



ADAB I. ADAB IN IRAN

ADAB

i. Adab in Iran

The term and its synonyms. Apart from a genre of literature (see [section ii](#)), *adab* in Persian means education, culture, good behavior, politeness, proper demeanor; thus it is closely linked with the concept of ethics. The first occurrence of its use in Persian is in poems by Šahīd Balkī, who died before 325/936 (Lazard, *Premiers poètes*, p. 24, nos. 11-13). *Adab* is the equivalent of the Middle Persian *frahang* and New Persian *farhang* (T. Nöldeke, "Geschichte des Artaschir-i Pāpakān aus dem Pahlevi übersetzt mit Erläuterungen und einer Einleitung versehen," *Bazzenberger's Beiträge zur Kunde der indogermanischen Sprache* 4, 1879, p. 38, note 3; H. S. Nyberg, *Hilfsbuch des Pehlevi*, Uppsala, 1931, II, p. 70); it is also very close to another Pahlavi word, *ēwēn*, Persian *āyīn*, meaning custom, rule, correct manner, and the like. Thus in certain Arabic works of the early Islamic centuries, *ēwēn* is rendered either by *adab* and its pl. *ādāb*, or by *rasm* and its pl. *rosūm*; but sometimes the original word, in its Persian form *āyīn*, is retained. Despite the opinion of scholars such as A. Christensen (*Les gestes des rois dans les traditions de l'Iran antique*, Paris, 1936, p. 102), G. Richter (*Studien zur Geschichte der älteren arabischen Fürstenspiegel*, Leipzig, 1932; repr. 1968, p. 41), and 'A. Eqbāl (*al-Adab al-wajīz*, ed. Ğ. Ḥ. Āhānī, Isfahan, 1340 Š./1961, p. v) *adab* cannot be considered exactly equivalent to *ēwēn/āyīn*.

The definition of adab in Iran. On the basis of the *Šāh-nāma* and other works



wholly rooted in the Iranian cultural tradition, *adab* may be defined in general as ideal refinement of thought, word, and deed. Ways of implementing this ideal in every field are specified by precise rules, whose main common characteristic is regard for proportion (*andāza*) or moderation (*mīāna-ravī*) in conduct. The passages cited below will clarify these matters; particular examples will be examined first.

On the subject of speech, the *Šāh-nāma* repeatedly affirms the rule of soft-spokenness (*narm-gūyī*). This means that a person's tone and cadence should be quiet and slow (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Mohl, VI, p. 272.1343 [41 in Wolff's Verskonkordanz; see following work]; see also F. Wolff, *Glossar zu Firdosis Schahname*, repr. Hildesheim, 1965, s.v. *āvā-ye narm* and *āvāz-e narm*). His utterances should never be gruff or wounding; as Ferdowsī puts it, he should not "tear anyone's skin with words" (VI, p. 270.1339 [41]). Similarly in the Pahlavi text *Handarz ī Āturpāt ī Māraspandān* (ed. M. Nawwābī, *MDA Tabriz* 11, pp. 502-28, par. 44), it is emphasized that we should not "hurt people with words." Another point that the *Šāh-nāma* makes is that we should stay silent in the face of insults and that if the insult-giver takes our silence for weakness and goes beyond the limit in his rudeness, we should then answer him in smooth (*čarb*), fresh (*tāza*), i.e., vigorous, but moderate (*be andāza*) language (*Šāh-nāma* VI, p. 506.4185f. [41]).

A similar concern with refinement appears in the rules of generosity. Any possessor of riches can make a gift whenever, to whomsoever, and of whatever size he pleases, but there is a risk that his manner may embarrass or humiliate the recipient. The rules are therefore intended to instruct the giver on refinement of conduct so that he does not hurt the recipient's feelings; this is why it is taught that the giver should be grateful to the recipient, not vice versa, because the giver buys peace and serenity for his soul with his gift and is really comparable with a merchant who has profited from a transaction (*Šāh-nāma* VI, p. 260.1204f. [41]). In other words, generosity is presented here as a natural and normal human characteristic, and this implies that generosity is brought within the scope of *adab* not by the act of giving in itself, but by the observance of its refined and subtle rules.

These and other kinds of refinement are not just enunciated here and there in the form of ethical maxims; they are manifested throughout the *Šāh-nāma* in the actual conduct of its heroes. A good example is the behavior of the man who brings the head of Tūr to the latter's father Ferēdūn and the response of Ferēdūn to the sight of his son's head (*Šāh-nāma* I, p. 192.930f. [6]; cf. Nöldeke,



Iranische Nationalepos, Berlin and Leipzig, 1920, p. 72, and Rückert in *ZDMG* 8, 1854, p. 322). Another is the reception which the Iranian commander Gōdarz gives to Rōyīn, who has been sent by his father Pīrān to Gōdarz's tent with an offer of peace; although Gōdarz has already lost seventy sons and grandsons in the war with Tūrān, he walks with a cheerful face to meet Rōyīn, embraces him, asks how Afrāsīāb, he himself, and the other Turanian generals are faring, and hospitably entertains him for one week before he finally tells him that there can be no solution except through battle (*Šāh-nāma* III, p. 512.1195f. [13F]). Esfandiār, having reached Sīstān, neither accepts Rostam's invitation to have meals with him, nor does he reciprocate the invitation for fear that if they ate each other's food and Rostam disobeyed him, he would be unable to carry out his instructions on account of the bond of friendship which the sharing of food creates (*mehr-e nān o namak*; Mohl's ed., IV, 1923, p. 520 [15] wrongly has *ḥaqq* in place of *mehr*—see the Moscow ed., VI, p. 249.526). The custom of *kerām* required that a host, after inviting someone to a banquet, should at the appointed time send a messenger to find him and renew the invitation (*Šāh-nāma* IV, pp. 608.2962f., 610.2980 [15]; *Loḡat-e fors*, s.v. *kerām*) in case the prospective guest might be afraid of going to the host's house only to find that the host had forgotten, in which case both would be embarrassed.

