

Introduction

The Later Epics

One of the best known works of Persian literature is Abū'l-Qāsem Ferdowsī's *Shāhnāme*. This epic 'Book of the Kings' in verse, completed in AD1010, gives a half mythical-legendary and half historical account of the events surrounding the kings and warriors of pre-Islamic Iran. Far less-known are the poems that were written in the course of the following four centuries in emulation of Ferdowsī's magnum opus, collectively termed 'the later epics' or 'the epic cycle'. Set against the background of legendary Iran as known from the *Shāhnāme* and often including figures familiar from this work, each poem narrates the adventures of one specific figure. The protagonists of the greater majority of these later epics are warriors from the family of the most famous *Shāhnāme* hero, Rostam. In this manner, later epics exist that, besides Rostam himself, his grandfather Sām or his ancestor Garshāsp, surround characters not known from the *Shāhnāme*, such as Rostam's son Jahāngīr, his daughter Bānū Goshasp or his grandson Barzū.¹ Another later epic protagonist, who does appear in the *Shāhnāme*, albeit in a considerably smaller role than Rostam, is his son Farāmarz. Two eponymous poems celebrating this hero are known to exist, one considerably shorter than the other. The present translation deals with the longer of the two, the *Large Farāmarznāme*.²

The later epics can be seen as supplements to the *Shāhnāme*'s legendary section. They are all *mašnawī*s that, like the *Shāhnāme*, have the internal rhyme scheme *aa bb cc* etc. and the *motāqareb* metre (o – – / o – – / o – – / o –) and that to a large extent follow Ferdowsī's use of vocabulary and style of writing. Their stories are all set during the reign of one or more Iranian kings from Jamshīd down to Bahman, and they often feature several of these kings' warriors. Many of the poems also see the appearance of Rostam and his father Zāl, as well as his brother Zawāre and his son Farāmarz. In addition, several later epics hark back to certain *Shāhnāme* episodes, by narrating a

sequel to a specific story, or they may repeat themes from this poem, such as two family members fighting without knowing each other's identity, as in the story of Rostam and Sohrāb, or one of the heroes performing seven trials (*haft khān*), as is done in the *Shāhnāme* by both Rostam and Prince Esfandiār. A number of poems came to be linked even more closely to the *Shāhnāme* in a physical sense: since they agreed so much in form and content with Ferdowsī's work, the later epics lent themselves well to interpolation. Especially from the fifteenth century onwards,³ various later epics were included in many *Shāhnāme* manuscripts, at points where they best fitted in with the storyline. By inserting one or more later epics into the manuscript he was copying, a scribe responded to his audience's increase in demand for adventures surrounding individual heroes.

The longer poems, such as the *Sāmnāme*, the *Jahāngīrnāme* and the *Barzūnāme*, which are made up of many thousands of verses, tell how their main heroes travel abroad and experience a series of adventures, which generally include one or more love affairs, but for the larger part consist of battles or individual fights, against man, demon, or beast. Some later epics are considerably shorter and, rather than having their hero go on a lengthy voyage, concentrate on just one or a few adventures. The *Bānū Goshaspnāme*, for example, the only later epic to feature a female warrior, numbers barely 1,000 verses and sees its heroine displaying her prowess in four separate stories. And there are several poems starring Rostam that each narrate just one adventure, set during the hero's younger years. To name just two, the story in which he fights a tiger in India, *Dāstān-e Babr-e Bayān*, comprises somewhat more than 400 verses, whilst the one in which he deals with a brigand closer to home, *Dāstān-e Kok-e Kūhzād*, has about 700 verses.⁴

Many of the later epics see the appearance of demons, sorcerers, fairies, dragons and other kinds of fierce animals or peoples with certain fantastic features. Whilst some adventures take place in countries neighbouring Iran, such as Tūrān (Turkistan), Rūm (the Roman Empire or Byzantium), Chīn and Māchīn (China and the adjoining lands to the south-west) or Hendūstān (India), others may be set in faraway fictional lands. By including fantastic creatures or peoples and distant countries, these poems did not just meet the contemporary taste for romance, but also tied in with another popular genre of the time, which had branched off from regular geographical works and consisted of accounts of the world's marvels (*'ajāyeb*).⁵ On the whole, these epics are better appreciated as entertaining stories than as pieces of a high literary standard. Scholarship of the last two centuries has judged them to be of lesser quality than Ferdowsī's *Shāhnāme* in terms of subject matter and

literary form,⁶ which seems to have been the main cause of the epic cycle's long-term general neglect by researchers.

The first, most famous and generally most appreciated, of the later epic poems, written in 1066, was Asadī Ṭūsī's *Garshāspnāme*.⁷ Consisting of close to 10,000 verses, it narrates a series of adventures experienced, partly in Iran but mainly abroad, by its eponymous hero in the service of Kings Ṣaḥḥāk and Fereydūn. Garshāsp travels to both the East and the West, to a large number of different countries, including several fictitious ones, and during his voyage fights several battles, slays ferocious creatures and sees many marvels. At the beginning of the poem, it is told how Garshāsp descends from the Iranian king Jamshīd. Halfway through the story, Garshāsp's son Narīmān is born, who later joins his father on his travels, and towards the end we are told of the birth of Narīmān's son Sām. The later epic tradition of Sām descending from Garshāsp deviates from the one told in the *Shāhnāme* – where Rostam's family is not given any royal ancestry – but Garshāsp's genealogy is repeated in a number of later epics starring Sām's descendants, and as such is referred to specifically in the *Large Farāmarznāme*.

