓāmī shows Farhād as working hard during the day and, in the evening, speaking to the stone image of his beloved (one of the reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān), and looking towards her castle.[29] Mustawfī Qazvīnī, in his work *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* (comp. 740/1340), voiced a criticism towards Niẓāmī for not having had any direct knowledge of the places described in his poem. Mustawfī underlines the fact that from the foot of Mount Bīsutūn to the *Ṣuffa-yi Shabdīz* 'Platform of Shabdīz' – as this author calls the site now known as Ṭāq-i Bustān – there is a distance of six parasangs (about 35 kilometers).[30]

While in the poems by Amīr Khusraw and Hātifī no mention is given of Farhād's connection with this site, 'Ārif Ardabīlī's poem *Farhād-nāma* (771/1369) clearly connects the character of Farhād with the main arched grotto and the reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān (see **fig. 3** below).[31] During a trip to Baghdad 'Ārif had had the opportunity to see the area linked with the Farhād legend, and refers to the site as an eyewitness.[32]

'Ārif narrates what, according to him, is the true story of the *Kūh-kan*, the Mountain Carver Farhād, and is openly critical of Niẓāmī's poem. He intends to present Farhād in a different light: Farhād is a foreigner, but is neither unsuccessful nor desperate; on the contra-

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27   See Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 51, 29-30, and ch. 56. On the different aspects of the character of Farhād in the sources see Scarcia, "Alla ricerca di un Ur-Farhâd".

28   Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 55, 42-44.

29   Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 56, 1-13.

30   Mustawfī Qazwīnī, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, 193.

31   'Ārif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*. The poem is attested by a single manuscript conserved in Istanbul (MS Ayasofya 3335). It was studied for the first time by Duda in 1933, and later edited with an introductory essay by 'Abd al-Riḍā Ādhar in 1976. Summaries of the poems are given by Duda (*Ferhād und Schīrīn*, 86-97) and Sattārī, *Usṭūra-yi 'ishq va 'āshiqī dar chand 'ishq-nāma-yi fārsī*, 53-64. See also Aliev, *Temy i sjužety Nizami*, 60-2.

32   'Ārif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, 173, ll. 3627-3629. On 'Ārif's biography see Ādhar, "Introduction to 'Ārif Ardabīlī", pp. nuh-pānzdah [9-15]. In particular, on 'Ārif's trip to Baghdad, cf. pp. čahārdah-pānzdah [14-15].
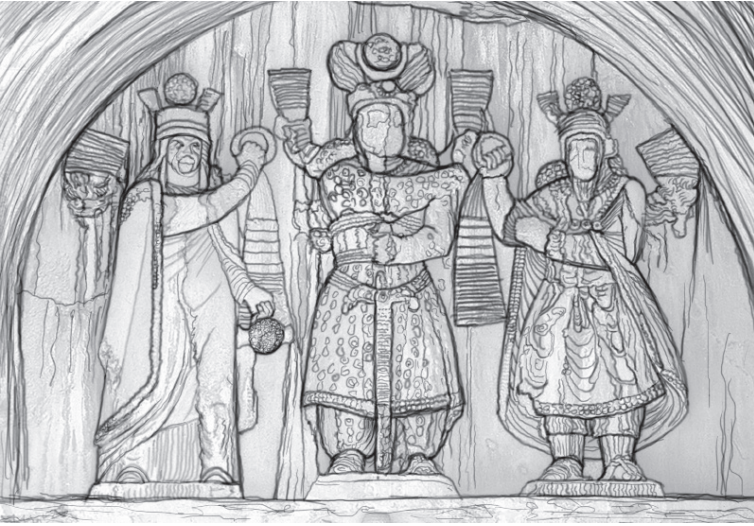
Figure 2 Ṭāq-i Bustān – The reliefs in the front upper panel of the great grotto (drawing by Mansoor Farahpoor)
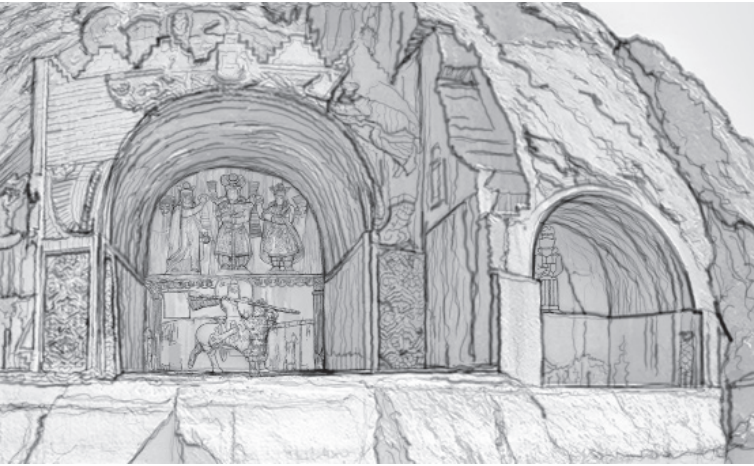
Figure 3 The site of Ṭāq-i Bustān (drawing by Mansoor Farahpoor)

ry, he is a very skilled artist, proud and satisfied with his art.[33] His love for Gulistān, in the first part of the poem (*Farhād va Gulistān*, ll. 1-2558), and for Shīrīn in the second part (*Farhād va Shīrīn*, ll. 2559-4364) is fully reciprocated.

Farhād is the son of the emperor of China (*Faghfūr*) and a skilful architect, calligrapher and painter. Dispossessed of his kingdom at his father's death by his paternal uncle, he seeks refuge in Abkhāz (Abkhazia), a region of Georgia replacing Niẓāmī's Armenia.[34] His companion is Shāpur (Shāvur/Shāūr in this poem), a native of Abkhazia who had come to China to study painting.

Farhād had fallen in love with Gulistān (Rose Garden), the daughter of a highly skilled sculptor and stone-mason (*sang-tarāsh*) simply called Ustād (Master) in the poem, on the basis of the portrait Shāpūr had painted on the walls of a palace, while still in China. The Master and his family live in Abkhazia, in a beautiful garden called Khumistān, so called because of the presence there of numerous jars (*khum*) of wine connected to one another by channels bearing the wine to little basins – wine and wine-drinking being emphasized in relation to the Christian setting of the poem. According to ʿĀrif, Gulistān's name, too, was due to the fact that she was born in that garden. As the Master had promised his only daughter to the man who would prove his equal in stone-carving, Farhād accepts the challenge of learning the hard craft of stone-cutter out of love for Gulistān, and carves a statue, or a relief, of her. With this wonderful work Farhād is victorious over the other suitors to Gulistān's hand. The marriage covenant between the two young people is decided. The Master makes Farhād a gift of the garden of Khumistān and has a palace with a portico (*ayvān*) constructed for him, with a door opening onto the garden – a clear reference to the site of Ṭāq-i Bustān, though transposed in Abkhazia. Farhād, in his turn, builds there an arch (*ṭāq*), with the images of the King of Abkhāz sitting on a throne (he is Shīrīn's father, brother of Mihīn Bānū[35]), together with Shāpūr and Farhād on one side, and the Master in the act of entrusting Gulistān's hand to Farhād, on the other – again a loose reference to the reliefs in the front upper panel of the main arched grotto in Ṭāq-i Bustān. He decorates this magnificent vault with figures reproducing the wall-paintings in the palace Farhād had had built in China. Farhād is converted to Christianity and the two lovers marry. Thus ends the first part of the poem.

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33 For this criticism, see especially ʿĀrif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, 173-4, ll. 3635-3654.

34 In Islamic times the term 'Abkhāz' (Abkhazia), western Georgia, was used to refer to the whole country of Georgia. Cf. Giunashvili, s.v. "Abḵāz".

35 Here Duda's summary of the poem should be corrected (*Ferhād und Schīrīn*, 90), as he asserts that Mihīn Bānū was the wife of the king of Abkhazia.

The culminating section of the poem's first part, therefore, is located in a garden (*bustān*), the garden of Khumistān, where Farhād builds a beautiful arch (*ṭāq*). In the poem there is no mention of the toponym 'Ṭāq-i Bustān', this archeological site being referred to as *Shabdīz* in the second part of the poem (l. 3627).[36] However, the description of the arch in the garden, decorated with a series of figures, clearly alludes to the main arched grotto at Ṭāq-i Bustān and its reliefs. Also a number of linguistic hints (the garden is often referred to, with a hendiadys, as *bāgh u bustān*) seems to allude to this site and to the certainly corrupted name, Ṭāq-i Bustān, that has come down until today to refer to it (see below).[37]

In the first part of the poem, then, Farhād is explicitly identified as the author of what appears to be a replica, in Abkhazia, of the Ṭāq-i Bustān's reliefs. It is important to note that in ʿĀrif's poem not only is Farhād a foreigner – the son of the king of China – but his work is also described as inspired by foreign models: the reliefs of the arch in the Khumistān garden – had said the author – were a copy of the paintings in a palace in China. As to the Master, the father of Gulistān, he lives in Abkhazia, a Christian region. He appears as a duplicate, with geographical displacement (from China to Abkhazia) of the master who had taught Farhād and Shāpūr sculpture and painting, in Niẓāmī's poem. These elements: Farhād as the sculptor of the arch and its reliefs; the focus on the Christian milieu of the story; and the foreign (Chinese) inspiration of his work, point to important features in the origin of the Farhād legend (see ch. 2 below).

4.2   Ṭāq-i Bustān and the Master in the Historical and Geographical Tradition

Unlike the romantic tradition, early historians and geographers attribute the construction of Ṭāq-i Bustān and its reliefs to another personage, different from Farhād, whose name is variously given: Faṭṭūs or Qaṭṭūs (Ibn al-Faqīh),[38] Qaṭṭūs (Yāqūt),[39] Fuṭrūs (Zakariyā al-

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36   'Shabdīz' is the toponym given by many Arabic geographers for the place now called Ṭāq-i Bustān. See for example the passage by Yāqūt referred to in note 21 above.

37   The hendiadys *bāgh u bustān* recurs many times in the first part of the poem. See for example ʿĀrif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, ll. 1081, 1298, 2495, and 2551, at the end of the first part of the poem. In the latter line, the first part of the poem is called 'the story of the Garden' (*nivishtam dāstān-i bāgh u bustān*).

38   Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 214,15 and 216,14 (French transl., 259 and 261).

39   Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 3: 250 and 251, s.v. "Shibdāz".
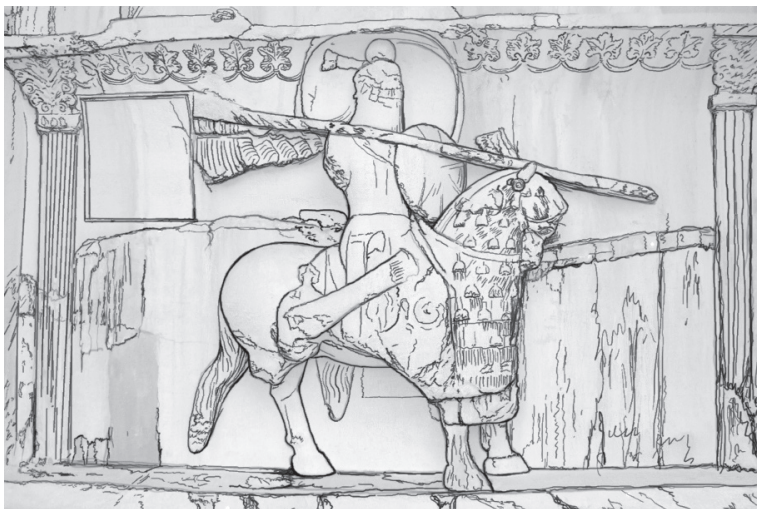
Figure 4 Ṭāq-i Bustān – The reliefs in the front lower panel of the great grotto
(drawing by Mansoor Farahpoor)

Qazwīnī),[40] Kīṭūs (*Mujmal al-tavārīkh*).[41] They describe the site when speaking of the town of Qirmāsīn/Qirmīsīn (Kirmanshah): among the wonders near the town, these authors mention the relief representing Shabdīz, the famous horse so beloved of Khusraw Parvīz (see **fig. 4**).

A short poem describing the beautiful arch of Ṭāq-i Bustān and its reliefs, quoted in Ibn al-Faqīh's *Kitāb al-buldān*, seems to provide a trace of an early legendary development concerning the Master who had created them – not yet identified with Farhād, however. The poem is ascribed to Aḥmad b. Muḥammad i.e., probably, Ibn al-Faqīh himself.[42] In this poem it is told that, among the reliefs on the arch, Faṭṭūs had represented himself.[43] It is possible – as supposed by Priscilla Soucek – that by the beginning of the tenth century legends concerning the sculptor of the reliefs were already circulating in the area.[44]

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40 Al-Qazwīnī, *Kitāb āthār al-bilād*, 230. If Fuṭrūs is not the original name of the master, it may be a form adapted to represent the well-known Greek name, Pétros.

41 *Mujmal al-tavārīkh va'l qiṣaṣ*, ed. Bahār, 79,15. See also the Berlin manuscript dated 751/1350, published in fac-simile: *Mujmal al-tavārīkh va'l qiṣaṣ. Nuskha-yi 'aksī-yi muvarrakh-i 751 qamarī (kitābkhāna-yi Birlīn)*, f. 30r13.

42 Herzfeld, "Khusraw Parwēz und der Ṭāq i Vastān", 98.

43 Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 216,14 (French transl., 261).

44 Soucek, "Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān", 43-4.

In his second *risāla*, edited, translated and commented on by Vladimir Minorsky, Abū Dulaf, speaking of the image of Shabdīz near Qirmīsīn, describes a relief or a statue, which has often been interpreted as referring to the character of Farhād: "Before the king [the "man on horseback made of stone"] there is a man with the appearance of an artisan with a bonnet on his head [...] and in his hand he holds a *balkān* with which he is digging the earth". The interpretation of this description and the meaning of the word *balkān*, translated as 'spade' by some scholars, are controversial. Despite Minorsky's contrary opinion, it has often been taken as meaning that one of the reliefs, or a statue, at the site was popularly interpreted as representing – if not Farhād – a worker connected with the creation of the site.[45]

It should be noted that in the early historical and geographical sources here analysed, nowhere is the toponym Ṭāq-i Bustān attested. In the poem by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (Ibn al-Faqīh) just referred to, the place where the famous arch is located is called Wastān (this is the vocalization given in the printed text).[46] Paul Schwarz considers this form, which is glossed as "name of a village" in one of the manuscripts of Ibn al-Faqīh's work, as a shortened form for Bahīstūn/Bīsutūn.[47] However, Bistām/Wistām as the name of a village near the site is also attested by two Persian sources. The first one is the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, which preserves what probably was the original name of the place, Bisṭām[48] – though the author of the *Mujmal* wants to connect it with Bisṭām/Gustaham, Khusraw's uncle (see ch. 2, §§ 2 and 3).[49] The other source is Mustawfī Qazvīnī's *Nuzhat al-qulūb*. The author writes: "Visṭām (var. Bisṭām): it is a big village facing the Ṣuffa-yi Shabdīz".[50] Indeed, *Ṣuffa-yi Shabdīz* is the name Mustawfī uses in reference to the archeological site.[51] The Arabic geographers generally refer to this site as *Shabdīz*, from the name of Khusraw's famous horse.

To sum up: Farhād as the artist of the reliefs of the site now called Ṭāq-i Bustān only appears in the romantic narrative tradition. This version of the Farhād legend is first given by Niẓāmī and then – in

45   Abū Dulaf, *Travels in Iran (circa A.D. 950)*, 45 § 34, and 92 (Minorsky's Commentary). On the identification of this figure as that of Mithra in the relief of Ardashīr II, see Luschey, "Bisutun. Geschichte und Forschungsgeschichte", 138.

46   Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 216,2 (French transl., 261).

47   Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, 4: 488 fn. 1.

48   *Mujmal al-tavārīkh va'l qiṣaṣ*, 79,15; see also the Berlin manuscript *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, f. 30*r*12.

49   On the presence of the proper name Bistām/Bisṭām as a place-name in different regions of Iran, especially of western and northwestern Iran, see Eilers, s.v. "Besṭām (or Bestām)". On Khosrow's uncles see ch. 2, §§ 2 and 3.

50   Mustawfī Qazvīnī. *The geographical part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, 109.

51   Mustawfī Qazvīnī. *The geographical part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, 108, 109, 193.

much greater detail – by 'Ārif Ardabīlī. Instead, in the early Arabic sources and in the Persian *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, other names are recorded for the Master of Ṭāq-i Bustān.

5 Farhād as a Constructor of Channels

Among the famous works accomplished by Farhād according to tradition only the construction of a channel to bring milk for Shīrīn is mentioned in all of the analyzed poems.

Farhād's excavation of a channel to bring milk from the fertile mountain pastures to Shīrīn's castle is first recounted in Niẓāmī's poem, where this work, commissioned by Shīrīn herself, is the first of the famous deeds accomplished by Farhād.[52] After him, also Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, in his poem *Shīrīn va Khusraw* (composed in 698/1299), recounts that Farhād was commissioned by Shīrīn to carve a channel for receiving milk at her palace – though, distancing himself from the other authors, Amīr Khusraw locates this work in the area of Mount Bīsutūn.[53] At the beginning of the Farhād episode is the construction of a first channel in the Bīsutūn area (referred to in a line not even present in all manuscripts) placed,[54] along with a reference to another of Farhād's works at Mount Bīsutūn (see below, § 6). Among the traditional deeds accomplished by Farhād, neither the engraving of the reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān, nor Farhād's carving a route through Mount Bīsutūn by Khusraw's order are referred to in Amīr Khusraw's poem.

In 'Ārif's poem Farhād carves a number of channels, bearing not only milk but also wine (on the emphasis on wine in the poem see above). Whereas a garden recalling the 'garden' of Ṭāq-i Bustān (The Arch in the Garden) is the main setting for the first part of the poem, Qaṣr-i Shīrīn is the main setting of the second part. 'Ārif recounts that after a long period of mourning for the death of his first wife, his beloved Gulistān, Farhād at last reciprocates the love Shīrīn had felt for him since their first encounter. In Shīrīn's palace in Abkhazia Farhād builds a cellar with pipes bringing the wine to a basin.[55] After Mihīn Bānū's death, however, Shīrīn flees from home to escape from

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[52] Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 51.

[53] Cf. Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, *Shirin va Khosrow*, 145-6, ll. 1655-60 (Shīrīn commissions the work) and 153, ll. 1744-52 (Farhād carves a channel through Mount Bīsutūn). Luschey ("Bisutun. Geschichte und Forschungsgeschichte", 138) has identified a channel in the area of Bīsutūn as Farhād's legendary channel of milk. In Amīr Khusraw's poem the Farhād episode is narrated in 142-200, ll. 1623-2270.

[54] Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, *Shīrīn va Khusraw*, 143, l. 1636.

[55] 'Ārif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, 160-1, ll. 3343-70.

an unwanted Armenian suitor, taking refuge in Qaṣr-i Shīrīn.[56] After a short time Farhād joins her, and excavates a channel and a pool for the supply of milk, as in the traditional account. According to his declared polemical attitude, ʿĀrif corrects the version given by Niẓāmī about the famous channel constructed by Farhād for Shīrīn: in this channel no milk but only water flowed, the milk being carried sealed in goatskins floating on the current and watched by attendants[57] – an example of ʿĀrif's rationalizing attitude from one side, but also a reference to a perhaps preexistent version concerning the channel, also testified by Mustawfī Qazvīnī in his *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, who speaks of "goatskins full of milk thrown into that channel of water".[58]

In Hātifī's poem *Shīrīn va Khusraw*, written between 889/1484 and 895/1490, Farhād is of Chinese origin and the colleague (*ham-pīsha*) of Shāpūr.[59] In this poem not only does Farhād excavate a channel for Shīrīn, but also a tunnel to escape from the well where he has been thrown by Khusraw's order:[60] indeed, after the carving of the channel, an innovation in Hātifī's treatment of the matter is that, when Khusraw is told of Farhād's love for Shīrīn, he has him taken to the top of a mountain and thrown into a well. With the help of a spade he finds by chance Farhād, however, menages to dig a tunnel through the foot of the mountain and escapes from the well – a new deed attributed to Farhād in addition to the traditional ones.

Farhād as the constructor of one or more channels in the region of Qaṣr-i Shīrīn, instead, is unknown to the earliest historical and geographical sources. Ibn al-Faqīh, in the chapter devoted to the reasons for the construction of Shīrīn's castle, relates a tradition concerning the construction of two channels in this site; but this work is not attributed to Farhād. Ibn al-Faqīh recounts that Khusraw (i.e. Khusraw II Parvīz) had ordered the creation of a big garden destined to become a hunting reserve, with every kind of animals. The king was so pleased with the garden that in a moment of intoxication he asked Shīrīn to express any wish she had. Shīrīn asked Khusraw to have two channels, one bearing milk, the other wine, constructed. Though this text attests to an early connection between Qaṣr-i Shīrīn and the construction of one or more channels at Shīrīn's request,

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56 ʿĀrif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, 164, l. 3428.

57 ʿĀrif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, 170, ll. 3562-3572.

58 Mustawfī Qazwīnī, *The geographical part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, 43, s.v. "Qaṣr-i Šīrīn".