Many similar examples are to be found in the *Šāh-nāma* and the books of counsel (*andarz*) in Pahlavi and Persian. In the *Qābūs-nāma*, particular attention is given to refinement of conduct; e.g., when you go to a banquet, you should be neither hungry nor replete (*Qābūs-nāma*, ed. Ğ. Ḥ. Yūsofī, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973, p. 75.12-13; tr. R. Levy, *A Mirror for Princes*, London, 1951, p. 65); when you are eating, you should not look at another person's morsel (p. 65.6, tr. p. 56), and so forth. An amusing example of the need for refinement of speech is provided by an incident which occurred between the book's author, 'Onṣor-al-ma'ālī Kaykāvōs, and the Shaddadid ruler of Ganja, Amir Abu'l-Sewār (Abu'l-Aswār; *Qābūs-nāma*, pp. 41f.; tr. pp. 35f.); the incident's moral is the same as in the *Šāh-nāma*'s teachings about generosity: There is no inherent virtue, or *adab*, in the sole act of truth-telling. The essence of *adab* is discernment, such as the ability to recognize that absurd things ought not to be said even if they are true, and that a polite lie is often preferable to an absurd truth; as Kaykāvōs says, "Never tell truths which sound like lies!" (p. 41.5-7, tr. p. 35). Avoidance of useless talk is likewise often commended in the *Šāh-nāma* (VI, pp. 252.1119f., 268.1308, 494.4037 [41]); in one passage it is likened to a fire which produces only smoke (VI, p. 254.1146 [41]).



Refinement should be observed in the wording as well as the content of speech. Kaykāvōs thinks it should be observed even in the most intimate human situations (p. 45, tr. p. 39). Sa'dī makes the same point in a story in chapter 8 of his *Golestān*: "I had a sore underneath my shirt. The late lamented shaikh asked me every day how it was, but never asked me where it was" (*Golestān*, ed. F. Johnson, London, 1862, p. 164).

As has been said, the essential characteristic of perfect refinement is regard for moderation or choice of the "golden mean" in conduct, as evidenced by the *Šāh-nāma* and certain Pahlavi and Persian books. In the Pahlavi text entitled *Ayādgār ī Wuzurgmīhr* (ed. M. Nawwābī, *MDA Tabrīz* 11, pp. 85-101, 303-33, par. 14-15), the principle of the middle way (*paymān-menišnīh*) is extolled and extremism (*frehbūt-menišnīh*) is reviled (on the use of these terms in the Dēnkard and some other texts, see J. C. Tavadia, *Die mittelpersische Sprache und Literatur der Zarathustrier*, Leipzig, 1956, pp. 52f.). The word *paymān* was used in Pahlavi with the meanings of contract, measure, and moderation, but in Persian it has kept only the first meaning and is almost never used with the other two meanings (but see *Šāh-nāma* II, p. 528.512 [12] and VI, p. 494.4038 [41]). As already noted, the Persian equivalent of the Pahlavi *paymān* is *andāza*. The middle way should be followed and proper proportion should be maintained in all the activities of life (V, pp. 372.477 [22], 412.26 [25], 484.14, 19 [32]; VI, p. 286.1524 [41]). Speakers ought to use measured and moderate language, and owners of wealth ought to practice measured expenditure, because extravagance and parsimony are both vile (VI, pp. 254.1142, 488.3974 [41]). Even in charity, proportion should be maintained (VI, p. 488.3972 [41]), and even when we seek God's help, our prayers should be measured (VI, p. 492.4006f. [41]). In the words of Abū Šakūr Balḳī (Lazard, *Premiers poètes*, v. 377; cf. *Qābūs-nāma*, p. 68.3, tr. p. 58.14-15), the bezoar stone (antidote) in excess of the proper proportion becomes poison. Similarly, efforts should be measured, because excess effort wears out the body (*Šāh-nāma* VI, pp. 260.1214f., 268.1296 [41]), particularly when fortune is not favorable (VI, p. 264.1265 [41]). According to the *Šāh-nāma*, the course of a person's life is determined by the conjunction of his effort (*kūšeš*) and his fortune (*baḳt*): Anōšīravān asks Bozorgmehr whether greatness results from effort or fortune, and Bozorgmehr answers that the two are coupled like body and soul; effort can not achieve greatness without the assistance of fortune (VI, p. 374.2572-77 [41]; cf. VI, p. 382.2670-75 [41], echoing the *Mēnōg ī xrat*, tr. E. W. West, SBE 24, repr. Delhi, 1965, 21 and 22).



Proper proportion in diet, according to the *Šāh-nāma*, is to eat little (VI, pp. 282.1476, 286.1517f., 476.3816 [41]; VII, p. 130.1532 [43]). Another passage advises not to take food when the stomach is full, and to stop eating when some appetite still remains (VI, p. 286.1519 [41]). A similar point is made by Ebn al-Moqaffa' when he states in his *al-Adab al-kabīr* (ed. M. H. Qāyenī Bīrjandī, Tehran, 1315 Š./1936, p. 6, par. 3) that the essential requisite for keeping the body sound is to impose only light burdens of food, drink, and seminal emission on it. As regards sexual relations with women, the *Šāh-nāma* also often mentions the harmfulness of excess (V, pp. 138.455f. [20], 630.952f. [35]), adding that the purpose should be the perpetuation of the species (V, p. 630.956f. [35]). On the subject of choosing a wife, the middle way is again recommended in the literature; she should be neither too elderly nor too young, neither too tall nor too short, neither too fat nor too slim (*Xusrav ud rēdak* [The Pahlavi Text: "King Husrav and his Boy," ed. J. M. Unvala, Paris, n.d.], section 96; *Ṭa'ālebī, Ġorar*, p. 171). Moderation in wine drinking is frequently enjoined in both the Pahlavi and the Persian texts. The *Šāh-nāma* states that wine should be taken to induce happiness, not drunkenness (VI, p. 286.1520 [41]). In the Pahlavi text *Mēnōg ī xra d* (p. 15, pars. 36-66) the advantages of moderation and the evils of excess in wine drinking are the subject of detailed disquisitions which show remarkable correspondence with the themes of the chapter on wine in the Persian *Nowrūz-nāma*. Ḥāfez, in one of his *ġazals* (ed. M. Qazvīnī and Q. Ġanī, Tehran, 1330 Š./1951, p. 72, verse 4) likewise calls for moderation in wine drinking. In the *Šāh-nāma* the best exposition of the advantages of such moderation and the evils of intemperance is found in the story of Kabrōy and the young shoemaker (V, p. 576.290-353 [35]; in *Ġorar*, pp. 149f., this story is placed in the reign of Kayqobād). In terms consistent with the *Šāh-nāma*'s maxims, the *Qābūs-nāma* (p. 69.5-7, tr. p. 59) argues against overeating and overdrinking.

