Published: December 15, 1998
Last Updated: April 29, 2013

ESFANDĪĀR (KAYANIAN PRINCE)

ESFANDĪĀR, son of Goštāsp (Av. Vīštāspa-, Mid. Pers. Wištāsp; see GOŠTĀSP), Kayanian prince of Iranian legendary history and hero of Zoroastrian holy wars, best known for his tragic combat with Rostam, the mightiest warrior of Iranian national epic. Esfandīār's name in Avestan is Spəntōδāta- (*Yt*. 13.103, *Vištāsp yašt* 25; cf. Av. adj. *spəntō-dāta–* "created/given by the holy," *AirWb*, cols. 1619-22; on *spənta-* see also Gnoli). The Median form *Spandadāta-, which must have been current in Old Persian, may be inferred from Sphendadátes, the name of the magus who assumed kingship after the murder of Cyrus' son Tanyoxarkes (Smerdis/Bardiya, q.v.) and the death of Cambyses (q.v.; Ctesias, *Persica* 2.10). The Middle Persian form may be read Spandadāt or Spandyāt (*d* and *y* having the same sign in cursive Pahlavi script), reflected in Arabic Esfandīāḏ (Dīnavarī, ed. Guirgass, p. 28; Ṯaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, p. 256) and Esfandīār (Ṭabarī, I, p. 677; Ṯaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, p. 256 n. 3). Two forms occur in Armenian: Spandarat (the earlier) and Spandiyat (in the Sasanian period; see Adonts, pp. 341, 508-9, 511-12; Hübschmann, *Armenische Grammatik*, nos. 170-71; Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 307; Markwart, 1931, pp. 86-88).

The Sources.

The earliest source is the Avesta (*AirWb.*, col. 1622), where Esfandīār is described as *taxma–* (Pers. *tahm*) "mighty, doughty." *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* (q.v.) apparently a Parthian work that survives in a Middle Persian recension, treats

the first invasion of Arjāsp (q.v.), king of the Xyōn (or Hyōn; Av. Hyaona- "Chionites?" q.v.; Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, pp. 50-52; Jackson, pp. 104, 221), a hostile tribe that adhered to the pre-Zoroastrian pagan religion; the bravery and martyrdom of Esfandīār's paternal uncle Zarēr; the prowess and gallantry of the latter's young son Bastwar (see BASTŪR), who kills the villainous Bīdarafš (q.v.); and Esfandīār, who leads the army after Zarēr's death and defeats the Xyōn. Although the war is a religious one, the tone and rhetoric of *Ayādgār* are epic, rather than religious.

Other references to Esfandīār in early Middle Persian works are meager. One of the earliest is in *Draxt ī asūrīg* (q.v.; 41), where Rōdstahm (Rostam) and Spandadāt are mentioned. In the *Bundahišn* Esfandīār is named in the genealogy of the second Kayanian cycle (TD2, p. 232; tr. Anklesaria, p. 297). In the *Dēnkard* he is identified as the father of Bahman (q.v.) and one of the first at Goštāsp's court in Balḵ to spread the Zoroastrian faith (5.2.12; cf. *Škand-gumānīg wizār*, pp. x, 67-68, where Spandadāt and Zarēr undertake to spread the Zoroastrian faith as far as Rūm and India; cf. also Zoroaster's reference to Esfandīār, *Dēnkard* 7.4.70). The lost Avestan *Vištāsp sāst* (summary in *Dēnkard* 8.2; cf. Molé, 1963, p. 394), on the conversion of Goštāsp, must have included the legend of Esfandīār's conversion as well. In the Pahlavi translation of *Vištāsp yašt* (a late *yašt* in somewhat flawed Avestan) Esfandīār is mentioned as the example par excellence of a warrior (Molé, 1963, pp. 377-78).

The major Persian source for legends about Esfandīār is Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma* (Khaleghi ed., V, pp. 76-438), which includes the 1,015 lines (according to Khaleghi ed., pp. 76-174; cf. 1009 lines in Moscow ed. VI, pp. 66-135) by Daqīqī (q.v.) incorporated at the beginning; these lines constitute an expanded version of the material in *Ayādgār*. Ferdowsī's own text begins as Arjāsp sends his son Kohram to reconnoiter in Iran and ends with the return of Esfandīār's son Bahman to Goštāsp's court after a period of tutorage under Rostam (all references to *Šāh-nāma* are to Khaleghi ed. V, unless noted otherwise).

A Persian Zoroastrian work, the versified *Zarātošt-nāma* by Zardošt Bahrām Paždū (or Kay Kāvūs son of Kay Ḵosrow) in the 13th century or perhaps earlier (Āmūzgār and Tafażżolī, p. 32) is a "life of Zoroaster," with elaboration of his miracles. It appears to have been based on legends in the Sasanian Avesta and its commentaries. A 19th-century Pahlavi work, *Wizirkard ī dēnīg*, falsely claimed to have been written by Zoroaster's cousin and disciple Maidiyoma, contains reports involving Esfandīār that are also alluded to in earlier Pahlavi works (see above).

Of the Arabic histories the version in Ṭaʿālebī's *Ḡorar* (pp. 262-372) closely parallels that in the *Šāh-nāma* and must have been based on the same source; it provides the longest and best-organized account of Esfandīār's career. There are, however, minor differences (see Zotenberg's introduction to *Ḡorar*, pp. xxxi-xxxii). Although Ṭabarī's account of Goštāsp's (Beštāsb's) reign (I, pp. 645 ff.) is a confused mixture of biblical, Babylonian, and Persian traditions, presumably concocted by the early translators of *Xwadāy-nāmag*s into Arabic (or to some extent by Judeo-Christian sources in pre-Islamic times) to harmonize Iranian and Semitic strands, the relatively short report on Esfandīār (I, pp. 676-81; cf. Ebn al-Aṯīr, I, p. 273) conforms in essentials to the versions of Ferdowsī and Ṭaʿālebī (for minor differences, see Christensen, pp. 120 ff.). Balʿamī (ed. Bahār, pp. 660-68) offered practically nothing more than is found in Ṭabarī's work.