59 Hātifī, *Shīrīn va Khusraw*, 64, ll. 854-855. The Farhād episode is narrated in 63-89, ll. 833-1185.

60 Hātifī, *Shirin va Khusraw*, 65-8, ll. 863-989 (channel for the milk), and 72-3, ll. 953-68 (carving of the tunnel through the mountain).

no mention of Farhād is to be found here.[61] Also Mustawfī Qazvīnī, in the already mentioned passage from his *Nuzhat al-qulūb* about a channel of water carrying goatskins full of milk in the area of Qaṣr-i Shīrīn,[62] does not mention Farhād as the constructor of it. Only a geographical source probably already influenced by Niẓāmī's narrative, Zakariyā al-Qazwīnī's *Kitāb āthār al-bilād* (thirteenth century), refers to Farhād's construction of a channel for Shīrīn.[63]

To sum up: Farhād as the constructor of one or more channels by Shīrīn's order only appears in the romantic narrative tradition and in late geographical sources, such as al-Qazwīnī's *Kitāb āthār al-bilād*, probably already influenced by Niẓāmī's poem. This is the sole legendary deed attributed to Farhād to be found in all of the analyzed poems. In the present state of research, also the attribution of this work to Farhād, in the same way as the carving of the reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān, seems to be an innovation due to Niẓāmī, widely accepted in the subsequent poems in response to his *Khusraw va Shīrīn*. The popular etymology of Shīrīn's name, explained as referring to her being fond of milk (*shīr*), may have helped the diffusion of the motif of the 'channel of milk' (*jūy-e shīr*) in the poetic narrative tradition.

6 Farhād and Mount Bīsutūn

The first mention of Farhād in connection with Mount Bīsutūn, which is also the very first mention of this character, is to be found in the second *risāla* of Abū Dulaf's travelogue, in a passage seemingly derived from local sources in 340/951. After having described the reliefs at the site near Qirmīsīn (Kirmanshah), Abū Dulaf continues the description of his itinerary in these words: "Thence [from Qirmīsīn] to a rock called Sumayra, high, towering (over the plain) and bearing a wonderful image and beautiful pictures. It is reported that Kisrā Abarvīz charged Farhād-the-Sage (*ḥakīm*) with this work".[64]

The "wonderful image and beautiful pictures" referred to in this passage are certainly to be identified as the reliefs of Darius[65] – though the commissioner is, according to this tradition, Khusraw Parvīz. As suggested by Ghazanfar Aliev, the expression "it is

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61   Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 158-9 (French transl., 192-3). ʿĀrif Ardabīlī's version, recounting of channels for the wine beyond the famous channel for the supply of milk (ʿĀrif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, 46-7, ll. 940-57, and 160-3, ll. 3343-405), can have been derived from this tradition.

62   See above, and fn. 58.

63   Al-Qazwīnī, *Kitāb āthār al-bilād*, 296.

64   Cf. Abū Dulaf, *Travels in Iran*, 46 § 35, and 92-3 (Minorsky's Commentary).

65   Cf. Minorsky, Commentary to Abū Dulaf, *Travels in Iran*, 92.

reported" (*yuqālu*) indicates that the author is here relating oral traditions gathered on the spot.[66] This passage is important, both for its ancientness, and because it testifies to an early connection of Farhād with Mount Bīsutūn and the (Darius) reliefs. By contrast, Farhād's connection with Shīrīn is not referred to, yet.

A clear reference to Farhād's legendary excavation of a route through Mount Bīsutūn is given for the first time by Niẓāmī: Khusraw – when informed of Farhād's love for Shīrīn – orders his rival to perform an impossible task: to cut a route through Mount Bīsutūn.[67] It is possible, however, that a short passage by Balʿamī already refers to Farhād's legendary excavation of a route, considered as Farhād's punishment for having fallen in love with Shīrīn (see below, § 7).

In his poem Amīr Khusraw – who had already placed Shīrīn's channel of milk in the area of Bīsutūn (see above, § 5) – seems to refer to another of the archeological remains in the Bīsutūn area. He recounts that one day, when wandering on horseback near Mount Bīsutūn, Shīrīn sees "a stone (*sang-ī*) polished in the likeness of an anvil, white and beautiful as a blossoming petal (or a smiling face, *gulbarg-i khandān*), as smooth and shining as crystal, which not even an ant could have climbed".[68] The poet is probably referring here to the huge panel commissioned by Khusraw Parvīz and left blank, popularly called the 'Tarāsh-i Farhād' (Farhād's Smoothing), which is still visible not far from the relief and inscription of Darius.[69] This panel is apparently already referred to by al-Iṣṭakhrī who, after the description of Mount Bīsutūn quoted above ("Its shape, from its highest to its lowest point, is as smooth as if it had been hewed"), adds: "And (for) a number of cubits from the ground its surface is already hewed and polished".[70]

At the end of the second part of ʿĀrif's *Farhād-nāma*, Farhād is clearly connected with the works at Mount Bīsutūn and Ṭāq-i Bustān. Indeed, the poet recounts that, after the construction of the channel of Qaṣr-i Shīrīn (see above, § 5), one day Farhād and Shīrīn go hunting together. Pursuing some gazelles they arrive at a mountain: the name is not given, but it is certainly to be identified with Mount

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66   Aliev, *Legenda o Khosrove i Širin*, 75-6.

67   Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, 55, 24-26.

68   Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, *Shīrīn va Khusraw*, 143-4, ll. 1637-8.

69   See Luschey, "Bisutun. Geschichte und Forschungsgeschichte", 129 and fig. 25, and s.v. "Bīsutūn II. Archeology"; Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall: Khusro II and his Regime", 94-5; and s.v. "Ḵosrow II".

70   Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, 230. See also Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, 4: 452. As Amīr Khusraw did not travel outside the Indian subcontinent, he may have come to know of this panel from Iṣṭakhrī's description, or from other sources.

Bīsutūn. Farhād stays in this area for some time, hunting and polishing stones (possibly another allusion to the *Tarāsh-i Farhād*), and sculpting beautiful images.[71] Farhād also sculpts a series of figures in the place called *Shabdīz* (Ṭāq-i Bustān). ʿĀrif adds that Shabdīz is the name given to this beautiful place (*but-khāna*), full of stone images (*buthā-yi sangīn*) from antiquity; a place located two days travel away from Qaṣr-i Shīrīn.[72]

In Hātifī's poem, it is only after Farhād's escape from the well (the new episode added to the saga of Farhād by this poet) that Khusraw decides to free himself of his rival by having him cut a passage through Mount Bīsutūn. Both Amīr Khusraw and ʿĀrif Ardabīlī, instead, omit the traditional datum of Farhād's hard work for carving a route through Mount Bīsutūn, an omission probably connected with the increasing idealization of the character of Farhād, the son of the emperor of China travelling incognito in Persia (see also below, § 8).

To sum up: a reference to the legend of Farhād as the author of the reliefs, or of any other work, on the wall of Mount Bīsutūn, is given by Abū Dulaf, Amīr Khusraw, and ʿĀrif Ardabīlī. As to the narrative element of Farhād as the Mountain-Carver for love of Shīrīn, this feature is present, among the romantic poems here considered, only in Niẓāmī and Hātifī's poems, and is possibly alluded to in Balʿamī's account (see below).

7 Farhād as Enamoured of Shīrīn

It is, seemingly, in the second half of the tenth century that the legend of Farhād is enriched with a new element: the romantic development of his character and his connection with the legendary cycle revolving around the love between Khusraw and Shīrīn. The Persian reworking of Ṭabarī's chronicle by Balʿamī (begun in 352/963 CE) is at present the first source speaking of Farhād as enamoured of Shīrīn.[73] In the section describing the marvels of Khusraw Parvīz's reign, the horse Shabdīz, and the astonishing beauty of Shīrīn – one of Khusraw's handmaidens – Balʿamī says: "This handmaiden was the one with whom Farhād was in love; and Parvīz punished him by send-

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[71] ʿĀrif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, 173, ll. 3624-9.

[72] ʿĀrif Ardabīlī, *Farhād-nāma*, 173, ll. 3627-9.

[73] Cf. Aliev, *Legenda o Khosrove i Širin*, 75. Aliev does not exclude the hypothesis, advanced by E.É. Bertel's (*Nizami. Tvorčeskij put' poéta*, 106), that the passage on Farhād in the chronicle by Balʿamī represents a later addition.

ing him to dig the mountain".[74] The mountain referred to is, certainly, Mount Bīsutūn, and Farhād is by then the *Kūh-kan*, the Mountain-excavator for love of Shīrīn.

In the anonymous Persian chronicle *Mujmal al-tavārīkh va'l qiṣaṣ* (composed in 520/1126 ca), in the chapter related to the reign of Khusraw Parvīz, two different traditions concerning Farhād are related, in both of which Farhād is, strangely enough, credited with the title of *sipahbad* (general).[75]

The first tradition has some resemblance with the one narrated in the just quoted passage on the wonders of Khusraw's reign in Balʿamī's chronicle (the second tradition from the *Mujmal* will be analyzed in ch. 2 below). Among the wonders of Khusraw's reign the author speaks of Shīrīn, the most beautiful among the 12,000 women of his harem – here, too, Shīrīn is only one of the women of Khusraw's harem. Then the author adds: "The *sipahbad* Farhād was in love with her. He executed the work at Bīsutūn, the vestiges of which are (still) visible".[76] According to this tradition, then, Farhād is enamoured of Shīrīn and the author of a work (perhaps this refers to the reliefs and inscription of Darius) on Mount Bīsutūn.

Another source speaking of Farhād in connection with Shīrīn is a passage from the *Siyar al-mulūk* (end of the eleventh-beginning of the twelfth century), which seems to pertain to a different tradition from the romantic one. In chapter forty-two, the advice of allowing women no access to the secrets of their men is illustrated with the following brief consideration: "As Khusraw nurtured such a love for Shīrīn handing her the reins of (his) pleasures, he used to do all she wanted. Inevitably Shīrīn became arrogant and – with such a great sovereign – was inclined towards Farhād".[77] Shīrīn is here considered as having, at least to a certain extent, requited Farhād's love.

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74 Balʿamī, *Tārikh*, 2: 1091. The same tradition is also reported in another recension of Balʿamī's chronicle, represented in the French translation by Zotenberg: "C'est de cette femme que fut amoureux Ferhâd, que Parwîz punit en l'envoyant extraire des pierres à Bisoutoun" (*Chronique de [...] Tabari...*, 2: 304). On the problem of the text of Balʿamī's chronicle see Aliev, *Legenda o Khosrove i Širin*, 75 fn. 47; and Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane*, 38-41.

75 *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 78-82 (for Farhād's title see 79, lines 12 and 17). See also the Berlin manuscript *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, ff. 29*v*-31*r*; in particular, for Farhād's title, see f. 30*r* lines 10 and 14.

76 *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 79,12-13; see also the Berlin manuscript *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, f. 30*r*10-11.

77 Cf. Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 246. Khismatulin ("To Forge a Book in the Medieval Ages") has convincingly demonstrated that Niẓām al-Mulk was not the author of either the last eleven chapters of the *Siyāsat-nāma/ Siyar al-mulūk*, or of the anecdotes of the first thirty-nine chapters. Khismatulin has also shown that the additions to the original piece are the work of the poet Muʿizzī at the beginning of the twelfth century.

Priscilla Soucek, in reference to this passage that she considers as going back to Sasanid sources, states that "the story of Farhād and Shīrīn originated at the Sassanian court".[78] However, this short passage only seems to reflect the unfavourable light surrounding Shīrīn in early texts, and probably also in Sasanid sources, well represented in the *Shāhnāma*; but, in itself, is insufficient to prove that the character of Farhād as lover of Shīrīn could hark back to Sasanid sources. On the subject, Aliev was definitively of the opposite opinion. Considering that there is no mention of Farhād (as enamoured of Shīrīn, or otherwise) either in Ṭabarī or in Jāḥiẓ, and that he is unknown to Christian (Byzantine, Armenian and Syriac) sources, Aliev concludes that the origins of this character must be considerably later than the events narrated in the poems. He asserts: "According to us it is certain that in the Pahlavi sources no mention of Farhād was to be found".[79]

In the romantic narrative tradition Farhād is chiefly the rival of Khusraw in his love for Shīrīn. He embodies the type of the lover who dies for his unhappy love, a literary type destined to great fortune in the Persian and other Islamic literatures, especially in connection with the increasing influence of mystic currents on literary production. (Such a development of the character in a mystical direction, and his partial overlapping with the figure of Majnūn, does not concern us here).

To sum up: Farhād as enamoured of Shīrīn is recorded for the first time in Balʿamī's chronicle, and is afterwards present in the first tradition concerning Farhād quoted in the *Mujmal*. This narrative feature is characteristic of the romantic narrative tradition, in its entirety.

8 Farhād as a Foreigner: His Social Status and Fatherland

Early non-literary sources speaking of the reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān and the master who carved them (see above, § 4.2) unanimously assert that the sculptor (variously named as Faṭṭūs, Qaṭṭūs, etc.) was the son of Sinimmār/Sinnimār, the constructor of the castle of Khawarnaq;[80] and Sinimmār is defined as *al-Rūmī* (the Greek). The foreign origins of the master of Ṭāq-i Bustān may possibly represent a historically reliable datum. Priscilla Soucek considers the reliefs in the main grotto as inspired by Greek (Byzantine) models;[81] and seems to lean

78   Soucek, "Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān", 45.

79   Aliev, *Legenda o Khosrove i Širin*, 73-5.

80   On this castle see Massignon, s.v. "Al-Khawarnaḵ"; Würsch, s.v. "Ḵawarnaq"; and "Das Schloss Ḫawarnaq nach arabischen und persischen Quellen".

81   Soucek "Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān", 29-34.

toward a possible Greek origin of the sculptor's name, as she writes: "The correct Greek form of the name has never been established".[82] Ernst Herzfeld, on the other hand, considers the form Qaṭṭūs, given by one of the manuscripts of Ibn al-Faqīh's work, as the closest to the original, and favours a purely Iranian origin of this name.[83]

In the romantic tradition Farhād is generally seen as a foreigner. In Niẓāmīs poem, among the features that make up his character, the most important one is that of being a loner, rootless and far from home: "Plants have roots in the earth; but not I. Dogs have their place in the world; but not I".[84] Moreover, in the famous question-and-answer confrontation (*munāẓara*) between Khusraw and Farhād, which is a set piece in all the poems in response to Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, and in many passages of the poem, Farhād embodies the type of the lover suffering from love without hope: he is a commoner, while his rival is a king, a powerful man.

In Amīr Khusraw's poem Farhād, though being an artist and a foreigner, becomes the son of the Khāqān of China living incognito abroad. Likewise, in 'Ārif's poem Farhād is the son of the Faghfur of China and a skilful architect, calligrapher and painter, dispossessed of his kingdom at his father's death by his paternal uncle. The increasing idealization of this character comes to a halt with Hātifī's poem: Farhād is here mainly presented as a specialized workman – the emphasis on the importance of work and manual skill being an issue probably dealt with in connection with the social advancement and prestige acquired by the artisan class in the Timurid period.

As to Farhād's fatherland, Niẓāmī is silent. He simply states that Shāpur and Farhād had been companions (*ham-zād*) in China, where both had studied under the same master.[85] Only in the poems composed after Niẓāmī is Farhād's Chinese origin asserted with certainty. As Shāpūr and Farhād are unanimously considered as artists – Shāpūr a painter, and Farhād a sculptor – their connection with China, the homeland of Mani (famous in Persian literature as a skilled painter) is hardly surprising. Moreover, according to a well-established tradition attributed to the prophet, China was the place where one should go to learn science. However, the foreign origin of Farhād can also represent a significant element in connection with the origins of this character (see ch. 2 below).

To sum up: Farhād is generally seen as a foreigner in the romantic tradition; and is considered of Chinese origin in the poems composed after Niẓāmī's poem. While already in Niẓāmī's poem, and afterwards

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82   Soucek "Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān", 40 fn. 69.
83   Herzfeld, "Khusraw Parwēz und der Ṭāq i Vastān", 97-8.
84   Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 56, 99.
85   Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 51, 17.

in Hātifī's, he is a highly qualified worker, with possibly a lower social status (at least in Hātifī), in the poems by Amīr Khusraw and ʿĀrif he appears as the son of the emperor of China. In the historical and geographical sources, instead, the master of Ṭāq-i Bustān, called Faṭṭūs, Qaṭṭūs, Fuṭrūs, etc. according to the different sources, is the son of the Greek Sinimmār/Sinnimār, the constructor of the castle of Khawarnaq.

9 Conclusions

From the review of the literary and non-literary sources given above it emerges that the two most ancient sources referring to the character of Farhād – Abū Dulaf's travelogue, and Balʿamī's chronicle – connect this character to Mount Bīsutūn. He is the sculptor of the "wonderful image and beautiful pictures" on the mountain side, according to Abū Dulaf; and is the lover of Shīrīn "punished by Khusraw Parvīz by sending him to dig the mountain", according to Balʿamī.

In the romantic narrative tradition, in the poems by Niẓāmī, ʿĀrif Ardabiīlī and Hātifī, Farhād is the carver of one or more channels, and in particular the carver of a channel, commissioned by Shīrīn, to bring the milk from the high mountainous pastures to her castle, the famous Qaṣr-i Shīrīn – Amīr Khusraw, however, places Farhād's channel in the area of Mount Bīsutūn. ʿĀrif does not only speak of the famous channel for milk, but also of a number of channels for carrying wine, that Farhād constructed for Shīrīn. Farhād's character as the constructor of one or more channels (for milk and for wine) is instead unknown to the earliest non-literary sources, and in particular to Ibn al-Faqīh's *Kitāb al-buldān* (beginning of the tenth century), in the section concerning Qaṣr-i Shīrīn and the reasons for its construction.

Farhād's legendary deed as Mountain-Excavator for love of Shīrīn is to be found – after a possible hint to it in the passage from Balʿamī's chronicle – in the poems by Niẓāmī and Hātifī, but not in Amīr Khusraw and ʿĀrif's poems: these authors give an idealized portrait of Farhād as the son of the emperor of China. As for the reasons for Farhād to being committed to mountain excavation, this deed is explained either as a punishment for his love for Shīrīn, as in Balʿamī's report, or as a trick devised by Khusraw and his minister(s) in order to get rid of him. Indeed, in Balʿamī's chronicle Farhād appears as if sentenced to hard labour at Mount Bīsutūn; whereas in the poetic narrative tradition the excavation of the mountain is presented as due to Khusraw's pretended wish to have a route carved through Mount Bīsutūn: a deed in which, contrary to Khusraw's expectations, Farhād succeeds.

The connection of Farhād with the reliefs of the site now called Ṭāq-i Bustān seems to be a relatively late narrative development. It seems to be first attested in Niẓāmī's poem; and becomes a central feature of the character of Farhād only in later poems, such as the

Farhād-nāma by ʿĀrif Ardabīlī. Earlier non-literary sources, such as Ibn al-Faqīh's *Kitāb al-buldān*, show however that, at the beginning of the tenth century, the development of legends concerning the master who realized the site were already circulating in the area.

A clear link between a certain 'Farhād' – a general under Khusraw Parvīz – and Ṭāq-i Bustān is attested by a passage from an early Persian historical source quoted in the anonymous historical work *Mujmal al-tavārīkh va'l-qiṣaṣ*, which will be analyzed in the second chapter of this study. This will give us the opportunity to discuss another personage, historical this time, who may have been also relevant in the growth of the legend of Farhād, especially in connection with its romantic development: Farhād as the unrequited lover, enamoured of a queen or a woman of royal origins.

2 General 'Farhād'

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Towards a Second Farhād: Farhād in the Mujmal al-Tavārīkh. – 3 The Hypotheses on the Origins of the Character of Farhād. – 4 Farrahān Shahr-barāz. – 5 Farrahān Between History and Legend. – 6 Legendary Developments of the Figure of Farrahān Shahr-barāz; the King of Syria. – 7 Conclusions.

1   Introduction

In chapter 1 a review of the sources concerning Farhād and the archeological sites of Mount Bīsutūn and Ṭāq-i Bustān has been conducted, with the purpose of individuating the main features of the character defined as 'The Master of Mount Bīsutūn'. There is a point on which the majority of the sources analyzed seem to agree: Farhād (in the poetic tradition), or the artist of the reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān (in the historical and geographical tradition) is a foreigner, his fatherland being placed in China according to poets, in Rūm (Greece, Byzantium) according to historians and geographers.

   In what follows I will attempt to show that the character of Farhād, as we know it from the Persian romantic tradition, represents the outcome of the literary development of the Master of Mount Bīsutūn with possible influences from a historical figure: Farrahān, alias Shahr-barāz, Khusraw Parvīz's supreme commander of the army (see below, § 4). Indeed, in the romantic transformation of the character of Farhād and its association with the narrative cycle centred around Khusraw and his love for Shīrīn, the conflation between the Farhād of Mount Bīsutūn and the historical character of Khusraw Parvīz's general may have been relevant.

2 Towards a Second Farhād: Farhād in the Mujmal al-Tavārīkh

The chapter related to the reign of Khusraw Parvīz in the anonymous Persian chronicle entitled *Mujmal al-tavārīkh va'l-qiṣaṣ* (composed in 520/1126 ca)[86] provides important information on the origins of 'the second Farhād'. After a tradition concerning Farhād's love for Shīrīn (see ch. 1, § 7), the author of the *Mujmal* – speaking of the relief of Shabdīz in the site now called Ṭāq-i Bustān – quotes a second and different tradition. His source is an earlier unpreserved text: the *Pīrūz-nāma* ('Book of Pīrūz' or 'Book of The Victorious').[87] It should be noted that in both traditions given by the *Mujmal* Farhād is qualified as *sipahbad* (general).

According to the *Pīrūz-nāma*, the sculpting of the reliefs at the site now called Ṭāq-i Bustān was the work of a foreign master called Kīṭūs (the Faṭṭūs/Qaṭṭūs etc. of other sources; see ch. 1, § 4.2). The text, however, also mentions another personage connected with the construction of the site: a general named Farhād. Indeed, the passage distinguishes General Farhād – who, according to current interpretation, directed (*farmūd*) the sculpting of the reliefs, the construction of a palace or portico (*ayvān*) in stone, and a castle (*qaṣr*) above it – from the person who, with other master masons, materially carried out the work: Kīṭūs, son of the Greek Sinimmār. When these works were completed – states the author, continuing to quote from the *Pīrūz-nāma* – Khusraw ordered them to be donated to Farhād.[88]

The passage from the *Pīrūz-nāma* quoted in the *Mujmal* has a convoluted syntax and its language seems to be quite archaic. Given its

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[86] On the *Mujmal*, see Daniel, "The Rise and Development of Persian Historiography", 136-9; Weber, Riedel, s.v. "Mojmal al-tawāriḵ wa'l-qeṣaṣ".