Another later epic worth mentioning is the *Bahmannāme*. Named after the Iranian king Bahman, this poem assigns major roles to both Farāmarz and Zāl, as well as a few later epic characters, such as Farāmarz's sisters Bānū Goshasp and Zarbānū and his sons Sām and Āzar-borzīn (also known as Ādar-borzīn). This is another lengthy poem, of more than 10,500 verses, but instead of telling of its protagonist's lengthy voyages, it for the largest part focuses on Bahman's battles against Zāl and his offspring, to avenge Rostam's killing of his father Esfandīyār, which latter story is famously told in the *Shāhnāme*. Bahman especially cracks down hard on Farāmarz, who at a certain point in the poem is captured and killed, and then wages war against Āzar-borzīn. This narrative of Bahman's battles against Rostam's family clearly derives from, whilst at the same time greatly expanding on, the short *Shāhnāme* episode in which this Iranian king invades their province of Sīstān, captures Zāl and fights Farāmarz.⁸ The *Bahmannāme* joins the *Garshāspnāme* in being one of the few later epics that can both be dated, to around 1102–1107, and attributed to a specific author, in this case Īrānshāh b. Abī'l-Kheyr.⁹ The same author – whose name is alternatively believed to be Īrānshāh – also composed another later epic, the *Kūshnāme*, which in more than 10,000 verses tells the adventures of the Chinese ruler Kūsh, a cousin of King Ṣaḥḥāk, and his son Kūsh Jr.¹⁰

Of most of the other later epics, the authors are unknown and the dates of composition have to be guessed from the texts themselves, such as their

vocabulary or subject matter. The more Arabic words and Islamic references a poem contains, the later the date to which it tends to be ascribed. Sometimes, a text contains certain clues from which a possible author or dedicatee might be deduced, and subsequently the period in which the poem might have been composed. Nevertheless, since such deductions are the result of conjecture and remain unsupported by more concrete evidence, one can never be completely sure, and at times certain attributions later have had to be refuted.¹¹ What is more, just like the *Shāhnāme*, these later epics have passed through a copying tradition of many centuries, and, as their oldest known manuscripts most often do not date from before the sixteenth or seventeenth century, their original texts will have undergone a great many changes and additions before coming down to us in their few extant versions. This makes it very difficult on the one hand to date any of the anonymous epics with any near certainty, and on the other to know how the text may have read in its original form.

Farāmarz and the *Farāmarznāmes*

In the later epic traditions Farāmarz is a considerably popular character. This is testified to by his having been given more or less substantial roles, in addition to both *Farāmarznāmes*, in six other later epics: he thus appears in the aforementioned ones surrounding Bānū Goshasp, Jahāngīr, Barzū and Bahman, as well as in the poem named after Barzū's son, the *Shahrīyār-nāme*, and in the one about the son of the White Demon that in the *Shāhnāme* was defeated by Rostam, the *Shabrang-nāme*.¹² But well before any of these later epics were written down, a number of stories about Farāmarz were already in circulation.

Most famously of course, he appears in several *Shāhnāme* episodes. Farāmarz on a few occasions functions as a warrior in Rostam's army, but on the whole remains largely in the background. He most prominently comes to the fore after Rostam's death, in the aforementioned episode of Bahman, where the king's war against the province of Sīstān ends in Farāmarz's execution. He makes two other notable contributions to the story. The first one occurs directly after his introduction into the *Shāhnāme* during the reign of Keykāwos, when Farāmarz leads a contingent against Warāzād, the king of Sepenjāb and an ally of Tūrān, and kills that king in the name of vengeance for Sīyāwakhsh.¹³ The second one is part of the episode of the fight between Rostam and Esfandīyār, during which Farāmarz and his uncle

Zawāre are provoked into a skirmish against the prince royal's troops and end up killing Esfandiār's sons, the latter dealing with Nūshāzar and the former with Mehrnūsh.¹⁴

Besides these and a few other, more fleeting, mentions in the *Shāhnāme*, other stories about Farāmarz seem to have been known to the general public of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The Ghaznawid poet Farrokhi Sīstānī (c. 995–c. 1037), for instance, not only refers in one *qaṣīde* to Farāmarz as possessing great courage and skill, but also in another one mentions that he killed a dragon in Sind.¹⁵ This heroic feat does not appear in the *Shāhnāme*, which means that Farrokhi must have learned about it from another source.

Both the mid-eleventh century anonymous 'History of Sīstān' and Shahmardān b. Abī'l-Kheyr's *Nozhatnāme-ye 'alā'ī*, an encyclopaedic work composed around 1100, mention a lengthy prose book about Farāmarz.¹⁶ Regrettably, this prose book has long since been lost and its contents are unknown, so that it cannot be said to what extent its stories are represented in either one of the versified *Farāmarznāmes*. The only clue can be found in the *Nozhatnāme-ye 'alā'ī* itself, which retells two stories about Farāmarz during his campaign against the Raja of India: both stories to a certain extent reappear in the *Large Farāmarznāme*.¹⁷ The first one recounts how a warrior named Ḥajjāw, who appears as Tajānū in the *Farāmarznāme*, tears the trunk off one of Farāmarz's elephants, but is subsequently captured, and when he breaks loose from his fetters he is defeated and killed by Farāmarz. The second story tells how the Raja ambushes Farāmarz, but the latter is rescued by Rostam, who was dispatched by Zāl when he was supernaturally warned of his grandson's situation.

