



## Love and Chivalry in Persian Old Stories

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### ABSTRACT

Characterization and Type creation of male protagonists in Persian old stories is based upon traditions which are derived from ancient Iranian kingdom and religions. A survey based on six cases proves that there are three types of male characters in the ancient Iranian stories. The First type, is the mythical hero of the Sām dynasty in Shāhnāmeh which is an Indo-Iranian myth by origin. The second type is related to the characters who possess the Divine virtue or “Farr”, that belongs to ancient Iranian kings and the third type is the amorous wine loving “troubadour”.

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### Introduction

In Persian literature, men have been praised not only for their roles as powerful kings, commanders, and brave warriors, but also for their masculine beauty and chivalry—and their part in fervid romances. What was the basis for the creation of such an image for men—as beloveds—in Persian literature? As protagonists of tales of feast and feat how have these men so thoroughly captured the Iranian imagination for centuries? Is there an identifiable pattern—a constant, fixed, and general paradigm whose particular components may change from case to case—for the male heroes of these romantic stories?

I believe that the image of the beloved in Persian literature originates from patterns dating back to the customs of ancient Iranian monarchies, gradually reaching perfection in epic and courtly literature. Male protagonists in Iranian romance stories can be categorized into three types. First, there are kings and royalty who possess the divine splendor (farr), a supernatural attribute ascribed to mythical Iranian monarchs of the Kiyānī clan and historical royal families such as Sassanids. Second, there are monarchs who lack the divine farr; the most distinguished of these families belong to the Sām dynasty, which includes in it Zāl, Rustam, and Suhrāb: they represent the non-Zoroastrian elements in Iranian historical narratives. Thirdly, there is a type of Persian romantic character that falls into neither of the first two categories: the troubadour, an amorous, wine-loving protagonist who calls to mind certain anecdotes about Bahrām V but is mostly reflected in the character of Rāmīn, the male hero of the Parthian romance Vīs va Rāmīn. In what follows I will discuss these three character types and explain the main narrative traits, fictional traditions, and historical documents relating to each.

Iranian art has long praised its heroes and warriors not only for their bravery and prowess in battle but also for their physical beauty and wisdom. A glance at the representation of Iranian legends and myths in reliefs and stone inscriptions demonstrates this point.

Reliefs dating back to the ancient Iranian history, particularly the Achaemenid period, attest that it was the general policy of Iranian kings to provide a pacifist yet still triumphant image of themselves so as to make the various peoples in their territories regard them as kind and supportive—in contrast with the decorations and ornaments seen in the palaces of Assyrian and Babylonian kings, which were reminiscent of their triumphs in hunting and battle. The image of the king in Iranian culture was that of an ideal man: an image of what he should be, not necessarily what he really was. This ideal depiction, which was imitated by all artists, painters, poets, and writers, involves a collection of rituals and behaviors for occasions such as battles and festivities.

Darius I and his successors are depicted sitting on their thrones with people all around them. The king has laid his foot on a stool; he holds a bunch of flowers in one hand and his royal spear in the other. He has a long beard and curly hair and looks straight ahead with a calm face. This is the image of Darius I on the wall of the Āpādānā Palace; it is a general example of the Iranian monarch reflected in Iranian tales. In another image, discovered in Greece, the king of Iran is depicted alongside his beloved in a private banquet. The king is wearing a simple hat and leaning back against large cushions; his legs are outstretched and he is calmly looking upon a woman who is facing him and reaching out to offer him a goblet of wine. It is no surprise if in Persian narratives we come across a group of highly attractive kings and princes who, possessing both physical beauty and immense power, are the protagonists of major love stories—men such as Khusraw Parvīz, Bījan, Bahrām, and Siyāvash. In addition to beauty and wealth, these men have a feature known among Iranians as farhang, which is a combination of culture and virtue. However, what makes them specifically distinctive is not beauty, culture, or knowledge, but the mysterious element known in Iranian culture as farr. According to the Avesta, the Kiyānī clan and some others were endowed with farr, which not only affirmed their position as monarchs but also provided them with divine beauty.

Perhaps Plutarch's description of Surena, the Arsacid commander, can provide a clearer image of these legendary heroes. Plutarch says, "He was by no means an ordinary character. He was the second greatest man in the Arsacid Empire in terms of wealth and family status, and the greatest of all in courage and power. He was exceptional in physical attraction. Even when he traveled alone and in private, a thousand camels carried his luggage, 200 chariots carried his wives and his concubines along, and a thousand fully armed men accompanied him to provide him with protection; furthermore, he also had a large number of men with lighter weaponry at his side."