Abū Ḥanīfa Dīnavarī (ed. Guirgass, pp. 27-28) recorded a somewhat different account of events involving Esfandīār, which was followed by the anonymous author of *Nehāyat al-erab* (Browne, esp. pp. 206-11), a work that Theodor Nöldeke (*Geschicte der Perser*, pp. 475-76) considered bogus (*Schwidelhaft*) and Edward G. Browne regretted having spent much time on (p. 258).

Nöldeke (*Nationalepos*, sec. 1) believed it possible that at the time the Avesta was being composed a cycle of Kayanian legends, possibly even in written form, was circulating in priestly circles. As the Avesta was not committed to writing before the 4th century C.E. (see AVESTA), however, only a sequential oral account, transmitted by reciters or minstrels, could have been available. Some myths and legends that were adumbrated in the Avesta were elaborated in Sasanian books that no longer survive, including the *Xwadāy-nāmag*, a Middle Persian precursor of the *Šāh-nāma*. Several books appear to have contained legends of Esfandīār. Among "the books that the Persians had written on the authentic life stories and legends of their kings" Ebn al-Nadīm (ed. Tajaddod, p. 364) mentioned first the Book of Rostam and Esfandīār, translated into Arabic by Jabala b. Sālem. Masʿūdī (*Morūj*, ed. Pellat, I, sec. 480) reported Esfandīār's exploits were recorded in a book entitled *Baykār* (i.e., *paykār* "war, battle"), translated into Arabic by Ebn al-Moqaffaʿ (q.v.); in his *Tanbīh* (p. 94) Masʿūdī noted that the book dealt with the wars between Iran and Turan (cf. Markwart, 1895, p. 639). He also mentioned (*Morūj*, ed. Pellat, I, sec. 541) a Persian book called *Sakīsarān*, which included an account of Esfandīār b. Bestāsf, his death at the hand of Rostam, and the slaying of Rostam by Bahman b. Esfandīār. According to Masʿūdī, the Persians set great

store by this book, as it contained information on their ancestors and kings; it had been translated into Arabic from Middle Persian (*al-fārsīya al-ūlā*). If the title is correctly understood to mean "Heads of the Sakas (i.e., Seistanis; see Christensen, p. 143)," the focus of the book must have been on the house of Zāl and Rostam and their exploits.

It is to be noted that in the Avesta and other Zoroastrian writings Esfandīār is by no means as prominent as in the *Šāh-nāma*.

Esfandīār's life and career.

Parents and relatives. According to sources, Esfandīār was the eldest son and crown prince of Goštāsp and a grandson of Lohrāsp; he thus belonged to the second cycle of the Kayanian dynasty (Yarshater, pp. 465 ff.). In the Avesta (*Yt*s. 9.26, 15.35, etc.) his mother is named as Hutaosā- (Hutōs in Pahlavi commentary on *Y*. 53.5 and *Ayādgār*, p. 68; Ḵoṭūs in Ṭabarī, I, p. 678; Ḥūṭos in Balʿamī, ed. Bahār, p. 662) from the house of Nowḏar (Av. Naotara-; *AirWb.*, col. 1822). In *Ayādgār* Goštāsp speaks of "Hutōs, my sister and wife, from whom the thirty sons have been born." Daqīqī, however, gave the name of Esfandīār's mother as Nāhīd, daughter of a caesar (*qayṣar*), "whom king [Goštāsp] calls Katāyūn" (*Šāh-nāma*, p. 78). Ferdowsī and Ṯaʿālebī knew her only by the latter name. According to them, she was a daughter of the king of Rūm (a designation for Byzantium, Greece, or Rome) and married Goštāsp while he was in exile in the "land of Caesar," having left his father's court in protest (cf. Nöldeke, *Nationalepos*, sec. 4 n. 2, who suggests that Katāyūn may shield the name of Kōmetō or Kōmētō, sister of Justinian's wife, Theodora). The whole sequence appears to have been transposed from a legend of Zariadres, presumably Goštāsp's brother Zarēr, preserved by Athenaeus (13.35) on the authority of Chares of Mytilene (Jacoby, *Fragmente* IIB, pp. 600-601 no. 125 frag. 5; Christensen, p. 117; Boyce, pp. 463-65).

The number of Esfandīār's brothers is somewhat confused in the sources. In *Ayādgār* (p. 49) the sage Jāmāsp, Goštāsp's vizier and counselor, predicts that twenty-three (p. 64: twenty-two) sons and brothers of the king will fall in battle. According to the *Šāh-nāma* (pp. 188, 199), Goštāsp has thirty-eight sons who fall in Arjāsp's second invasion, and Esfandīār vows to avenge them; in another place (p. 150), however, Jāmāsp informs him that five of his thirty-eight brothers have survived the battle (a manuscript variant confirms the earlier statement; cf. *Ayādgār*, p. 64, where Monchi-Zadeh suggests amendment of thirty-eight to twenty-eight).