The categories of adab. Abū Eshāq Ḥoṣrī (d. 453/1061), the compiler of the Arabic anthology *Ketāb zahr al-ādāb* (ed. Z. Mobārak, Cairo, 1925, I, p. 140), quotes a saying of the vizier Ḥasan b. Sahl (d. 236/850) about the categories of *adab*: "There are ten categories of *adab*. Three are *šahraġānī*, three are *anūšervānī*, three are Arabian, and one is superior to the others. The *šahraġānī* are lute playing, chess playing, and spearmanship; the *anūšervānī* are medicine, *handasa* (geometry and architecture), and horsemanship; the Arabian are poetry, genealogy, and historiography. The category superior to all others is the recitation of pieces of story and fable at social gatherings." This organization points to the Iranian origin of some aspects of *adab*, though



it cannot be taken to mean that Sasanian *adab* consisted of only the six categories which were supplemented in the Islamic period by four more categories, including three from specifically Arab culture. As for the tenth and professedly highest category, its Iranian origin is shown by the range and renown of the Iranian heritage of narrative literature. Thus Ebn al-Nadīm in his *Fehrest*, completed in 377/987-88 (p. 304), takes it for granted that the first story-tellers were the early inhabitants of Fārs: “After the stories of the early Persians had passed to the Arsacids and the Sasanians, the Arabs translated them into their own language and then began to compose similar stories themselves.”

As to poetry, although only a few fragments of Pahlavi verse have come down to us, and no completely satisfactory conclusions have yet been reached concerning some of them, there can be no doubt that Pahlavi literature was rich in poetry. In the tripartite art of minstrelsy (*konyāgarī*), which endured in its traditional Sasanian form throughout the early Islamic centuries, the elements of music, singing, and poetry were inseparable (see M. Boyce, “The Parthian *gōsān* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition,” *JRAS*, 1957, pp. 17f., and E. Yarshater, “Affinities between Persian Poetry and Music,” in *Studies in Art and Literature of the Near East*, ed. P. Chelkowski, University of Utah and New York University, 1974, pp. 63f.). In regard to genealogy, it is clear from the Pahlavi books (see e.g. the *Bundahišn* tr., chap. 35 on the origin and lineage of the Kayanians) and the *Šāh-nāma* that the Iranians took pride in remembering and recording their ancestors. There is also ample evidence that the Iranians maintained this custom in the early Islamic period. Mas‘ūdī included in his lost *Ketāb akbār al-zamān* a detailed list of Iranian generals, sages (*hakīms*), ascetics, governors (*marzbāns*), and kings, with their family trees, which he had compiled from Iranian sources, and compared the Iranian interest in genealogy with that of the Qaḥtānī and Nezārī Arabs (*Morūj*, ed. Pellat, I, pp. 326f.; also Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, Halle, 1888, I, p. 161). In historiography likewise, the Iranians of course had a long tradition, though it was characterized by their own familiar style of mingling historical facts with legends, fabulous notions, and religious beliefs, the most important example being the *K̄vadāy-nāmag*. Here again Mas‘ūdī (*Morūj* I, p. 277) praises the Iranians for their careful transmission of the history of their ancestors. The labeling of three categories of *adab* as “Arabian” in the list ascribed to Ḥasan b. Sahl probably arose because the Arabs were unable to accept all the categories of Iranian *adab* in its Sasanian form and felt obliged either to modify those elements which they found too specifically Iranian in language



and substance or to replace them with pre-existing Arab elements. This is clearly true of poetry and genealogy, two branches in which the Arabs possessed long-standing traditions of their own, and also of religious learning, which was later to become another category of *adab*. In any case, Ḥasan b. Sahl's reported statement covers only a few of the many categories of Sasanian *adab*. In the Islamic period the scope of *adab* was probably never thought to be so wide as it had been in the Sasanian period.

The Sasanian categories of *adab*, i.e., the things that a well-bred young man ought to know after completing a full education, are listed in the Pahlavi book *Xusraw ud rēdak* and in its Arabic version in Ṭa'ālebī's *Ġorar* as follows:

Knowledge of religion (*dīn*), i.e., knowledge and memorization of the Yašts, Yasnā, Vendidad, etc. (par. 9). The supposition of Tavadia (*Die mittelpersische Sprache*, p. 134) that this is a later addition to the book seems improbable; in view of the incorporation of religious knowledge into *adab* in the subsequent Islamic period, it is unlikely that *adab* was wholly uninfluenced by religion in the Sasanian period. Knowledge of literate composition (*dabīrī* “scribeship”), calligraphy, history, and philosophy (par. 10). Knowledge of clothes, i.e., how to choose fine and tasteful garments suitable for the different seasons (pars. 7 and 19, and *Ġorar*, p. 710; cf. the rules ascribed to Ardašīr Pāpakān about use of appropriate clothes on journeys and at home in the “Letter of Tansar,” Persian tr. in Ebn Esfandīār, p. 39). Knowledge of beds and bedclothes, i.e., of the specifications of the most comfortable beds (*Ġorar*, p. 710). Knowledge of sports, such as horsemanship, archery, spearmanship, polo, and hammer throwing (pars. 11 and 12). Knowledge of music, singing, and poetry, which together constitute the art of minstrelsy. This included ability to recognize and play instruments such as vina (*wīn*), lyre (*barbaṭ*), lute (*ṭanbūr*), zither (*kennār*), and flute (*nāy*), and to choose the best instruments (*Ġorar*, p. 710). (The best for women is the harp [*čang*]*—*an opinion frequently endorsed in the *Šāh-nāma*. In *Xusraw ud rēdak* there is no mention of the most suitable instrument for men, but from certain passages in the *Šāh-nāma* II, p. 522.426 [12]; IV, p. 504.1735, 1740 [15], it would appear that the lute is the most suitable for men other than professional players.) Also included is knowledge of the musical modes and types of melody, etc. (pars. 13, 60-64; *Ġorar*, p. 710). Knowledge of the stars (par. 14). Knowledge of games, including chess, backgammon, and several others which cannot be identified (par. 15). Knowledge of cookery (*kʷālīgari*), including flavors, sorts and cuts of the meat of wild and domestic animals and birds, ways of preparing meats and making