How far back in time any of the stories featuring Farāmarz were first told is anyone's guess. It seems quite likely that such stories were part of the repertoires of storytellers and were developed into written poems on the basis of the oral narrative traditions of the early Islamic period, or maybe of the preceding centuries. During the Parthian period (c. 171 BC–AD 226), travelling minstrels (*gōsāns*) would have sung stories about various figures both from a distant past and the Parthian age itself, of which a number of stories in one form or another survived throughout the Sasanian period (226–651) and subsequently found their way into Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāme*,¹⁸ so it is not unlikely that other stories, which were not incorporated in the Book of Kings, equally continued being transmitted down to the early Islamic period, including the heroic adventures of Farāmarz. Whereas it is impossible to do anything more than speculate on past oral traditions, the very fact that narrations involving Farāmarz, including those in Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāme*,

were in circulation by the eleventh century and subsequently put down in writing and that this hero plays a reasonably prominent role in the later epic traditions testifies to his fame.

Farāmarz's popularity as an epic character is all the more underscored by his starring in two separate eponymous poems. Since these epics are set in two distinct periods, the shorter one during Keykāwos' reign and the longer one during Keykhosrow's, it seems likely that they were originally composed as separate entities, by two different poets. It appears that the younger of the two poems may be the shorter *Farāmarznāme*. Going by references at a certain point in the text by the poet himself to his penname, his age and his place of origin, Akbar Naḥawī has deduced that the epic was composed by the poet Rafī' al-Dīn Marzbān Fārsī, probably soon after 555/1161, whilst it would have been dedicated to Moḥammad Jahān-Pahlawān, brother and right-hand man of the Seljuk ruler of western Iran, Mo'ezz al-Dīn Arslān (r. 555–571/1161–1176).¹⁹ The gist of the story of the shorter *Farāmarznāme*, which consists of about 1,500 verses, is that Farāmarz leads his army to India to go to the assistance of a vassal of Keykāwos, King Nowshād, whose country is terrorised by a demon and several different fierce animals and who is oppressed by his neighbour King Keyd demanding tribute. Farāmarz slays the demon and the animals, defeats King Keyd and in addition holds two discussions with two different Brahmins, the latter of which leads to the conversion of the Indian king and his people.²⁰ The poem ends abruptly and contains some clues indicating that its story ought to continue. This means that either the poem was never completed or its end was cut off at a certain point during its copying tradition, maybe so that the epic could be interpolated in a *Shāhnāme* manuscript. An example of such an interpolation of the shorter *Farāmarznāme* can be found in, London, British Library, ms Or. 2926 (Shiraz, 1246/1830; *Shāhnāme*, first half), fols 167–180.²¹

The *Large Farāmarznāme*, which in its critical edition runs to 5,442 verses, completely lacks any mention of a date or author but, going by the appearance of two names in the text, Abolfazl Khatibi proposes a candidate for the poem's dedicatee, or rather one of possibly two dedicatees, and subsequently suggests its period of composition. The poem includes a short panegyric passage, which makes reference to a vizier and includes both the names Abū Bakr and Nezām al-Dowal (vss 3025–3026). Khatibi believes that this dedicatee was one of the sons of the famous Seljuk vizier Nezām al-Molk; this Abū Bakr, one of whose surnames was Nezām al-Dowal, lived from 444/1052 to 494/1101 and like his father served as a vizier, for three brief periods between

476/1084 and 494/1101, to three different Seljuk sultans. Rather confusingly, the rubric heading this passage reads ‘In praise of Sultan Nezām al-Dowle and his vizier’, which has led Khatibi to believe that the section in praise of the sultan himself has been lost from the poem and that the Nezām al-Dowle of the rubric actually is the vizier.²²

Whether or not this really is the case will be difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain, but Khatibi’s dating of the poem to the last quarter of the 5th/11th century, and more precisely to the period between 487/1095 and 494/1101, does tie in with a reference made in the anonymous compendium of histories *Mojmal al-tawārikh*. Written around 1126, this work mentions a – further unspecified – *Farāmarznāme* as one of four works that branched off Ferdowsi’s *Shāhnāme*.²³ The other three works are the aforementioned *Garshāspnāme*, *Bahmannāme* and *Kūshnāme*, and since these have all been dated with near-certainty to the period between 1066 and 1107, the inclusion of the *Farāmarznāme* amongst these works seems to underscore Khatibi’s assumption of its date of composition.

The Text of the *Large Farāmarznāme*

Even more than many other later epics, the *Large Farāmarznāme* was in the past greatly neglected by researchers. This is mainly due to the fact that this poem was not known to scholars such as Mohl and Şafā,²⁴ because for a long time no texts of the epic were known to exist in either Europe or Iran. As far as has been recorded, the only known manuscripts are either currently kept in India or were once part of the India Office collections, which in 1982 were incorporated in the British Library, where now two manuscripts of the *Large Farāmarznāme* can be found. Only one of these texts (MS RSPA 176; Nawsari, 1166/1752)²⁵ is complete and therefore has been used as the basis for the critical edition. Nevertheless, the text is relatively sloppily executed, at times includes incorrect readings and even seems to be missing certain verses, which makes it far from ideal. In this manuscript, in the first rubric of the poem, mention is made of the *Farāmarznāme* being ‘large’ (*bozorg*). The second text (MS IO Islamic 3263; Isfahan?, late 17th C.)²⁶ has been more carefully executed and includes often more reliable readings, but this manuscript, too, has its defects, first and foremost because it lacks more than 1,000 verses. In addition to these two manuscripts, there is a lithographed book entitled *Farāmarznāme* (ed. Rostam pūr-e Bahrām-e Sorūsh-e Taftī; Bombay, 1324/1907),²⁷ which joins together several later epics

