



## DĀRĀB-NĀMA

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**DĀRĀB-NĀMA**, prose romance of the 12th century, by Abū Ṭāher Moḥammad b. Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Mūsā Ṭārsūsī (or Ṭarṭūsī), in which the adventures of the legendary Kayanid king *Dārāb*, son of Bahman (also called Ardašīr) and Homāy, variously identified as the daughter of king Sām Čāraš of Egypt or of Ardašīr (=Bahman), are recounted. The tale also includes a story of Alexander the Great and his conquest of Persia in one of the Iranian variants of the Romance of Alexander by Pseudo Callisthenes. The text has been edited by Ḍabīh-Allāh Šafā. (For manuscripts see *Cat. Bodleian Library*, nos. 522, 787; Rieu, *Persian Manuscripts*, Suppl., nos. 384 [16th century], 385 [99?/158?]; E. Blochet, *Bibliothèque Nationale, Catalogue des manuscrits persans* III, nos. 1201, 1202, Suppl., nos. 837, 838; Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, no. 63.19; C. Stewart, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the late Tipoo Sultan of Mysore*, Cambridge, 1809, p. 7 no. xiv; Bibliotheca Lindesiana, Aberdeen, 1898, p. 109 no. 132 [1054/1644], now in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, Persian ms. no. 132; Ivanov, *Catalogue*, p. 138 no. 321 [17th century]; Aligarh University Library, no. 10/414 [see Ṭarsūsī, I, p. 25]; Akademiya Nauk, Institut Narodov Azii, *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi* [Persian and Tajik manuscripts], Moscow, 1964, nos. 1220, 1221; for Turkish versions, see E. Blochet, *Catalogue des manuscrits turques de la Bibliothèque Nationale* 2 vols., Paris, 1932-33, I, A.F. no. 107; II, no. 140; Monzawī, *Noskaha* V, pp. 3685-86.)

The story, in brief, is as follows: Homāy, the queen of Persia, is pregnant by her father, Ardašīr/Bahman, and gives birth to a son. She sets him afloat in a



box on the Euphrates, where he is found by a launderer and given the name Dārāb. When he reaches the age of thirteen years, after a turbulent youth during which he proves his military prowess, Dārāb meets his mother, and they are reconciled. It is not yet time for him to assume the throne, so he sets off on a long series of adventures on land and sea. In Oman he falls in love with the widowed queen Ṭamrūsīa, of Greek origin. Together they flee by ship for the islands of Greece. The lovers encounter storms at sea, talismans, cannibals, and sea monsters and are saved from trouble by prophetic dreams, magical cures, and divine intervention. Circumstances separate the two, and Dārāb, now thirty years old, reaches an island, where he is crowned king and marries the former king's daughter.

Ṭamrūsīya meets her brother Mehrāsb, and together they undergo adventures among the Greek islands. They separate, and Mehrāsb marries a mermaid (*doḵtar-e ābī*). She returns to the sea after four years, and he sets sail, reaching an island of one-eyed people. He becomes their king and marries Gowharāsā, the former king's widow, whose sister Zankalīsā has married Dārāb. Gowharāsā dies, and Mehrāsb kills all her family. When Dārāb learns of this crime, he conquers the island and imprisons Mehrāsb. Ṭamrūsīa reaches Dārāb's island, and they marry. Dārāb's other wife, Zankalīsā, also arrives and kills her rival, but the newborn son of the latter survives. Dārāb names him Dārāb. Zankalīsā dies of snakebite, and Dārāb *père* sets out with his son to return to Persia.

While passing through Oman Dārāb learns that Homāy has been defeated in a battle with the Caesar of Rūm, who is descended from Salm the son of Ferīdūn and thus distantly related to Dārāb. Dārāb hastens to her aid, but before he can reach her Homāy is captured in battle at Ray. Dārāb rescues her, and she turns the throne over to him. The Caesar is eventually captured and held prisoner at Eṣṭaḳr. More fighting results in the defeat and capture of the Caesar's brother Filqūs, whose daughter Nāhīd is demanded by Dārāb as tribute. They are married, but Dārāb sends her back to her father, pregnant, because of her bad breath. She gives birth to Alexander in secret, and to avoid a scandal she leaves him on the mountain where Aristotle lives in a retreat. The infant is eventually found by an old woman, who nourishes him and rears him under the guidance of Aristotle. In the meantime, Dārāb dies, and Dārāb *fi*ls becomes king.