There are mythical features, which correspond to descriptions of Bahrām in the Avesta. Bahrām is not only the symbol of the victory of the Aryan people over their enemies, he is also the embodiment of other attributes such as masculinity, virility, and physical prowess. Therefore, in the Avesta he appears in a variety of forms, all of which possess such qualities. He has been depicted both as a vibrant adolescent with bright, beautiful eyes and great strength and as a rampaging camel, both denoting considerable sexual prowess. Indeed, Mary Boyce believes Bahrām to be equivalent to Indra, the warrior god in the Vedas.

Bahrām's features are quite evident in the great heroes of the Shāhnāma: Zāl, Rustam, and Suhrāb. It should be noted, however, that this clan, though highly popular, lacks the divine farr. Moreover, the beauty that members of this family possess is qualitatively different from that of Siyāvash, Khusraw, and Bījan. It is a fact that Rustam's family is not related to any of the Iranian royalty depicted in the Shāhnāma. Perhaps that is why their beauty is not depicted as divine as that of the Kiyānī kings. Therefore, the collection of heroic attributes ascribed to the members of Rustam's family puts them in a different category compared to the Iranian kings. Scholars believe that Zāl and Rustam found their way into the Shāhnāma from a source other than the Khudāināma. In fact, they are not mentioned at all in the Avesta. Josef Marquart has claimed that Zābul, the capital city of which was Ghazna which, was the territory of a king named Rustam who ruled Sakastān independently of Iran. According to studies conducted by Marquart, Ernst Hertzfeld, and Theodor Noldeke, Rustam is historically equivalent to Gandaffarah, one of the kings of Sakastān. Bahman Sarkārāfi, however, disagrees. Nevertheless, Mehrdād Bahār's statements on Rustam however correspond the image that is culturally accepted topos. According to Bahar's studies, Rustam is equivalent to Indra. Indra's weapon was lightning, and like Rustam he was born through an incision made in his mother's side. Like Rustam, Indra aids the Aryan people in battle; unlike Varuna, the Indian god who symbolizes moral and ethical law and order, Indra is the master of the material world and depends on extraordinary physical strength. Noldeke points out hints of satanic features in Rustam's nature. But one can argue, like Islāmī Nudūshan, that all great heroes can be seen to have a touch of Ahrīman (Evil) within them; even Prometheus and Hercules are no exception. According to the Shāhnāma, the clan of Sām Narīmān to which Rustam belongs was appointed to rule Sakastān. Despite their power and immense attractiveness, the members of Sām's dynasty sometimes use deception and ignore common values. The most prominent example of such scheming behavior can be observed in the combat between Rustam and Isfandiyār, where Rustam manages to overcome his young rival in the final combat by means of subterfuge.

Zāl and Rūdāba, Rustam and Tahmīna

In the romantic tale of Zāl and Rūdāba, Zāl (Rustam's father) is depicted as a lover who is willing to eliminate any obstacle—even traditions and rituals—to reach his beloved. When Rūdāba, the daughter of Mihrāb—the governor of Kabul—falls in love with Zāl and asks for his love, Zāl secretly accepts, despite the warnings he receives from the noblemen of his clan. By extension, he in fact ignores his pledge to the Iranian king, for Rūdāba is a descendent of Zāhhāk, and any romantic involvement with her would imply neglecting the age-old animosity between Iran and Zāhhāk. Zāl is aware of the political peril his family would face should he get close to the princess. Not only may it compromise his political ambition, it may also gravely endanger his people. Additionally, religious considerations pertaining to both Zāl's family and the king of Persia rendered it unacceptable to have close ties with Kabul's dominion. Zāl even tells Mihrāb that the Iranian king cannot tolerate Zāl's dining with the idolaters. Turning down Mihrāb's invitation to dine indicates the sensitivity of the matter. In the meantime, Rūdāba falls madly in love with Zāl by merely hearing about his traits and his valor:

You'll see no other horseman to compare  
With Zāl, he has no equal anywhere  
As ruddy as the pomegranate flower  
Youthful, and with a young man's luck and power;  
Fierce in revenge, and in the saddles he's  
A sharp-clawed dragon to his enemies;  
Possessed of mammoth strength, a lion's guile,  
His arms are mighty as the flooding Nile;  
He scatters gold when he's in court, and when  
He's on the battlefield, heads of men.  
He has one fault—which after all's so slight  
No one remarks on it—his hair is white.