featuring Farāmarz, including both *Farāmarznāmes*, but its text contains a large number of orthographical mistakes and often contains doubtful readings. This lithographed version of the poem was the single one known to Khaleghi-Motlagh, who in addition only, and just briefly, had access to the book after he had completed his research on the shorter *Farāmarznāme*, so that his observations on the longer poem by necessity were limited, as well as hampered by the text's inferior quality.²⁸ Together with the two manuscripts, the lithographed text has been used to compile the critical edition of the *Large Farāmarznāme*.²⁹

From the contents of the poem as it appears in the critical edition one can easily deduce that it is incomplete. Whilst the text in places seems to miss a few verses and has a rather abrupt ending, the poem's defectiveness most notably becomes clear from its beginning. Firstly, the introduction clearly is makeshift, as it lacks an original exordium that might have included any mention of the circumstances of the poem's composition, but instead consists of a praise of God followed by a praise of wisdom (vss 1–37), which factually is a copy of the opening of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāme*.³⁰ Secondly, the following introductory section to the actual story of the *Farāmarznāme* (vss 38–195) borrows heavily from another section of the *Shāhnāme*, in which Keykhosrow, soon after he has ascended to the throne of Iran, launches his campaign against Tūrān to avenge the murder of his father Sīyāwakhsh.³¹ The *Farāmarznāme* paraphrases parts of this *Shāhnāme* episode, with a focus on Farāmarz's role in the story, and at times even more or less literally copies one or more verses at a time.

This introduction tells how the newly ascended Keykhosrow calls on his nobles to assist him in his war of vengeance. Next, he distributes his treasures and appoints several army leaders to go to war against different allies of Tūrān.³² Then Rostam presents himself before the king and suggests they launch an expedition to reconquer a province that borders to the east on Rostam's homeland, Zābolestān (i.e. Sīstān), but has been lost to Tūrān. This fictional province is called Khargāh. Keykhosrow applauds this idea and says that an excellent candidate to lead this expedition would be Rostam's son Farāmarz. So, Keykhosrow sends for Farāmarz and gives him counsel. Rostam also gives his son advice and then accompanies him on the first part of his journey. After they have said their goodbyes, Farāmarz travels onwards to Khargāh, at which point the main text of the *Large Farāmarznāme* begins. Whilst the *Farāmarznāme* continues with Farāmarz's adventures, which no longer at all resemble the storyline of the *Shāhnāme*, the episode of Keykhosrow's review in Ferdowsi's epic concludes by telling how Rostam

turns back to join the king and they muse on the vicissitudes of life. The *Shāhnāme* includes no further reference to Farāmarz's expedition in Khargāh.

The close resemblance of this introduction to a section of the *Shāhnāme* points at it not having originally been part of the *Large Farāmarznāme*, but having been added at a later date, probably written by a scribe who was copying the later epic and found its introduction missing. It seems highly unlikely that the poem originally did not have a proper introduction, which probably would have included a praise of God that was written in the poet's own words, as well as an indication of a time of composition or a mention of a dedicatee. The current absence of such an introduction, in turn, seems to indicate that at a certain point it had been cut off from the *Large Farāmarznāme*, so that the later epic could be interpolated in the *Shāhnāme* – most likely in the aforementioned episode of Keykhosrow's war of vengeance. Since its introductory section had no place in the middle of Ferdowsi's poem, the poem was inserted in the *Shāhnāme* from the point at which Farāmarz departs for Khargāh. In all likelihood, a later scribe wanted to present the later epic once again as a separate poem and, in order to do so, had to compose a new introduction: his most obvious option would have been to borrow heavily from the *Shāhnāme* episode into which the poem had been interpolated.

The introduction of the lithographed text of the *Large Farāmarznāme* is not the same as in the manuscript version, but it does also go back to the *Shāhnāme*, and to an even more literal degree. This version of the later epic has no preamble at all, since it occurs in the book without any break after the shorter *Farāmarznāme*, but begins with a copy of 159 verses from a version that closely resembles Macan's edition.³³ Most likely this passage was derived from a lithographed *Shāhnāme*, of which a dozen or so editions were produced in Bombay from 1846 onwards and for which Macan's edition had served as the main, if not only, exemplar.³⁴ The extract from the *Shāhnāme* presented in the lithographed version tells of Rostam suggesting the reconquest of Khargāh and Farāmarz being dispatched to lead this expedition. The next day, in a passage that is not represented in the manuscript introduction to the *Farāmarznāme*, the king musters his army and Farāmarz is the last of the commanders to bring forward his troops. In this version, too, Keykhosrow gives him some counsel, after which Farāmarz departs and Rostam accompanies his son for the first part of the way, although here he speaks his words of advice when they say their goodbyes, after which Farāmarz continues his journey to Khargāh. Although this lithographed introduction has not been included in the critical edition

of the *Large Farāmarznāme*,³⁵ it is worthwhile taking note of, because it supports the theory that the original introduction at one point became separated from the poem and had to be newly written by a later scribe – in this case either Sorūsh-e Taftī, the lithographed book's editor, or the copyist of the manuscript that the editor used as his exemplar but of which the provenance to date remains unknown.