different dishes with them, desserts, jams, pastes, etc. (pars. 19-36). This section is intended not only to enumerate foods but also to impart good taste, and is really not about eating but about tasting; it thus has a certain importance as an illustration of refinement in Sasanian *adab*. The frequency of technical uses of the word *maza* (taste) in Persian (e.g., *Šāh-nāma* V, p. 608.687 [35]; VI, pp. 280.1456, 384.2694, 500.4103 [41]; *Qābūs-nāma*, p. 73.1; *Sendbād-nāma*, ed. A. Ateş, Istanbul, 1948, p. 168.15-17; *Nowrūz-nāma*, ed. M. Avestā, Tehran, n.d., p. 102) demonstrates that study of taste was one of the subjects in which adepts of *adab* in the Sasanian period were interested. Knowledge of fruit (pars. 48-54). Knowledge of wines, their types and best sorts, the delicacies to be served with wine, and the proprieties to be observed in wine drinking (pars. 55-59, 64-67). Knowledge of water, i.e., of the most salubrious kinds of water (*Ġorar*, p. 710). Knowledge of flowers, their varieties and their scents (pars. 68-94; *Ġorar*, p. 709). Numerous flowers and perfume are mentioned. The likening of perfumes to friends, relatives and social groups probably both reflects contemporary use of flowers and symbolizes refinement of feeling in family and social relations. Knowledge of perfume in this section has the same significance as knowledge of taste in the section on cookery. (Colors of flowers are compared with those of jewels in Sasanian poetry and in sayings ascribed to Ardašīr and Anōšīravān; see Ḥoşrī, *Zahr al-ādāb* II, pp. 209, 211.) Knowledge of women, i.e., of moral virtues and above all of facial and figural beauty in women (pars. 95-97; on Sasanian notions of female perfection in these respects, see also Baḷ'amī, *Tārīk*, ed. M. T. Bahār and P. Gonābādī, Tehran, 1353 Š./1974, II, pp. 1106-11). Knowledge of mounts (*sotūr*), i.e., of riding and of pack animals such as horses, mules, and camels (pars. 98-101).

The themes appearing in *Xusraw ud rēdak* are confirmed and amplified in other books. The *Šāh-nāma* deals mainly with the education and culture of princes and heroes. When the youthful Zāl seeks the approval of King Manōčehr for his marriage to Rōdāba, he first must convince the king and the nobles of the adequacy of his education. In the king's presence he is tested by the priests (*mōbads*) on his knowledge of the stars, his way of life, and his attitude to death. After passing these tests, he is sent to the tournament field to display before the brave warriors his prowess in spearmanship, club-wielding, archery, wrestling, and horse-racing (I, p. 328.1416f. [7]). When Rostam is charged with the upbringing of Sīāvoš, he takes him to Zābol and teaches him how to ride horses, shoot with bows, hunt wild beasts, train falcons, drink wine, behave decently, speak properly, exert authority, and handle troops (II,



p. 200.87f. [12D]). Similarly Bahman (IV, p. 696.4007 [15]), Dārāb (V, p. 52.82f. [18]), Ardašīr (V, p. 276.114f. [21]; Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 38f.), Bahrām Gōr (V, p. 500.94f. [34]), and others are trained by men of culture in these skills and further specialties such as polo, chess, *dabīrī*, knowledge of history, and knowledge of the Avesta. In addition to the *Šāh-nāma*, other Persian epics and romances shed light on the categories of the *adab* which well-bred persons had to learn.

On the evidence of the *Qābūs-nāma*, which is essentially a recapitulation of Sasanian *adab*, more subjects can be added to the list, such as rules for going to bed, going to the hot baths, conducting battles, buying slaves, seeking the hand of a girl in marriage, picking friends, receiving and giving hospitality, behaving at meals, making jokes, practicing chivalry (*javān-mardī* or *'ayyārī*), judging horses, and many others. Scattered in the *Šāh-nāma* and other Persian and Arabic works based on Pahlavi sources are copious data on the details of all these rules, e.g., the etiquette at meals from a Pahlavi source in the *Ketāb al-tāj* (attributed to Jāḥeẓ; ed. A. Zakī Pāšā, Cairo, 1914, pp. 18f.) and in the *Morūj* of Mas'ūdī (I, p. 262).

Three branches of Sasanian *adab* had great influence, namely *dabīrī*, rhetoric (*soḡanvarī*, Arabic *balāḡa*), and manners. The importance of *dabīrī* and the high standing of *dabīrs* (secretaries) in the Sasanian period, and their continuing role in the Islamic period, do not need exposition here (see Christensen, *Iran Sass.* pp. 132f.). According to the *Šāh-nāma* (V, p. 358.322f. [22] and VI, p. 286.1531f. [41]), the secretary should be well versed in rhetoric and calligraphy, be able to write in short but pithy sentences, be mentally alert, learned, acute, and receptive, and morally patient, perseverant, truthful, reticent, loyal, uncorrupt, abstemious, and cheerful. The secretarial qualifications enumerated in chapter 39 of the *Qābūs-nāma* and the first discourse of Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's *Čahār maqāla* roughly correspond with the descriptions in the *Šāh-nāma*; in other Persian and Arabic writings about the secretarial profession, they reappear with more details and with anecdotal embellishments which in many cases are derived from stories in Pahlavi books (see [Dabīrī](#)).