Rūdāba is constantly chided by her attendants, since they believe she deserves marriage with a prince, not someone like Zāl, who lacks the divine farr. In their opinion "this silver-headed stranger was raised and nourished by Sīmurgh in the mountains, was never given mother's milk, and is thus considered wild". But Rūdāba seems tenacious in her love for this gallant warrior. With the complicity of her nurse and her attendants she eventually manages to bring Zāl through a castle window into her private apartment, where they pledge themselves to each other. By receiving love from Rūdāba, without her father's consent while he himself is a guest in Mihrāb's quarters, Zāl transgresses against established customs. The escalating political crisis amongst Iran, Zābulistān, and Kābulistān (the territory of Rūdāba's family) was going to turn into a bloody war, before being settled through efforts of Zāl's father and political negotiations done by other elderly.

The fruit of Rūdāba and Zāl's marriage is Rustam, Shāhnāma's most beloved hero. Rustam is adored by a princess from the alien region of Samangān in Tūrān. Like his father, Rustam is the protagonist of yet another love story. The princess of Samangān, Tahmīna, knows that a permanent wedlock with Rustam is not feasible due to the conflict between Iran and Tūrān. However, when Rustam was staying in the palace of Samangān as a guest during a hunting adventure, Tahmīna took the initiative, snuck up to his bedside at midnight, and revealed to him how she had heard all about his bravery and courage and how she yearned to be loved by him:

My name is Tahmīnih; longing has torn  
 My wretched life in two, though I was born  
 The daughter of the king of Samangān  
 And am descended from a warrior clan.  
 But like a legend I have heard the story  
 Of your heroic battles and your glory,  
 Of how you have no fear, and face alone  
 Dragons and demons and the dark unknown,  
 Of how you sneak into Tūrān at night  
 And prowl the borders to provoke a fight,  
 Of how, when warriors see your mace, they quail  
 And feel their lion-hearts within them fail.  
 I bit my lip to hear such talk, and knew  
 I longed to see you, to catch sight of you,  
 To glimpse your martial chest and mighty face—  
 And now God brings you to this lowly place.  
 If you desire me, I am yours, and none  
 Shall see or hear of me from this day on;  
 Desire destroys my mind, I long to bear  
 Within my woman's womb your son and heir.

After spending a passionate night with Tahmīna, the hero leaves Samangān and rides back to Iran. From this union, the protagonist of a famous Iranian tragedy, Suhrāb, is born nine months later. Although there is no proper love story ascribed to him, one of Shāhnāma's remarkable tales relates the story of Suhrāb and the Turani princess Gurdāfarīd.

a female Iranian warrior with whom Suhrāb fell in love in the middle of the fight after her helmet fell off and revealed her astounding countenance. Gurdāfarīd fallen down into the hands of Suhrāb, plays a trick and deceives Suhrāb by promising him to relinquish the military fortress called Sipīd Dizh, an strategic fortress which Suhrāb longs to capture but finally Gurdāfarīd enters the fortress alone and leaves Suhrāb behind the gates.

The physical attributes of Zāl, Rustam, and Suhrāb are comparable to those of Bahrām in the Avesta, as said."

#### **Siyāvash and Sūdāba**

Firdawsī usually describes the heroes of the Shāhnāma in an extravagant way, ascribing to them extraordinary characteristics. As James Atkinson remarks: "In the heroic ages of Persia as in the early periods of every nation, feats of personal activity and muscular strength constituted the most prominent features of a champion, and accordingly, Firdawsī has thought it necessary to give his hero extraordinary size and gigantic breath of limb." Such attributes were not given to the Kiyānī prince Siyāvash, who was a victim of a conspiracy by the Iranian queen Sūdāba, King Kavūs's wife, who was in love with Siyāvash and accused him of having attempted to rape her when Siyāvash rejected her advances. According to the story, Sūdāba was so infatuated with Siyāvash at the first sight that "she became lost in thought at beholding the young man's face; and her heart started beating fast:

It was as though the fine brocade of her being had been turned into crude fibers, or as though ice had been set close to fire."