Another clue to the shortening, and thus possible former interpolation, of the *Large Farāmarznāme* can be found in its ending. The final verse in the critical edition tells us how Farāmarz, after his return to India, ruled that country for sixty years. This ending is not only abrupt, but also does not fully reflect the manner in which it appears in two of the texts that were consulted for the edition. Whilst in ms IO Islamic 3263 the page that would have contained the poem's final verses is missing altogether, both ms RSPA 176 and the lithographed version of the *Farāmarznāme* lack a proper ending. The latter, after telling us how Farāmarz ruled India for sixty years, continues the book with an extensive extract (799 vss) from the *Bahmannāme*, in which Farāmarz battles against King Bahman and is eventually killed. The manuscript instead ends with six lines that first inform us that Ardashīr (i.e. Bahman) killed Farāmarz to avenge the blood of his father Esfandiyār, then announce that the narrator will return to the story of Tūs and Pīrān, before concluding with a single verse containing salutations to Zoroaster.³⁶ Not only this makeshift ending, clearly composed by a later copyist, but also the mention of a return to the main story, which quite likely is a reference to the *Shāhnāme* episode of Keykhosrow's war of vengeance, can be taken as another indication that the *Large Farāmarznāme* once existed as an interpolation. As in the case of the introduction, the original ending of the poem – which probably consisted of more than one verse of salutation, and most likely of an Islamic rather than a Zoroastrian nature – had no place amidst Ferdowsi's text and consequently upon its interpolation would have been removed.

The hypothesis that the *Large Farāmarznāme* at some time during its copying tradition may have been interpolated in the *Shāhnāme* is not very far-fetched. Because not only, as mentioned above, was this a practice that was applied to a number of lengthy later epics, such as the *Garshāspnāme* and the *Bahmannāme*,³⁷ but also there are five manuscripts from the early seventeenth century that present an interpolated version of the *Large Farāmarznāme* – albeit of merely its first part. Telling only of Farāmarz's expedition against three different commanders on the Indian mainland (*Large Farāmarznāme*, vss 196–1958), but leaving out a large number of individual verses dispersed throughout the text, as well as complete sections of the story, the first part of

the later epic in this interpolated version has been contracted, in its longest version, to just 843 verses.³⁸ Whilst it is unclear why the poem was shortened before it came to be included in Ferdowsi's epic, it is quite possible that one or more other *Shāhnāme* manuscripts, which are either now lost or to date have not been properly examined or documented, included the *Large Farāmarznāme* in its full length.

There is even a possibility that the poem's original introduction and ending have not been completely lost, but are still present in another extant manuscript. Because, in addition to the three texts that were used for the critical edition, at least three other manuscripts of the *Large Farāmarznāme* supposedly exist in India. Three catalogue entries point to this poem being housed in three different libraries, namely the Cama Oriental Institute and the Mulla Firuz Library, both in Mumbai, and the First Dastur Meherji Rana Library in Nawsari.³⁹ The second Mumbai manuscript dates from the late nineteenth century and could possibly be a copy of the first one, which was produced in Udaipur, but is undated. The text housed in Nawsari dates from 1586–1587 and is believed to have been copied in India. Going by their catalogue descriptions, all three texts appear to be of a substantial length, of at least 5,000 verses, but it is unclear to what extent each one is complete or includes additional material, or even whether it agrees with the *Large Farāmarznāme* as presented in the critical edition and consequently the present translation. Regrettably, due to difficulties of access, in the compilation of the edition these manuscripts had to be left out of consideration. Quite possibly they include a number of interesting variants, which would form a valuable addition to the three other texts or might even provide some useful information about the circumstances of the poem's composition. It is hoped that the Indian manuscripts will be included in future research of the text of the *Large Farāmarznāme* and perhaps consulted for an updated version of its critical edition.

The Story of the *Large Farāmarznāme*

The storyline of the *Large Farāmarznāme* consists of two distinct parts. In the first one, following the introductory section and covering 1,832 verses (vss 196–2027), Farāmarz leads a military campaign on the Indian mainland against three different rulers. The first of these rulers is Tōworg, an ally of the Iranian archenemy Tūrān and the governor of Khargāh. After dealing with Tōworg, Farāmarz continues his campaign by subduing the Raja of India.

And when he and the Raja return from their visit to the Iranian court, where the Indian king has pledged his allegiance to Keykhosrow, they learn that during their absence the Raja's throne has been usurped by the governor of Kashmir, Maharak. After Farāmarz has defeated this rebel, his receipt of a charter from the Iranian king granting him the kingship of Khargāh, Kashmir and India brings his Indian campaign to a conclusion.

This first part of the poem in the main consists of a report of the battles fought by Farāmarz's army against its enemies and of a number of bouts of single combat between the hero from Sistān and different Indian warriors. In addition, it tells of Farāmarz's cunning: he devises a ruse to take the fortress in which Toworg has ensconced himself and he disguises himself as his own messenger in order to investigate the Raja's forces and to try to dissuade the Indian from going to war. When the Raja nevertheless plots to ambush Farāmarz and his company when they leave his court, the Sistāni hero has the foresight to suspect the Raja's deceitfulness and secretly send for reinforcements. Despite the cleverness he shows in defeating his enemies, the focus of the story lies with Farāmarz displaying his prowess in battle.