The most important of Esfandīār's brothers is the noble and saintly Pašōtan (q.v.; Av. Pəšōtanū), one of the Zoroastrian immortals and a helper of the future savior (*saōšyant*). In the *Šāh-nāma* (V, index) he is Esfandīār's counselor and supporter, as well as commander of his army, accompanying him on the expeditions against both Arjāsp and Rostam; his voice is one of reason, piety, and justice. The favorite brother of Esfandīār is his sibling (*Šāh-nāma*, p. 78) Faršēdvard (q.v.; less frequently Faršāvard; *Šāh-nāma*, pp. 78, 144;Av. Fraš.hąm.varəta-, *AirWb*, col. 1010; Mid. Pers. Frašāward, *Ayādgār*, p. 64 nos. 48, 59, 64; cf. Ṭaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, Introd., p. xxx). Another pious brother, Frašō.kara-, is mentioned in *Yašt* 13.102 but not in the *Šāh-nāma*. Daqīqī names at least two other brothers, Ardašīr and Šēdasp; and apparently two more: Ōrmazd or Šēr-Ōrmazd and Nēvdār or Nēvzār or some other variant (manuscripts vary; see *Šāh-nāma*, pp. 109, 111, 122), all of whom fall in the first holy war against Arjāsp (cf. Ṭaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, pp. 271-72, who gives Ardašīr, Rām-Ardašīr, Šēdasp, and Fīvandāḏ as the names of the brothers). None of these figures is mentioned in the Avesta, *Ayādgār*, or *Bundahišn*. Daqīqī also mentioned (*Šāh-nāma*, p. 135) five brothers of Esfandīār without naming them; all take their places in his battle to avenge his uncle Zarēr. Darmesteter (1883, II, p. 206), Justi (*Namenbuch*, p. 495), and Jackson (p. 70 n. 5) considered the dozen pious Zoroastrians, beginning with Fraš.hąm.varəta (most of the names begin with *ātar-* "fire") to be Goštāsp's sons, a plausible proposition but difficult to prove (for a contrary view, see Pūrdāwūd, I, p. xxx).

Two sisters of Esfandīār are mentioned in the *Šāh-nāma*: Homāy and Behāfarīd (pp. 185, 195; cf. Ḵomānī and Bāḏāfrah in Ṭabarī, I, p. 678). Goštāsp promises Homāy in marriage to whoever repels Arjāsp's first invasion, and she is thus given to Esfandīār. Both women are seized during Arjāsp's second invasion and carried away to Dež-e Rūyīn (q.v); both also play a role in the drama of Esfandīār's life and death. As Khaleghi-Motlagh pointed out (personal communication) most probably Behāfarīd, too, whom Esfandīār rescued from captivity (see below) was also his wife, but Ferdowsī in deference to Muslim sensivity muted the report, implying it, however, where he describes the mourning at court for the prince by equating his sisters with his wives (*pūšīdarūyān-e ū* "his face-covered ones"; p. 428).

No mention can be found in the *Šāh-nāma* of the mother of Esfandīār's children. Ṭabarī (I, p. 688) identified Bahman's mother as Estūrīā, i.e., Esther (q.v.; cf. Estūr in *Mojmal*, ed. Bahār, p. 30; Spiegel, 1891, p. 238), obviously the result of mixing Persian and biblical traditions, and identifying Bahman (q.v.;

also called Kay Ardašīr in the sources) with the Achaemenid Artaxerxes I (q.v.).

According to Daqīqī, Esfandīār had four sons: Bahman, Mehrnūš, Ṭūš (or Āḏarafrūznūš), and Nūšāḏar (or Āḏarnūš; see *Šāh-nāma*, pp. 161 and 199 for variants). None of them is mentioned in the Avesta. In the *Bundahišn* (p. 232, tr. p. 297) Adur-tirs and Mihr-tirs are named as sons of Esfandīār; perhaps they are to be equated with Nūšāḏar and Mehrnūš. Nūšāḏar is the most distinguished. He takes part in both the war against Arjāsp and the expedition to Seistan, kills the Seistani fighter Alvāy, and is killed in turn by Rostam's brother Zavāra.

Champion of the faith. Although Esfandīār is best known from secular literature for his battle with Rostam, in Zoroastrian writings he is depicted as one of the first converts to the faith and, together with Zarēr, its most zealous champion. In the Avesta Esfandīār figures among the defenders of the faith whose sacred souls or *fravašī*s are praised (*Yt*. 13.103). He is also involved in several of the prophet's miracles. When Goštāsp's matchless horse is afflicted by an ailment that makes its legs disappear into its belly he appeals to Zoroaster to heal it (*Dēnkard* 9.22.2; Molé, 1967, p. 186 n. 70); the prophet makes several conditions, one of them being that Esfandīār should become a champion of the faith (*Dēnkard* 7.4.70; Molé, 1967, p. 110). This legend is elaborated in Bahrām Paždū's *Zarātošt-nāma* (vv. 942 ff.; *Wizirkard ī dēnīg*, p. 18; Molé, 1967, p. 132; cf. Šahrastānī, I, pp. 285-89, who refers to the miracle citing Jayhānī, but not naming Esfandīār; tr. Torka, pp. 186-88). In another miracle the prophet places the fire of Burzēn-Mihr (see ĀDŪR BURZĒN-MIHR) in the hands of Goštāsp, Jāmāsp, and Esfandīār without burning them. Elsewhere Goštāsp asks Zoroaster for four boons, but the prophet only agrees to give them to four different persons. As a result, Goštāsp gains knowledge of his place in *mīnū* or the world beyond; Jāmāsp is rendered cognizant of all past, present, and future events; Pašōtan becomes immortal; and Esfandīār is made invulnerable, *rūyīn-tan* (lit., "brazen body"), "so that no sharp knives (*kārd*) could hurt his body" (*Zarātošt-nāma*, vv. 1162 ff.; *Wizirkard ī dēnīg*, p. 19).*Esfandīār's career*. The summary version given here is according to the *Šāh-nāma*, with additional details from other sources.