Firdawsī does not, however, provide details about Siyāvash's beauty in the love scenes. Even though Siyāvash's heroic features, his martial prowess, and his skill at chugān (similar to the game of polo) are praised frequently in the stories, it is a mysterious feature of Siyāvash that Sūdāba falls for and not his other abilities.

This indescribable quality of his was pointed out by the heroes of the story on several occasions and is so mysterious that no one figures out the secret of Siyāvash's attraction: "The blood in your veins and love cannot be concealed; God the immaculate has so designed you that all who behold you conceive a love for you." Sūdāba contrived with the king that Siyāvash should visit the women's quarters of the palace so that the concubines could all see him. Siyāvash enters reluctantly. His face is so attractive that the girls cannot take their eyes off him:

When Siyāvash stepped behind the curtains at last  
 Sūdābih stood up and went forward so fast  
 She approached him gracefully and then she bowed  
 Hugged him tightly and her affection she showed  
 Kissed his lovely eyes and face for a long time  
 Could not quench desire for the king in his prime  
 "Since I fell in love as soon as I saw you  
 From then all the time I feel restless and blue."

Siyāvash perceives the nature of Sūdāba's love and understands that the affection she displays is not pure. Not uttering a word, he refuses her love.

"Never will I throw my head to the winds for the sake of my heart," says Siyāvash. "How could I behave so disloyally towards my father and break with all honor and sense? You are the king's wife and the sun of his palace; it ill becomes you to be guilty of sin such as this."

Although according to legend Siyāvash has the divine farr in his disposal, he has no desire towards the crown.. To escape Sūdāba's advances he seeks refuge in enemy soil and eventually dies as a martyr. As a result Siyāvash has come to signify chastity and innocence in Persian literature.

#### **Bījan and Manīzha**

The Kiyānī prince Bījan—whose story of relationship with Manīzha predates Shāhnāma—is the protagonist of another famous Iranian love story. Like Siyāvash, Bījan possesses the divine farr. Besides he has an extraordinary attractiveness. Manīzha, the Tūrānīan princess and Afrāsiyāb's daughter, became so instantly enamored with him that she decided to make him her lover, although the two lovers were from archenemy dynasties.

Looking at him, fair Manijeh could figure  
 There stood a warrior, as tall as a cedar  
 She then beheld the royal helmet on his head  
 On his body shiny robes made of silk thread  
 When she saw him, the girl, fair to an excess  
 Fell in love as her behavior could express  
 A maiden she ordered to go swiftly there  
 Beneath the tall cypress as a messenger  
 To thus inquire just who that sweetheart could be  
 "Siyāvash is he living or a fairy?"

"Has the world ceased? Am I on the road of bliss?  
 To see the fire of your affection like this?"

Manīzha invites Bījan for a feast, makes him drink wine, and then drugs him. When unconscious, she secretly takes him to the palace to make love with him and this is just the beginning of a very long romance in Persian stories.

Bījan's royally elegant clothes and the jewelry described for him in Shāhnāma are also seen in the drawings and coins remaining from the Arsacid and Sassanid eras. Jewelry did not only imply elegance and glory but also was useful when rewards, wages, or gifts were to be given. Rustam's family, however, did not use gemmed crowns. Ironically Rustam has been described as Tājbaksh, even though there is no mention of his wearing a crown or royal collar.

Precious robes and special hats for festivities (which differed from crowns) were used for other ceremonies. Moreover, it seems that men of Royal family used to have a special hair dressing. Hertzfeld has frequently mentioned curly hair as a component of Median and Persian men's aesthetics.

#### **Khusraw and Shīrīn**

Another Persian prince who is the protagonist of a well-known romance is the Sassanid king Khusraw Parvīz (d. 628). Although the *Shāhnām* provides a brief account of the love story of Khusraw Parvīz and his Armenian beloved Shīrīn, it is Nizāmī's *Khusraw and Shīrīn* which is completely devoted to this romance as the title of the work confirms. Khusraw Parvīz (Khusraw II), who reigned from 590 to 627, was the second most prominent Sassanid king after Khusraw Anūshirvān (Khusraw I); in contrast to Khusraw I, however, his extravagant rule did not bring Iran any glory. Through his excessive spending, legendary appetite for luxury, aimless military campaigns, and his lack of esteem for his men-at-arms commanders, this overconfident and arrogant king exhausted Iran's financial and human resources and initiated downward spiral of the Sassanid Empire to eventual ruin: he was killed in a coup d'état in 628.