One section of the episode with the Raja is somewhat out of tune with the rest of the story, as it includes a supernatural phenomenon: Zāl is warned in a dream that his grandson is in danger and he sends Rostam to India to rescue Farāmarz from the Raja's ambush. The gist of this story is also told in Shahmardān b. Abī'l-Kheyr's *Nozhatnāme-ye 'alā'ī*, discussed above. However, unlike in the *Nozhatnāme*, in the *Farāmarznāme* Rostam and his men arrive at the scene of the battle when Farāmarz and his reinforcement troops have just defeated the Raja, which means that Rostam's role in the story is superfluous and Zāl's dream has no actual function for the development of the story. The original plot either passed through different narrative stages before it reached Shahmardān and the poet of the *Large Farāmarznāme*, respectively, or was deliberately changed by the poet in order to place Farāmarz in a more favourable light. Either way, in the *Farāmarznāme* Rostam's role has lost its significance. As the story reads now, Farāmarz and his men need neither outside help nor supernatural interference to defeat their enemies, and they obtain their victories in a straightforward, down-to-earth manner, by doing combat, and on their own strength.

The second part, the remainder, of the *Farāmarznāme*, which is almost twice as long as the first part, contains some more otherworldly phenomena. Farāmarz embarks on a voyage of discovery which takes him to a number of islands and distant countries inhabited by various kinds of peoples, often of a

fantastic nature. This section is briefly introduced by several lines (vss 2028–2040), which refer to an unidentified narrator and tell how he wanted to write a story about famous heroes from the past that was not part of Ferdowsi of Tūsī's book, i.e. the *Shāhnāme*. The narrator could only find stories about Farāmarz, who had traversed the whole world and experienced different kinds of adventures. This introduction, brief as it may be, implies that the second part of the poem originally was a separate narration. It is linked to the first part by just a couple of verses, which recapitulate that Farāmarz had finished his business in Khargāh, India and Kashmir and received the crown and the seal of these regions from Keykhosrow (vss 2041–2042), before saying that he wished to explore the world and led his men across sea and land. This verbal separation may indicate that the poet of the *Large Farāmarznāme* joined together stories taken from different sources, or possibly that the second part of his epic derived solely from his own pen.

As part of his lengthy travels, Farāmarz reaches both ends of the earth. The first part of his journey takes him to the lands of the West (*khāwar*). He first sails past a number of islands, which are in turn inhabited by King Farāsang, King Kahilā, the Dawāl-pāyān, the Pīl-gūshān, the Brahmans, a giant bird, a dragon and the Zangīs, after which Farāmarz and his men reach the mainland and at the end of a six-month march arrive in Qīrwān. This name is known to be synonymous with the end of the earth,⁴⁰ and in the poem this country is indeed said to lie next to the mountain range that surrounds the world. From Qīrwān, the Iranians head in the opposite direction, towards the lands of the East (*bākhtar*). They sail across a vast ocean towards Chīn and Māchīn and reach several more fictional places, such as the island inhabited by horse-headed people (Asp-sarān), an island on which lies a mountain with a fortress containing king Hūshang's tomb and the country of king Farghān, which adjoins the land that leads to the mythical Mount Qāf. As this mountain is well known to lie on the edge of the world,⁴¹ although this is not noted in the poem, one may conclude that it should be part of the aforementioned world-surrounding – unnamed – mountain range next to Qīrwān. Next, Farāmarz embarks for the final time and heads in the direction of China. Having again reached the mainland, he first fights against the demons of Kalān-kūh and then marches for another six months to reach the vast country ruled by the king of the fairies, Farṭūrtūsh. After an absence of over fifteen years,⁴² Farāmarz briefly returns to Iran, travelling via the borderlands of China and through India, to pay a visit to Keykhosrow's court and spend some time with his family in Zābolestān before settling in his Indian capital Qannowj, where his sons Sām and Ādar-

Borzīn (or Borzīn-ādar) are born. As noted above, the text as represented in the critical edition ends with a mention that Farāmarz ruled the Indians for sixty years.

During his voyages overseas, mention is made of Farāmarz and his men marvelling at a number of unfamiliar phenomena, but the passages describing them are short (vss 2051–2056, 2975–2976, 3780–3784 and 3979–3992),⁴³ so that the focus of the poem's second part, like that of the first, clearly lies much less on the wonders of the world than on Farāmarz's actions. As in India, he engages in a number of battles, only this time not just against regular armies of men, like the one commanded by King Farghān, but also against pugnacious peoples of different kinds, such as the cannibalistic warriors of the king of Farāsang, tall black men whose only weapons are bones (the Zangīs), peoples with limber legs or with giant ears (the Dawāl-pāyān and the Pīl-gūshān) and ferocious demons living in a fortress on top of a tall mountain, Kalān-kūh. He also fights a number of fierce creatures, namely lions, wolves, dragons, a rhinoceros and a giant bird. In addition, Farāmarz has some experiences of a more peaceful nature. He for instance holds a conversation with an ascetic, wise Brahman and visits the tomb of the ancient Iranian king Hūshang, where he reads that monarch's counsel regarding the transience of life. The *Large Farāmarznāme* includes another figure known from the *Shāhnāme*, the benevolent giant bird Simorgh: when Farāmarz is shipwrecked and has lost his men at sea, he calls for Simorgh's help by burning a piece of feather he received from Zāl. In the course of the poem, Farāmarz twice falls in love and marries, the first time with King Kahilā's daughter, whom he has rescued from a savage demon, and the second time with a fairy princess. In order to reach the country of her father Farṭūrtūsh, Farāmarz has to pass through seven trials (*haft khān*), a feat that again harks back to the *Shāhnāme*.