When Zarēr and many other Iranian warriors are killed during Arjāsp's first invasion and Goštāsp finds his army in dire straits, he swears a solemn oath to relinquish the throne to his son Esfandīār, as his own father had done before him, if his son can defeat and repel the enemy (p. 134). When Esfandīār

achieves his great triumph, however, Goštāsp gives him Homāy in marriage and honors him in every way, but stops short of yielding the crown; instead he sends him on further expeditions to conquer and pacify distant lands and to spread the new faith, a mission that Esfandīār carries out successfully. At this point a relative of the king, Korazm (Jorazm in Ṭabarī, I, p. 677, apparently Av. Kavārasman-, *Yt*. 13.103; *AirWb*., col. 443, an early believer), accuses Esfandīār of planning to seize the kingdom and depose the king. Esfandīār is publicly rebuked, then seized, chained, and imprisoned in the mountain fortress Dež-e Gonbadān (q.v.; Šabdez or Gerd-[Kard-?]kūh in Bondārī, I, p. 235; in a prison for women in Ṭabarī, I, p. 677; in the fortress of Eṣṭaḵr in Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 51).

Arjāsp hears of these events and of Goštāsp's departure for Seistan (Ṭabarī, I, pp. 677-78: Kermān and Seistan, leaving his harem and treasury in the charge of his wife Ḵoṭūs; Kūh-e nefešt in Fārs in Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 51) to convert the people of Zāvolestān, leaving Balḵ defenseless. Daqīqī's verses end here, and those of Ferdowsī begin (p. 175). Arjāsp invades Balḵ; kills the aged Lohrāsp, who has retired to the Āḏarnūš temple; burns down the temple; kills many priests; and carries off Homāy and Behāfarīd (pp. 184 f.). He also captures *derafš-e kābīān*, the Iranian royal flag (Ṭabarī, I, p. 678; see DERAFŠ-E KĀVĪĀN). When Goštāsp returns to confront the enemy he is utterly defeated, and thirty-eight of his sons are slain (pp. 188; see above). He retreats to a mountain, where he is besieged. He sends Jāmāsp to appeal for help to Esfandīār, who at first refuses but eventually is moved when he hears of the mortal wounds received by his brother Faršēdvard to lead the Iranian army against Arjāsp. He visits Faršēdvard in his agonies, buries him, and vows, if victorious, to forget past injuries from his father. The remorseful Goštāsp again solemnly promises him the throne if he wins the war. In the ensuing battle Esfandīār performs extraordinary feats of valor and strength, killing a large number of the Xyōn and avenging the blood of his grandfather. Arjāsp flees, and Esfandīār captures Gorgsār, an enemy general, who offers to guide him in Turan in exchange for his life.

The seven exploits. Esfandīār's greatest feat is the capture of the impregnable Dež-e rūyīn, where his two sisters are held captive. The road to the fortress is fraught with dangers and impediments; overcoming them and emerging unscathed constitute Esfandīār's seven stations or exploits (*haft ḵān*, pp. 219-89; see below). They consist of slaying two ferocious wolves, two redoutable lions, a dragon, a sorceress disguised as an enchantress, the fearsome bird Sīmorḡ and its two offspring, as well as weathering a terrible

three-day blizzard and crossing a wide expanse of water (“the Kāsrūḏ, the Mehrrūḏ, and another of their mighty rivers” in Ṭabarī, I, p. 680; for identifications, see Spiegel, 1871-78, I, pp. 627 ff.; Markwart, 1938, pp. 5, 97 ff., 113; for an analysis and interpretation of the seven exploits, see Maguire 1973, 1974; Omīdsālār, pp. 267-81). The fortress is taken through a combination of courage and trickery. Esfandīār poses as a merchant, deceives Arjāsp with gifts, then attacks and kills him in his private quarters. At his signal the Iranian troops, led by Pašōtan, attack the Turanian army, which is utterly destroyed when Esfandīār joins the battle. The commanders of the defeated army, Kohram and And(ar)īmān (Av. Vandarəmainiš-), Arjāsp’s two brothers, are seized and hanged before the fortress (p. 280, vv. 741 f.), which is then burned to the ground. The sisters are freed and Arjāsp’s mother, two sisters, and two daughters taken captive. The whole land of Turan suffers the wrath of Esfandīār.

The combat with Rostam. The most dramatic event in Esfandīār’s heroic career is his combat with Rostam, one of the longest episodes and literary highlights of the *Šāh-nāma* (pp. 293-438; Moscow ed., VI, pp. 216-321). Upon his victorious return from Turan he expects the fulfillment of his father’s promises, but again Goštāsp hedges. Although he knows according to Jāmāsp’s prediction that his son’s death is to be at the hand of Rostam, he charges Esfandīār with a last ordeal before he will yield the throne: to go to Seistan and bring in chains the mighty Rostam whom he accuses of arrogance and of not having paid his respects to the court. Esfandīār protests, reminding the king of Rostam’s renown, his old age, and his outstanding services to the dynasty but to no avail. In the end Esfandīār, driven by pride, ambition, and desire for power, sets out, with his brother Pašōtan and his sons Bahman, Āḏarnūš, and Mehrnūš, at the head of a body of troops for Seistan, Rostam’s country, flouting the anguished and tearful advice of his mother and even denouncing her for opposing his decision.