What makes the story of Khusraw unique is the role of two historically verifiable women, who were both non-Iranian Christians: First, Maryam, Khusraw's official wife. She was the daughter of the Byzantine emperor Mauricius (d. 602 CE) who helped Khusraw to crackdown the great revolt of an army commander, Bahrām Chubin (d. 591). Khusraw gave Armenia to Maricius in return for his help. He also married his daughter. The second lady of his life is Shīrīn (d. 628), Khusraw's beloved, to whom he married later. According to *Shāhnāma*, Shīrīn, who the courtiers believed not to be of a noble family, caused a great deal of disappointment and dissent from among the courtiers and the high priests. After the death of Maryam, who according to some accounts was poisoned, Shīrīn's influence grew to such an extent that she planned to supplant Maryam's son (Shīrūya) with her own as the next potentate. After dethroning his father and killing him in the coup of (628), Shīrūya devised in forcing Shīrīn to marry him. This, however, never came to be, since Shīrīn took poison and killed herself.

In Nizāmī's version, Khusraw is described as having a great lust for pleasure and excessive indulgence in wine and women. This seems to partially be the characteristic of such stories: was it not excessive drinking and lustful indulgence that drew Bījan into Manīzha's trap and eventually left him unarmed in the claws of the Tūrānīan enemy?

Although such mythical tales are riddled with artistic exaggerations, they nevertheless present the prevailing public opinion about the heroes of the story, for these are undoubtedly the characteristics which people and the creators of the story believed to be true and were therefore preserved enthusiastically through the passing of centuries. The same characteristics are also featured in the story of Bahrām V, better known as Bahrām Gūr (r. 420–38). Although not a main character of any well-known romantic epic, Bahrām was associated with a variety of tales or romances since the earliest of times. His courage, battle skills, and reckless spirit, in addition to his lust for pleasure and his insatiable desire for women, have made him an indispensable part of Iranians' narrative tradition.

His love story with a harpist girl, Āzādeh, is well known and is also mentioned in the *Shāhnāma*. Nizāmī has versified other parts of his legendary life.

#### **Vīs and Rāmīn**

Vīs and Rāmīn is an ancient Iranian Romance which has come down to us from Arsacid era and tells us the story of a forbidden love between Rāmīn, the Iranian prince, and Vīs, the wife of his brother who is the king of Marv. In this passionate and Audacious love story the young lovers push all boundaries to express their agony and indulgence. Rāmīn is pictured as a troubadour, a minstrel who despite singing and drinking excessively is capable of launching huge battles. In this old story the Iranian musical Gusānī tradition is revived and reflected vividly. Here we face a depiction of a frivolous type which is derived from Iranian court tradition of banquet which is focused on wine and lyrical poetry and music. Not only Rāmīn, but also Bahrām and Khusrow narrate the same tradition of music and love. As stated by Ṭabarī, there were twelve thousand musicians and singers in Khusraw Parvīz's court and two renowned Iranian musicians, Bārbad and Nakīsā, were highly influential at his court. Also Bahrām V had such a great interest on music that led him to revise the age-old court hierarchy to allow musicians to reach as lofty ranks as high court clergy and Nobel royalties. According to well-known historical accounts, Bahrām invited twelve thousand musicians from India to Iran.

That is how the fabulous characters of these historical figures found their way into Iranian legends. Their life between reality and fiction is still inspiring Persian imaginary works of talent glowing from behind centuries.

#### **By Way of Conclusion**

We can conclude here that there are three distinct prototypes of a male beloved in the Persian epic romantic literary tradition. One type is modeled on Iranian royal traditions of Parthian, Sassanid, and Achaemenes kings, who were portrayed as bearers of the divine farr, and idealized as demigods. They were sin-free and the people's destiny was at their discretion.

Secondly we face another type of love and chivalry in Iranian love stories which have been affected by Indo-Iranian narratives of pre Zoroastrian time that found their way into the *Shāhnāma*. The characteristics are evident in the lineage of the Sām dynasty. Men from this family shoulder the heavy burden of protecting their people, however they are deprived from the divine farr. Despite all their virtues and their bravery, they are not considered to be free of sin. The third type, often appearing in Iranian love stories are men whose character has neither divine farr (or intellect), nor conveys the valiance depicted in portrayal of the epic heroes. This type demonstrates the image of chivalrous lover and is personalized in character of Rāmīn, who not only attained the Iranian Queen, but also managed to dismiss the King and step up in to thrown with queen's alliance.