[87] On the *Pīrūz-nāma* as one of the sources of the *Mujmal* see M. Qazvīnī's introduction to the fac-simile edition of the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh* (1309/1920) from the Paris manuscript Persan 620, reprinted in *Mujmal al-tavārīkh va'l qiṣaṣ*, ed. Bahār (p. lām ṭā [=39]); and Weber, Riedel, s.v. "Mojmal al-tawāriḵ wa'l-qeṣaṣ". Concerning the date of the *Pīrūz-nāma*, Priscilla Soucek favors a dating to the pre-Islamic period ("Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān", 40). However, the *Pīrūz-nāma* seems more likely datable to the early Islamic period, because in another passage the author of the *Mujmal* says: "In the *Pīrūz-nāma* I read that the hate of Shāpūr [Dhu'l-aktāf: this title is only given in the heading of the paragraph, *pādšāhī-yi Shāpūr-i Dhu'l-aktāf*] towards the Arabs depended on the fact that in the sentences (*aḥkām*) of Jāmāsp he had read that, from among the Arabs, a prophet would come who would destroy the religion of Zarathustra" (*Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 66,2-14). The work alluded to in the latter statement is probably to be identified with the Pahlavi apocalyptic text *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg*, ed. and transl. by D. Agostini, in particular chapters 16 and 17, 109-15 (translation). On this basis, it seems possible a dating of the *Pīrūz-nāma* – like the last layer of Middle Persian Zoroastran apocalyptic texts – to the period immediately following the Islamic conquest of Iran (see Macuch, "Pahlavi Literature", 154-5).

[88] *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 79,16-20; see also the Berlin manuscript *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, f. 30*r*13-17.

importance, it will be quoted and translated in full. The author of the *Mujmal* says:

> *va dar Pīrūz-nāma čunān khwāndam ki īn ṣanʿathā bar sang Kīṭūs kard, pisar-i Simsār* [var. *Sinimmār*]-*i Rūmī, ān-ki Sidīr va Khavarnaq kard-ast, va Farhād-i sipahbad farmūd-aš bā ustādān-i dīgar. Va čun bipardākht ba farmān-i Khusraw – bad-ān sar-čašma ayvān būd, va qaṣr-ī bālā-yi īn ṣuffa-yi sangīn ki hanūz ba-jāy-ast, va šāh ānjā šarāb khward* [var. *khward-ī*] *bā buzurgān va sipāhān – ba Farhād dād. Va ānjā ṣifat-i Parvīz va Shabdīz va Shīrīn va Mawbad va shikārgāh hama ba-jāy-ast, nigāšta bar sang-ī*

I read in the *Pīrūz-nāma*[89] that these works in stone were made by Kīṭūs, the son of the Greek Sinimmār, the one who constructed the Sidīr and the Khavarnaq. General Farhād ordered him (to construct them), together with other masters.[90] When they were finished, by Khusraw's order – there was a portico on that spring, and a castle above this stone platform that still exists; and (when the works were finished) the king drunk wine there with the nobles and the army[91] – they were given to Farhād. The images of Parvīz, Shabdīz, Shīrīn, the Mawbad, and a hunting-place are all visible there, sculpted on a rock.[92]

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[89] In this place, both in the Bahār edition of the *Mujmal* (79,16), and in the Berlin manuscript (*Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, f. 30*r*13), the title of this work is given as *Sarvar-nāma* (the Book of the Lord), with a variant *Parvīz-nāma* in the apparatus of the Bahār edition. However, in other places of the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh* (37,14, 66,12, 70,22, 80,3 of the Bahār edition, corresponding to ff. 14*v*2 and 5, 25*r*16, 27*r*4, and 30*r*20 of the facsimile of the Berlin manuscript) the title of this important source is given as *Pīrūz-nāma*.

[90] In reference to a more archaic linguistic stage, the difficult passage *va Farhād-i sipahbad farmūd-aš bā ustādān-i dīgar* can also be interpreted as "and he [Kīṭūs] was ordered by General Farhād (to do it), together with other masters"; or as "and by General Farhād (the work) was ordered to other masters (too)", with *farmūd* in a passive/ergative value, and *bā* meaning 'to' (Middle Persian *bāz, bāz ō*). The overall meaning of the passage, however, would be the same. In the following phrase, I have interpreted *bipardākht* (they [the works] were finished), and *ba Farhād dād* (they were given to Farhād) as passive/ergative non agential forms.

[91] The Berlin manuscript gives here a lectio facilior (*Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, f. 30*r*16): *va šāh ānjā šarāb khward-ī bā buzurgān va laškariyān* (and the king there used to drink wine with the nobles and the soldiers). The reading of the Bahār edition (when the works were finished [...] the king drunk wine there with the nobles and the army) seems preferable. As Soucek ("Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān", 40) has noted, here a reference is probably to be seen to "the celebration of the completion of the works by a ceremony or festivity".

[92] The new critical edition of the *Mujmal*, based on four manuscripts in Heidelberg, Berlin, Dublin and Paris (*Mudjmal at-tawārīkh wa-l-qiṣaṣ: eine persische Weltgeschichte aus dem 12. Jahrhundert*) gives the same texts, apart from a more archaizing *īn ṣanʿathā **ba** sang bar Kīṭūs kard* instead of *īn ṣanʿathā **bar** sang Kīṭūs kard*. I wish to thank Anna Livia Beelaert for having checked the text, as I have not this edition at my disposal.

The interpretation of the verb *farmūd* "(Farhād) ordered" in the diffi-
cult passage *va Farhād-i sipahbad farmūd-aš bā ustādān-i dīgar* is prob-
lematic. That 'General Farhād' could have been the commissioner of
the work, i.e. the one who ordered these works to be accomplished,
seems to be improbable in light of what is stated at the end of the just
quoted passage, where it is reported that, when the works were fin-
ished, "by Khusraw's order ... they were given to Farhād", the com-
missioner of the works being – as unanimously stated also by other
sources – Khusraw Parvīz. For this reason, the passage has general-
ly been interpreted as meaning that general Farhād had been the su-
pervisor or director of the works. This is the interpretation given by
Soucek, who translates: "Farhād the Sipāhbad directed him [Kītūs]
with other workers".[93] And Jules Mohl more freely translates: "Lui [Ki-
tous] et les autres artistes travaillaient sous les ordres du Sipahbed
Farhād".[94] However, this interpretation is not convincing, because
farmūdan does not mean 'to direct or supervise a work'. I would like
to suggest a slightly different interpretation: "General Farhād ordered
him (Kītūs) to realize (the works), together with other masters", with
farmūdan meaning 'to tell (to do) something, to have something done'.[95]

The new interpretation of the passage from the *Pīrūz-nāma* assigns
a different role to 'General Farhād': he is not so much the commis-
sioner, or the supervisor of the works, as, rather, someone who had
a voice in the choice of the skilled workers in charge of the work, al-
so being the ultimate beneficiary of the site. But why is the Farhād
enamoured of Shīrīn called 'general', in the first tradition (see ch. 1,
§ 7)? And: why is the general of Khusraw Parvīz called Farhād in the
second tradition? Who is he?

In the *Mujmal*, a third passage (apparently not quoted from the
Pīrūz-nāma) mentions a *sipahbad* Farhād. It is to be found in the sec-
tion devoted to the notables of the Sasanid kings where, among Khus-
raw Parvīz's dignitaries, the author records: "The minister (*dastūr*)
was Kharrād Burzīn; the nobles were Bindūy and Gustaham (=Bisṭām),
his uncles; the general of the army (*sipahbad*) was Farhād".[96] Then,

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93 Soucek, "Farhād and Ṭāq-i Būstān", 40.

94 Mohl, "Extraits du Modjmel al-tewarikh", 127.

95 The use of *farmūdan* in the meaning 'to command, order (*farmān dādan*)', and 'to
tell' in a high and formal style, is quite ancient. See Wolff, *Glossar zu Firdosis Schahna-
me*, 610-12, s.v. "farmūdan"; see also the frequent expression *nāma farmūd* 'he told/or-
dered (to write) a letter' (Wolff, *Glossar*, 611A); and it is already attested in Manichae-
an Middle Persian (cf. Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Middle Persian
and Parthian*, 156A).

96 *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 96,10-11; see also the Berlin manuscript *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*,
f. 35*r*17-18. On Khusraw's uncles, and above all on Bisṭām, cf. Shapur Shahbazi, s.v.
"Besṭām o Bendōy"; Nöldeke, "Exkurs 7. Empörung des Bistâm"; and Howard-John-
ston, s.v. "Ḵosrow II".

the latter must be the Farhād referred to in the two passages from the *Mujmal* discussed above, where he bears the appellative of 'General'.

From historical sources we know that the commander-in-chief of Khusraw Parvīz's army was a general called Farrahān (or Farrukhān in some sources), also known by the title of Shahr-barāz.[97] It is therefore possible that the author of the *Mujmal*, or his source(s), confused together two personages: a fictional one, i.e. the Farhād of Mount Bīsutūn, and a historical one, Farrahān, Khusraw's general. The relationship between the two personages – if there is any relationship at all – has to be explained, starting from a review of the main theories concerning the origins of the character of Farhād.

3   The Hypotheses on the Origins of the Character of Farhād

Concerning the origins of the character of Farhād, three theories, put forward by Aliev (1960), Eilers (1971), and Scarcia (in Cristoforetti and Scarcia 2013), deserve consideration. Apart from Eilers's hypothesis, the theories by the other two scholars are influenced by the passage(s) on Farhād from the *Mujmal*.

Wilhelm Eilers compares Farhād to the character of Onnes (Ὄννης), the first husband of Semiramis, an Assyrian general to King Ninos; according to the legend, when King Ninos won Semiramis's love and married her, Onnes in despair committed suicide.[98] The similarity between the situation in the Semiramis legend, and the triangle Khusraw (corresponding to Ninos), Farhād (Onnes) and Shīrīn (Semiramis) is striking. This would be a further feature linking the legend of Semiramis with that of Shīrīn, according to Eilers.[99]

On the other hand, starting from the just quoted second passage from the *Mujmal*, Gianroberto Scarcia conjectures that the Farhād of the Persian romantic tradition was based on a true historical character, Khusraw's rebel uncle Bisṭām; and explains the name of the archeological site of Ṭāq-i Bustān not so much as "the Arch in the village named after the Uncle of Ḫusraw Parwiz", but as "the Arch of the Uncle of Ḫusraw Parwiz" *tout court*. Indeed, concerning Bisṭām, i.e. the name of the village where the relief of Shabdīz was located,

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[97]   On this personage see below, § 4. The author of the *Mujmal* does know a personage called Shahr-barāz, but seems to ignore that he was Khusraw's most famous general and the same person as the one called 'Farhād' in other places of the book. The author only knows that Shahr-barāz was one of the kings who reigned after Khusraw Parvīz (*Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 87), that he was not of kingly ascent (*na az aṣl-i šāhān būd*, 87,15B and 97,6), and that in the *Shāhnāma* he was called both Gurāz and Farāyīn (*Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 83,1).

[98]   Eilers, "Semiramis", 52 and fn. 90.

[99]   On the legend of Semiramis in connection with Shīrīn, see above ch. 1, § 2. See also Part II (*The Origins of Turandot*), ch. 2, § 1 below.

the author of the *Mujmal* adds: "Bisṭām was Gustaham, Khusraw's (maternal) uncle".[100] Scarcia thus conjectures that the arch was constructed by Bisṭām/Gustaham "to celebrate his fleeting moment of glory", and was then left unfinished after Khusraw Parvīz's triumph. As to the appellative *sipahbad*, Scarcia recalls that Khusraw's uncle belonged to the ancient and noble family of the Ispahbads; *sipahbad* in the *Mujmal* would therefore be not so much a title attributed to 'Farhād', but the name of his (i.e. of Bisṭām's) family.

When Khusraw, after having defeated the rebel general and usurper to the throne, Bahrām Chūbīn (591 CE), decided that the moment had arrived to rid himself of his uncles, Bisṭām formed an army, married Bahrām's widow, Gurdiya, and rebelled against Khusraw, proclaiming himself king. The final battle between Khusraw and Bisṭām was fought out in the vicinity of Hamadan, and therefore not far from Ṭāq-i Bustān. Khusraw defeated him, but only through treachery: Bisṭām was killed and his army scattered. Some sources cite Gurdiya, instigated by Khusraw, to be Bisṭām's assassin; soon after, Khusraw married her. Gurdiya, therefore, the wife of Bisṭām and responsible for his death, then married Khusraw: enough to give birth to the legend of the two rivals for love of a woman, who became the reason for the death of her unrequited lover 'Farhād'.[101]

This hypothesis is fascinating, but does not take due account of the passage, in the *Mujmal*, where it reports that "when the works were finished, by Khusraw's order [...] they were given to Farhād" (see above, § 2). This seems to exclude a possible identification of Farhād/Bisṭām as the commissioner of the arch. Moreover, the third just quoted passage from the *Mujmal* explicitly states that Farhād was the commander of Khusraw's army, and that he was someone different from Khusraw's uncle. If the *Mujmal* and its source, the *Pīrūznāma*, have to be taken as reliable historical sources, these texts give glimpses of a different historical background (see below, § 5).

In 1960 Ghazanfar Aliev put forward an interesting hypothesis to explain the appellative 'general' (*sipahbad*) attributed to Farhād in the *Mujmal*. As we have already seen (ch. 1, § 7), Aliev thinks that the origins of the Farhād character and legend, unknown to the Sasanid sources, are quite recent. He also focuses on the popular and oral origins of his legend, and thinks that only gradually the legend of the *Kūhkan*, the Excavator of Mount Bīsutūn – connected to the Mount Bīsutūn area – merged with the legendary cycle of the loves of Khusraw and Shīrīn. As to the *Farhād-i sipahbad* of the *Mujmal*, Aliev thinks that such

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100 *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 79,15; see also the Berlin manuscript *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, f. 30*r*12-13.

101 See Cristoforetti, Scarcia, "Talking about Sîmurġ and Tâq-i Bustân with Boris I. Marshak", 344-6 (*On the so-called Farhād*). On Khusraw's uncles see fn. 96 above.

an appellative must have arisen out of misreading – possibly due to the author of the *Mujmal* himself – of the name of Khusraw's famous general, *Farrahān* or *Farruhān*, also known to the sources as Farrukhān, and better known by the title of Shahr-barāz, the conqueror of Syria and Jerusalem. Indeed, according to Aliev, the name فرهان might have been graphically confused with and finally read as فرهاد, Farhād being a much more famous personage than Farrahān Shahr-barāz at the time of the composition of the *Mujmal*. Aliev's hypothesis, therefore, only concerns the origins of the title *sipahbad* attributed to Farhād in the *Mujmal*; indeed he rejects the idea of Farhād as a historical figure.[102]

Aliev's intuition about a graphic confusion between 'Farrahān' and 'Farhād' (only possible on the basis of the writing of this name in Arabic script[103]) may be illuminating in explaining the figure of Farhād in the *Mujmal*/*Pīrūz-nāma*. Aliev, however, does not discuss the second tradition reported by the *Mujmal* (see § 2 above), which seems to refer to a different Farhād from the one known from the romantic poetical tradition: he is neither the Mountain Excavator (*Kūh-kan*) for love of Shīrīn, nor a master stone-cutter or a sculptor, but a general who had a role in the construction of the site of Ṭāq-i Bustān. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the 'Farhād' of the second tradition from the *Mujmal*/*Pīrūz-nāma* actually referred to Khusraw Parvīz's general, whether his connection with the works at Ṭāq-i Bustān be historically true or not. 'Farhād' can in actual fact represent not only a misreading of the name, or title, 'Farrahān', but can be a trace of the superimposition of a historical character on that of the Master of Mount Bīsutūn.

To sum up: the two passages concerning Farhād in the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, in which Farhād bears the title of *sipahbad*, suggest that Farhād, the Master of Mount Bīsutūn, was here superimposed on another personage who in actual fact was a general. In particular the second passage, which has the *Pīrūz-nāma* as its source, clearly distinguishes General 'Farhād' from the Master of Ṭāq-i Bustān, named Kīṭūs.

4 Farrahān Shahr-barāz

Farrahān, or Farrukhān as he is called in some sources, is a key personage in the critical period which led to the destitution and death of Khusraw Parvīz and, shortly thereafter, to the end of the Sasanid dynasty. In the sources and in modern studies he is more often called Shahr-barāz.[104] He was Khusraw's most famous general, well-known

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102 Aliev, *Legenda o Khosrove i Širin*, 73-81 (in particular 77).

103 In ancient manuscripts, final *nūn* and *dāl/dhāl* can be easily confused.

104 On the forms of his names (or titles) see Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, s. vv. "Farroχān: 9. Ferruhān", 95; "Razmiozan", 260; and "Šahrwarāz", 277-8. On Razmyūzān/Romizān/

to both Christian and Islamic sources as the supreme commander of the Persian army during the long Perso-Byzantine war (603-628 CE). He is the general who made important territorial conquests for Khusraw when, after the murder of Maurice (602) – the Byzantine emperor who had restored Khusraw to his throne after Bahrām Chūbīn's revolt – Khusraw had at last a pretext to move against Byzantium.[105]

According to Cyril Mango's reconstruction, Shahr-barāz appears for the first time on the scene in 606-7 CE, when he leads the invasion of Mesopotamia, under Byzantine control at the time. He conquers Mardin, Amida and, in 609, Edessa. In the following year he crosses the Euphrates and takes possession of the city of Zenobia. In 611 he conquers Apamea, Emesa, Antioch. In 613 he conquers Damascus, thus taking control of a great part of Syria. In 614 he invades Palestine and conquers Jerusalem, finally taking the Holy Cross to Persia.[106] After many years of continuous victories, he suffers his first serious defeat in Armenia in 622. Afterwards, in 626, his army besieges Constantinople. On this occasion the Persian troops have a secondary role, compared to the role of the troops of the Avars. Mango voices a doubt: "On se demande si son manque d'activité n'était pas voulu".[107]

Romiuzān 'He who seeks the battle' (etymology according to Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, 260), the different forms of this title and the question of Razmyūzān's identity with Shahr-barāz, see Nöldeke in Ṭabarī, *Geschichte der Perser*, 290 fn. 3. On the identity between Shahr-barāz and Razmyūzān, and the forms of the latter title see also Banaji, "On the Identity of Shahrālānyōzān in the Greek and Middle Persian Papyri from Egypt", 30 fn. 18, who proposes a different etymology for the title Razmyūzān (34-35 and fn. 43; I wish to thank Matteo Compareti, who brought this article to my attention). On this matter, see also fn. 106 below.

105   On these events, see Mango "Héraclius, Šahrvaraz et la vraie croix". See also the articles by Howard-Johnston reprinted in the volume *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity*, and in particular his "Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity"; and Kaegi, Cobb, "Heraclius, Shahrbarāz, and al-Ṭabarī". See also Banaji, "On the Identity of Shahrālānyōzān", who also identifies Shahr-barāz as the general who in 619 conquered Alexandria, known from Greek and Middle Persian papyri from Egypt with the title of Shahr-ālānyōzān.

106   Scholars generally accept the datum, mainly reported by Christian sources, that the conqueror of Jerusalem was Shahr-barāz, and that he also had the title of Razmyūzān. However, both Ṭabarī and Balʿamī consider the general who conquered Jerusalem as a different person from the Farrahān (Farrukhān) also called Shahbarāz. Ṭabarī (*History*, V: *The Sāsānids*, 318) says that the conqueror of Jerusalem was Rumiyūzān (this is the form of the title given there), considered as a different general from Shahr-barāz; and Balʿamī (*Tārīkh*, 2: 1095) mentions, as the conqueror of Jerusalem, another commander (*sarhang*, captain), likewise different from Shahr-barāz, called Ṣadrān. Concerning the identity between Shahr-barāz and Rumiyūzān, Nöldeke expresses some doubts: "Ob es [the title 'Rumiyūzān'] nun ein früheren Title oder Beiname oder aber doch Name eines Unterfeldherrn ist der fälschlich mit seinem Obern verwechselt wird, kann ich nicht sagen" (Ṭabarī, *Geschichte der Perser*, 290 fn. 3).

107   Mango, "Héraclius, Šahrvaraz et la vraie croix", 106-7. According to Howard-Johnston, such an early political understanding between Heraclius and Shahr-barāz "should probably be rejected as a piece of deliberate disinformation, circulated to further Roman interests as the war reached its climax in 627-628" (see Historical commentary to Pseudo-Sebeos, *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, 223).

In the sources an anecdote revolving around an intercepted letter, narrated in many variants, throws some light on the deterioration in relations between Khusraw and Shahr-barāz and the latter's betrayal.[108] For some time after Khusraw's deposition and murder (February 628), Shahr-barāz continued to hold the conquered territories both in Mesopotamia and in Syria, keeping himself far from Persia. Mango indeed writes: "[After Khusraw's deposition and killing] les hostilités en Perse prirent fin, tandis que Šahrvaraz restait toujours dans les territoires qu'il avait conquis sur les Romains et *qu'il considérait, peut-être, comme sa propre satrapie*".[109] Only in July 629, according to some sources, a meeting and an agreement between him and the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (610-641) took place; after that Shahr-barāz came back to Persia.[110] About Shahr-barāz's rule over the occupied territories (Rūm, i.e. the Byzantine territory), Balʿamī writes: "Farrukhān [i.e. Farrahān Shahr-barāz] conquered all Rūm, and entrusted it to Maurice's son. But the people gathered together and said: 'We do not want the son of Maurice […].' Therefore Farrukhān kept on staying there and *ruling over Rūm as a king* (*malikī-yi Rūm hamī kard*)".[111] After Khusraw's murder, and the brief reigns of Shīrūya (Qubād II) son of Khusraw, and Ardashīr III son of Shīrūya, for a short period (40 days according to Firdawsī; from April 27 to June 630 CE, according to Justi[112]) Shahr-barāz reigned on the throne of Persia, hoping to transmit the kingdom to his sons; but he was soon killed.[113]

Parvaneh Pourshariati has recently argued that Farrukhān and Shahr-barāz were two different historical personages,[114] basing her

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108   This anecdote has been studied, in eastern Christian sources, by Mango, "Héraclius, Šahrvaraz et la vraie croix", 107-11. See also Howard-Johnston, "Al-Tabari on the last great war of Antiquity", 12-14, who compares the eastern Christian version of the anecdote with the one given by Ṭabarī; and especially Kaegi, Cobb, "Heraclius, Shahrbarāz, and al-Ṭabarī" (with further bibliography), who also analyze and translate the early Islamic version of the anecdote attributed to the traditionist al-Zuhrī (d. 142/742) preserved in the *Kitāb futūḥ al-Miṣr wa akhbārihā* by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871). A version of this anecdote is also given by Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 299-308, ll. 3841-959.