Farāmarz's seven trials consist of fights against several supernormal fierce animals and a ghoulish, as well as of the otherworldly phenomenon of an extreme heat followed by a sudden freeze and heavy snowfall, which can only be warded off through prayer. As King Farṭūrtūsh notes, Farāmarz's successfully passing through these trials is not only due to his superhuman strength and courage, but also to his standing under the protection of God. Farāmarz himself also points this out, when he at the end of several, successful, fights against ferocious creatures washes himself and then prays to God, to give thanks to his Creator for providing him with the power to defeat his opponents. Farāmarz's reliance on God also becomes clear from a number of his speeches at different points in the poem, when either he

himself or his army find themselves in dire straits or opposed by a formidable enemy, and he reminds his men that they should strive to fight for what they are worth and thus obtain a good name, since they cannot avoid their deaths, as everyone's appointed time has been divinely ordained. As becomes a true epic hero, Farāmarz thus combines the qualities of a warrior and an insightful leader with those of a pious man.

In Imitation of Other Epic Heroes, Garshāsp and Eskandar

By travelling around the world, seeing marvellous things, visiting various kinds of places and fighting a number of different peoples and creatures along the way, Farāmarz's adventures, albeit in nature rather than in detail, resemble those of his ancestor Garshāsp. Whereas in the *Shāhnāme* Garshāsp appears during the reign of king Fereydūn as a peer of Farāmarz's great-grandfather Sām, in the later epic traditions he is presented as Sām's grandfather. Asadi's *Garshāspnāme* tells of its eponymous hero's peregrinations, during the reigns of Zāḥḥāk and Fereydūn, both to the East and the West. Although Garshāsp's travels take him to many other places than Farāmarz visits, including regions that actually exist, such as Rūm, Shām (Syria) and the Maghreb (Northern Africa), he also reaches Qīrwān.⁴⁴ That Garshāsp stopped here is referred to in the *Large Farāmarznāme* by means of a book in the king of Qīrwān's possession. It was written by Garshāsp, who predicted that in 1,500 years' time a descendant of his by five generations would come to this country and free it from five terrorising creatures, namely a dragon, two lions and two wolves. As a reward, Garshāsp has buried a treasure, joined with a tablet containing counsel, for his descendant to retrieve.

A less direct reference to Garshāsp's travels is made when Farāmarz arrives at Kalān-kūh and the poet tells us that no one has come here since Garshāsp (vs. 4018). Although the name Kalān-kūh does not appear in the *Garshāspnāme* and it is not directly clear to which stage of the hero's voyage this remark refers, its implication is obvious: being the first in centuries to travel this far around the world, Farāmarz in his feats equals a great hero like his famous ancestor. A similar kind of reference is made later in the poem, when Zāl tells his grandson that the troubles he has experienced are unlike those anyone else has gone through since the times of Sām and Garshāsp (vs. 5332).

There is another resemblance between Farāmarz's and Garshāsp's adventures, which consists of both heroes visiting a land inhabited by Brahmins.

They both spend some time with one of these wise men, pose him a few questions and receive some wise lessons. Whereas Farāmarz in the *Large Farāmarznāme* holds just one conversation with a Brahman, Garshāsp has two separate meetings at two different stages of his journey.⁴⁵ The theme of the protagonists receiving counsel is extended by them reading admonitions that were written on a tablet in a distant past by an ancient ruler or, additionally in Farāmarz's case, his ancestor. Besides receiving Garshāsp's counsel in Qīrwān, Farāmarz reads both an inscription on the fortress containing the tomb of Hūshang and, inside, that king's writing on a tablet. Garshāsp himself visits the tomb of Siyāmak, the son of the very first ruler Gāyūmart and father of Hūshang, where he reads an inscription about the transience of the mortal world.⁴⁶

By including counsel (*andarz*), both later epics imitate the *Shāhnāme*, where pieces of wisdom are imparted by various kings in their throne addresses or testaments, as well as by the poet himself, who concludes a number of stories with some musings on the vicissitudes of fate. Similar musings also appear at different points in the *Large Farāmarznāme*. In this manner, both Ferdowsi and the poets of the *Garshāspnāme* and the *Farāmarznāme* placed their epics within the rather broad genre of wisdom literature, which covers a range of works presenting *andarz*, varying from maxims or short passages to whole books of counsel.⁴⁷ In addition, the poet of the *Farāmarznāme* was clearly well versed in the contents of the *Garshāspnāme*, and it appears that he, in his presentation both of Farāmarz's travels and of the hero's encounters with wise lessons, in addition to imitating Ferdowsi, also wanted to follow the example of the first of the later epic poets, Asadi.