Now it is understandable that these men of love were involved in a political discourse and their love affairs personify the political streams of order and disorder in form of narrative manifestation. But what are the exact historical links between these protagonists and the real political movements and changes in the Iranian narrative history? This still needs extended documentation.

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- About "farr" see Avistā : Chapter of "Zāmyād Yasht", "Kardi yi Yikum", and other positions in the same Yasht which are all about obtaining the farr, in Jalil Dūstkhāh, Avistā, Nāmiye Mīnuvī -i Zartusht, Nigārish -i Jalil Dūstkhāh Az Guzārish -i Ībrāhīm Pūrdāwūd, 6th ed. (Tehran: Murvārīd, 1366/1988), 290.
- Nyberg believes that the concept of farr as a supernatural power of kingship is rooted in the beliefs of the Medes. See Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *Dīnhāyi Iran-i Bāstān*, trans. Siyf al-Dīn Najm Ābādī (Tehran: Markaz -i Muṭālī'āt -i Farhanghā, 1359/1979), 335. For etymology of farr see also Muhammad Mu'īn, *Mazdyasnā va Ta'thīr -i Ān dar Adabīyyāt -i Fārsī* (Tehran: Chāpkhāni ye dānishgāh -i Tehran, 1326/1948), 219n3 and 228.
- Quoted from Plutarch's *Crassus*, translated by John Dryden, (London, 1902) by Vladimir Minorsky, "Yek Dāstān -i 'Āshigāni -i Partī," in *Vīs u Rāmīn ba Muqaddami Mabsūṭ va Ḥawāshī va Ta'liqāt*, ed. Muhammad Ja'far Mahjūb, trans.

Mustafā Muqarribī (Tehran: Kitābkhāni y-i Ibn Sīnā, 1337/1959), p.471; Originally published as “Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11, no. 4 (1946): 741–63.

See also the Persian translation: Plutarch, *Īrānīān va Yūnānīān*, Tarjumih va ‘Intikhab ‘Aḥmad Kasravī, (first published in new edition, Tehran, Jāmī, 1380), p.432.

This quotation has been cited by Minorsky; see Minorsky, *idem*, p. 471.

Dūstkhāh, Avistā, *ibid*, Bahrām Yasht, p.270. Compare Bahrām with Tishtrya, who has also been described as a fifteen-year-old god; see John R. Hinnells, *Shinākh i- Asāṭir i- Iran*, trans. Zhalih Āmūzgār and Taqī Tafazzulī (Tehran: Nashr i- Chishmih, 1373/1993), 41–43. Originally published as *Persian Mythology* (London: Hamlyn, 1975).

Mary Boyce, *Zardushtīān, Bāvarhā va Ādāb i- Dīnī- i Ānhā* trans. Askar Bahrāmī, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Quqnūs, 1381/ 2002), 119. Originally published as *Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

In his book *Jām -i Jahān Bīn* (Tehran: Inteshārāt Ibn -i Sīnā, 1349/1991), Īslāmī Nudūshan has surveyed the stories of Zāl and Rūdābih, Sīāvash and Sūdābih, and Vīs and Rāmīn. He has mainly paid attention to the female characters in these stories. He also mentioned some similarities between the stories of Romeo and Juliet and Zāl and Rūdābih. *Jām*, 96. Some delicate points about this story, especially in political respects, were made by Fazlullāh Rizā, *Nigāhī bi Shāhnāmih Tanāvar Dirakht -i Khurāsān*, *Silsilih Inteshārāt ‘Anjuman ‘Āthār -i Millī*, (Tehran, 1350/1972).

Josef Marquart, *Īrānshahr Bar Asās i- Joghrāfiyā ye Mūsā Khurīnī*, trans. Maryam Mir-Ahmadī (Tehran: Ittilā‘āt, 1373/1973), 81, 87. Originally published as *Eranshahr: Nach der Geographie des ps Moses Xorenaci, Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, philologisch-historische klassen n.s., 3, pt. 2* (Berlin, 1901).