109   Mango, "Héraclius, Šahrvaraz et la vraie croix", 109 (emphasis added). Also one important account, quoted by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam in his *Kitāb futūḥ al-Miṣr* and attributed to the traditionist al-Zuhrī, clearly shows that "Heraclius left Shahrbarāz in possession of those regions under Persian occupation that he had captured" (Kaegi, Cobb, "Heraclius, Shahrbarāz, and al-Ṭabarī", 106).

110   See Mango, "Héraclius, Šahrvaraz et la vraie croix", 110-11.

111   Balʿamī, *Tārikh*, 2: 1095-6 (emphasis added).

112   Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, 95 (s.v. "Farroχān: 9. Ferruhān").

113   Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 385-90, ll. 1-48. On these events, see also Pseudo-Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 86-9 (ch. 40, 129-30); and Howard-Johnston, Historical commentary to Pseudo-Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 223-6.

114   Cf. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 142-53.

argument on the account given in the *Shāhnāma*.[115] However, that Shahr-barāz and Farrahān (this is probably the right form of the general's title[116]) were the same person emerges almost unanimously from the sources, included the *Shāhnāma*. In this poem Shahr-barāz (The Wild Boar of the Reign) is called Gurāz (Wild Boar, i.e. metaphorically Hero) probably because, as Nöldeke has suggested, the form Shahr-barāz, with two consecutive short syllables, would have been incompatible with the meter of the poem; and not infrequently this title is attested as Varāz/ Barāz alone.[117] After his accession to the throne, this same personage is called Farāyīn (فرايين). It is highly probable that the form 'Farāyīn' of the *Shāhnāma* originated as an erroneous reading of the other title borne by Shahr-barāz in its Pahlavi spelling: Farrukhān according to Theodor Nöldeke.[118]

It is also possible that the form 'Farāyīn' is not just the result of an erroneous reading of a Pahlavi word, but was dictated by the wish to deliberately obscure the honorific title of the general, afterwards usurper of the throne of Persia, responsible for the Persian defeat in front of Byzantium and, indirectly, for the fall of the Sasanid dynasty: a sort of *damnatio memoriae* through concealment of his regnal name or honorific title. Whereas the Christian sources and, to a certain extent, also some early Islamic sources do not present

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115 "for our argument that we are in fact dealing with two separate figures and not one, we fortunately possess a source that in this, as in many other cases, contains valuable information, and here must be deemed the most reliable, namely the *Shāhnāma* of Ferdowsī" (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 146).

116 See below, notes 118 and 133.

117 See Nöldeke in *Ṭabarī, Geschichte der Perser*, 292 fn. 2. According to Dieter Weber, 'Shahr' (Reign) was a prefixed honorific extension of titles such as Warāz (Wild Boar) or Palang (Leopard), and therefore could also be omitted (Weber, "Ein bisher unbekannter Titel aus spätsassanidischer Zeit", 234).

118 See Nöldeke in *Ṭabarī, Geschichte der Perser*, 292 fn. 2. In order to explain the form *Farāyīn* of the *Shāhnāma* it seems preferable to suppose a Pahlavi form <plh'n>, that is Farrahān, an adjective meaning 'glorious', from *farrah* 'glory' (spelled phonetically as <plh> instead of heterographically as GDE) and the adjectival suffix *-ān*. Indeed, *farrox(v)* 'fortunate, blessed' < Old Iranian **hu̯arna-hu̯ant-*, Avestan x*var°nah-vant-* (see Ḥasandūst, *Farhang-i rīša-shinākhtī-yi zabān-i fārsī*, 3: 2003-4, no. 3599, s.v. "Farrux") would have been spelled <plhw> in the Pahlavi script; and Farroxān would have been spelled <plhw'n> with a <w>, before suffix *-ān*, not represented in the form given by Firdawsī. It should also be noted that in its first occurrence in the printed edition of Ṭabarī's chronicle (*Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed Ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, 1002, l. 13), the general's title is not given as Farrukhān, but as Farruhān, with a vocalization with *u* which may represent a hybrid between Farrahān and Farrukhān. The form Farrukhān instead of Farrahān may have crept in as a *lectio facilior* instead of a less common Farrahān. Indeed, in Middle Persian both Farrox and Farroxān are frequently attested as proper names, spelled <plhw> or <plhw'> (Farrox), and <plhw'n> (Farroxān), respectively (see Gignoux, *Noms propres sassanides*, 82, no. 352, s.v. "Farrox", and 83, no. 354, s.v. "Farroxān").

Shahr-barāz in an unfavourable light,[119] the *Shāhnāma* – though not concealing Khusraw's responsibilities in the collapse of his own empire[120] – represents in some respects a different tradition, much more unfavourable to Shahr-barāz Farrahān.[121]

5 Farrahān Between History and Legend

Apart from narratives showing a high degree of literary elaboration and even mirroring a more or less deliberate purpose of distorting the recounting of events, reliable historical documents about Shahr-barāz are not numerous. Ryka Gyselen has published two seals belonging to a general named Pirag, having the honorary title of Shahr-barāz and living under King Khusraw (therefore either Khusraw I Anushirvān, or Khusraw II Parvīz). This general was the *spāhbed* of the side of the south (*kust ī nēmrōz*). In the second seal it is added: "(of the) Mihrān (family)".[122] Parvaneh Pourshariati has claimed the identification of the owner of the seal with the Shahr-barāz of the epoch of Khusraw II.[123] If the Shahr-barāz general of Khusraw Parvīz was a member of the ancient Mihrān family of Arsacid origins, the treatment reserved to him in the Persian and in some Islamic sources, starting from the ignominious episode of diarrhea at the moment of his enthronement narrated by Ṭabarī,[124] must be imputed to the seriousness of his faults. Ṭabarī only says that he did not belong to the reigning royal house, i.e. the Sasanid family; but in two places the *Mujmal* asserts that the Shahr-barāz who succeeded to the throne of Persia was not of royal blood.[125] The way Firdawsī describes Gurāz is

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[119]   This accounts for the report by al-Zuhrī, connected – according to Kaegi and Cobb – to the eastern Christian historiographical tradition. Indeed Kaegi and Cobb write: "The general presentation of Shahrbarāz's defection in the early Islamic historiographical tradition conforms to the presentation of the same event in the eastern Christian historiographical tradition as represented by Theophilus [...] all relate the fall of Persia to Khusraw's treachery toward his own trusted subjects" ("Heraclius, Shahrbarāz, and al-Ṭabarī", 103).

[120]   On Khusraw Parvīz's downward spiral see Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 299-319, ll. 3839-4107.

[121]   At the beginning of the episode narrating the last years of Khusraw's reign (Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 299-319, ll. 3847-9), Gurāz is qualified as *bī-hunar* (unskilful), *dīv-sar* (bad-tempered), *bī-dād* (unjust), and *shūm* (bad ominous).

[122]   Gyselen, *The Four Generals of the Sasanian Empire: Some Sigillographic Evidence*, 40-1, seals 2d/1 and 2d/2.

[123]   Pourshariati, "Recent Discovered seals of Wistaxm, uncle of Husraw II?". Banaji, "On the Identity of Shahrālānyōzān", 29 fn. 13, rejects Pourshariati's identification.

[124]   Ṭabarī, *History*, V: *The Sāsānids*, 402-3.

[125]   See fn. 97 above. Concerning Shahr-barāz, Ṭabarī (*History*, V: *The Sāsānids*, 402) says: "He was not of the royal house of the kingdom". In the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh* (87,15

not fitting for someone of noble origins.[126] Firdawsī even represents a dialogue between the just enthroned Farāyīn and his two sons; his eldest son, while expressing his concerns about his father's decision to ascend to the throne of Iran, says: "When has any of our fathers ever been a king!", thus asserting their not royal ascent.[127] Shahr-barāz is instead considered as a Sasanid in the *Chronicle of Seert*.[128]

If the *Pīrūz-nāma*, as quoted by the *Mujmal*, is to be considered a reliable historical source, it seems to depict Khusraw and Farrahān in their moment of glory, before Farrahān's treachery and the final catastrophe. Indeed, this text seems to present the construction of the main arch and the front reliefs of Ṭāq-i Bustān as a celebration of Khusraw's victories over Byzantium, in a moment in which "Khusro had every reason to be confident that final victory was within his grasp … (and) commissioned several monuments designed to celebrate and commemorate his forthcoming victory".[129] Farrahān was the protagonist of these victories; hence his connection with the monument – whether the statement that it was afterwards given to him (possibly as a recompense for his war achievements) be historically true, or not. Having long stayed in the Byzantine occupied territories, Farrahān may have been informed about the most skilled local artists; hence a second reason for his connection with the site. Though not all scholars are inclined to attribute the reliefs in the front panels of the main grotto of Ṭāq-i Bustān to Khusraw Parvīz's epoch, and their meaning and historical context are still debated, the *Pīrūz-nāma* would provide further evidence – to be subjected, of course, to critical scrutiny – endorsing their attribution to the epoch of Khusraw Parvīz.[130]

If, instead, the tradition about Farhād given by the *Mujmal*/*Pīrūz-nāma* has not to be considered as historically reliable, its value for literary studies is nevertheless relevant. It shows that the figure of Farrahān Shahr-barāz had soon entered legend.

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col. B and 97,6) it is written: "(He was) not of royal descent (*na az aṣl-i šāhān/mulūk*)"; see also the Berlin manuscript *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, ff. 32v15 and 35v5.

126   See fn. 121 above.

127   Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 386, l. 5B.

128   Cf. Mango, "Héraclius, Šahrvaraz et la vraie croix", 110.

129   Howard-Johnston, "Pride and fall: Khusro II and his regime", 94. Luschey ("Bisutun. Geschichte und Forschungsgeschichte", 129), in reference to the many monuments commissioned by Khusraw II in this period speaks of 'Bauprogramm'.

130   A different date for the reliefs in the main arch of Ṭāq-i Bustān has been presented and discussed by Callieri, *Architecture et représentation dans l'Iran sassanide,* 154-9. For a recent review of the hypotheses on the date and context of this monument see also Compareti, "La raffigurazione della 'gloria iranica' nell'arte persiana e la sua distinzione dall'uccello fenice/simurgh", 10-15; and "Observations on the Rock Reliefs at Taq-i Bustan".

6   Legendary Developments of the Figure of Farrahān Shahr-barāz; the King of Syria

In a legend focusing on the figure of Shahr-barāz, the latter appears as the (probably unwanted) husband, and afterwards as the unrequited suitor to the hand of Būrān, daughter of Khusraw II and, after the murder of Ardashīr III son of Shīrūya, queen of Iran (630-631 CE).[131]

In what appears to be the earliest attestation of the legend, given in the Armenian history attributed to Sebeos (mid seventh century),[132] Būrān is said to be Shahr-barāz's wife. (It must be noted that the name of the famous general and usurper of the throne of Persia is given here as Khoṙeam, i.e. probably Khorre(h)ān, a variant of the title 'Farrahān' under which the general was also known[133]). As a marriage between Shahr-barāz and Būrān does not seem to be attested in other sources, this marriage may represent an early legendary development. It is also to be noted that in this text, immediately after the murder of Khoṙeam Shahr-barāz, a different personage, Khoṙokh Ormizd (Farrukh Hurmuz of Islamic sources[134]), appears as the unwanted – in fact, killed – suitor to the hand of Būrān (Bor in the Armenian text).

The passage from the Armenian chronicle is as follows: "[After Khoṙeam's killing] they [the Persians] installed as queen Bor, Khosrov's daughter, who was his [Khoṙeam's] wife, and they appointed as chief minister at court Khoṙokh Ormizd, who was prince of the region of Atrpatakan. Then this Khoṙokh sent (a message) to the queen: 'Become my wife'. She agreed, saying: 'Come with a single man at midnight, and I shall fulfil your wish'. Arising at midnight, he went with a single aide. But when he entered the royal palace, the guards of the court fell on him, struck him down and killed him".[135]

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[131]   On this queen see below, Part II, ch. 3.

[132]   Cf. Pseudo-Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 89 (ch. 40,130).

[133]   Th. Nöldeke (in *Ṭabarī, Geschichte der Perser*, 292 fn. 2), without questioning that Shahr-barāz and Farrukhān were the same person, considers unlikely that this personage could have been called both Farrukhān and Khurrahān (*Chorahân*). However, an oscillation between different outcomes of a same word is attested for other proper names too. Suffice it to quote Bisṭām ~ Gustaham; (Shahr-)Barāz ~ Gurāz; Fahrabadh or Bahlabad ~ Bārbad (Khusraw Parvīz's famous musician). Indeed, in the title borne by Khusraw's general, *farrah/farre* and *khwarrah/khorre* are two parallel outcomes corresponding to Old Median *farnah-* and Young Avestan *xvarənah-* 'glory' respectively – the form with *f-* having traditionally been considered of Median origin, though being found in many other Iranian languages and dialects (see Gnoli, s.v. "Farr(ah)"; for a different explanation of the origin of the *f-* forms see Lubotsky, "Scythian Elements in Old Iranian", 191-5; see also Shavarebi, Qaemmaqami, "Les mots moyen-perses XWARRAH et FARR"). As to the Armenian spelling Khoṙeam, with ṙ representing Iranian *rr < rn*, see Bolognesi, *Le fonti dialettali degli imprestiti iranici in armeno*, 28.

[134]   On this personage, see Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 146-53.

[135]   Cf. Pseudo-Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 89 (ch. 40,130).

In the *History* of Ṭabarī the heroine of this story is Āzarmīdukht, Būrān's sister and queen after her for a short period. She – says the author – was "one of the most beautiful of the women of the Persians". When Farrukh Hurmuz, who is here defined as the "Iṣbahbadh of Khurāsān", sent a message asking her to give herself in marriage to him, she answered: "Marriage to a queen is not permissible". She then convened him for an amorous encounter, and had him murdered by the commander of her guard.[136] Despite the many differences with the legend of Farhād, in this narrative it is possible to recognize some of the characteristic motifs of the latter legend: one is, broadly speaking, the motif of the suitor who dies because the woman he loves does not reciprocate him, or has him killed; another motif is, more specifically, that of the lower social status of the suitor, who cannot aspire to the queen's hand as he is not of kingly descent. The latter, despite the corrections introduced by some poets who transformed Farhād into the son of the Emperor of China, is one of the main features of the character of Farhād in the romantic tradition: Farhād's love is without hope, because his rival is a king and he is only a commoner (see ch. 1, § 7).

The tradition which identifies Farrahān Shahr-barāz, instead of Farrukh Hurmuz, as the unrequited wooer of queen Būrān seems to be first attested in Ibn al-Faqīh's *Kitāb al-buldān* (beginning tenth century). In a line from the poem in which Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, i.e. Ibn al-Faqīh himself, describes the reliefs at the site of Ṭāq-i Bustān, Ernst Herzfeld identifies a certain Khurrīn ("Et Ḫurrīn qui s'est élancé et qui, de sa fleche, fait signe à une jeune beauté qui ne parle pas"[137]) as Farrahān Shahr-barāz, the young beauty not responding to his nod being identified with Būrān.[138] If Herzfeld's interpretation of the line in question is to be accepted, this text, beyond providing an early attestation of the legend of Shahr-barāz as unrequited suitor to Būrān's hand, also attests to an early connection of his character with Ṭāq-i Bustān and its reliefs: a proof that, at the beginning of the ninth century, the legend of the unrequited wooer, still identified with Khusraw's general, was already widespread in the area.

The tradition which gives Farrahān Shahr-barāz as Būrān's unwanted husband seems to be also reflected in one of the stories intercalated in Abū Dulaf's second *risāla* (mid-tenth century).[139] At the

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136 Ṭabarī, *History*, V: *The Sāsānids*, 406.

137 Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 216,5 (French transl., 261). Khurrīn (Khwarrēn) would be a slightly different adjectival form meaning 'glorious', from *khwarr/khorr* 'glory' and the adjectival suffix *-ēn*, used here in reference to the famous general.

138 Herzfeld, "Khusraw Parwēz und der Ṭāq i Vastān", 99.

139 Minorsky, "Two Iranian legends in Abū-Dulaf's second risālah", 175-8. On Abū Dulaf see Minorsky, "Abū Dulaf, Misʿar b. Muhalhil al-Ḵẖazraḏj̄ī al-Yanbuʿī", 116.

end of his description of Tustar, Abū Dulaf speaks of a high ranking lady – whose name is hardly recognizable in this very damaged passage – who had built a wonderful bridge in Tustar. About her Abū Dulaf recounts a story: on the very night of her wedding, with the help of her beardless pages dressed up as slave-girls, she killed "the king of the Yemen" who – after having murdered her kingly "brother" – had married her. Vladimir Minorsky, who published and analyzed this tale, identifies the royal princess who killed the usurper to the throne as Būrān,[140] and the King of the Yemen as Shahr-barāz – in actual fact, the latter had killed Ardashīr, the son of Būrān's brother Shīrūya, and not her brother. Minorsky defines the character of the King of the Yemen as "a mere invention" due to Abū-Dulaf himself; and adds: "Of what he [Abū-Dulaf] heard he must have retained only the fact that the usurper came from a far-away place".[141] This is exactly the feature shared by both the legendary character of Farhād, and the historical or – better – semi-historical character of Shahr-barāz: both come from a far-away country.

Shahr-barāz appears as the hero of a number of legends, which are like scraps of a more ancient corpus focusing on the figure of the famous general. This legendary corpus was possibly the object of one of the lost works quoted by Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist* under the title: *Kitāb Shahrīzād* (sic for *Shahr-barāz*) *ma'a Abarwīz*.[142]

Among these legends one must have been that of the 'Treasure carried by the wind' (*ganj-i bād-āvard*) which, in Niẓāmī's poem, is only the name of one of the melodies sung by Bārbad at Khusraw's court.[143] This story is briefly recounted by Bal'amī, in the section devoted to the wonders of Khusraw's kingdom – though in this text no reference to Shahr-barāz's role is to be found. According to Bal'amī, the King of Rūm (the Byzantine emperor) had sent some ships charged with a fabulous treasure to Abyssinia (Ḥabash), in order to preserve his riches from the dangers of the war; but the wind had pushed the ships onto the coasts of Oman, and they had fallen into Khusraw's hands.[144] Mas'ūdī, in his *Kitāb murūj al-dhahab* (332/943), preserves another variant of this story, which explicitly attributes the recovering of the treasure to Shahr-barāz. In this text Shahr-barāz, whose title is deformed into Shahr(i)bār (a form not too different from the one given

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140 Būrān is also famous for having constructed or repaired a number of bridges. About her Ṭabarī says: "She gave orders for silver coins to be minted, and she repaired masonry bridges (*al-qanāṭir*) and bridges of boats (*al-jusūr*)" (*History*, V: *The Sāsānids*, 404).

141 Minorsky, "Two Iranian Legends in Abū-Dulaf's Second risālah", 177.

142 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 1: 305.

143 Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 48, 7.

144 Bal'amī, *Tārikh*, 2: 1091.

in the *Fihrist*), is the margrave (*marzbān*, 'general of the confines') of Maghreb. He recovers the fabulous 'Treasure carried by the wind' on the shores of Antioch, the city he had conquered.[145]

A second legend connected with the figure of Shahr-barāz, possibly going back to ancient pre-Islamic sources, is that of the epistolary exchange – with interception of a letter – between Shahr-barāz and Khusraw, already mentioned above (§ 4). Both legends must be of early origins and are recounted in a long narrative concerning Khusraw Parvīz and Shahr-barāz inserted in the *Kitāb al-tāj*, in the section devoted to the deceptions used by kings as a means to win a war or a conflict.[146]

The *Kitāb al-tāj* recounts that during a long siege to his capital, the King of Rūm (the Byzantine emperor) had proposed an accord between him and Shahr-barāz, but the latter had refused; Shahr-barāz is indeed depicted as a loyal and valiant general, who gained many victories and successes for Khusraw. The King of Rūm had then prepared himself for naval war, charging his ships with immense treasure and riches. A storm had sunk the king's ships, and Shahr-barāz had recovered the treasure and had sent it to Khusraw, who of course was delighted with it. However, one of Khusraw's slaves (*ghulām*) called Rustah, who was an enemy of Shahr-barāz (no reason for this is given), succeeded in changing Khusraw's heart towards his general. At this point a different and possibly more ancient version of the anecdote of the exchange of letters between Khusraw and Shahr-barāz is given, which is reported in order to illustrate Khusraw's skillfulness in deceiving his faithful general.

In this narrative, the character of the faithful Shahr-barāz deceived by Khusraw may well recall the loyal Farhād deceived by Khusraw with the false news of Shīrīn's death. This narrative, though probably being of ancient pre-Islamic origins, confirms the existence of a tradition favourable to Shahr-barāz, different from the anti-Shahr-barāz tradition offered by other Persian texts such as the *Shāhnāma* (see above).