In Seistan Esfandīār sends the young Bahman to Rostam with a conciliatory message tinged with threat, telling him of the king’s order, asking him to submit to being bound and taken to court, and promising to intervene with the king to keep him from harm. Rostam admonishes the young prince not to demand the impossible. He invites Esfandīār to eat at his table, after which he will willingly accompany him to court and seek to satisfy the king. In the two ensuing encounters between the warriors each stands his respective ground, Esfandīār declining Rostam’s invitation and insisting that he cannot disobey

the king, Rostam claiming that honor forbids him to accede. Although Rostam makes every possible concession to Esfandīār, short of letting himself be chained, the haughty and inflexible prince refuses to be softened even by Pašōtan's repeated pleas; his insistence on the dictates of the faith and the inviolability of the king's command brings matters to a head. The young hero and the old champion engage in single combat. In the meantime Rostam's brother Zavāra and his son Farāmarz attack Esfandīār's camp, killing Āḏarnūš and Mehrnūš. Even though Rostam apologizes and offers to deliver the culprits to Esfandīār's sword, the combat between the two rages on. At the end of the day the invulnerable Esfandīār proves superior with his piercing arrows. Rostam, exhausted, wounded, and desperate, takes refuge on a hill; he replies to Esfandīār's taunting demands for surrender with a request for a respite so that he can dress his wounds overnight; he promises to accede to Esfandīār's wishes in the morning. At home the despondent Rostam uncharacteristically considers flight, but then his father, Zāl, puts in the fire a feather given to him by the miraculous bird Sīmorḡ the bird, whose mate has been killed by Esfandīār in the course of his seven exploits, descends from the sky. It heals Rostam's wounds with its feathers and instructs him to make an arrow from the branches of a tamarisk (*gaz*) tree and aim it at Esfandīār's eyes. It also reveals to Rostam a secret of destiny: Whoever sheds Esfandīār's blood will suffer in both this world and the next. On the following day Rostam passionately renews his plea, offering to give Esfandīār all his and his ancestors' treasures, to place his men at his disposal, and to go with him in obedience to court and accept the verdict of his sovereign, but Esfandīār's arrogant insistence on putting him in chains, leaves Rostam no choice but to follow Sīmorḡ's instructions; Esfandīār falls to the ground mortally wounded.

Pašōtan and Bahman hasten to his side. Rostam, profoundly grieved, confesses to Zāl's artifice. In his agonies Esfandīār comforts his relatives, blames fate for his death, and entrusts Pašōtan with a chiding message to his father. The education of Bahman he places in the hands of Rostam. When Esfandīār's coffin reaches the court Goštāsp is blamed by all for his death, especially by Katāyūn, Homāy, Behāfarīd, and most eloquently by Pašōtan (pp. 426-31). Elaborate mourning follows.

Bahman stays with Rostam, who teaches him princely arts. After some time Rostam writes a soothing letter to Goštāsp and receives a warm response from the monarch, who recalls Bahman to court. Soon after, Rostam is treacherously killed by his half-brother Šaḡād. Once on the throne, however,

Bahman seeks vengeance for his slain father, attacks Zāvolestān, kills Farāmarz, imprisons the aged Zāl in a cage, and pillages his realm (see BAHMAN ii. on the various traditions regarding his vengeance).

A somewhat different tradition was recorded by Dīnavarī (ed. Guirgass, pp. 27-28; cf. Browne, pp. 206 ff.). When Rostam, Goštāsp's vassal (*ʿāmel*) in Seistan and Khorasan, hears of Goštāsp's conversion to Zoroastrianism he flies into a rage, gathers the people of Seistan, and calls for the deposition of the king; the people rebel against the king. Goštāsp calls on Esfandīār to kill Rostam. The prince selects 12,000 brave men from his father's army and marches against Rostam, who advances to meet him at a location between Seistan and Khorasan (Qūmes, according to *Nehāyat*). Esfandīār proposes that, instead of battle, they spare their armies and meet in single combat; the army of the defeated warrior will then obey the other. Rostam agrees, they fight, and Esfandīār is killed. When the news reaches Goštāsp he becomes ill and dies of grief, leaving the throne to his grandson Bahman. Obviously different traditions as to the cause of the war between Rostam and Esfandīār existed. Religious antagonism as a result of Goštāsp's conversion is related also by the anonymous author of the *Tārīḵ-e Sīstān* (pp. 33-34).

Šehāb-al-Dīn Sohravardī (d. 1191) in his mystical treatise "The Red Intellect" (*ʿAql-e sorḵ*, pp. 232-34), where he gave his interpretation of Sīmorḡ, offered a different version of the Sīmorḡ and Zāl as the schemers of Esfandīār's death: Zāl who knew that anyone who looked at the reflection of Sīmorḡ in a mirror or a similar surface will be dazed, had Rostam's armor and helmet polished and pass them before the bird. In the battlefield next day, being dazzled, the young hero thinks he has been wounded in the eyes and falls to his death.

Masʿūdī (*Morūj*, ed. Pellat, I, sec. 479) credited Esfandīār with having erected a lofty fortress with a connecting bridge over a gorge in Qabq (or Qabḵ, i.e., the Caucasus; see Markwart, 1930, pp. 26 ff.), in order to bar the passage of the Alans (cf. *Mojmal*, ed. Bahār, p. 51, where this enterprise is attributed to Goštāsp). Ḥamza Eṣfahānī (p. 37) attributed to Esfandīār the construction of a barrier against the Turks 20 farsakhs from Samarkand.

Ẓahīrī Samarqandī in his *Āḡrāż al-sīāsa*, a "mirror for princes" which features the wise sayings in Arabic of a number of figures, mostly rulers, and the author's comments on and elaborations of these sayings in florid Persian, attributes three philosophical dicta to Esfandīār (pp. 85-89), apparently born of the author's imagination.