Besides Garshāsp, Farāmarz resembles another and internationally more famous hero, Alexander the Great, in Persian known as Eskandar. In historical reality, this Macedonian king (356–323 BC) conquered Asia Minor, the Near East, Egypt and the Iranian empire of the Achaemenids, and then marched onwards through Bactria and Sogdiana to the Indus valley, before returning westwards and dying in Babylon. But in the many legendary accounts that have been told about Alexander, in a large number of different languages, his travels cover a much larger geographical scope and take him to all kinds of marvellous places and peoples. In the main, these accounts originate in the Greek *Alexander Romance* mistakenly attributed to Alexander's contemporary and official historian Callisthenes. The main gist of pseudo-Callisthenes' narrative can be recognised, albeit with a number of variations and additions, in the section dealing with Eskandar, or Sekandar,

in Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāme*.⁴⁸ Several Persian literary works were subsequently composed about this conqueror, probably most famously Nezāmī Ganjavī's versified *Eskandarnāme* (made up of two parts, *Sharafnāme* and *Eqbāl-nāme*) from around 1200.⁴⁹ More relevant to the present discussion are the prose romances in which Eskandar stars, firstly the anonymous *Eskandarnāme*, which was written and reworked at uncertain dates anywhere between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries,⁵⁰ and secondly Abū Ṭāher Ṭarsūsī's *Dārābnāme*, which probably dates from the twelfth century.⁵¹

The most general resemblance between Farāmarz's and Eskandar's adventures, the latter in all four aforementioned Persian versions of his life story, is that both heroes travel to the earth's extremities. Also, the Eskandar of the *Shāhnāme*, like Farāmarz, visits Brahmans and obtains some pieces of wisdom by posing them a number of questions,⁵² although such an encounter is missing from any of the other three versions. Further, both Farāmarz and Eskandar at different points in their respective stories battle against different peoples that are described as black and of a demonic appearance, sometimes in addition having cannibalistic tendencies. Such descriptions are however of a rather general nature and such encounters also apply to a number of other later epic heroes.

More remarkable similarities can be found in two specific peoples, whom Farāmarz fights on two separate islands during the first part of his voyage by sea. Firstly, in both the prose *Eskandarnāme* and the *Dārābnāme*, Eskandar, like Farāmarz, encounters the Dawāl-pāyān ('strap-legged'), whilst the *Shāhnāme* mentions a people called *narm-pāyān* ('soft-legged'). In all three narratives, Eskandar fights and defeats these people. Secondly, Pīl-gūshān or Fil-gūshān ('elephant-ears') is the name of a pugnacious people with giant ears that battle the protagonist of the *Eskandarnāme*, albeit not on a separate island as in the *Farāmarznāme* but as part of Eskandar's lengthy battles against the infidel Turks in the East. In the *Dārābnāme*, Eskandar on two separate occasions comes across large-eared people, which are called Gelīm-gūshān ('Carpet-ears'). In the first case, these people inhabit an island in the ocean and they fight Eskandar, but thereafter make peace; the second Gelīm-gūshān live close to the Dawāl-pāyān, at the end of the world, whilst they submit to the conqueror without fighting. The *Shāhnāme* sees the appearance of just one giant-eared man, with peaceful intentions, who identifies himself as *gūsh-bestar* ('pillow-eared').⁵³ Even if the context of the main hero's encounters with these strangely-featured peoples varies from one narration to the next and from one protagonist, Eskandar, to the next, Farāmarz, it cannot be coincidental that peoples with certain

remarkable appearances and corresponding names, either identically or somewhat transformed, reappear in the adventures of both heroes. It points to the narratives surrounding the two conquerors either going back on similar origins or to a certain extent having borrowed from one another.

In a similar manner, there is the theme of the hero displaying his cunning by going as his own messenger to the court of a ruler he wants to subdue, as Farāmarz does with the Raja of India. This theme reappears in two of the aforementioned literary works that surround Eskandar. In the *Shāhnāme*, the world-conqueror goes undercover, not just once, but three times: to the Persian king Dārā, the queen of Andalusia, Qeydāfe, and the Chinese emperor, or Faghfūr. In the *Eskandarnāme*, he visits the same latter two rulers – albeit in different circumstances than in the *Shāhnāme* – and although he does not go to Dārā as his own messenger, Eskandar instead comes to Fūr, who like the Raja in the *Farāmarznāme* is king of India.⁵⁴ Again, even though the storylines surrounding Eskandar's and Farāmarz's respective experiences as a messenger differ, the recurrence of such a specific theme in the *Large Farāmarznāme* seems to derive from a deliberate plan by its author.

By including the episodes of Farāmarz pretending to be his own messenger and of the islands of the Dawāl-pāyān and the Pīl-gūshān, in addition to having him travel to both ends of the earth, the poet of the *Large Farāmarznāme* seems to have wanted to place his hero within the traditions surrounding Eskandar. In this, he went beyond composing his poem in imitation of the *Shāhnāme*, a *modus operandi* that the authors of the later epics had in common and that becomes clear from the *Farāmarznāme* including names, themes, a vocabulary and a style of writing known from Ferdowsi's epic. The poet in addition borrowed some elements of his story from narratives that specifically feature Eskandar. With the dates when both the prose *Eskandarnāme* and the *Dārābnāme* were first written down being uncertain, it cannot be said whether the poet of the *Large Farāmarznāme* would have known, and subsequently borrowed from, either of those two prose romances, but he most likely would have been familiar with stories about Eskandar, besides the relevant *Shāhnāme* episode, which would have circulated in his days. These stories could have been transmitted orally or been part of written works that served as sources for books such as the *Eskandarnāme* and the *Dārābnāme* or even the Eskandar episode in the *Shāhnāme*, but now no longer exist. The audience of the *Large Farāmarznāme* probably would equally have been familiar with such narratives about Eskandar, so that by including both themes and peoples that were linked to this famous conqueror, the poet implied, just as in the case of Garshāsp, that

Farāmarz equalled a great man like Eskandar in prowess. In this manner, Farāmarz as a hero and conqueror would fill the poem's audience with even greater awe and admiration.