As regards the art of composition and rhetoric, the Iranians ideally gave weight to meaning and were wary of verbal ornamentation which might distract the reader or hearer from the subject. The rules of rhetoric in the *Šāh-nāma*, reflecting the style of writing in the 10th century, are as follows: Speech should be brief and meaningful (VI, p. 252.1119 [41]) and speakers should use



the shortest possible words (VI, p. 288.1538 [41]; *lotf* in Mohl's ed. is a misreading for *lafz*—see Moscow ed., VIII, p. 146.1483). Kōsrow Parvēz's advice to his secretary is “few words and much meaning” (VIII, p. 102.1188 [43]). Short words (*saḵon-e kūtāh*) in the *Šāh-nāma* mean conciseness, which is good, and long words (*saḵon-e derāz*) mean prolixity (*eṭnāb*), which is bad. The desire for correspondence (*barābarī, mosāwāt*) between words and meanings is everywhere apparent. In another passage it is stated that speech should not be bound (*basta*), i.e., complicated, but light (*sabok*), i.e., simple and immediately intelligible, and furthermore that it should not be crude (*kām*) and mixed with the color and perfume (*rang o bū*) of verbal adornments (VI, p. 288.1552 [41]). According to the *Šāh-nāma*, there are five essential points in rhetoric: (1) The words must be beneficial such that they are incapable of causing harm or pain to the hearers; (2) the words must be in proportion, i.e. measured; (3) the speaker must have a sense of occasion and a quick wit; (4) the speaker, if telling a story, whether old or new, must tell it in verse (*peyvasta*; this word, which means joined, is used here and in many other passages of the *Šāh-nāma* with the connotation of versified, Ar. *manzūm*, as opposed to *parākanda*, Ar. *mantūr*, which means scattered and denotes prose [VI, pp. 454.3561, 456.3563 (41)]; see Wolff, *Glossar*, s.v. *paivastan* 3 and *paivand* 7); (5) the speaker must have a warm tongue and a calm, soft voice (VI, p. 494.4037-44 [41]).

The fourth point, which predicates the superiority of verse over prose, was to become a *leitmotiv* of Persian literature. Among Ferdowsī's expressions of this opinion are his remark that the *Šāh-nāma* of Abū Manšūr failed to please its readers because it was in prose (IV, p. 446.1045f. [15]) and his favorable comment on the story of *Kalīla o Demna* which Rūdakī had put into verse (VI, p. 456.3563 [41]). Azraqī of Herat (5th/11th cent.) likens a story in prose to a scrap and one in verse to a gem (*Dīvān*, ed. S. Nafīsī, Tehran, 1336 Š./1957, v. 1877); Neẓāmī describes prose as copper, verse as silver and gold (*Haft peykar*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul, 1934, p. 65, vs. 10-12); Ferdowsī compares an unversified story to unstrung pearls and vice versa (VI, p. 454.3561 [41]); and 'Onsor-al-ma'ālī calls prose the subjects, verse the king (*Qābūs-nāma*, p. 190.15, tr. p. 183).

From the *Šāh-nāma*'s assertion of the superiority of verse over prose, it can be safely inferred that this opinion stemmed from Pahlavi literature and consequently that Pahlavi literature had contained many versified stories or narratives. Moreover the fact that much of the first outpour of New Persian



poetry was in the form of versified narratives, such as the *Šāh-nāma* of Mas'ūdī of Marv, the *Kalīla o Demna* and *Sendbād-nāma* of Rūdakī, and the *Āfarīn-nāma* of Abū Šakūr Balkī, indicates continuance of a tradition of versification rather than innovative change. Two Shu'ubites, Abān Lāḥeqī (d. 200/815-16) and Abū Ja'far Aḥmad al-Balāḍorī (d. 279/892), translated Iranian romances from Pahlavi into Arabic *mozdawej* (= *maṭnawī*) verse, and like the Persian poets they must have taken over the method of narrative verse composition from Pahlavi literature, because versified narratives had never been—and never were to become—customary in Arabic poetry. The Arab author Ebn al-Aṭīr (d. 637/1239) criticizes this defect of Arabic literature at the end of his *Ketāb al-maṭal al-sā'er* (Cairo, 1312/1894, p. 324), where he writes that in the field under discussion the Iranians are superior to the Arabs. The Iranian poet writes a vivid and eloquent book made up entirely of versified stories and adventures. Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma* is the Qur'ān of the Iranians because it is the most eloquent work in their language. No such work exists in Arabic, even though the Arabic language has a wideness of range and multiplicity of techniques (*fonūn*) and themes (*aḡrāz*), a fact which makes the Persian language, in comparison, “like a drop in the ocean.”

The Shu'ubites thought that “persons aspiring to rhetorical skill, ability to choose the right words, and mastery of language should read the *Ketāb-e kārvand*, and those in need of rationality (*ʿaql*), *adab*, knowledge of etiquette (*al-ʿelm be'l-marāteb*), warning lessons, good examples, noble sayings, and lofty thoughts should study the *Sīar al-molūk* (i.e. the *Kʿadāy-nāmag*)” (Jāḥeẓ, *Ketāb al-bayān wa'l-tabayīn*, ed. H. al-Sandūbī, II, Cairo, 1345/1927, p. 6). In regard to good style in Persian, 'Onṣor-al-ma'ālī writes, “In Arabic letter-writing . . . rhymed prose (*saḡ*) is meritorious and pleasing, but in Persian it is not and had better be avoided” (*Qābūs-nāma*, p. 208.4-6, tr. p. 201). On standards in poetry-writing, he advises the poet to strive to make his words “facile yet inimitable (*sahl-e momtane*).” He should avoid obscure Arabic words and things that others will need to have explained, and not be content with rhythm and rhyme alone, because a “straight” poem (i.e. without imagery) will not please people. “If you want your words to seem lofty, use metaphors and analogies from natural phenomena” (*Qābūs-nāma*, p. 189.3-11, tr. p. 183).

In the light of the foregoing, the desiderata of prose and verse style in Pahlavi and in the Persian of the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries may be summarized as (1) brevity (both in the sentences and in the whole composition), (2) simplicity (both in the idea and in the wording; i.e. the subject should be as



nearly intelligible as possible and the language should be free from artifices such as rhymed prose which distract attention from the subject), and (3) imaginativeness (i.e. enrichment with similes, examples, proverbs, and appropriate tropes).