Cf. ‘Abū Ja’far Muhammad Jarīr al- Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al- Ṭabarī*, ed. Ṣidqī Jamīl ‘Attār (al - Juz’ al- Thānī, *Dhikr u khabar i- Ardishīr va ibnatuhu Khumānī*). (Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr, al- tab’at al- Thāniyya, 1423/2002).

A ruler hailing from Souren’s clan, ruled the grand monarchy of Sakastān for several decades during the mid-first century CE.; Ernst Herzfeld, *Īrān dar Sharq -i Bāstān*, trans. H. San’atizādeh (Tehran: Pajūheshgāh -i Ulūm Insānī -i Tehran and Shahīd Bā Hunar University of Kirmān, 1381/1983), 297. Cf. Theodor Noldeke, *Hamāsiyi Milīy -i Iran*, trans. Buzurg ‘Alawī, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Markazih Nashrih Sipih, 2537 Shāhanshāhī =1357/1979), no. 10, 81.

Bahman Sarkārātī, *Sāyi Hāy -i Shikār Shudih*, 2nd ed. Tehran: Tahuri, 1385/2007), 37.

Mīhrdād -i Bahār, *Pajūhishī dar ‘Asāṭir -i Iran*, ed. Katāyūn Mazdā Pūr (Tehran: Intishārāt Āgāh, 1375/1997), 30.

Noldeke, *Hamāsiyi Milīy*, 30.

Īslāmī Nudūshan, *Dāstān -i Dāstānha* (Tehran: Nashr -i thār, 1376/1998), 82–83.

bulghasim Ferduwsī, *Shāhnāmih*, ed. Evgenil Eduardovich Bertels, (Moscow: Academy of Science, 1966), 6:216.

Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Rostam: Tales of Love and War from the “Shahnameh,”* trans. Dick Davis (London: Penguin, 2007), 14.

Ferdowsi, *Rostam*, 133. Ferduwsī, *Shāhnāmih*, ed. Bertels, 2:188–89, vv. 250–60. his “thighs as thick as the thighs of a camel, and forearms like a lion’s: Bahrām Yasht, in *Dūstkhāh, Avistā*, 270. Compare descriptions of Zāl:

Ferduwsī, *Shāhnāmih*, ed. Evgenil Eduardovich Bertels, I, 515–17, “Dāstān -i Manūchihr, p.169, vv; Description of Rustam in *ibid*, I, “Dāstān -i Manūchihr, pp.244-245, vv. 587–89; And that of Suhrab in *ibid*, II, “Dāstān -i Suhrāb”, p.208 vv. 488–89

Firdausi, *The Shah Nameh*, trans. James Atkinson (Tehran: Society for Publication of Classical Works on Iran, 1975), 5n.

Ferdowsi, *The Epic of Kings: Shahnamah, the National Epic of Persia*, trans. Reuben Levy, rev. Amin Banani (London: Routledge, 2011), 83.

Sūdābih has been compared to Phaedra, wife of Theseus, who fell in love with her godson. Nudūshan, *Jām*, 99. Ferdowsi, *The Epic of Kings*, 84.

Ferdowsi, *An English Translation in Prose and Verse of Selected Tales of the Shahnameh*, trans. Seyed Abolghassem Fatemi Jahromi and Shima Babapour (San Diego, CA: Montezuma, 2014), 149–51. Ferdowsi, *The Epic of Kings*, 86.

This peculiarity of Sīyāvash has been noticed by the critics: Qulām Husiyn Yūsifi, “Chihri’ī Ma’sūm dar Shāhnāma,” in *Yādnāmiyi firdawsī*, in *Occasion of Rebuilding His Tomb*, *Silsilih Intishārāt-i Anjuman-i Āthār -i Millī*, Nr. 71 (Tehran: 1349/1971), 87–109.

Dhabīhullah Šafā, *Ĥmāsīh Surāyī dar Iran Az Qadīmtarīn Ahd tā Qarn -i Chihārdahum -i Hijrī* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr 363/1985), 155–256, 177.