Bahrām b. Farhād, a follower of Āḏar Kayvān devotes a long chapter in his *Šārestān-e čahār čaman*, a rambling philosophizing work belonging to the *ešrāqī* or illuminationist school of Zoroastrianism (see *EIr* III, p. 186b), devotes a long chapter to Esfandīār (pp. 461-523). It consists mostly of fanciful accounts and imagined stories in which the traditional lines of the prince's biography are barely discernible; the author makes of Esfandīār an ascetic given to Sufic mystical musings all couched in Islamic illuminationist terms, with Arabic quotations even from the Qurʾān, and Hadith to idolize a hero who would not harm a fly, but would further the good religion by his example, his many miracles, and his knowledge of the past, present and future; whom Zoroaster rendered invulnerable by his blessing and appointed him the executor of his will (*waṣīy*, p. 462). The author often offers fantastic justifications of the events of Esfandīār's career not found in traditional sources; his encounter with Rostam, however, follows Ferdowsī's scheme, although in a much inflated form. (The writer is grateful to Jalal Khaleghi-Motlagh for drawing his attention to this source; see Mojtabāʾī in *DBE* I, p. 252 on Šārestān and its author)

Popular versions. The legend of Esfandīār, particularly his seven exploits and his contest with Rostam, has enjoyed great popularity since ancient times (cf. Masʿūdī, *Morūj*, ed. Pellat, I, secs. 480, 267 sec. 541; Nöldeke, *Nationalepos*, sec. 6). The 8th-century biographer of the prophet of Islam, Ebn Esḥāq, reported (I, pp. 195, 239) that Nażr b. Ḥāreṯ "was one of the devils of Qorayš and one of those who would harm the Apostle of God. He had visited Ḥīra and there had learned the accounts of the Persian kings and those of Rostam and Esfandīār and, when Moḥammad preached, Nażr would stand up and tell the audience that he was a better recounter than Moḥammad, and he would tell them the stories of Persian kings and of Rostam and Esfandīār and call Moḥammad's object lessons 'yarns of the ancients'" (*asāṭīr al-awwalīn*). Ebn al-Balḵī (p. 52) actually dispensed with the details in his account of the story because they were so well known. One of the earliest Sasanian novels that were translated into Arabic was "the Rostam and Esfandīār" by Jabala b. Sālem (Ebn al-Nadīm, ed. Tajaddod, p. 364).

Such popular stories did not cease to circulate orally even after they were recorded in writing. Nor did elaboration and change by professional storytellers and others cease after Ferdowsī had fixed the version that had reached him. Abu'l-Qāsem Enjavī recorded a number of modern popular stories about Esfandīār in *Mardom o Ferdowsī* and *Mardom o Šāh-nāma* (most

of them extracted and summarized in Omīdsālār, pp. 258 ff.). In several Rostam does not kill Esfandīār with a magic arrow but by striking him with an aromatic orange made of gold or other metals (Enjavī, 1976, pp. 211-13; idem, 1975, p. 25). In another folk version (Omīdsālār, p. 259) Rostam strikes the prince with a golden stool.

Origins and development of the legend.

Although presented in coherent form by Ferdowsī and Ṭaʿālebī, the story of Esfandīār is in fact a combination of different elements, many of them floating motifs common to the folklore and the myth making of many nations. Some are repeated in different contexts in the *Šāh-nāma* itself, for example, the hero's disguise as a merchant in order to gain entrance to an impregnable castle, such as Rostam's conquest of the fortress on Mount Sepand (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Aliev and Osmanov, I, pp. 263-68; ed. Khaleghi, I, pp. 277-80), Ardašīr Bābakān's entrance into Haftvād's fortress (*Šāh–nāma*, Moscow ed., VII, pp. 144 ff.), and Alexander's entering Dārā's camp incognito in order to gather intelligence (e.g., Ṭaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, p. 522). The seven exploits on the way to a rescue are a popular theme in Persian tales (e.g., Rostam's seven exploits en route to rescuing Kay Kāvūs and his companions; *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, II, pp. 21-43). The sorceress posing as an enchantress and the vulnerable spot of an otherwise invincible hero are universal motifs (cf. Achilles' heel in the *Iliad* and the spot on Siegfried's shoulder in the Germanic myth). Motifs related to the Esfandīār legends can be found conveniently in the Index of Stith Thompson and that of Tom Peete Cross, the latter cross-referenced to Thompson's work (the author is grateful to Maḥmūd Omīdsālār for references to Cross's index and for checking Thompson's index). The Thompson index numbers of some of the motifs in the seven exploits are as follows: killing ferocious wolves B16.2.4; killing mighty lions B16.2.3; the magic arrow D1092; killing the dragon B11.2.11, F912; entering the enemy camp or fortress in disguise D641.2, *K1810 ff. (cf. K2357.2); and rescuing ladies K1941. Motifs related to the combat with Rostam include the omen of the camel kneeling at the crossroads and refusing to move (*Šāh-nāma*, p. 309) B521, B140; mythical birds B30-31; the hero's invulnerability D1381.3.2*, D1840, D1846.5 (cf. D1846; Omīdsālār, pp. 267 ff.); the vulnerable spot Z310-11.1*; the special arrow Z312; prophecy M341.2.19*, M341.3.

Once the legend of Esfandīār, as retold in the *Šāh-nāma*, is stripped of folk motifs, little remains. All that is relatively certain to have been part of the original core narrative is that he was a son of Goštāsp, an early believer in

Zoroaster, and a “holy and gallant” defender of the Zoroastrian faith (*Yt*. 13.102). He early became the focus of miraculous legends. That the story of his combat with Rostam is of Saka origin is confirmed by the absence of Rostam and Zāl from the Avesta; sympathy for the old hero rather than the young prince; favorable presentation of Sīmorḡ the callowness of Bahman and his being educated by Rostam but proving ungrateful; and Goštāsp’s role as villain of the story.