Very soon the historical figure of Farrahān Shahr-barāz fell into oblivion; of his real biography only some features survived, transformed into legend. His connection with Rūm, the territories of the Byzantine empire under his control, was transformed into his being the king of a far-away country: Yemen, Maghreb or – in the poetic narrative tradition – Syria.

Indeed, in the poems of love and adventure, which represent a stream parallel to that inaugurated by Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn*,

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145 Maçoudi, *Les prairies d'or*, 2 : 226-7. A still slightly different version of the story of the Treasure carried by the wind (without mention of Shahr-barāz), is given by Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, *Shirin va Khosrow*, 86-89, ll. 969-1005.

146 Pseudo-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj fī akhlāq al-mulūk*, 180-5 (French transl., 196-202).

there is a character, called 'The King of Syria', which corresponds to Farhād in Niẓāmī's poem: he is the rival of the hero, as is Farhād with reference to Khusraw in Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn*. In fact, the King of Syria (in Khwājū Kirmānī's *Gul va Nawrūz*, composed in 742/1341), or the son of the King of Syria (in Salmān Sāvajī's *Jamshīd va Khwarshīd*, composed in 763/1372), is the rival of the hero in his love for the beautiful female protagonist.

In the first poem, Khwājū Kirmānī's *Gul va Nawrūz*, Nawrūz falls in love with Gul, the daughter of the Qayṣar (the emperor of Byzantium), having heard a description of her from a traveling merchant. Ignoring his father's opposition, he sets out for Rūm. On the way there he meets with various adventures, including an encounter with a handsome young man suffering the pains of love: this is Farrukh-rūz, King of Syria, who with his army had unsuccessfully sought to overcome the Qayṣar's resistance and obtain the hand of his daughter, Gul. The character of Farrukh-rūz, King of Syria, who at the head of his army endeavours to beat down the resistance of the Qayṣar, the Byzantine emperor, recalls the figure of General Shahr-barāz leading his army in a number of military expeditions in Byzantine territory. The name 'Farrukh-rūz' seems even to echo the title 'Farrukhān' under which the general was known in some sources, or, possibly, the name of Farrukh Hurmuz, the personage which was replaced by Shahr-barāz in his role of rejected suitor to the queen's hand, in the just analyzed legend.

Also in the second poem, Salmān Sāvajī's *Jamshīd va Khwarshīd*, Jamshīd, son of Shāpūr, king of China, falls in love with a beautiful girl glimpsed one night in a dream. After much fruitless search, he realizes from the description of a merchant that this beauty is Khwarshīd (Sun), daughter of the Qayṣar of Rūm. Jamshīd sets out and, after a series of adventures, meets Khwarshīd, who immediately returns his love. Only after defeating Shādī, son of the King of Syria, who is also a suitor to Khwarshīd, Jamshīd is able to marry the daughter of the Qayṣar. He returns to China and ascends his father's throne.

The character of the King of Syria (or of the son of the King of Syria) cannot be explained other than as a romantic re-elaboration of the figure of General Farrahān, rival of Khusraw Parvīz – though not, of course, for love of a woman. The surprising war exploits and territorial conquests made by Shahr-barāz under Khusraw's orders, coupled with a remote memory of his mutiny and his prolonged stay in the occupied territories, made of him the king of a far-away country. His true or supposed agreement with Heraclius, the emperor of Byzantium, was transformed into his being a suitor to the hand of

the latter's daughter.[147] It is as if a distant memory of ancient events had later offered the backdrop for a narrative transposed into a romantic plan, with the protagonists of war events transformed into two rivals for love of a woman, the latter being the daughter of the Byzantine emperor, in the tradition of the poems of love and adventure; Shīrīn, in Niẓāmī's poem *Khusraw va Shīrīn* and in the poems composed in response to it.

From a functional point of view, then, the King of Syria corresponds to Farhād, the rival of Khusraw. At the same time, this character also preserves some features of the historical Shahr-barāz as, in actual fact, the latter had conquered Syria, and had continued to keep it as his own kingdom for a period. From a merely literary point of view the King of Syria recalls Shahr-barāz's legendary role of unrequited wooer of queen Būrān.

7 Conclusions

In the romantic narrative tradition the character of Farhād has a double origin: he is, mainly and first of all, the Master of Mount Bīsutūn, of which Abū Dulaf preserves early evidence (mid-tenth century). This character, connected with the region of Mount Bīsutūn, is probably of popular origin, though having an early prototype – according to Wilhelm Eilers – in the character of Onnes, Semiramis's first husband, King Ninos's general. Very soon, however, Farhād the Master merged into the figure of another 'Farhād', Khusraw Parvīz's general, his rival for the throne of Persia and – in the romantic narrative tradition – his rival tout court.

The merging of 'the two Farhāds' is attested by a lost text, the *Pīrūz-nāma*, of which some passages are quoted in the anonymous *Mujmal al-tavārīkh* (first half of the twelfth century). Ghazanfar Aliev was right in supposing that the 'General Farhād' of the *Mujmal* had to be understood in reference to Khusraw Parvīz's famous general, Farrahān. However, in the *Mujmal* the identity between Farhād and Farrahān is not just an error in the reading, as Aliev had supposed. It is a clue bringing to light the overlap of two characters, a popular and fictional one, and another endowed with an ancient historical origin.

A series of legends analyzed in the second chapter of this study shows that Khusraw Parvīz's famous general, mainly known by the title of Shahr-barāz, was gradually transformed into the type of the unrequited suitor aspiring to the hand of the queen of Persia (Būrān,

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147 In actual fact, marriage bonds between the families of Heraclius and Shahr-barāz are mentioned in the Syriac history by Nicetas (see Mango, "Héraclius, Šahrvaraz et la vraie croix", 105).

or her sister Āzarmīdukht); as he was not of royal ascent, he was unfit for such a marriage. The texts analyzed for this research let us suppose that only afterwards was the woman loved by the general gradually identified with Shīrīn: this triggered the transformation of Khusraw Parvīz's general into his rival for love. Despite the evident differences between the legend of Shahr-barāz and that of Farhād, this study suggests that the character of Farrahān Shahr-barāz may have merged with the character of Farhād, the Master of Mount Bīsutūn, to contribute to the 'romantic' development of the latter's figure.

Part II
The Origins of Turandot: the Development
of a Character from Shīrīn to Būrān-dukht

1 The Turandot Tale

Summary   1 Introduction: the Misogamist Woman and Her Riddles. – 2 The Eastern Prose Turandot Tales. – 3. Niẓāmī's Tuesday Tale.

1   Introduction: the Misogamist Woman and Her Riddles

The present study aims to trace the historical-legendary origins and early development of a female character, that of Būrān-dukht, that is supposed to have lent her name and some of her features to the character of Turandot. Turandot is the heroine of the tale – well-known in Europe from Puccini's opera (1926) – of the beautiful, learned and cruel princess who sets riddles to her suitors to be answered, on pain of death, as a necessary condition for her consent to marry: she will only marry the man who proves to be superior to her in intelligence and learning by answering her questions or riddles and who, in his turn, is able to set questions that she cannot answer.[1] In Europe, the tale of Turandot, as well as the name 'Turandot' for the female protagonist, are attested for the first time in François Pétis de la Croix's tale collection *Les Mille et un Jour(s)* (Paris, 1710-12, 5 vols.; see below, ch. 6, § 1).

Two historical personages, both called Būrān or Būrān-dukht, did lend some of their, mostly legendary, features and their name to the character here studied: they are Būrān(-dukht), daughter of Khusraw II Parvīz and queen of Iran for a brief period (630-631 CE; see ch. 3) and, more prominently, Būrān(-dukht), the daughter of Ḥasan b. Sahl, wife of Caliph al-Maʾmūn (813-833 CE), as her historical figure and the account of her wedding to the caliph are re-elaborated in later sources (ch. 4). Other historical and legendary characters (in particular Shīrīn; ch. 2) have also been considered relevant in this research. What

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[1]   These are tale-types AT 851 ("The Princess who Cannot Solve the Riddle") and 851A ("Turandot") in the Aarne and Thompson catalogue (*The Types of the Folktale*, 286). See also Goldberg, "Rätzelprinzessin".

is common to the two Būrāns is their name, and a narrative motif that springs from their – mostly legendary – biography: the motif of the learned, clever, or warrior woman, who delays the wedding or the union even, in the case of the first Būrān, by fighting or killing her suitor. Only for the second Būrān is also the narrative element of the riddles or enigmatic expressions, as a means of avoiding or delaying the union with the caliph, also attested. This makes the wife of caliph al-Ma'mūn the most suitable candidate to be the prototype of the Turandot of European tales.

In this study, dedicated to the development of a character, and not to a tale-type, the typological differences between the analyzed stories, taken from texts pertaining to different genres (historical chronicles, narrative poems, works of *adab*), are considered irrelevant, as is considered irrelevant the type of riddles, or tests (of cleverness, courage, etc.), or simple questions, asked; the person who poses the riddles, the heroine (a princess or a handmaiden), the hero (mostly a prince), or both;[2] and the ability of the hero or heroine to answer them. Likewise, the issue of possible influences of riddle tales from literature in other languages on the development of the tale of the princess and the riddles for consenting to a marriage will not be dealt with.

2 The Eastern Prose Turandot Tales

In the literature of the Islamic world some prose texts in Persian and Turkish exist, that represent the source of the Turandot tale of European literature. These texts have been the object of research starting from the publication of the groundbreaking article by Fritz Meier in 1941.[3] Though in the Eastern variants of the tale known so far the princess has no name, being indifferently referred to as "the daughter of the Qayṣar of Rūm [the King of Rūm, i.e. Greece, Byzantium]" or as "the daughter of the Faghfūr [Emperor] of China", the label 'Turandot tale' is generally also used in reference to pre-European attestations of the tale.[4] As Ettore Rossi explains, "… the tale of the princess and her questions, and then of Prince Khalaf and the

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2 Other personages too – most typically the bride's father – may pose riddles or submit the suitor to different tests of skill, courage and cleverness before giving consent to a marriage. See for example the story of Sarv, king of Yemen, and the three sons of Firīdūn in Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 98-103 (*Firīdūn*, ll. 143-220).

3 On pre-European attestations of the tale see Meier, "Turandot in Persien"; Rossi, "La leggenda di Turandot"; Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot. Die persische Märchenerzählung*, especially 17-34.

4 In German the term 'Rätzelprinzessin' is often used in reference to this character and the type of tale in question.

Princess of China, became the tale of Turandot. The tale came to be conventionally named thus, even for earlier stages of it".[5] Following this tradition, we will continue to speak of 'Turandot tale' also for pre-European attestations of it.

At present, the first known instance of the Turandot tale in Islamic literatures is the one in Muḥammad 'Awfī's Persian collection of anecdotes entitled *Javāmi' al-ḥikāyāt va lāvāmi' al-rivāyāt* (dedicated in 665/1228).[6] Despite being shorter than the later variants, 'Awfī's tale is considered as the prototype of the later redactions of the story: it contains all the characteristic features of the Turandot tale as they are attested in later texts.[7]

Recently, an apparently unique Persian manuscript has been drawn to the attention of researchers in connection with the study of Persian folk-literature and the Turandot tale: it is MS Or. 9317 of the British Library, containing a work entitled *Mu'nis-nāma* by an otherwise unknown author named Abū Bakr Ibn Khusraw al-Ustād.[8] The work is dedicated to the Atabek of Azerbayjan Nuṣrat al-Dīn Abū Bakr Ibn Muḥammad of the Ildegozid dynasty; therefore – though the manuscript bearing it is later – the *Mu'nis-nāma* must have been composed between 591/1194 and 607/1210.[9] The manuscript contains, apart from other works by Ibn Khusraw, a collection of tales (ff. 61*r*-365*r*) which includes an early Persian redaction of the Turandot tale. This shows that attestations of the tale earlier than the one given in 'Awfī's collection did certainly exist.[10] Unluckily, the text of this very tale has been lost due to a gap in the manuscript; but its inclusion in the collection is attested by the manuscript's table of contents, where the tale is entitled "Prince Khalaf and the daughter of the Faghfūr of China"; a title which would seemingly provide an early attestation of the name of the hero, though giving no name for the princess. Therefore, at present 'Awfī's tale remains the most ancient preserved version of the Turandot tale. Incidentally, it is inter-

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5 "la fiaba che fino allora era stata quella della principessa e dei suoi quesiti, poi del Principe Khalaf e della Principessa della Cina, diventa la fiaba di Turandot e con tal nome viene designata convenzionalmente anche per il periodo anteriore" (Rossi, "La leggenda di Turandot", 471).

6 See below, ft. 13.

7 Cf. Meier, "Turandot in Persien", 7; Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 19-21. In both studies 'Awfī's tale is termed the 'Ur-Roman'.

8 See Marzolph, *Relief After Hardship*, 47-8, who refers to the article by Meredith-Owens, "An Early Persian Miscellany".

9 Meretith-Owens, "An Early Persian Miscellany", 435. On the Ildegozid dynasty see Luther, s.v. "Atābakān-e Ādarbāyjān", who gives as the dates of Nuṣrat al-Dīn Abū Bakr's rule 587/1191 to 607/1210.

10 For an appraisal of the tale collection contained in the *Mu'nis-nāma* for the studies on the 'Turandot tale' see Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 128-9.

esting to note that the dedicatee of Ibn Khusraw's collection of tales is the son of one of the dedicatees of Niẓāmī's poems, Muḥammad Jahān-pahlavān;[11] and that the collection of tales in the *Mu'nis-nāma* is more or less coeval with the composition of Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar* (593/1197; see below § 3).

A comprehensive review, analysis and edition of the Eastern prose redactions of the Turandot tale is still lacking.[12] Recently Youssef Mogtader and Gregor Schoeler have published, with a German translation, not only 'Awfī's Turandot tale,[13] but also a longer Persian prose redaction of the tale from MS Ouseley 58 in the Bodleyan Library, Oxford.[14] This is the text that Meier had already summarized from the Bodleian manuscript, also supposing that, despite the fact that the manuscript is quite recent, it represents an earlier stage, or even the source, of Pétis de la Croix's tale.[15] (For a summary of the Turandot tale in 'Awfī and in the longer Persian prose redaction of the tale, see Appendix below).

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[11] On the dedicatees of Niẓāmī's poems and the poems' chronology see François de Blois, *Persian Literature*, V, pt. 2, 439-46; and V, pt. 3, 585-91.

[12] Some of the Persian and Turkish manuscript redactions of the tale have been cited and – some of them – summarized in the studies quoted in fn. 3 above. Manuscript copies of the Persian 'long tale' are pointed out by Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 124. Ulrich Marzolph gives detailed summaries, bibliographical references and a thorough commentary of the 42 tales of a Turkish tale collection known by the title of *Ferec ba'd eş-şidde*; the Turandot tale is no. 25, referred to as "Khalaf" (see Marzolph, *Relief After Hardship*, 87-9). Marzolph also gives a review of some Persian manuscript tale collections (*Relief After Hardship*, 19-23); for manuscripts bearing the Turandot tale see in particular table 2, no. 25.

[13] Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 7-20 (Persian text), 55-67 (translation). 'Awfī's tale is no. 25 in part I, ch. 25, "On the Anecdotes of Sagacious and Acute Persons", of his *Javāmi'*. Actually 'Awfī's tale was not still unpublished as supposed by the authors. I have an indirect notice of at least one edition: 'Awfī, *Javāmi' al-ḥikāyāt va lavāmi' al-rivāyāt*, qism I, juzv II, ed. Amīr-Bānū Muṣaffā 'Karīmī' (Tehran, 1378/1999), where the anecdote of the daughter of the king of Rūm and her ten questions to her suitors is on pp. 379-90. However, Mogtader and Shoeler's edition of 'Awfī's tale is highly welcome, as the edition just referred to, and other possible editions of this section of 'Awfī's *Javāmi'* are extremely difficult find outside Iran (I was unable to find any of them, and wish to thank Amīr-Bānū Karīmī for having provided me with the reference to the edition published by her). On 'Awfī and his collection of tales see now Pellò, "Introduction to Sadīd al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Awfī", in particular LVI-LIX on the editions of the *Javāmi' al-ḥikāyāt*.

[14] See Sachau, Ethé, *Catalogue of the Persian, Turkish, Hindûstânî, and Pushtû Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, 1: cols. 447-8, no. 488 (ff. 1*v*-30*v* of the MS). This text has been edited by Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 21-57 (Persian text), 69-118 (translation).

[15] Meier, "Turandot in Persien", 9-10.

3   Niẓāmī's Tuesday Tale

In past studies Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale in the poem *Haft paykar* ('Seven Beauties/Idols', or 'Seven Portraits', or 'The Seven Celestial Bodies/Skies', composed in 593/1197) has often been considered as the first instance of the Turandot tale in Persian literature. Fritz Meier indeed writes: "Die früheste persische Turandotgeschichte findet sich bei Niẓâmî".[16] In actual fact, Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale may represent an early instance, in Persian literature, of the tale based on the motif of the princess and her riddles to her suitors; but it shows a number of differences with the Turandot tale proper.

The Tuesday tale is recounted to the hero of the poem, king Bahrām Gūr, by the princess of Slavonia (*Siqlab*, the country of the Slavs), in the red domed pavilion. The story is as follows.[17] A beautiful and learned princess (no name is given; she is the daughter of a king in Russia) loves studying and knowledge and is not inclined towards marriage. She leaves her father's castle and locks herself in an impregnable fortress guarded by talismans. She then paints her portrait and orders it be hung at the city gate, challenging those who would win her hand to overcome all the tests she has set: her suitor must be noble and valorous, must break the spell of the castle talismans, must be able to find the invisible door into the castle, and has to solve the riddles she sets him. Many young men make the attempt but are killed by the power of the talismans. Their heads are hung at the city gates as a warning not to attempt the trial lightly. In the end a young prince, following the advice of a wise man, manages to neutralize the talismans, find the invisible door and enter the castle. The final test consists of answering some non-verbal riddles the princess poses. A mute, fascinating exchange begins, at the end of which the princess announces to her father that she intends to marry the young man (for an analysis of the riddles in this tale see below, ch. 5, § 1).

Recent studies have highlighted the differences between Niẓāmī's tale and the Turandot tale properly said, as it is attested in the known Persian and Turkish prose texts and its European re-elaborations. Albert Wesselski, writing as far back as 1934, had already emphasized some differences, mainly lying in the different kind of enigmas posed by the princess: verbal riddles in Pétis de la Croix's tale, non-verbal in Niẓāmī's.[18] In more recent times, Christine Goldberg – following a different methodological approach – has stressed the dissimilarity between Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale and both types AT 851 ("The

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16   Meier, "Turandot in Persien", 2.

17   Niẓāmī, *Haft paykar*, ch. 35.

18   Wesselski, "Quellen und Nachwirkungen der Haft Paikar", 114-15. See also Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 18.

Princess who Cannot Solve the Riddle") and 851A ("Turandot") in the Aarne and Thompson catalogue.[19] Indeed, in the Turandot tale, as it is attested for the first time in 'Awfī's collection, the princess must, in her turn, answer the questions the suitor asks her. Moreover, the question-and-answer disputation (termed *munāẓara* in the Persian texts) between the youth and the princess includes the episode of the nocturnal visit of the princess to the young man, accompanied by one or two of her handmaidens,[20] and is preceded by the young man's long series of adventures: all episodes lacking from Niẓāmī's tale. Therefore, despite a long-standing tradition, it is preferable to keep Niẓāmī's tale – the creation of a poet – distinct from the Turandot tale proper. However, the existence of the tale entitled "Prince Khalaf and the daughter of the Faghfūr of China" in Ibn Khusraw's collection (see § 2 above) suggests that Niẓāmī may have been acquainted with an early variant of the Turandot tale, which may have been one of the sources for his own tale.

If Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale and the type of tale first attested in 'Awfī's *Javāmi' al-ḥikāyāt* show many points of divergence, they share the presence of one and the same female character. Two main features seem to be relevant for the identification of this character both in Niẓāmī's tale and in the Turandot tale proper: that of being a 'misogamist woman' – as this character is called by Ettore Rossi[21] – i.e. a woman who flees from, or delays, her wedding; and, secondly, the fact of subjecting her suitor(s) to tests of courage, skill and wit before being willing to consent to marry. It is the origin of this character that concerns us here. From the different tales and plots analyzed it will possible to follow the development of this character up to the anonymous princess in Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale in the poem *Haft paykar*, and to 'Awfī's tale collection. Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale, which in past studies has been the starting point of researches focusing on the story of Turandot, is instead the end point of the present research, which also aims to discover a possible source for Nizami's.

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[19] See Goldberg, "Rätzelprinzessin", col. 286; and *Turandot's sisters*, in particular 27, with further bibliography on the question.

[20] In Pétis de la Croix's tale it is only Adelmulc, a slave princess in the service of Turandot (Liù in Puccini's opera), who visits the prince by night.

[21] Rossi, "La leggenda di Turandot", 457. Bürgel ("Turandot – Von Niẓāmī bis Puccini") speaks of "Misandry" (*Männerfeindschaft*) as opposed to "Misogyny".

2 Shīrīn and Other Figures of the Misogamist Woman in Persian Literature

Summary 1 Shīrīn, the Lady of the Castle. – 2 Shīrīn's Aunt Mihīn Bānū. – 3 Shīrīn and the Misogamist Handmaiden. – 4 Shīrīn and the Interdiction Against Sexual Intercourse Due to a Prediction.

1 Shīrīn, the Lady of the Castle

One of the components in the formation of the Turandot character can be traced back to the development of the literary figure of Shīrīn. A number of studies have shown that the character of Shīrīn, the heroine of Niẓāmī's poem *Khusraw va Shīrīn* (composed between 571/1176 and 576/1181, with later additions), has a historical origin: she was the famous Christian wife of Khusraw II Parvīz (r. 580-628 CE).[22] Beyond historical traits, a number of legendary features were soon added to historical Shīrīn to create her literary figure.[23] One of them is the superimposition of her character on that of the legendary queen Semiramis, a queen as strong and wise as a man, whose historical kernel can be traced back to Sammuramat, an Assyrian queen (r. 809-806 BCE ca) bearing, on an inscription repeated on several statues of Nebo, the title of 'Lady of the Palace'.[24]

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[22]   See above, part I, ch. 1, § 2 fn. 3.