On account of the paucity of verbal artifices in Pahlavi literature, the Arabs, who looked for such devices in rhetoric, found Pahlavi literature strong in ideas but weak in expression. The best example of this opinion is a comment by Abū ‘Amr al-‘Attābī (d. early 3rd/9th cent.) quoted in the *Ketāb Baḡdād* of Ebn Ṭayfūr (d. 280/893). ‘Attābī, who made three journeys to Iran to copy Persian books and once, when homeward bound, went ten parasangs back to Marv for the sake of one book, was asked by Yaḥyā b. Ḥasan what was his purpose in copying the books of the Iranians; he replied, “Can ideas be found anywhere except in the books of the Iranians? We have eloquence (*balāḡa*), but they have ideas (*ma‘ānī*)” (*Ketāb Baḡdād*, ed. and German tr. by H. Keller, Leipzig, 1908, I, p. 157, 61f.; II, p. 71, 61f.).

The most important branch of *adab* covered manners, morals, and conduct. Some of the relevant rules have already been mentioned. For a full study of this subject, the surviving Pahlavi texts and the *Šāh-nāma* and many other Persian and Arabic works would have to be sifted with this end in view. Only the *Šāh-nāma*, and only its account of Anōšīravān’s reign (VI, pp. 160f. [41]) including maxims addressed to the king and his officials, has been used in the preparation of the following list of the main principles with references to the numbers of the respective verses. They are: honesty (*rāstī*; 1242, 1260, and passim); honesty in buying and selling (1197); concurrence of heart and tongue, i.e. sincerity (*yak-deli*, *yak-zabānī*, *yak-ruyī*, *yak-rangī* [=Ar. *ṣafā*]; 1323); generosity and magnanimity (*karīmī o rādī*; 1190); affability (*modārā*, Ar. [= Persian *sāzgārī* or *sāzeš*]; 1136); forbearance (*bordbārī* [= Ar. *ḥelm*]; 1224, 1289, 4134); calmness (*ārām* [= Ar. *sakīna*]; 1360, 1511, 1523 and passim); chivalry (*ḵavanmardī* [= Ar. *fotūwa*]; 2648); abstemiousness (*parhīz*; 2543); godfearingness and trust in God (*ḵodātarsī o omīd be Ḵodā*; 1218); hope (*omīdvārī*; 2536f., 2546, 2593f.); trustworthiness (*peymān-negahdāštan* [= Ar. *wafā*]; *peymān* = Ar. *‘ahd*]; 3949); abstention from gossip (1483), from fault-finding (1480f.), and from slander (1338); reticence (*kamsaḵonī*; 1345); silence (*ḵāmūšī*; 1312, 1133, 1506); care not to interrupt (1319); knowing the right time to say things (*hangāmšenāsī*; 1484, 4040) and to do things (1523); avoidance of frivolous talk (1148, 1308; cf. Abū Šakūr Balkī, *Premiers poètes*, v. 399); softspokenness (*āvāz-e narm*; 1242, 1343, 2554), particularly in women (2681,



4127); care not to frown and clench the fists while speaking (2655); avoidance of harsh and wounding words (1338), because pain is caused by the tongue (1344); gentleness (*āhastagī*; 1190, 2589f.); modesty (*šarm* [= Ar. *ḥayā'*; 1242, 2493, 2527]; humility (*forūtani* [= Ar. *tawāzo*]; 1284f.); ability to recognize and give up one's own bad habits (1194) and to avoid conceit about one's own knowledge (1134, 1435, 1607f., 1616, 2568); and care to speak only within the limits of one's own knowledge (1507) and not to let one's tongue overshoot one's ability (4183).

Adab ("farhang") must be learned (1318, 1321f.), and be learned at all times (1607, 1615). Noble birth without proficiency and *adab* is worthless and resembles a flower with only color but no scent, whereas *adab* adorns the soul (1279f., 2561f.). Children must be subjected to *adab* (1394, 1531) so that the world will not fall into ignorant hands (1251), but they must be treated with loving kindness (1252f., 1393; many passages in the *Šāh-nāma* call for love of young children, II, p. 228.413 [12D]; of one's wife, VI, p. 586.509f. [42]; and of one's homeland, II, p. 22.211f. [12B], VI, p. 186.312f. [41], VII, p. 376.259f. [44]).

On the subject of friendship, the *Šāh-nāma* advises choice of friends who will be helpful in the hour of need (1505, 2649). Nothing should ever be withheld from a friend (4179), and any dispute with a friend should be settled when no one else is present (4180). Friends should be consulted about affairs (1292) and taken as companions on walks (1192). Concord with friends is as necessary as wariness of enemies (1350). As regards enemies, avoidance is preferable (1144). A good man must wish for the world what he wishes for himself, i.e., he must do as he would be done by (1212f.). The *Šāh-nāma* insists that enemies must be honorably treated (III, p. 496.1014 [13F]) and that their abilities must not be disdained (III, p. 90.1034f. [13B]). Only the shameless deserve disdain (1224). It is unwise to talk and tell secrets to all and sundry (1307). In difficulties, constancy must be maintained (1303). In every action, reason (*kerad*) must be brought into play (1196 and passim; reason is the God-given robe of honor [2567 and elsewhere] and the life of the soul [*jān-e jān*; 1497], and so forth; on *kerad*, see also the preface of the *Šāh-nāma* I, pp. 4.1, 6.16f.; VI, p. 10.65f. [35B]). Thoughts and ambitions of doing impossible things should not be entertained (1147, 1229, 1301, 4178) and vain hopes (*ārzū*= Ar. *hawā*) should not be pursued (1200, 1243, 2661). The best hopes are for good health when one is ill and for happiness when one is well (2627f.).