We know a little bit about Bījan’s historical character. He was the grandson of Gūdarz, an Arsacid prince. A stone carving in Bīsūtūn dating back to the Arsacid era depicts a triumphant rider wearing a throne and carrying a spear. The writing under the image reads “Gūdarz, the son of Gīv (see Maria Brosius, *The Persians: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 129) In *Shāhnāma* by contrast Bījan is Gīv’s son, and Gīv is Gūdarz’s. (see Ferdowsi, *An English Translation in Prose and Verse*, 181–84) . Although Gūdarz was not from the Arsacid clan, he enjoyed a lofty position and succeeded Mehrdad II to the throne in 88 CE.

About the dynasty of Gūdarz to which Bījan is attributed see also Minorsky, “Yīk Dāstān,” 456. Ferduwsī, *Shāhnāmih*, *ibid*, V: “Dāstān -i Bījan u Manījih,” p.18, vv. 183–87. cf. Rustam giving Tahmīna, three valuable gems, even though he had not expected to come across her; and Zāl bestowing his earrings to Rūdāba’s maiden as a reward for bringing her messages to him.

Literally, Tāj-bakhsh is “the one who bestows the crown.” his title indicates the superiority of the Dastān family to the Kīanī dynasty because of their influential role in political affairs and appointments.

Herzfeld, *Īrān*, 273. This fact would be confirmed through the hairdressing of Rāmīn in the romance of Vīs and Rāmīn, while his hair is compared to bunches of grape. Fakhr al-Dīn ‘As’ad Gurgānī, *Vīs u Rāmīn*, eds. Māgālī Todova and Alexander Govakhārīā (Tehran: Intishārāt -i Bunyād -i Farhang -i Iran, 1349/1971), 154. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2:148

According to Nizamī, Shīrīn was the second wife of Khusraw whom he married to consummate his passionate love, but (relying on what Noldeke has found out), Shīrīn, the Christian wife of Khusraw and his most influential wife, had married him even before Khusraw’s marriage to Maryam. Theodor Noldeke, *Īrānīān va Arabhā dar Zamān -i Sāsānīān*, trans. ‘Abbas Zaryab Khuyī, *Pajūheshgāh -i ‘Ulūm Insānī -i va Muṭālī‘āt i- Farhangī*, Second Edition (Tehran: 1378/1998), chapter 8, p.305, note n2. Originally published as

Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden: Aus der arabischen Chronik des Tabari (Leiden: Brill, 1352/1973). Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmih*, ed. Bertels, 9:214. Tabarī, *Tārikh*, 2:169.

When the Hephthalites made their horrific invasion of Iran in 425 CE, it was Bahrām who managed to defeat the enemy astoundingly by means of an amazing ambush, killing their king personally and saving Iran from a great danger. Noldeke has described Bahrām as an adventurous, pleasure-seeking man who “was, despite all of his courage and bravery, a basically weak man.” Noldeke, *Īrānīān*, chapter 4, p. 129, note 3. It is unclear why Noldeke has thus judged Bahrām, who—as Noldeke himself also admits—made significant religious reforms for the first time in Iran by officially recognizing Christianity in Iran—a brave act that made all of the Zoroastrian men of clergy confront him.

Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmih*, ed. Bertels, 7:273–75.

The narrative poem *Vīs and Rāmīn* by Fakhr al-Dīn Asa‘d urgānī (d. 1068), adapted from Parthian literature; Ḥamdullah

Mustfī has claimed in *Tarīkh Guzīdih* (written in 731/1352) that this story originated in the Parthian era and this has been confirmed. Furūzānfar, *Sukhan va Sukahanvarān*, fifth edition (Tehran: Intishaārāt -i Khārazmī, 1380/2002), 366. Minorsky, “Yek Dāstān,” 464, 559, 417; Boyce “The Parthian ‘Gosān,’” 11; cf. Muṣṭabā Mīnuvī ed., *Vis u Rāmīn* (Tehran: Brūkhīm 1338/1959); Dhabīḥullāh Šafā, *Tarīkh -i Adabīyyāt Dar Iran*, 17th ed. (Tehran: Intishaārāt -i Firduws, 1366/1987), 370–83.

For the Gusānī tradition, see especially Boyce, “The Parthian ‘Gosān.’”

‘Abu’l Hasan ‘Alī b. Hasan Mas’ūdī, *Muruj al- Dhahab wa Ma’ādin al- Jawāhir*, ed. Muḥīd Muhammad Qamīḥa (Beirut: Dār a- Kutub al- ‘Ilmīyyah, 1425/2004), 2:157. Unlike Khusraw, Bahrām Gūr is said to have been both a poet and a musician.