The Saka stories featuring the house of Zāl appear to have been combined, in the course of time, with the Kayanian legends of the Avestan people, most probably gradually in the long period between Alexander and the Sasanians, assisted by the spread of Zoroastrian religion among the Sakas (cf. Boyce, pp. 475-76). We must assume that when Seistan was converted to Zoroastrianism its legends were gradually grafted onto Avestan traditions, which already incorporated pre-Zoroastrian Kayanian legends. These two traditions were not always in harmony, and the combination has left some rough edges; a glaring instance is the dual personality of Goštāsp, represented as both the protector of the good religion (Avestan tradition) and a devious ruler who reneges on his word and loses his son in battle against the hero of Seistan (Seistanian tradition). Anomalies in the rather disjointed career of Rostam such as the span of his life and his inconsequential rule in Turan (ed. Khaleghi, II, pp. 405-12), and the uncertainty of Garšāsp’s status are others (cf. Maguire, 1974, p. 140; and Davidson, 1994, pp. 76 ff). Esfandīār’s expedition to Seistan, like Rostam’s lineage through Rōdāba to Dahāk (Żaḥḥāk) may be regarded as vestiges of an early conflict between the Sakas and the people represented by the Kayanians (cf. Hansen, pp. 69-70, who rightly distinguishes two major strands or traditions, one “royal [i.e., Kayanian]” and the other “Seistanian,” which fell together in the *Šāh-nāma*, with Ferdowsī favoring “with all his heart” the latter, which dominates the heroic section; and Davidson, pp. 75 ff, 91, 94, 117, 160, who argues that Esfandīār and Rostam legends do not derive from different sources or poetic modes, but represent two traditions organically linked together: that of “book of kings” and that of “epic of heroes,” a dichotomy that find instances, according to Millman Parry and Albert Lord [apud Davidson], in other epics based on oral transmission). One should be mindful that combining the Kayanian and Seistanian strands must have taken place long before Ferdowsī.

The similarity between Rostam’s seven exploits on the road to Māzandarān (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, II, pp. 21-43) and those of Esfandīār has raised the

question: Which is an imitation of the other? (For a comparison of the two *haft ḵāns*, see Ṣafā, p. 556; Maguire, 1973, pp. 158-70; 1974, pp. 140-47; and Davidson, 1994, pp. 158-66.). Spiegel argued that Esfandīār's exploits were fabricated by Zoroastrian priests who wanted to show their crusading prince superior to Rostam (1871-78, I, pp. 719, 722; idem, 1874, p. 126; idem, 1891, p. 201; cf. Molé, 1951, p. 133, who believed Rostam's to be original). Nöldeke (*Nationalepos*, secs. 10, 30), on the other hand, thought that Zāl and Rostam were probably not known to the authors of the Avesta and pointed out that Rostam's *haft ḵān* were not reported by Arab historians, even Ṯaʿālebī; he argued that they must therefore have been modeled partly on Esfandīār's exploits and partly on the legend of Rostam's rescue of Kāvūs from Ḥemyar (Hāmāvarān), which could not predate the conquest of the Yemen by Ḵosrow I in about 575. Hansen (pp. 149-50) showed with some plausibility that Ṯaʿālebī was aware of the Māzandarān expedition, but summarized this and the Hāmāvaran expedition into one, and therefore Rostam's seven exploits cannot be regarded as derivative on that ground. It appears that the popular motifs that constitute the seven exploits were attached to the careers of both heroes by minstrels and story tellers. Further, the mention of Ḥemyar does not necessarily indicate a late date for the substance of the story; as Arabia became better known to Persians in the Sasanian period, a dry region of Central Asia was replaced by a desert region, the Yemen, in that land, in the same way that Żaḥḥāk was relegated to the Arabia.

Whereas in the priestly tradition Goštāsp and Zarēr are the outstanding champions of the Zoroastrian faith against Arjāsp and the pagan Xyōn, in the epic literature represented by the *Šāh-nāma* Esfandīār has been elevated to the preeminent role (cf. Coyajee, 1939, pp. 235 ff.; Ṣafā, pp. 594-99). This shift conforms to a general tendency in heroic epics to concentrate heroic deeds on a single warrior. It is a mark of the high esteem in which Esfandīār was held in popular and priestly imagination that both Parthian and Sasanian dynasties claimed descent from him and Goštāsp (*Bundahišn*, p. 232; tr. Anklesaria, p. 297; Ṯaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, p. 474; Ṭabarī, I, pp. 708-9, 813-14; Dīnavarī, ed. Guirgass, p. 44; Masʿūdī, *Morūj*, ed. Pellat, I, sec. 576; see ARSACIDS i).

Coyajee suggested (1929, pp. 14-17, 66) a similarity between Sīmoḡ's intervention and Rostam's recourse to a *gaz* arrow, on one hand, and Chinese myths about miraculous trees, particularly cassia, and a wonderful crane on the shores of China Sea, on the other—a rather far-fetched conjecture. He also drew attention (1939, pp. 223-32) to the fact that most of the exploits of Goštāsp

and Zarēr in the Avesta and the Pahlavi books were transferred to Esfandīār in the *Šāh-nāma*. He drew a number of parallels between Esfandīār and Achilles (initial reluctance to engage in warfare with the enemy because of a grudge against an unjust king, being spurred to join the fray by the death of a dear one, invulnerability except in one spot, etc.; 1939, pp. 235-50). Mehrdād Bahār elaborated on these resemblances and noted the similarities between Goštāsp and Agamemnon, Rostam and Hector. Whereas Coyajee took these resemblances to result from a common Indo-European heritage, Bahār argued less convincingly (1973, pp. lvii ff.; idem, 1994, pp. 47-54, 97 ff., 110, 113) that the combat of Rostam and Esfandīār was modeled on the battle between Hector and Achilles and was a product of eastern Iran around the first century C.E., when the mixed Iranian, Greek, and Buddhist cultures experienced a floruit under the Kushans, largely free of Zoroastrian bias; it was there that Saka legends were combined with those of pre-Zoroastrian Avestan people in a saga in which legends of the house of Zāl and Rostam predominated. Bahār's hypothesis regarding eastern Iran, where the legend took shape seems reasonable, reflecting the cultural creativity of this region, as seen also in the Persian literary and artistic renaissance in the early Islamic period emerging from Khorasan and Transoxania. Our knowledge of Kushanian life and culture, however, is too meager to warrant certainty.