[23]   The most complete survey of the sources on Shīrīn's legendary figure is still that given by Aliev, *Legenda o Khosrove i Širin*, 21-36 (Byzantine, Armenian, and Syriac sources) and 36-57 (Muslim sources).

[24]   Eilers, "Semiramis". On Sammuramat and the historical data referring to this queen see in particular 33-46. On the legend of Semiramis see more recently Bernbeck, "Sex/Gender/Power and Šammuramat", with interesting methodological remarks on the relationship between history and legend.

Sammuramat is connected with the regions of western Iran and Armenia, as is Niẓāmī's heroine. In Niẓāmī's poem, Shīrīn spends a relevant part of the narrative time alone, closed in her castle, the famous Qaṣr-i Shīrīn, a castle that Khusraw's handmaidens had arranged to be built in a noxious place, out of envy for her beauty.[25] She is a *bānū-yi ḥiṣārī* (Lady of the Castle) like Sammuramat, and like the princess in the Tuesday tale in Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar*.[26] That of being a 'Lady of the Palace/Castle' may have been one of the literary motifs connecting Sammuramat, through Shīrīn, to the anonymous princess in Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale.

2 Shīrīn's Aunt Mihīn Bānū

Beyond the Lady of the Castle motif, in the literary development of Shīrīn's character other features are relevant in order to bring to light early stages of the character of Turandot. Some of them also pertain to Shīrīn's aunt Mihīn Bānū (The Grand Lady),[27] whose proper name according to Niẓāmī (Shamīrā, rather than the Arabized form Shumayrā[28]), in itself connects her with the legendary queen Semiramis.[29] Mihīn Bānū's location in Bardaʿ, where she winters,[30] is particularly meaningful: in the first part of his *Romance of Alexander*, the *Sharaf-nāma* (Book of Honor[31]), Niẓāmī places another female character in Bardaʿ: queen Nūshāba.

As is well known, in the Nūshāba episode Niẓāmī reworks a particular episode of the Greek Pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander romance: Alexander's visit, in disguise, to queen Kandake.[32] But when Niẓāmī

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25 Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 26, 9-39. The ruins of Shīrīn's Castle (Qaṣr-i Shīrīn) are traditionally identified in the remains of Sasanid palaces near the city of this name in Jibal or Persian Iraq; see Streck, s.v. "Ḳaṣr-i Shīrīn"; and Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 63.

26 In Persian the princess of Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale is usually referred to as *bānū-yi ḥiṣārī*. See Bürgel, "Turandot – Von Niẓāmī bis Puccini", 350 fn. 3. In Persian this expression also implies a meaning of confinement or (self-)imprisonment.

27 On Mihīn Bānū, see Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 17, 13-29. On this character and its origins cf. Orsatti, "Le donne e le città", 140-4.

28 Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 17, 20.

29 Eilers, "Semiramis," 56-8 and fn. 100. Already in the Pseudo-Callisthenes Romance (Book III, 18), Kandakes's kingdom was identified with that of Semiramis.

30 Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ch. 17, 26.

31 On the complex question of the date of the first part of Niẓāmī's *Iskandar-nāma* see de Blois, *Persian Literature*, V, pt. 2, 442-6; and V, pt. 3, Appendix II: *Some Afterthoughts on the Chronology of Niẓāmī's Works and that of the Sharwān-shāhs*, 585-91.

32 On the figure of Kandake (Qaydāfa/Nūshāba) in Persian sources, see Rubanovich, s.v. "Qaydāfa"; and "Re-Writing the Episode of Alexander and Candace in Medieval Persian Literature", 123-52.

states that the ancient name for Bardaʿ was Harūm,[33] this location offers another key to the comprehension of the Nūshāba and – moreover – of the Mihīn Bānū character: indeed, in the *Shāhnāma*, in the episode of Alexander's visit to the Amazons, these famous women warriors are located in Harūm or thereabouts; and, in some lexica, *Harūm* is defined as 'The city of women'.[34]

In Niẓāmī's *Sharaf-nāma* Nūshāba is described as the queen of a realm of women; she is surrounded, served and advised by women alone, and no man is allowed to approach her, not even – as was usual in Niẓāmī's own world – her relatives. Her male subjects live, separately, in another region, and never dare to approach, despite offering their military services when need arises.[35] Therefore it is clear that, in the *Sharaf-nāma*, the episode of Nūshāba represents the point of convergence of two different episodes of the Pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander romance, which are still separate in the *Shāhnāma*: that of Alexander's visit to Kandake/Qaydāfa,[36] and that of the Amazons.[37]

In the poem *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, Mihīn Bānū, whom Niẓāmī places – like Nūshāba/Kandake – in Bardaʿ, is likewise depicted as the queen of a realm of women alone. Arrān, in eastern Transcaucasia, and Armenia, the regions where she lives, are not too far from the country where the Amazons lived according to Greek tradition: the banks of the river Thermodon and the south-west shores of the Black Sea. (According to the Muslim tradition, instead, the fabulous country of these warrior women was much more to the west and to the north, being variously identified with Egypt, Yemen, or with a country not far from the north pole[38]). It would not be impossible, therefore, to see the literary character of Mihīn Bānū as embodying the legendary figure of the queen of the Amazons.[39] This would explain the anomaly whereby

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33 Niẓāmī, *Sharaf-nāma*, ch. 36, 19.

34 Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, s.v. "Harūm", gives the following definition, in a quote from the *Burhān-i qāṭiʿ*: "The name of the city of women. Some commentators maintain this to be the present-day Bardaʿ".

35 Niẓāmī Ganjaʾī, *Sharaf-nāma*, ch. 36, 26-33. For an account of a similar gender division in Islamic literatures, cf. Arioli, *Le isole mirabili*, 191-2.

36 Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Historia Alexandri Magni*, 115-23 (III: 18-23); Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 6: 51-74 (*Iskandar*, ll. 671-1055).

37 Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Historia Alexandri Magni*, 124-9 (III: 25-7); Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 6: 85-90 (*Iskandar*, ll. 1233-327).

38 On the Amazons, cf. Shapur Shahbazi, s.v. "Amazons". On the location of the country of the Amazons in Muslim sources and on the etymology of the name Harūm, cf. Monchi-Zadeh, *Topographisch-historische Studien zum iranischen Nationalepos*, 172-6.

39 Orsatti, "Le donne e le città", 140-1. A link between some feminine characters in Niẓāmī's poem and the myth of the Amazons has been suggested by several other scholars. See, among others, Tughiyānī, Muʿīnī Fard, "Ārmān-shahr-i zanān dar Khusraw va Shīrīn-i Ḥakīm Niẓāmī-i Ganjaʾī"; and Karamī, "Bar-rasī va taḥlīl-i ʿshāh-zanʾ dar nigāh-i Niẓāmī".

only Shīrīn's aunt appears in the poems, but never her parents, who would have no place in a city of women. This can also explain the development that the character of Mihīn Bānū underwent after Niẓāmī. Hātifī, in his poem *Shīrīn va Khusraw* (written between 889/1484 and 895/1490), takes the figure of Mihīn Bānū to its extreme. She is described as a masculine woman: wise, fearless, childless, she has a male countenance and no need of men; she is compared to a lion (not a lioness); she is an excellent swords(wo)man, and in battle is able to outstare a lion.[40] The only thing she fears is love; when she becomes aware of the exchange of amorous glances and gestures between Khusraw and her niece, "just thinking – Hātifī says – of a union between sugar and milk, her heart was transfixed as by a dagger or an arrow".[41]

Through her literary kinship with the Amazons, Shīrīn may have inherited the feature of the woman who escapes from sexual intercourse, one of the features of the character of Turandot. Her strenuous resistance to Khusraw's advances, in Niẓāmī's poem and even more so in some later responses to Niẓāmī's poem such as that by Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī (d. 725/1325), coupled with some stubbornness in her character,[42] and with the tradition of her infertility (see below), may originate from this literary background.

3 Shīrīn and the Misogamist Handmaiden

Some elements of the figure of Shīrīn and her aunt Mihīn Bānū can also be recognized in the heroine of another tale from Niẓāmī's *Haft paykar*, the Sunday tale recounted by the daughter of the Qayṣar of Rūm.[43] Two features link this tale with the narrative in the Tuesday tale: the heroine, a beautiful handmaiden, flees from relations with men as does – at least initially – the princess in the Tuesday tale; and, secondly, both the hero – a pleasure-seeking prince who falls in love with the handmaiden – and the handmaiden must answer personal questions (not true riddles, however), in order to achieve union.[44]

The tale is as follows. A prince, who passes from one woman to another being unable to fall in love with any of them, at last falls in love

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[40]   Hātifī, *Shīrīn va Khusraw*, 31, ll. 401-6.

[41]   Hātifī, *Shīrīn va Khusraw*, 59, l. 777.

[42]   Cf. Orsatti, "Le poème *Xosrow va Širin* de Neẓāmi et ses répliques par Amir Xosrow et Jamāli", 167-71.

[43]   Niẓāmī, *Haft paykar*, ch. 33.

[44]   The motif of the personal questions within the couple also recurs in a short anecdote about Bilqīs and Solomon inserted into the same Sunday tale (for a summary, see the following note). Riddles revolving around personal, often incestuous, tabooed or socially sanctioned matters are frequent in literature. Suffice it to recall the Apollonius of Tyre romance, on which see Goldberg, *Turandot's Sisters*, 20.

with the only woman who resists him, a beautiful handmaiden who, however, flees from physical relations. The prince asks her to be sincere with him and explain the reasons for her conduct; a procedure which – he says – has often proved successful in overcoming a difficulty (here, as illustration, a curious tale is inserted into the main story, concerning queen Bilqīs and Solomon[45]). The handmaiden, in her turn, asks the reason why the prince passes from one woman to another. The prince answers that he has found no sincere and honest woman until then, and now that he has found her, he only wants her love. The handmaiden, in her turn, confesses that she flees from men because her horoscope has warned that the love of a man would put her life at great risk. However, this confession does not have the expected effect. At this point an old woman intervenes: just as custom has it in horse-breaking, she counsels the prince to 'saddle' already tamed 'fillies' in the girl's presence. Stung by jealousy, the girl suffers deeply to the extent of almost dying, just as her horoscope had foreseen; the shrew is tamed and love is crowned with union.

In this tale it would be tempting to see, behind the figure of the handmaiden, a reflex of the literary character of Shīrīn: indeed, according to some sources, Shīrīn was only one of Khusraw's handmaidens;[46] and the way she is depicted in the *Shāhnāma* leaves no doubts as to her humble origins (at least according to some traditions, possibly of Sasanid origins).[47] Shīrīn's strenuous resistance of Khusraw's advances in Niẓāmī's and other poems may find a parallel in the character of the misogamist handmaiden of the Sunday tale. A final element of the plot is relevant in order to connect the handmaiden of the Sunday tale with the character of Shīrīn: the motif of sexual intercourse forbidden by a prediction is to be found in a tradition concerning Shīrīn reported by Ṭabarī.

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45 The anecdote is as follows: a baby is born to Bilqīs and Solomon, which has neither arms nor legs. As the only possible cure the archangel Gabriel suggests that, during intimacy, the two be sincere and answer honestly the questions they pose each other. Solomon asks Bilqīs if she has ever desired other men, apart from him; Bilqīs asks if he has ever coveted another's goods. When they respond honestly, their son gains his arms and legs (Niẓāmī, *Haft paykar*, ch. 33, 95-132). For a study of the sources and development of the tale of Bilqīs and Solomon, cf. Wesselski, "Quellen und Nachwirkungen der Haft Paikar", 116-19.

46 Balʿamī, *Tārīkh*, 2: 1091-2; *Mujmal al-tavārīkh vaʾl-qiṣaṣ*, ed. Bahār, 79.

47 Cf. Firdawsī, *Shahname*, 8: 259-70 (*Khusraw Parvīz: Dāstān-i Khusraw bā Shīrīn*, ll. 3387-515). On the figure of Shīrīn in the *Shahname* see Khaleghi Motlagh, *Die Frauen im Schahname*, 84-8 (= 67-71 of the enlarged English edition); and van Ruymbeke, "Firdausi's *Dastan-i Khusrau va Shīrīn: Not much of a Love Story!*", 125-47.

4   Shīrīn and the Interdiction Against Sexual Intercourse Due to a Prediction

The motif of the ban on sexual intercourse due to a prediction or a horoscope is to be found in a short narrative concerning Shīrīn recounted by Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), in his *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, and – with slight differences – in the Persian adaptation of the latter by Balʿamī (begun in 352/963). Shīrīn appears here in her traditionally negative aspect,[48] as an infertile woman – a datum probably pertaining to the historical Shīrīn[49] – and, worse still, as indirectly responsible for the fall of the Sasanid empire. Indeed, in this tale the foretold danger is the birth of a child under whose reign the power of Persia would come to an end. The source of the story is Hishām b. Muḥammad, who can certainly be identified with the famous scholar Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204/819 or 206/821).[50]

According to this tradition, Khusraw had been warned by the court astrologers that one of his sons would have a son with a physical defect, under whose reign the kingdom of Persia would be destroyed. For that reason he gives orders to keep his sons separate from all women. Shīrīn had adopted Shahriyār, the eldest of Khusraw's eighteen sons (according to this tradition, therefore, Shīrīn was permanently infertile).[51] As Shahriyār complains about his lust for women, Shīrīn at last provides him with one of her maids, a hideous woman she thinks will be of no use to him. Instead, Shahriyār immediately leaps on her, and she becomes pregnant with Yazdagerd (Yazdagerd III), the last Sasanid king.[52]

In this story the ban on sexual intercourse does not affect Shīrīn (the handmaiden in Niẓāmī's tale), but Shīrīn's putative son Shahriyār. However, as will appear from a late reworking of this anecdote placed in a different historical context, through the motif of the interdiction against sexual intercourse dictated by reasons of state the character of Shīrīn appears relevant to the development of that of Būrāndukht (see below, ch. 5, § 3).

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48   On the negative traits of Shīrīn's character, even emerging from Niẓāmī's poem, see Orsatti, "Le donne e le città", 146-8.

49   Her initial infertility is attested by Theophylact Simocatta, a seventh-century Byzantine historian, who quotes the text of a probably authentic letter written by Khusraw concerning Shīrīn; see *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 151 (V: 14). On this letter, see Orsatti, s.v. "Kosrow o Šīrīn and its Imitations".

50   See Atallah, s.v. "al-Kalbī: II. Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī".

51   Shahriyār, instead, is given in the *Shāhnāma* as one of the four sons Khusraw had had by Shīrīn. Cf. Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 368 (*Shīrūya*, ll. 551-2).

52   Ṭabarī, *History*, V: *The Sāsānids*, 379-80. This anecdote is told with slight differences by Balʿamī, *Tārikh*, 2: 1147-50. On this tale, see Sprengling, "From Persian to Arabic", 219-20.

3 Būrān, the Daughter of Khursraw Parvīz

Summary 1 Shīrīn and Būrān. – 2 Būrān, the Wise and Combative Queen.

1 Shīrīn and Būrān

A late transformation of Shīrīn's character, the figure of Nigār in Jamālī's poem *Mihr va Nigār* (composed in 805/1403), is particularly meaningful in order to trace a possible line of development from Shīrīn to Būrān-dukht. *Mihr va Nigār* is a poem composed in response (*javāb*) to Niẓāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn*; the character of Nigār corresponds to Shīrīn in Niẓāmī's poem.[53] Jamālī gives fictitious names to his protagonists, and makes of Nigār, and not his male hero, Mihr, a descendant of the ancient dynasty ruling over Iran, having its court in Madāyīn – this being the Arabic name of Ctesiphon, the capital of the Sasanid kingdom. A particular helps place Nigār's fictional character in a precise historical context: according to Jamālī, Nigār is the daughter of Kisrā Thānī (The Second Khusraw), behind whom none other than historical Khusraw II Parvīz can be glimpsed, the hero of Niẓāmī's poem and the last great king of the Sasanid dynasty before the Arab conquest of Iran. The character of Nigār, then, reflects the figure of the historical Būrān (Bōrān), or Būrān-dukht, daughter of Khusraw Parvīz and queen of Iran (630-631 CE).[54]

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[53] London, Persian MS Ethé 1284, ff. 29*v*-86*v*. On this manuscript, the author and his work see Orsatti, "The *Ḫamsah* 'Quintet' by Ǧamālī".

[54] See on this queen Ṭabarī, *History*, V: *The Sāsānids*, 403-5; Balʿamī, *Tārikh*, 2: 1198-201; and Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 391-6. On the chronology of her kingdom cf. Nöldeke, "Exkurs 1. Chronologie der Sâsâniden", 433; Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, 70; Chaumont, s.v. "Bōrān"; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 207-9. It is less likely that the character of Nigār

Nigār is a princess learned in all sciences, who lives in an ancient castle in the desert, near the royal court of Madāyin: it is the Qaṣr-i Shīrīn of tradition, of course. She cannot belong to any man because she is bound by a promise to her cousin Bihzād, who has asked for her hand. Soon afterwards, however, Bihzād is kidnapped by brigands, and nothing more is heard of him; a plausible narrative reason for the heroine's initial misogamy.

Apart from her initial misogamy, and her being a Lady of the Castle, no other feature pertaining to Turandot can be recognized in the character of Nigār. What is interesting, however, is that, through the character of Nigār, Jamālī gives his own authorial version as to the identity of the Lady of the Castle; the Lady of the Castle was not Shīrīn, Khusraw's wife, but Būrān, his daughter.

2 Būrān, the Wise and Combative Queen

Among the features attributed by the sources to this historical figure, one may be of interest in connection with the origins of the character of Būrān-dukht, the misogamist woman: queen Būrān is presented as a wise and combative queen, equal to a man. According to Balʿamī's account of her reign, after having appointed as minister the man who had killed the usurper to the throne of Iran, Farrahān Shahrbarāz,[55] Būrān summons the army to her presence, asking for obedience. She writes a letter to be dispatched to all cities and provinces of Iran, in which she enounces the principles of good rule, the first and foremost being justice. In this letter she openly asserts that, whoever follows these principles can rule over a kingdom, be it either a man or a woman (*čūn pādshāh dādgar buvad mulk bitavānad dāshtan, agar mard buvad va agar zan*).[56] In the *Shāhnāma*, the short report of Būrān's reign does not offer any relevant detail for the legendary development of the character, apart – perhaps – from a description of the cruel punishment reserved by Būrān for Pīrūz, one of Khusraw Parvīz's sons, responsible for the death of Ardashīr, son of Shīrūy.[57]

In other sources, Būrān is mentioned in connection with the emerging Islamic power, and for having sent an army to fight the Muslim conquerors. For example in the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh* (composed in 520/1127), in the section concerning Būrān's reign we read: "(Her reign) lasted a year and four months. It was the period of the (com-

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could originate from the figure of another daughter of Khusraw Parvīz, Āzarm(i)dukht, whose reign is also mentioned in the *Shāhnāma*, 8: 397-400.

55   On this personage see part I, ch. 2, §§ 4-5.

56   Balʿamī, *Tārikh*, 2: 1198-201.

57   *Shāhnāma*, 8: 390-396, especially 395, ll. 9-19.

ing to) power of Islam (*rūzgār-i quvvat-i Islām*). She sent an army to fight against the Arabs. In the same period she died in Madāyin".[58]

In popular imagination queen Būrān must have been transformed into a warrior queen, endowed with masculine attributes, and even into a representative of the misogamist woman type. In a legend gathered by Abū Dulaf during his travels in Iran around the years 331/943 – 341/952,[59] queen Bōrān is transformed into the wife of Shahr-barāz, the usurper of the throne of Persia; she is narrated as having had Shahr-barāz killed on the very night of their wedding.[60]

In a Medieval prose text, Ṭarsūsī's *Dārāb-nāma* (twelfth century), the daughter of Dārāb son of Dārāb, i.e. Darius III – the princess Rawshanak/Roxane who married Alexander in other sources – is surprisingly called Būrān-dukht. This text shows that the transformation of the character of Būrān into a warrior and masculine woman had already been completed. Indeed, at the beginning of the section of the *Dārāb-nāma* devoted to Būrān-dukht's story, Ṭarsūsī presents her as a beautiful and skilled girl. At the age of seventeen – he says – she was endowed with Siyāvakhsh's appearance and Hūshang's glory, and for her strength and courage she was like Isfandiyār: she was capable of fighting with a mace of the weight of two hundred and fifty *man*. The author adds a physical detail: she had down (*khaṭṭ-i sabz*) on her lip, so that she looked like a man. Ṭarsūsī says that according to another tradition her name was Rawshanak, but she was called Būrān-dukht because of the down on her lip (*az ān sabab ū-rā Būrān-dukht guftand-ī ki ū pusht-i lab sabz dāsht*). She was said to despise men.[61] Ṭarsūsī's Būrān-dukht is a warlike heroine who – unlike Rawshanak – refuses to marry Alexander; she raises an army and fights against him and the Greek conquerors, only agreeing to marry Alexander when he happens to see her naked, while bathing in a river.[62]

Concerning the character of Būrān-dukht, therefore, Ṭarsūsī allows a feature to emerge which probably originated from a development of the figure of Būrān, the daughter of Khusraw Parvīz: she was a queen, equal to a man. From Ṭarsūsī's words moreover, when he says that Dārāb's daughter was called Būrān-dukht because of her slight moustache, it appears that this name came to be used as a nickname for mustachioed, that is masculine women.

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58 *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 82.