Alexander conquers the Persian army, and he and Dārāb, half-brothers, finally meet on the battlefield, as Dārāb lies dying. One of his last requests is that



Alexander marry his daughter Būrān-doḡt (q.v.), also called Rowšanak. Būrān-doḡt does not agree to this marriage, and, being a spirited and warlike woman, she raises an army and battles with Alexander. The fighting ranges from Aleppo to Eṣṭaḡr in Fārs, where Alexander finally captures Būrān-doḡt. Again she refuses to marry him and escapes, soon proclaiming herself queen of Persia. After more fighting around Eṣṭaḡr, Alexander surprises her as she is bathing, and she finally agrees to marry him.

After they are wed Alexander installs Būrān-doḡt as queen of Persia and sets off to travel around the world with the object of conversing with sages and seeking the Water of Life. He first marches toward India, where he encounters the Indian king Kaydāvar. This king resists Alexander so strongly that he is forced to send to Būrān-doḡt for reinforcements. She herself leads the Persian forces into India and captures the king. Būrān-doḡt continues to aid Alexander in many ways, particularly against wizardry, because she is divinely protected against many natural hazards. In India she and Alexander have several adventures in which she is identified with, or aided by, water.

The campaigns in India end, and Alexander sets sail for the Arabian peninsula, passing through Mecca and pausing in Egypt. There he and Būrān-doḡt part ways, never to meet again. She returns to Persia, and he heads west in search of the Water of Life. The story ends as Alexander dies in Jerusalem and Būrān-doḡt dies shortly afterward in Persia (for a discussion of the relationship between Alexander and Būrān-doḡt and her possible identification with the Iranian goddess Anāhitā, see Hanaway).

This *Dārāb-nāma* should not be confused with another romance of the same name by Shaikh Ḥājī Moḡammad b. Shaikh Aḡmad b. Mawlānā ‘Alī b. Ḥājī Moḡammad, known as *Bīḡamī*, which would be more accurately entitled *Fīrūzšāh-nāma*. Ebn al-Nadīm (ed. Tajaddod, 2nd ed., p. 541) listed a *Ketāb Dārā wa’l-šanam al-ḡahab*, but its contents are unknown.

Popular romances like the *Dārāb-nama* were most certainly performed, rather than read silently, and therefore their primary existence was in the performance, rather than in a fixed text. The performing, as well as the literary, skills of the storyteller (*naqqāl, qeṣṣakʷòān*) must thus have played a large part in the general success of the story. Ṭārsūsī’s written text of the *Dārāb-nāma* is simply one version of a long tale, the second part of which (the Alexander Romance) is known to have been recounted by many different storytellers over hundreds of years.



The *Dārāb-nama* is true to its generic nature as a romance. In Persian romances, both popular and courtly, instruction is combined with entertainment. Listeners are instructed in the traditional social and moral values of the Iranian common people, in contrast to those of the courtly elite. Popular romances thus complement courtly romances in preserving and transmitting traditional values. More specifically, the *Dārāb-nama* and other popular romances like the *Fīrūzšāh-nāma*, *Samak-e 'ayyār*, and *Eskandar-nāma* are focused on the moral value of kingship and the social value of relations between men and women.

The model for moral instruction is usually a prince, who matures from a callow youth into a responsible adult, or a hero from among the people (e.g., Samak the *'ayyār*). In a typical tale the prince or hero leaves home, usually to pursue a woman with whom he has fallen in love. Once separated from his family, he must overcome a series of challenges before being reunited with his beloved and returning home. These challenges serve to test his bravery, instruct him in administrative or military skills, and teach him sexual restraint and a proper attitude toward women. They include a journey to the supernatural world of *parīs* (fairies) or to a culturally different region of the human world. In the *Dārāb-nāma* Dārāb travels about the Greek islands, and Alexander the Great journeys to India and later to the Land of Darkness. In the end the hero returns home, ready to marry and assume the responsibilities of kingship and adult life.

The *Dārāb-nama* links stories from the national legend about the fall of the Achaemenid dynasty with those of the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great. There are both popular and courtly parallels to the Alexander Romance, which is part of the *Dārāb-nāma*. Regarding the genealogy of Alexander, for example, Ṭārsūsī followed a version in which Dārāb and Alexander are half-brothers; the *Eskandar-nāma*, a popular prose romance from the 13th century (ed. Ī. Afšār), and Ferdowsī's account follow this version, whereas the versions of Neẓāmī and Amīr Ḳosrow are different.



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