Several scholars have advanced theories assuming mythological, rather than historical or legendary, origins for the Lohraspian line of the Kayanians. One of the reasons is that Aurvaṯ.aspa- (i.e., Lohrāsp "[he who has] speedy horses") was an epithet of the sun (*AirWb.*, col. 200). Another is the resemblance between the story of Goštāsp and Katāyūn and Athenaeus' romantic tale (13.35) about Zariadres, son of Aphrodite and Adonis and younger brother of Hystaspes (i.e., Vīštāspa), and his beloved, Odatis. In fact, this story is generally believed to have been later transposed to royal couple. These scholars concluded that Vīštāspa was originally conceived as divine, a child of the sun god (Spiegel, 1891, pp. 196-98, idem, 1898, pp. 192-93), of Apąm Napāt (q.v.) and Anāhitā (Darmesteter, 1892-93, III, pp. lxxx-lxxxiii), or of Drvāspā and Anāhitā in a Median version or of Aurvaṯ-aspa, the sun, in a Drangian version (Herzfeld, pp. 170-80; for a summary and critique of these views, see Boyce, pp. 464-66). Josef Markwart suggested (1931, pp. 87-88) a cult of Esfandīār in the west, basing his theory chiefly on the identification in a late source (Moses Kabankatoudcʿi apud von Stackelberg, p. 623 n. 5; for other sources, see Boyce, p. 473 n. 4) of the Khazar god Tʿangri Ḵān with a figure "whom the Persians call Aspandēat."

The name Esfandīār may have been introduced in Armenia by the Medes or Achaemenids, and his legend must have been known to the Armenians under the Arsacids and later during the Sasanian period. The name occurs in the genealogy of the Bagratids, and "his legend developed a strong local connection with Mount Sabalān" (Boyce, p. 473 n. 4).

The legend was not immune to the influence of subsequent events. Nöldeke (*Nationalepos*, sec. 9) considered the first invasion of Arjāsp and Goštāsp's defeat a possible reflection of the defeat of the Sasanian king Pērōz by the Hephthalites in 484, his disappearance in the land of the enemy, and the devastation that ensued. Notions and conditions of historical periods, especially late Sasanian times, may be seen mirrored in Daqīqī and Ferdowsī calling the people of Arjāsp alternatively Turanian, Turk, Chinese, and Turks of China (*Torkān-e Čīn*); and the king of Xyōn setting out from Ḵollaḵ in western Turkestan (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VI, p. 138) and his supposed arrival in Eṣṭaḵr in Pārs after taking Balḵ according to Balʿamī (ed. Bahār, p. 664).

Recent Studies

As a chief episode of the Persian saga and a masterpiece of Ferdowsī's, "Rostam and Esfandīār" has been frequently discussed and commented upon by scholars, essayists and literary critics. Some of these I have already referred to; of the more recent works, one may mention Šāhrokh Meskūb's "Introduction to Rostam and Esfandīār" (*Moqaddema-ī bar Rostam o Esfandīār*), which reviews the career of Esfandīār with comments on the mythological, psychological, social, and moral aspects of the legend; Moḥammad-ʿAlī Eslāmī Nodūšan, analyzes the *Šāh-nāma* episode in an essay in "The Life and Death of Heroes in the *Šāh-nāma*" (*Zendagī o marg-e pahlavānān dar Šāh-nāma*, pp. 352-85), adding comparative parallels from other myths and legends in his "Legend of Legends" (*Dāstān-e dāstānhā*) that treats the Rostam and Esfandīār episode. Moṣṭafā Raḥīmī in his "Tragedy of Power in the *Šāh-nāma*" (*Terāžedī-e qodrat dar Šāh-nāma*, pp. 140-209), studies the legend as an illustration of the most powerful motivation of human conduct, the thirst for power and its corrupting influence. ʿAlī-Akbar Saʿīdī Sīrjānī in his "Poor Esfandīār" (*Bīčāra Esfandīār*) makes the legend a mirror of human motives and food for his biting satire of those who wield power without moral restraint, showing the pitfalls of yielding to greed, pride, or unbridled ambition, while imparting topical flavor to the narrative through his running commentary. The late Moḥammad-Jaʿfar Maḥjūb recorded the *Šāh-nāma* story of Rostam and Esfandīār with explanatory comments in an

album of eight audio cassetes, each of one hour duration (Persian Books on Tape, 1994).

Richard Davis in his *Epic and Sedition* devoted to an analysis of the *Šāh-nāma* and the art of Ferdowsī, studies the story of Rostam and Esfandīār (pp. 128-66) as a supreme example of the motif that he sees running through the three most effective and highly admired episodes of the Persian epic (the other two being those of Sīāvoš and Sohrāb), that is, the oppression of the younger generation by the older (Esfandīār by Goštāsp, for instance). In Esfandīār's legend the motif is amplified, according to Davis, by the presence of another *Šāh-nāma* motif, that of king-subject or king-champion relationship, which requires the winning of the hierarchically superior. Davidson (1990) focuses on Esfandīār in the Seven station *haft ḵān* as an example of Iranian heroes' fondness of fighting and feasting (*razm o bazm*) as is the case with Greek heroes, notably Achilles in the *Iliad*. She draws (1994, pp. 159-67) a contrast between Esfandīār as a royal figure and Rostam as only a champion, and sees the especial features of each of *haft ḵān* resulting from this difference.

(For a survey of earlier *Šāh-nāma* studies, see Shahbazi, pp. 8-18; for other figures named Esfandīār/d, see Justi, *Namenbuch*, pp. 308-9; cf. Ṭabarī, I, pp. 2650, 2660-61.)

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