59 See Minorsky, s.v. "Abū Dulaf, Misʿar b. Muhalhil al-Khazradjī al-Yanbuʿī".

60 Minorsky, "Two Iranian legends in Abū-Dulaf's second risālah", 177. See part 1, ch. 2, § 6 above.

61 Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, 1: 467.

62 Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, 2: 92. On the personage of Būrān-dukht in the *Dārāb-nāma*, see Ṣafā, "Introduction" to Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, 1: p. yāzdah [11]; and Gaillard, "Introduction", 40-6. See also Hanaway, s.v. "Dārāb-nāma".

A historical analogy probably helped in the merging of the two characters, Būrān-dukht and Rawshanak, and their names: as Būrān was the daughter of the last great Sasanid king before the Arab conquest of Iran, Rawshanak/Būrān-dukht is transformed into a warrior heroine fighting against the Greek conqueror of Persia, Alexander.[63]

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[63] My analysis of Būrān-dukht's character in the *Dārāb-nāma* is different but not incompatible with that offered by Hanaway ("Anāhitā and Alexander", 285-95), who sees in the character of Būrān-dukht a popular representation of the Iranian goddess Anāhitā. Venetis ("Warlike Heroines in the Persian Alexander Tradition"), calls into question Hanaway's thesis in favour of an unclear historical dimension of the Būrān-dukht character, and underlines analogies between Būrān-dukht and other fabulous characters such as Arāqit. Only in passing does he note that Būrān-dukht "bears the historical name of a short-lived Sasanian Queen" (229B).

4 Būrān, the Wife of Caliph al-Maʾmūn

Summary   1 Būrān's Historical Figure. – 2 The Development of the Character: the Postponement of the Union Due to the Bride's Indisposition.

1 Būrān's Historical Figure

Apart from the daughter of Khusraw Parvīz, another historical personage was called Būrān or Būrān-dukht: the daughter of the powerful Ḥasan b. Sahl,[64] and wife of Caliph al-Maʾmūn (198-218/813-833).[65] As is shown below, it is especially to the latter Būrān that the characteristic features of Turandot are probably to be referred: rejection, or postponement of the wedding, and the presence of riddles or enigmatic expressions. As in the case of Darius's daughter, some sources assert that Būrān was a nickname – or possibly a title elevating her to the rank of the other Būrān – the true name of Ḥasan b. Sahl's daughter being Khadīja.[66] In a tale from *The Thousand and One Nights*, the wife of caliph al-Maʾmūn appears under the name 'Khadīja'.[67] However, nothing of Khadīja in this story recalls the Turandot character except, perhaps, for her being a clever and learned woman, fond of music and poetry; as if the

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[64]   On Ḥasan b. Sahl see Sourdel, *Le vizirat ʿAbbâside de 749 à 936*, 1: 215-18. He belonged to a Zoroastrian family converted to Islam under caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7: 319-20). He was a poet and a man of letters, and patronized the translation of Pahlavi texts into Arabic, also personally taking part in this task himself; see Zakeri, *Persian Wisdom in Arabic Garb. ʿAli b. ʿUbayda al-Rayḥānī (D. 219/834) and his Jawāhir al-kilam wa-farāʾid al-ḥikam*, 1: 11-12.

[65]   Cf. Ihsan Abbas, s.v. "Būrān".

[66]   Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1: 268.

[67]   Cf. *Arabian nights*, 4: 119-25, nights 279-82.

characteristic features of the character were only appended to the name Būrān-dukht.

Būrān/Khadīja (192-271/807-884) married Maʾmūn in 202/817, when she was ten years old (the sources say that the caliph *tazawwaja* her); but the consummation of the marriage (*bināʾa*) took place only eight years later, in Ramazan 210/December 824-January 825:[68] a long period that may have given birth to the legend of the woman who escapes from or postpones marriage.

The wedding or, better, the celebrations for the consummation of the marriage became famous in Islamic sources for their pomp and magnificence. They even passed into proverb, being referred to as "the invitation of Islam" (*daʿwat al-Islām*).[69] Nabia Abbott has given a full account of the event, based on Arabic sources.[70] Sources highlight Ḥasan b. Sahl's generosity in hosting the caliph and his retinue for the period – seventeen days in most sources – when they stayed in Fam al-Ṣilḥ, the residence of Ḥasan on a tributary of the Tigris, north of Wāsiṭ; and describe the precious and extravagant gifts he bestowed on the guests.[71] In the account of the celebrations, what strikes the reader is the emphasis given to the financial side of the wedding, and the minute details in the report concerning the sums spent by the main participants: apart from Ḥasan and the caliph himself, Ḥamdūna, daughter of Hārūn al-Rashīd and half sister to al-Maʾmūn, and Zubayda, wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd and step-mother of al-Maʾmūn.[72]

Among the women present at the celebration was also Būrān's grandmother. When the caliph enters Ḥasan's palace and meets his bride, Būrān's grandmother pours a tray full of precious pearls over him. Again – in the historians' report – the accounting aspect of the matter takes over: the caliph asks how many pearls have been scattered. We are told, a thousand. The caliph orders they to be gathered and counted: ten of them are found to be missing, having been taken by somebody, a servant or someone else present at the ceremony. Maʾmūn buys back the ten pearls from the person and offers Būrān the thousand pearls as his personal wedding gift.[73]

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68 Historical sources with an annalistic structure, such as the *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk* by Ṭabarī (*History*, XXXII: *The Reunification*, 82 and 153-9) and the *Kāmil fīʾl-taʾrīkh* by Ibn al-Athīr (*Ibn-el-Athiri Chronicon*, 6: 248, 279) mention the marriage between Būrān and the caliph under the year 202 (or 203 in Ṭabarī); and, then, under the year 210, they say that the marriage was consummated or the wedding celebrated.

69 Al-Thaʿālibī, *Latáifoʾl-maʾárif*, 73.

70 Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, 231-4.

71 Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, 116; Ṭabarī, *History*, XXXII: *The Reunification*, 156; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Historiae*, 2: 559; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7: 321.

72 See Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, 116; Ṭabarī, *History*, XXXII: *The Reunification*, 156-7.

73 Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, 115; Ṭabarī, *History*, XXXII: *The Reunification*, 154-5.

Būrān is not a real presence in the narrative. She only appears on the scene when the caliph invites her to ask him whatever she desires. "But Būrān – I quote here Nabia Abbott's words – modestly refrained from any request until her grandmother encouraged her with, 'Speak to your lord, and make your wishes known as he has commanded'". So Būrān, "who had, no doubt, been schooled for this very moment", made two requests in the interest of Zubayda and of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī:[74] nothing interesting in view of the development of her character.

Būrān is further remembered for having been present at the death of caliph al-Maʾmūn near Ṭarsūs in 218/833, during his expedition against Byzantium, only eight years after their wedding;[75] and concerning the famous palace, at first called al-Qaṣr al-Jaʿfarī (after the former minister Jaʿfar Barmakī), then al-Maʾmūnī, and finally, after Maʾmūn donated it to Ḥasan b. Sahl, al-Qaṣr al-Ḥasanī, where she lived out her long life.[76] No offspring of their union are recorded.[77]

If it were not for her name, or nickname, Būrān, and for the historical fact of the long delayed consummation of the marriage, nothing in the account given by the Arabic historians would let us presage the development of her character in literature, as the prototype of the misogamist and learned woman falling back on enigmatic expressions to keep her groom or suitor at bay.

2 The Development of the Character: the Postponement of the Union Due to the Bride's Indisposition

It is in works outside historiography that we can best follow the development of the figure of the historical Būrān, the daughter of Ḥasan b. Sahl, as it progressed over time. In a work devoted to figurative expressions (*kināyāt*), by the shafiite jurist Abū'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d. 482/1089), two anecdotes are reported at the end of a very short account of the marriage between Būrān and Maʾmūn.[78] They are to be found in the chapter entitled: "On figurative expressions relating to what comes out of human beings, be it excrement (or impurities: *ḥadaṯ*) or flatulence (*rīḥ*)".[79]

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74   Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, 233. On the Abbasid prince Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, for a short period proclaimed (anti-)caliph in Baghdad under al-Maʾmūn's caliphate, see Sourdel, *Le vizirat ʿAbbâside*, 1: 209.

75   Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, 234.

76   See Le Strange, *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*, 244-6, 248-9; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 1: 807-8.

77   Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, 234.

78   Al-Jurjānī, *Kināyāt al-udabāʿ wa-ishārāt al-bulaghāʿ*, 170-1.

79   Al-Jurjānī, *Kināyāt*, 169.

The first anecdote, whose source is Muḥammad b. Khalaf b. al-Marzubān (d. 309/921),[80] who quotes it from ʿUmar b. Shabba (173-262/789-878),[81] is also reported by Ibn Khallikān (608-681/1282-1211) in his *Biographical dictionary* (*Wafayāt al-aʿyān*). If the anecdote is to be ascribed to Ibn al-Marzubān, and before him to ʿUmar b. Shabba, it must be dated to before 262/878. I quote it in the version by Ibn Khallikān and the English translation by William Mac Guckin de Slane.

After having recounted, mainly from Ṭabarī's work, the story of the magnificent ceremony of Būrān's marriage to Maʾmūn, Ibn Khallikān then adds: "Another author says: 'When al-Mâmûn sought to enter in to Bûrân, he was refused admittance, on the pretext that she was indisposed, but he would not retire; and when his bride was brought forth to him, he found her unwell, and left her. The next morning, when he gave public audience, the *kâtib* Ahmad Ibn Yûsuf[82] entered and said to him: 'Commander of the Faithful! May God accord you happiness and good fortune in what you have undertaken; may you be great in prowess and victorious in combat!' To this al-Mâmûn replied by reciting the following verses:

> Eques impetuosus, cum hastâ suâ promptus in confossionem in tenebris, praedam suam sanguine inficere voluit; sed eum prohibuit illa, cum sanguine, a sanguine suo.[83]

Ibn Khallikān, in reference to Maʾmūn's enigmatic words, adds: "In this, he made allusion to the nature of her indisposition, and the figure he employed is perfectly appropriate".[84]

Al-Jurjānī, in his book on figurative expressions, had been more explicit than Ibn Khallikān in relating this anecdote: Maʾmūn utters the two lines quoted above in reply to an outspoken question by Aḥmad Ibn Yūsuf: "Did you profit from what happened (last night)?" Then, after the quotation of Maʾmūn's verses, al-Jurjānī explains: "He (Maʾmūn) was referring to the fact that she (Būrān) got her menstrual period, and he had not deflowered her".[85]

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80   On al-Marzubān and his works see Zakeri, *Persian Wisdom in Arabic Garb*, 1: 31-8.

81   On this personage, "an expert in *akhbār* on history as well as poets and poetry, very important source for some of the most prominent works of Arabic literature", see Leder, s.v. "ʿUmar b. Shabba".

82   On him see Sourdel, *Le vizirat ʿAbbâside*, 1: 225-31.

83   "The fiery horse, ready to sink his rod into the darkness, wanted to stain his prey with blood. But, with blood, she prevented him from shedding her blood". It is interesting to note the translator's choice of rendering these lines in Latin, according a common usage, in Oriental studies in the past, of translating obscene expressions into Latin.

84   Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1: 270.

85   Al-Jurjānī, *Kināyāt*, 171.

The second brief anecdote quoted by Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Jurjānī in his book on *Kināyāt al-udabāʾ* is as follows: "Another person relates that he (al-Maʾmūn) met Būrān to deflower her. When he was about to, Būrān got her period. She told him: *'God's commandment comes, therefore do not desire to hasten it'*.[86] Al-Maʾmūn understood what she meant and moved away from her".[87] The same anecdote had already been narrated in another work also devoted to figurative expressions and allusions (mainly concerning tabooed objects and actions), by al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1039);[88] and is to be found in a great number of other works, both in Arabic and in Persian.

In Persian literature, the second anecdote is briefly reported in the *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*. In the section concerning the history of Maʾmūn's caliphate, the anonymous author gives a description of Būrān and the caliph's sumptuous wedding. At the end he laconically adds: "When Maʾmūn stretched his hand towards his bride, a state appeared in her (*ū-rā ḥāl-ī ẓāhir gasht*). She said: 'O Commander of the Faithful! *God's commandment comes, therefore do not desire to hasten it*'".[89]

In the *Mujmal* no explanation is given as to the kind of state which appeared in Būrān. Perhaps the anecdote was so famous that the author thought it was pointless to provide further explanations. However, for the uninformed reader, Būrān's phrase could have been simply taken as a way of asking for the deferment of the consummation of the wedding.

The two anecdotes reported by Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Jurjānī in his book on figurative expressions are centred on the fact that, on the night of the consummation of the wedding, Būrān had got her period and therefore the consummation was further delayed. In both cases, Būrān's physical state is expressed through a figurative expression. These anecdotes are therefore relevant to both lines of development of Būrān's character in literature: her transformation into the misogamist woman type, who delays the consummation of marriage; and the association of her character with allusive or enigmatic expressions, and finally true riddles.

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86   Koran XVI,1.

87   Al-Jurjānī, *Kināyāt*, 171.

88   Al-Thaʿālibī, *Kitāb al-kināya wa ʾl-taʿrīḍ*, 43.

89   *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 355.

5 Būrān-dukht Back to Persia, and Her Association with Riddles and Enigmatic Expressions

Summary 1 Non-Verbal Riddles Though Objects: Niẓāmī's Tuesday Tale and the Pearls as Symbols. – 2 Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī's Anecdote on Maʾmūn and Būrān in the Čahār Maqāla. – 3 Maʾmūn and Būrān in ʿAwfī's Collection of Anecdotes.

1 Non-Verbal Riddles Though Objects: Niẓāmī's Tuesday Tale and the Pearls as Symbols

The two lines pronounced by Maʾmūn in the first anecdote, as well as the Koranic verse recited by Būrān in the other, are not true riddles, as they do not involve any explicit challenge to guess their meaning. Their genetic affinity with riddles, however, is evident: as riddles and enigmas, they are based on the substitution of plain and ordinary language with figurative or indirect expressions, in order to say something without revealing it openly.[90] Both for Maʾmūn in the first anecdote, and for Būrān in the second one, they are a witty way of alluding to an unpleasant personal situation which is an object of taboo from a cultural point of view.[91] In the first anecdote, the factual data (the frustrated sexual act and Būrān's menstruation) are talked about in an indirect way, through metaphors: the fiery horse, the horse's rod and the darkness; while the image of "blood preventing from shedding blood" is

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90 See *The Poetics of Aristotle*, 83: "The essence of a riddle is to express true facts under impossible combinations. Now this cannot be done by any arrangement of ordinary words, but by the use of metaphor it can" (XXII: 1).

91 See Naaman, "Women Who Cough and Men Who Hunt".

constructed according to a technique typical of riddles and enigmas, consisting of expressing "true facts under impossible combinations".[92] In the second anecdote, Būrān utters a Koranic verse in order to let Ma'mūn understand – without saying it openly – the embarrassing situation in which she has come to find herself. It is her usage of the Koranic verse in that particular situation, not the verse in itself, that renders it an allusive and enigmatic expression.

In Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale the riddles consist of the exhibition of certain objects that the princess, sitting in front of the prince, sends him via a handmaiden. In order to respond, the young prince must understand the meaning of each object. After the first object, however, the princess too must understand the meaning of the objects the prince sends her in reply. In this language, the objects exhibited, and the actions accompanying their exhibition, have a symbolic value: they are the signifier of something signified, which has to be guessed. They are true riddles, though presented by means of non-verbal language.[93]

The princess takes two little pearls off her earlobes and hands them to the youth. He weighs the two pearls, adds three more pearls of the same value, and returns all of them to her. The princess carefully examines the five pearls, reduces them to powder, mixes the pearl dust with sugar, and passes the mixture to the young prince. In answer, he puts the mixture into a glass of milk and passes it back. The princess drinks the milk, collects the residue and weighs it: the weight is exactly that of the five pearls. She then gives him a ring. He puts it on his finger and gives the princess a splendid pearl. The princess unstrings an identical pearl from her necklace and gives both pearls back to the youth, who finds that the two pearls are identical. He then adds a little azure stone before passing back all three. She hangs the two white pearls on her ears, the blue stone on her finger, smiles and announces to her father that she intends to marry the young man: at last she has found a man who surpasses her in learning and wisdom.[94] She herself, then, explains to her father the meaning of the enigmatic exchange through objects she has had with the prince:[95] the two pearls in the first exchange mean the transience of life; the three other pearls added by the young man mean that whether three or even five days, life is still fleeting; the following question concerns voluptuousness (the

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92   See fn. 90 above.

93   See the third group of riddles (the other two being the riddles of didactic intent, and the ones just for entertainment) in Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Afsāna-yi bānū-yi ḥiṣārī va pishina-yi qālib-i adabī-yi ān", 172.

94   Niẓāmī, *Haft paykar*, ch. 35, 232-60.

95   Niẓāmī, *Haft paykar*, ch. 35, 268-85.

sugar), inextricably linked to life (the pearls): how to distinguish the one from the other? The young man gives the answer by adding the pearl dust to milk; by drinking it the princess subordinates herself to him, at the same time showing that the weight of the pearls is unchanged. By giving him the ring, she in turn accepts to marry him, to which he responds with a very precious pearl, signifying that she would never find another husband of equal worth. To this she adds a pearl of identical value, thereby declaring herself his companion and equal; he simply adds the azure stone as protection against the evil eye.

The wisdom interpretation given in the poem is not the only possible one. The mute exchange between the princess and her suitor represents an example of successful non-verbal communication, and has a strong erotic charge. A sexual interpretation of it has also been posited.[96]

Examples of such communication by means of objects (and actions) are well-known from ancient sources.[97] Albert Wesselski has rightly suggested that one of the sources, or probably the main source, for the non-verbal riddles in Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale is the exchange of objects between Alexander and the wise Indian, recounted in its fullest version by Masʿūdī.[98] On the other hand, examples of this kind of non-verbal communication are rather numerous in Persian literature, both in the context of a riddle, and in a context where no riddle is openly asked. An example of the latter type is a passage from the *Shāhnāma* where – after his marriage to Shīrīn – Khusraw uses non-verbal language through objects to overcome the opposition of the nobles of his court to the wedding. For three days the nobles keep away from court, as a sign of protest and disapproval. Khusraw convokes them. He has a splendid vase brought in to the presence of the nobles and has it filled with impure blood, a disgusting sight for all of them to see. He then orders it to be washed clean, and once again shows it to them. Khusraw himself explains the meaning of the vase and its cleaning: Shīrīn – he says – is like that vase. If at first she was not worthy of marrying the king, she has now been purified by their union.[99] In the just seen example, the gestural language based on the exhibition of an object, though enigmatic in itself, functions as a comparison or a parable.

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96 See for example Meier, "Turandot in Persien", 417.

97 On gestural riddles see the bibliography given by Rossi, "La leggenda di Turandot", 461 fn. 1.

98 Wesselski, "Quellen und Nachwirkungen der Haft Paikar", 114-16; Masʿudi, *Murūǧ al-dahab*, 2: 265-74. This story is also recounted, with some differences and in a more succinct way, in Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 6: 28-31 (*Iskandar*, ll. 353-96).

99 Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 8: 267-9 (*Khusraw Parvīz*, ll. 3482-509).

The objects involved in non-verbal communication – the pearls exchanged by the two young people in Niẓāmī's tale, or the vase in the *Shāhnāma* – have a symbolic value. If Niẓāmī's riddle in the Tuesday tale pertains to the well-known category of non-verbal riddles, the choice of the pearls as symbolic objects represents the link connecting Niẓāmī's tale with the story of Maʾmūn's marriage with Būrān: a possible sign of a relation, or even of the derivation, of the princess in the Tuesday tale from Būrān-dukht.

2 Niẓāmī ʿArūżī's Anecdote on Maʾmūn and Būrān in the Čahār Maqāla

In the first 'discourse', or chapter, devoted to the profession of secretary, in Niẓāmī ʿArūżī's *Čahār maqāla* ('Four discourses', probably composed in 551/1156), an anecdote concerning Maʾmūn's marriage with Būrān is narrated. It is connected to the theme of the chapter by glorifying the great statesmen who flourished under the Abbasid dynasty, among whom were Ḥasan b. Sahl and his brother Fażl.[100] Niẓāmī ʿArūżī freely reworks his sources, offering a narrative endowed with a quality which is not to be found in previous texts: beauty.

In the final part of the anecdote, after the description of the sumptuous preparations for the wedding – including an interesting account of Maʾmūn's decision to wear black clothing for the ceremony,[101] and the traditional report concerning the gifts for the guests – the focus of the narrative moves on to the couple and their feelings: Būrān's kind and submissive attitude, and Maʾmūn's increasing passion for her. Būrān's grandmother, as well as the other noble ladies who – according to the sources – were present at the ceremony, disappear from the narrative, and the couple act in a refined setting, in absolute solitude.

Maʾmūn, on entering the bride's house, is struck by the beauty of the mansion. On a sumptuous carpet of gold thread embroidered with pearls, rubies and turquoises he sees six precious cushions and, seated in the place of honour, he sees Būrān. The author gives a description of her beauty, as it appears to Maʾmūn's astonished eyes. Būrān then acts (I quote the passage in the beautiful English translation by Edward G. Browne):[102] "She, rising to her feet like a cypress, and walking gracefully, advanced towards Maʾmún, and, with

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[100] Niẓāmī ʿArūżī Samarqandī, *Chahār maqāla*, 19-21. The author confuses the two dignitaries, as he says that Būrān was the daughter of Fażl.

[101] In reference to Maʾmūn's political change, in 204/819, reflected in his abandoning the green clothing characteristic of the ʿAlids and coming back to the black of the ʿAbbāsids. See Rekaya, s.v. "al-Maʾmūn b. Hārūn al Rashīd". See also fn. 109 below.

[102] Niẓāmī ʿArūżī Samarqandī, *Chahár Maqála*, 21-3.

a profound obeisance and earnest apologies, took his hand, brought him forward, seated him in the chief seat, and stood before him in service. Ma'mún bade her to be seated, whereupon she seated herself on her knees hanging her head, and looking down at the carpet. Ma'mún was overcome with love: he had already lost his heart, and now he would have added thereunto his very soul".