One should strive to strengthen the body (1132), food should be taken sparingly (1476, 1517f., 3816), and wine should be taken for good cheer, not for



intoxication (983f., 1520). In all activities, the middle way should be chosen (1524, 4176). Expenditures should be kept in proper proportion (1143, 3974). Meanness must be shunned, because a jewel that is not used is just a stone (1259) and a rich man who is miserly might as well be under the ground (1443, 2680). Generosity is essential; it must be given before, not after, the receipt of an appeal for help (1204) and without thought of compensatory gain (4136), but rather with gratitude to the recipient (1204f.; cf. the virtues ascribed by Arabic poets to Kāled Barmakī and his son Yaḥyā, quoted by G. von Grünebaum, *Der Islam im Mittelalter*, Zürich and Stuttgart, 1963, pp. 329, 559, no. 91). Nevertheless, a gift (baḡšeš = Ar. *ʾaṭā*) should only be made to a person worthy of it (1207f., 1305, 2665f., 4138f.), and charity should only go to the deserving (1288). In spite of one's power, one should be ready to pardon offenses (1198); one should not judge others while angry (1225). On the death of a loved one, it is not right to grieve endlessly (1228); but it is right to cherish the memory of deceased persons and men of past generations (3781f.). Lamenting over past losses and rejoicing over gains that have yet to be won are both unwise (1299f.), and so too is rejoicing over present gains (4177; cf. Rūdakī, *Dīvān*, v. 104); and joy which may end in sorrow should be eschewed (1351).

Throughout life, effort is necessary (1187f., 1192, 1352f., 4190), but disproportionate effort is unseemly (1296) because effort makes no difference to God's mercy and cannot change fate's decrees (1185, 1265). This being so, we must gladly accept God's mercy (1264), live in contentment and cheerfulness (*ḡorsandī*, *ḡošnūdī* = Ar. *reżā*; 1138, 1287, 2547, 2539f., 2587f.), seek peace of mind and freedom from worldly needs (*bī-nīāzī*; 1221), and eschew the sin of greed (1122, 1131, 1135, 1287, 2549).

In the world there are ten demons (*dēvs*) who are enemies of life and reason, namely greed (*āz*), need (*nīāz*), envy (*rašk*), disgrace (*nang*), revenge (*kīn*), anger (*kešm*), slander (*sakon-čīnī*), insincerity (*do-rūyī*), irreligion (*nāpāk-dīnī*), and ingratitude (*nā-sepāsī*) (2509-2527). Among these ten demons enumerated by Bozorgmehr in an address to Ḳosrow I are five (greed, need, envy, revenge, and anger) that have been named earlier in the account of Mazdak's teachings (VI, p. 148.285f. [40]) and that are mentioned again by Bozorgmehr in another context (2606f.). Greed and need incur particularly stern censure (4030f., 4151f.). Generally speaking, the *Šāh-nāma* reckons greed the worst sin.

Passages in the *Šāh-nāma* give some information about the holding of *adab* sessions in the Sasanian period or at least in the reign of Ḳosrow I. In these



gatherings attended by the king and held weekly, morals, manners, literary matters, principles of statecraft, and the like were discussed. The seven sessions recounted in the *Šāh-nāma* could be called the *haft k̄vān* of *adab*, being analogous to the seven exploits (*haft k̄vān*) of Rostam. The participants, aside from the king, were Bozorgmehr the vizier, Yazdegerd the secretary (*dabīr*), Ardašīr the chief priest (*mōbad-e mōbadān*), and two other dignitaries named Sāva and Bahman. The name given to these discussions in the *Šāh-nāma* is *bazm* (banquet), and as it indicates, they were accompanied by food and wine (1101f.). In the Islamic period, the Barmakids and the caliph Ma'mūn are known to have followed the example of Kōsrow I and his minister by instituting similar sessions which were named *majles*. This Arabic word likewise meant banquet with wine and discussion, and can be considered a translation of the Pahlavi *bazm*. The same is true of many other Arabic technical terms of *adab*, particularly in the fields of manners and morals. A careful examination of the *Šāh-nāma*'s Persian terminology of *adab*, which reproduces the Pahlavi terminology, proves both that Sasanian *adab* had been well developed and that Islamic *adab* was directly connected to it.

Contrary to the opinion of Richter (*Studien*, p. 52), *adab* did not arise all of a sudden in the Sasanian period, but to a large extent incorporated the world views of earlier periods. This fact is supported most strongly by the Avesta. The *amšāspands* (attributes of Ahura Mazdā) epitomize the whole ethical purport of *adab*, and the precept (*Yašt* 5.18 and elsewhere) "good thoughts (Av. *humata*, Pahl. *humat*), good words (Av. *hūxta*, Pahl. *hūxt*), good deeds (Av. *hwaršta*, Pahl. *huwaršt*)" is really the Avesta's definition of *adab*. Scattered mentions of Iranian ethics by Greek and Roman historians also confirm the general outline provided by the *Šāh-nāma*.

The fusion of adab and Islam. The principal transmitters of Sasanian *adab* to Islamic culture were the Shu'ubites, two of whom made outstanding contributions: Ebn al-Moqaffa' and Ferdowsī. They not only had in common the Shu'ubite characteristics of strong attachment to Iranian culture and somewhat superficial Islamic faith (though Ferdowsī was a convinced monotheist and like most Iranians a sincere admirer of 'Alī), but they also left deep imprints on the *adab* of subsequent periods. It is a fair assessment to say that the elements of the Iranian heritage which Ebn al-Moqaffa' transmitted and blended into the general Islamic culture and which Ferdowsī transfused into the particular Islamic culture of Iran suffice to demonstrate the continuity of the Iranian cultural tradition.



The fusion of Iranian *adab* with Islamic culture did not at first proceed smoothly, but encountered strong resistance. One reason was that certain branches of *adab*, such as music, chess, backgammon, and even poetry, had non-Islamic roots. Another was that the transmitters of Iranian culture, namely the Shu'ubites, were correctly suspected of trying to replace Islamic standards with those of Iranian origins in the guise of *adab*, or at least of wanting to bring Islam into line with Iranian culture. They were thought to be exploiting their political and administrative positions in the 'Abbasid bureaucracy with a view to reparation for Iran's military defeat through cultural victory. Numerous reports give evidence of the cultural effort of the Iranians and the adverse reaction of the Arabs. Two examples are cited below.

