



FARHĀD (1)

FARHĀD, a romantic figure in Persian legend and literature, best known from the poetry of Neẓāmī Ganjavī (q.v.) as a rival with the Sasanian king Ƙosrow II Parvēz (r. 591-628) for the love of the beautiful Armenian princess Šīrīn. His story, following its masterly depiction by Neẓāmī, provided the source for several narrative works in Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Pashto, and Kurdish.

Farhād (Phraates, q.v.), like Milād and Bēžan, is among the Parthian princes who are transformed in the Iranian national epic into warrior-heroes at the Kayanian court (*Camb. Hist. Iran* III, pp. 458 and 1157). Unlike Bēžan, however, Farhād plays only a minor part in the *Šāh-nāma* with no specific episode of his own.

One of the first references to Farhād as a Sasanian rather than a Kayanian figure in Persian historical texts is in Bal‘amī’s Persian adaptation of Ṭabarī’s *History*: “...this concubine [Šīrīn] was the one with whom Farhād fell in love. Parvēz punished Farhād by sending him to cut through the mountain” (Bal‘amī, ed. Bahār, pp. 1090-91). The anonymous author of the *Mojmal al-tawārīk wa’l-qešāš*, (ca. 520/1126), refers both to the Kayanian Farhād (*Mojmal*, ed. Bahār, pp. 25, 92) and the Farhād of Ƙosrow Parvēz’s reign (*ibid.*, pp. 79, 96) although he retains the warrior-hero associations of the latter by describing him as an army commander (*sepahbad*) in love with Šīrīn. It may be noted that in this text Farhād is not depicted as a sculptor but as the overseer of the Byzantine Keyṭūs who carries out the stone carvings (*ibid.*, p.79). The legend of Farhād and Šīrīn was also widely known to Persian poets long before Neẓāmī’s time. The earliest reference is perhaps a single *bayt* attributed by



some early lexicographers to Āgājī Boḳārī (q.v.) in which the Samanid poet compares the alacrity with which his beloved rushes into his arms to the speed with which Farhād's chisel falls on Bīsotūn (*Loḡat-e fors*, ed. Eqbāl, p. 382). There are also many allusions to the legend scattered in the lyrical poetry of well-known Persian poets before Neẓāmī, including Farroḳī, Qatrān, Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān, 'Oṭmān-e Moḳtārī, Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow, Anwārī, and Sanā'ī. A brief reference by Neẓām-al-Molk, ca. 484-85/1091-92, mentions the legend as a well-known popular story (*samar-ī ma'rūf*) and claims that Ḳosrow's uxoriousness towards Šīrīn emboldened her to desire Farhād rather than her royal spouse (*Sīar al-molūk*, ed. H. Darke, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968, p. 246).

The poet Neẓāmī was well acquainted with *Sīar al-molūk*, as is shown by the evidence of his verbatim quotations in his *Haft paykar* of phrases from the passage on Bahrām Gōr's vizier Rāst-ravešn (Rāst-rošan) in the *Sīar al-molūk*. In his characteristic way, Neẓāmī adopted the story as told by Neẓām-al-Molk while radically altering its moral implications. In his narrative poem *Ḳosrow o Šīrīn*, probably finished in 576/1180, Farhād appears at a point when relations between Šīrīn and her royal lover are strained. Acting on Šīrīn's request, Farhād, described as an architect and sculptor well-versed in the sciences and also endowed with immense physical strength, undertakes to cut a stone canal for the flow of milk from the pasture to her palace. Later in the poem, in a pivotal *monāzara* (stichomythia) Farhād defeats Ḳosrow in a verbal duel about Šīrīn. The dialogue is the culmination of the clash between two conflicting codes and concepts of love, one heroic and sensual, regarding the beloved as a prize or booty to be conquered and possessed, the other unrequited and all-consuming, relishing the very notion of the annihilation of the self through love. Ḳosrow, unable to dissuade Farhād from abandoning his love for Šīrīn, charges him with the task of cutting a road through the rocks of Bīsotūn, agreeing to give up, as a reward, his own claim to Šīrīn. Farhād takes up the challenge; when Ḳosrow learns that this seemingly impossible labor is almost done, he sends Farhād the false news of Šīrīn's death. In his despair, Farhād falls from the rocks and dies.

Throughout the centuries many poets have tried to compose imitations of Neẓāmī, either in the form of self-contained narrative poems on the legend of Farhād and Šīrīn, or within the wider frame of the Ḳosrow and Šīrīn romance. Perhaps the most successful among the latter group was Amīr Ḳosrow Dehlavī (q.v.; d. 725/1325), followed by 'Abd-Allāh Hātefī (q.v.; d. 927/1520). Amīr Ḳosrow (*Šīrīn o Ḳosrow*, ed. G. Alieva, Moscow, 1961), expanding the brief



reference to Farhād's education in China in Neẓāmī, described Farhād as a Chinese prince who sacrifices his rank and wealth for love of the arts. Hātefī and subsequent poets only mention that he was a Chinese artist. In their attempts at innovation both Amīr Ƙosrow and Hātefī (*Šīrīn o Ƙosrow*, ed. S. Asadulloev, Moscow, 1977) introduced changes in the plot that demonstrate a certain lack of sophistication (Moayyad). 'Aref-e Ardabilī (b. ca. 711/1312), in his rather bizarre *Farhād-nāma* (ed. 'A. Āḍar, Tehran 2535=1355 Š./1976), departed radically from Neẓāmī's plot, substituting in the first part of his narrative Golestān, the daughter of Farhād's teacher, for Šīrīn. In the second part, he focused on the relationship between Farhād and Šīrīn, adopting a mocking tone towards Neẓāmī and poking fun at what he saw as Neẓāmī's absurd idealizations of love. Instead, he offered what he regarded as a more robust and down to earth approach where sexual gratification becomes the driving motive and the ultimate ideal. Waḥšī Bāfqī (d. 991/1583) was in the initial stages of composing a *Farhād o Šīrīn* when he died. His work was completed by Weṣāl Šīrāzī (d.1262/1846) with some additional lines later appended by Āqā Mahdī Šāber Šīrāzī, who would have preferred for Farhād to be receptive to love instead of rejecting Šīrīn's advances (*Dīvan-e Waḥšī Bāfqī*, ed., Ḥ. Naḳā'ī, Tehran, 1339 Š./1960, pp. 491-611; *Kollīyat-e dīvān-e Waḥšī Bāfqī*, ed. M. Darvīš, Tehran, n.d. [1964?], pp. 487-603). Mīrzā Moḥammad-Ja'far Neyrīzī, writing under the pen name Šo'la (d. 1316/1897) is the last known composer of a *Ƙosrow o Šīrīn* in which the Farhād episode appears, with only insignificant changes to the original plot (*Ƙosrow o Šīrīn*, ed. 'A-W. Nūrānī Weṣāl, Shiraz, 1343 Š./1964).

The influence of the legend of Farhād is not limited to literature but permeates the whole of Persian culture, including folklore and the fine arts. Farhād's helve supposedly grew into a tree with medicinal qualities, and there are popular laments for Farhād, especially among the Kurds (Mokri) There is also evidence of the widespread popularity of the legend in the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century from the surviving pottery of the time—an unglazed ceramic vessel, for example, depicts two scenes from the Farhād episode (Soucek, p. 46). A survey of the Farhād legend, as depicted in the illustrated manuscripts of Neẓāmī, lies beyond the scope of this article.



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