The recounting of the thousand pearls poured over Ma'mún by Būrān's grand-mother and then counted and given (as if they were a settlement by notary act) to Būrān by Ma'mūn as his wedding gift, is here completely changed: "He stretched out his hand and drew forth from the opening of his coat *eighteen pearls* [my emphasis], each one as large as a sparrow's egg, brighter than the stars of heaven, more lustrous than the teeth of the fair, rounder, nay more luminous, than Saturn or Jupiter, and poured them out on the surface of the carpet, where, by reason of its smoothness and their roundness, they continued in motion, there being no cause for their quiescence. But the girl paid no heed to the pearls, nor so much as raised her head".

The narration of Ma'mūn's attempt to embrace Būrān and the beginning of her menstruation ("that state peculiar to women" in Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī's words) is retold with a focus on Ma'mūn's and Būrān's feelings, in a clear though preciously allusive way: "Thereat was Ma'mún's passion further increased, and he extended his hand to open the door of amorous dalliance and to take her in his embraces. But the emotion of shame overwhelmed her, and the delicate damsel was so affected that she was overtaken by that state peculiar to women. Thereat the marks of shame and abashed modesty appeared in her cheeks and countenance, and she immediately exclaimed: – '*O Prince of Believers! The command of God cometh, seek not then to hasten it!*'".

In this beautiful narrative, there is no need to explain further what has happened. Ma'mūn gets the point and his love increases: "Thereat Ma'mún withdrew his hand, and was near swooning on account of the extreme appositeness of this verse, and her graceful application of it on this occasion. Yet still he could not take his eyes off her, and for *eighteen days* [my emphasis] he came not forth from this house and concerned himself with naught but her".[103]

In Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī's retelling of the story, the pearls presented by Ma'mūn to Būrān become a symbol: there are eighteen of them, just as there are eighteen days of amorous dalliance between Ma'mūn and Būrān. They are a gift and a promise of love. The interpretation of the pearls as metaphorical objects is reinforced by the fact that in the Persian language 'pearl' has a vast array of metaphorical meanings, and appears in a number of figurative expressions. Metaphorically,

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[103]   Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī Samarqandī, *Chahár Maqála*, 22-3.

'pearl' means 'word', especially the poetical word; but also means 'tears', and 'rain'. Among the other metaphorical meanings, one is important here: 'pearl' can mean a virgin, a girl still untouched, or a girl of unique value. And 'to bore the pearl' (*dur[r] suftan*), besides meaning 'to compose poetry', also means 'to deflower a girl'.[104]

One can suppose that the other Niẓāmī, Niẓāmī of Ganja, had this anecdote in mind when he conceived the tale of the princess of the castle, with the enigmatic exchange of pearls between the princess and her suitor (see §§ 1.3 and 5.1 above). But this is only a suggestion, and can certainly not be proved.

3 Maʾmūn and Būrān in ʿAwfī's Collection of Anecdotes

The famous collection of anecdotes by Muḥammad ʿAwfī entitled *Javāmiʿ al-ḥikāyāt va lāvāmiʿ al-rivāyāt* (665/1228) which – as already stated (see above, ch. 1, § 2) – contains the first known attestation of the Turandot tale, also contains an anecdote having caliph Maʾmūn and Būrān as protagonists. It is an anecdote in chapter 22 of the third part of the work, entitled "On clever and wise women, and on the pleasantness of their sayings".[105] Būrān (here Pūrān) is a representation of the clever and witty woman and embodies both characteristic features of 'Turandot': that of the misogamist woman, and that of the woman who asks and/or responds to riddles. The plot, however, is very different from that of both the Turandot tale, and the anecdotes on the wedding night of Maʾmūn and Būrān. The ban on sexual relations is here dictated by a medical prescription concerning Maʾmūn, and it is Maʾmūn who poses a riddle to Būrān concerning his own sexual life. As will be shown, this anecdote also testifies to the connection of Būrān (in this case, the second Būrān) with the legendary figure of Shīrīn.

The story is as follows. Maʾmūn asks ten women of his harem, mothers of his sons,[106] the following question: "What do I need?" None of the women can answer. The caliph then asks Būrān, and she gives the right answer: the caliph – she says – needs sexual intercourse (*mubāšarat*) with women, but this has been denied him by his physician Bukhtīshūʿ;[107] he can have free social intercourse (*muʿāšarat*) with them, but when he is assailed by desire he must be content with a male slave (*khādim*). The caliph is amazed at Būrān's cleverness, how she is able to guess

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104 Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, s.vv. "Dur(r)" and "Dur(r) suftan".

105 ʿAwfī, *Javāmiʿ al-ḥikāyāt va lavāmiʿ al-rivāyāt*, qism III, juzv II, 646-8.

106 This means that they were simple concubines and not, like Būrān, his wives.

107 This is the name borne by several physicians of a famous Christian family originally established at Jundīshābūr. The personage in this anecdote may be identified with Jibrīl b. Bukhtīshūʿ or with his son. See Sourdel, s.v. "Bukhtīshūʿ".

the secret only known to the physician and himself. She retires to her room and sends the caliph some beautiful male slaves; but he desires Būrān. He tries to penetrate Būrān's room, but – no matter how much he insists and pleads – she does not let him in, not wanting to transgress the prescription of the physician Bokhtishuʿ, for the sake of the caliph's health. She says to Maʾmūn: "The health of the Prince of Believers is what all his servants desire. Therefore, limit yourself to a friendly relationship (with your wives), so that your health be complete, and the servant's ease under (your) reign be perfect". In the end Būrān explains how she had managed to guess Maʾmūn's secret: if the caliph had free intercourse with such beautiful women without having sexual relations with them, she had deduced that this was because of a prohibition concerning sexual relations with women.

In this anecdote a feature recurs, already seen in the story of Shīrīn and her putative son Shahriyār referred to above (see ch. 2, § 4): it is the prohibition from sexual relations with women. Whereas in the anecdote of Shīrīn and Shahriyār the ban (for Shahriyār) on sexual intercourse was motivated by the need to avert the birth of an ill-omened child, in the anecdote of Maʾmūn and Būrān narrated by ʿAwfī it is motivated by a medical prohibition; but the reason for this is not clear. One might recall that, in classical moral literature, over-frequent relations with women were considered a danger to the health of a man, and especially for a ruler's well-being;[108] or, rather, the prohibition concerning sexual intercourse with women (not sexual intercourse tout court) may be considered as a literary reflex of Maʾmūn's political choices in relation to the question of his succession.[109] But such explanations are unconvincing. The only acceptable interpretation for the ban on sexual intercourse in this anecdote has to be searched for within the literary world. Indeed, it intertextually responds to and retells the anecdote of Shīrīn and Shahriyār, giving it a happy ending: Būrān – unlike Shīrīn – is a wise woman and resists the pleas of Maʾmūn for the sake of her husband's health and – above all – for the welfare of the country. The character of Būrān, which accords with some of Shīrīn's characteristic features, evolved until it became Shīrīn's opposite: no longer, as with Shīrīn, the main character responsible for the fall of the kingdom of Persia, but a model of virtue and cleverness, deeply interested in the welfare of the kingdom and its subjects. Perhaps a remote memory of the Sasanid queen Būrān can also be detected behind ʿAwfī's Būrān.

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108   For advice on health problems connected with over-frequent contact with women cf. Fouchécour, *Moralia*, 389.

109   At the beginning of his reign, Maʾmūn had attempted to impose ʿAlī al-Riḍā, son of the martyr Mūsā al-Kāẓim, as his successor, therefore renouncing a direct line of succession. On that occasion he abandoned the black color of the ʿAbbāsids in favor of the green color of the ʿAlids. See Rekaya, s.v. "al-Maʾmūn b. Hārūn al Rashīd".

6 The Turandot Tale in Europe: Origins of the Name 'Turandot'

Summary   1 The Name 'Turandot'. – 2 From Būrān-dukht to Tūrān-dukht. – 3 Conclusions: the Anecdote of Maʾmūn and Būrān and the Turandot Tale.

1   The Name 'Turandot'

The name *Turandot* is attested for the first time, in the form *Tourandocte*, in the tale "Histoire du prince Calaf, et de la Princesse de la Chine" (other editions have: "Histoire du prince Calaf et de la Princesse Tourandocte") in François Pétis de la Croix's tale collection *Les Mille et un Jour(s)* (Paris, 1710-12, 5 vols.).[110]

In Europe, after the publication of Pétis de la Croix's collection of tales, the character of Turandot appears in many other re-elaborations of the tale, from the drama plays by Carlo Gozzi (*Turandot. Fiaba cinese teatrale tragico-mica*, first performed in Venice on 22 January 1762) and Friedrich von Schiller (*Turandot, Prinzessin von China. Ein tragikomisches Märchen nach Gozzi*, first performed in Weimar in 1802), to Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni's libretto for Puccini's *Turandot*, which premiered in Milan, at La Scala theatre, on 25 April 1926 – these only being some of the main stages in the fortune of the Turandot tale in Europe.[111]

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[110]   In the different editions the title is given either as *Les Mille et un Jour*, or as *Les Mille et un Jours*. In the edition I consulted (*Les Mille et un Jour. Contes persans*. Amsterdam and Paris, 1785, 2 vols.), this tale is in vol. 1: 227-42 and 296-392, days 45-8 and 60-82. I was not able to consult the critical edition of the work by Paul Sebag (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1980; 2nd rev. ed. Paris: Phébus, 2003).

[111]   Among the studies specifically devoted to the fortune of the Turandot tale in Europe see Di Francia, *La leggenda di Turandot*.

The question of Pétis de la Croix's sources has been much debated.[112] Scholars consider a manuscript of a Turkish tale collection entitled *Ferec baʻd eş-şidde* as the direct source of Pétis de la Croix's *Les Mille et un Jour(s)*.[113] Pétis de la Croix re-worked the Turkish Turandot tale introducing a number of innovations:[114] the most relevant from the point of view of the present study is that he gave a name to all the personages of the tale, who – with the exception of the hero, Khalaf – were nameless in the Persian and Turkish redactions.[115]

On the origins of the character of Turandot and her name there is, as far as I know, no research. Letterio Di Francia, and Ettore Rossi after him, merely noticed that in d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale* (1697) two historical figures bear the name *Tourandokht*: a queen, daughter of Khusraw II Parvīz, and the daughter of Ḥasan b. Sahl, wife of caliph al-Maʾmūn.[116] Likewise Angelo M. Piemontese, without referring to Di Francia and Rossi's remark, quotes d'Herbelot on the two historical personages bearing the alleged name of Tūrān-dukht.[117] Recently Youssef Mogtader and Gregor Schoeler have hypothesized that Pétis de la Croix took the name from the short section dedicated to Queen Būrān in the *Shāhnāma*, where the queen's name is erroneously given in the form *Tūrān* or *Tūrān-dukht* due to a change in the diacritical points.[118] Neither Mogtader and Schoeler, nor the scholars referring (without the due historical checks) to the two *Tourandokht*s in d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale*, deal with the narrative features linking these historical personages with the literary character of Turandot. However Piemontese is probably right when he states that: "The name Turandot, by which the Princess is known in European modern literary developments, originates in d'Herbelot's posthumous *Bibliothèque orientale*" (see § 3 below).[119]

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112   The story related by Pétis de la Croix, and accepted – among others – by Meier, about a certain Moclès (i.e. Mukhliṣ) from Isfahan, who gave Pétis a manuscript containing a collection of tales from Indian sources, that he translated into French, has been recognized as a mere literary cliché (see, among others, Di Francia, *La leggenda di Turandot*, 14-15). Mukhliṣ, however, was a historical figure, that Pétis did actually meet in Isfahan (see Marzolph, *Relief After Hardship*, 7-8).

113   See Marzolph, *Relief After Hardship*, especially 9-11, and Di Francia, *La leggenda di Turandot*, 14-15.

114   On which see Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 34-7.

115   In the long Persian prose redaction of the tale (see above, ch. 1, § 2) only one other character has a name: Āzād, a king who helps the hero during his journey in search of his fortune; cf. Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 14 and 27 (Persian text).

116   See Di Francia, *La leggenda di Turandot*, 42; Rossi, "La leggenda di Turandot", 471 fn. 1.

117   Piemontese, "The Enigma of Turandot in Nizāmī's Pentad", 133.

118   Mogtader , Schoeler, *Turandot*, 14 and fn. 7.

119   Piemontese, "The Enigma of Turandot", 133.

2 From Būrān-dukht to Tūrān-dukht

It is well-known that the name of the character in Pétis de la Croix's tale, and hence in Gozzi, Schiller and Puccini's plays, Turandot, corresponds to Persian *Tūrān-dukht*. This name, however, is only attested in Islamic sources as a misreading of the form Būrān-dukht,[120] a name attested – as already stated – for two historical figures: the daughter of Khusraw Parvīz, and the daughter of Ḥasan b. Sahl, wife of caliph al-Ma'mūn. The original Persian name of the character known in European sources as Turandot, then, must have been Būrān-dukht (Burān-dokht according to later pronunciation), the form Tūrān(-dukht) only being attested in a number of manuscripts of different works as a misreading of the original form.[121]

Bōrān is considered an ancient patronymic formed from *Bōr < *Baur*, an abridged form from **Baurāspa-* 'having bay horses', followed by the suffix for patronymics *-āna-*; and means 'daughter of the possessor of bay horses'.[122] The occasional and later addition of *-dukht* to this name may have been dictated by analogy with the many Middle Persian female proper names ending in *-duxt* (daughter, girl).[123] It is interesting to notice that, according to some sources, Būrān-dukht (or Pūrān-dukht) became a sort of nickname for a clever and wise woman, as strong as a man (see above, ch. 3, § 2).

'Tūrān-dukht', then, probably arose from a trivial misreading of the name of the two Būrān-dukhts, the daughter of Khusraw Parvīz and the wife of caliph al-Ma'mūn. This kind of mistake, called *taṣḥīf*, is well-known to philologists: it consists in changing the diacritical points of a letter. Indeed, Būrān/Būrān-dukht does not seem to have been a widespread name, as only two historical personages bore it. The reading with initial <t>, instead of <b>, allowed, with a simple displacement of the diacritical points in the initial letter, a more comprehensible etymology for the name: Tūrān-dukht, the girl from Tūrān – this region being variously identified with the central-Asiatic Turkish lands, and with China. As we have already seen, the corrupted form of the name was even accepted into European sources, such as d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale*.

As to the form Purān or Purān-dukht given in later Persian sources, Theodor Nöldeke demonstrated – comparing the Middle Persian

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120 Cf. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, 329, s.v. "Tūrānduχt (°dot)".

121 For the name of the Sasanid queen, see *Shāhnāma*, 8: 394 (apparatus for l. 8); Balʿamī, *Tārikh*, 2: 1198 (apparatus); *Mujmal al-tavārīkh*, 37 and 82 (apparatus).

122 Cf. Gignoux, *Noms propres sassanides en moyen-perse épigraphique*, 58, nos. 208-9. See also Moḥammad Ḥasandust, *Farhang-i rīsha-shinākhtī-yi zabān-i fārsī*, 1: 527-8, s.v. "būr, bōr".

123 These nouns, in their turn, are for the most part patronymics; cf. Gignoux, *Noms propres sassanides*, 9.

form attested on the coins minted in her name with the form attested in the Syriac, Greek and Armenian *Nebenüberlieferung* – that this is only a late, incorrect form of the name of the Sasanid queen (also attested for the other Būrān).[124]

3   Conclusions: the Anecdote of Maʾmūn and Būrān and the Turandot Tale

A number of narrative features link the character of Turandot of European literature with that of Būrān-dukht, as it emerges from the review of texts given above. It is impossible, however, at least in the present stage of research, to trace a direct derivation of the Turandot tale and character from tales and anecdotes focused on the figure of Būrān-dukht (mainly intended as the caliph's wife). The inclusion, side by side, of both kinds of narratives – the Turandot tale and the anecdote about Maʾmūn and Būrān – in ʿAwfī's collection of tales seems to show that they developed independently from one another. What is sure is that the Turandot tale, from the one side, and the anecdotes on Maʾmūn and Būrān from the other, pertain to different literary genres: folk-literature, permeated with fabulous motifs and clichés, in the first case; narratives based on historical or semi-historical personages and events, in the second case. Such difference of narrative genres may explain some differences in the physiognomy of the female protagonist. For example, the princess in the Turandot tale possesses a feature (almost) unknown to the character of Būrān-dukht: that of her cruelty.

The cruel princess who sets riddles to her suitors seems to have received a name, *Tourandocte*, for the first time in Pétis de la Croix's *Les Mille et un Jour(s)*. The name of Pétis's princess is so well-chosen that it cannot be due to chance; the hypothesis underlying this article is that it originated from the character of Būrān-dukht described in this study. As to possible ways of transmission of this character's name to Pétis de la Croix, one can only guess. If Būrān-dukht/Tūrān-dukht as the name of the princess is not attested in any of the Eastern redactions of the Turandot tale, and in particular in Pétis's Turkish source, it is possible that the French author took the name either, directly, from one of the anecdotes about Maʾmūn and Būrān in the literatures of the Islamic world, or, indirectly, from the notice on *Tourandokht*, the wife of the caliph, in d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*. Indeed under this entry d'Herbelot recounts the episode of the couple's wedding and relates the Kuranic verse uttered by *Touran-*

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124 See Nöldeke, in Ṭabarī, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, 390 fn. 2.

dokht to prevent the caliph from approaching her when she was in a state of impediment.[125] In such a case, d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale* provided Pétis de la Croix with not just a name, but with a name and a set of narrative features pertaining to one of the representatives of the misogamist woman type in Arabic and Persian literatures.

Niẓāmī's Tuesday tale in the poem *Haft peykar* seems to represent – if our supposition is confirmed by further research – an early text documenting a link between the Turandot tale and the anecdote about Ma'mūn and Būrān. Indeed, one can hypothesize that Niẓāmī's tale of the princess in the castle is a poetical re-elaboration of an early Turandot tale, perhaps the one in Ibn Khusraw's collection (see above, ch. 1, § 2), with substitution of the verbal with non-verbal riddles, in the wake of the tradition of riddles by means of objects. It is also possible that, in choosing the pearls as symbolic objects in the context of the couple's encounter, the poet was influenced by Niẓāmī 'Arūżī's beautiful anecdote on Ma'mūn and Būrān's union.

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125 See d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale*, 895-6. Concerning *Tourandokht*, the caliph's wife, d'Herbelot says: "Cette princesse étoit fort sçavant & douée d'un très bel esprit. L'Auteur du Nighiaristan rapporte que le Chalife étant entré un jour dans sa chambre & voulant avec precipitation s'acquitter avec elle du devoir de mary, cette Dame, qui avoit pour lors quelque empêchement legitime, luy dit ces paroles de l'Alcoran [...] Il arriva que ce passage cité à propos reprima la convoitise trop ardente de son mary" (896).

Appendix
A Summary of the Turandot Tale in two Persian Sources

The Turandot tale, as it is attested by ʿAwfī,[126] and by the longer Persian prose tale[127] published by Youssef Mogtader and Gregor Schoeler is, in broad outline, as follows. A young man (he is the son of indigent parents living in Iraq, in ʿAwfī's tale; the son of the king of Tūrān who has lost all his wealth, in the longer Persian version) is obliged – in order to cope with the situation of poverty which he and his parents are facing – to sell as slaves his father for a horse and his mother for armor. He then leaves to seek his fortune. He overcomes a long series of difficulties and dangers. Finally he arrives at the court of a king (the king of Rūm in ʿAwfī, the king of China in the longer tale) and comes to know of the conditions set by the king's daughter for her suitors: whoever aspires to her hand must answer a series (ten in ʿAwfī) of questions. If the suitor cannot answer, he is condemned to death. In ʿAwfī's tale a second condition is expounded from the very beginning: if the suitor is able to answer, he, in his turn, must ask the princess three questions. The princess will only consent to marry him if she cannot answer the suitor's questions. The young man/the prince accepts the challenge and answers the princess's questions. The hero then asks the princess a question focusing on his own personal story, and which cannot be answered other than by himself: who is that man/prince …? followed by a summary, in enigmatic terms, of the hero's story. In ʿAwfī

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126   Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 7-20 (Persian text), 55-67 (translation).
127   Mogtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 21-57 (Persian text), 69-118 (translation).

he asks: Who is that man whose mother is a horse and whose father is armor?[128] The princess asks for a delay and, during a nocturnal visit to the young man in the company of one of her handmaidens (two of them in 'Awfī), manages to find the solution. She, however, from simple heedlessness (in the longer tale), or at the express request of the youth (in 'Awfī), leaves with the young man some of her personal possessions (a dress wet with wine, her ornaments). On the following day the princess answers the young man's question (in 'Awfī's tale), whereas in the longer tale she only has the prince understand that she knows the answer. The young man/the prince then challenges the princess to guess a riddle concerning three female birds that visited a male bird, leaving him their feathers and wings (in 'Awfī), or alluding to the princess's nocturnal visit through the metaphor of a bird which has fallen into the prince's net (in the longer tale). The princess surrenders and recognizes her suitor's superiority: she cannot risk everyone coming to know about her nocturnal visit to the young man. The tale ends with the wedding of the couple and the redemption from slavery of the old parents.

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128 See the edition of 'Awfī's tale by Moqtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 15 (Persian text). At the beginning of the tale, however, the young man asks for a horse in exchange for his father, and armour in exchange for his mother (Moqtader, Schoeler, *Turandot*, 8).

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Index

The two essays gathered here, devoted to the characters of Farhād and Turandot/Būrān-dukht respectively, represent two parallel upshots of a stream of research focusing on the transformation of historical or semi-historical figures into literary characters. The research moves from literary characters and their possible historical or legendary origins, to un understanding of their literary function in Persian literature.

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