Jāḥeẓ in his *Rasā'el* (ed. 'A. M. Hārūn, Cairo 1384/1965, II, p. 191; O. Rescher, *Excerpte und Übersetzungen aus den Schriften des . . . Ğāḥiẓ*, Stuttgart, 1931, pp. 70-75) criticizes the secretaries (*dabīrs*) because as soon as they gain some superficial knowledge of the maxims of Bozorgmehr, the counsels of Ardašīr, the letters of 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd, the *adab* of Ebn al-Moqaffa', the book of Mazdak, and *Kalīla wa Demna*, they think themselves the equals of Ebn al-'Abbās in theology and exegesis, Mo'ād b. Jabal in jurisprudence, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb in judging and sentencing, and Aṣma'ī and Abū 'Obayda in philology and genealogy; then they defame the Qur'ān by calling it self-contradictory, describe the Traditions as lies, and deny the superiority of the Prophet Moḥammad's Companions. They regard Ša'bī as stupid, Ebn Jobayr as ignorant, and Naḳa'ī as unimportant. At the end of every gathering, they cite Ardašīr's sayings on administration and Anōšīravān's on statecraft as proof of every point. None of these *dabīrs* has bothered to learn the Qur'ān and study exegesis, theology, and precedent, or if they have bothered, they show no interest. A few pages further on, Jāḥeẓ makes very uncomplimentary remarks about Ebn al-Moqaffa', Yūnos b. Abī Farwa, Ebrāhīm b. Esmā'īl b. Abī Dā'ūd, and several other *dabīrs*, describing them as *zendīqs* (Manichaeans), Zoroastrians, and Shu'ubites.

In Ṭabarī's account of the trial of Afšīn Ḥaydar (III, p. 1309), it is stated that Moḥammad b. 'Abd-al-Malek asked Afšīn about the book in his possession dealing with unbelief and ornamented with gold, jewels, and brocade. Afšīn answered that he had inherited it from his father, and that it was about the *adab* and *āyīn* of the Iranians. As for its unbelief, he consulted only what it had to say about *adab* and paid no heed to the rest. It was ornamented when it came into his possession, and he saw no need to remove its ornaments. He left



it in the same state as the book of *Kalīla wa Demna* and the book of Mazdak which 'Abd-al-Malek had in his house. He did not think that this contravened Islam.

In the 4th/10th century, the cultural strength and Iranianism of the Shu'ubites and the Islamic faith and nationalism of the Arabs constituted two more or less balanced forces, neither capable of displacing the other. On the one hand, thanks to the weakening of the Baghdad caliphate and the rise of the Iranian local dynasties, particularly the Samanids, the Iranian cultural resistance successfully implanted the New Persian language, which with the emergence of Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma* grew into a large and robust tree. On the other hand, this cultural victory had the effect of eliminating Shu'ubism from the sphere of the Arabic language and confining it to that of Persian, and thus of fragmenting the movement's strength. The period of conflict between the two cultures gave way to a period of symbiosis and synthesis. In other words, the stagnation of the Shu'ubite movement from the 5th/11th century onward was caused mainly by the preceding cultural victory of the Iranians. When the movement had more or less achieved its goal with the composition of the *Šāh-nāma* and the consolidation of Persian, there was no longer any need for continuance of its activity, or at least not so great a need as in the past. In the Persian sphere, the *Šāh-nāma* from the 5th/11th century onward had a profound influence on the Iranians. Although the political power in Iran was mostly in the hands of the Turks, whose Islamic zeal is beyond question, the Persian language and the *Šāh-nāma* had taken such deep root that the Turks themselves admired and promoted the literature and culture of the Iranians.

In all the Persian works in the field of *adab* written after the 5th/11th century, two influences can be discerned, one from the synthesized Islamic *adab*, described above, and the other from the purely Iranian *adab* represented in Persian principally by the *Šāh-nāma*. This double influence is also true of Sufi writings in verse and prose, though Sufism, as a third and independent trend, soon began to exert a decisive influence of its own on *adab*. Sa'dī's *Būstān*, an outstanding example of Persian *adab* in both its ethical and literary sense, represents a world view which is rooted in Iranian moral concepts, Islamic doctrine, and mystical teachings.

Sources. The source material on Iranian *adab* can be classified by periods as follows: (1) pre-Sasanian, (2) Sasanian to 4th/10th century, (3) 5th/11th century and thereafter. Material on the first period comes in the Avesta and Middle Iranian texts, but a good deal of pertinent data can be gleaned from the *Šāh-*



nāma and a number of Arabic and Persian works, particularly Ṭabarī's history. Also important are the accounts left by classical writers, among which Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is most important.

Apart from some reports by Byzantine and Armenian writers, the main source material on the second period comes in indigenous writings in the Pahlavi, Persian, and Arabic languages. The surviving Pahlavi texts on *adab* are generally either parts of religious literature or are religiously oriented. The most important of these latter are the books of counsel (*pand-nāmag* or *handarz-nāmag*). The only extant non-religious Pahlavi book on *adab* is the short treatise on the education of the Sasanian nobility entitled *Xusrāw ud rēdak*, which is uniquely valuable for its information on the categories of *adab*. This book remained in high repute long into the Islamic period, and Ta'ālebī incorporated a summary of its contents in his Arabic *Ġorar* (pp. 705-11). During the early Islamic centuries, numerous Pahlavi books were reproduced in Arabic translations, which like the originals are nearly all lost; but information of their existence has come down to us in surviving Arabic works, above all the *Fehrest* of Ebn al-Nadīm.

The source materials on the third period may be divided into two groups: Those which really belong to the second period because they have little or no Islamic coloring, and those with a stronger Islamic coloring, though of course no clear line of distinction can be drawn. In general, themes belonging to *adab* are scattered through the Persian narrative and didactic literature of every genre, such as epics, ethical and mystical discourses, or romances, and they permeate the "mirrors for princes" such as the *Qābūs-nāma*, and collections of fables. See also [Andarz](#), [Dabīrī](#), [Ethics](#), Literature, Paymān.

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