



FERDOWSI, ABU'L-QĀSEM I. LIFE

FERDOWSI, ABU'L-QĀSEM (فاروقی فردوسی) (فاروقی)

i. LIFE

Life. Apart from his patronymic (*konya*), Abu'l-Qāsem, and his pen name (*taḳallosá*), Ferdowsī, nothing is known with any certainty about his names or the identity of his family. In various sources, and in the introduction to some manuscripts of the *Šāh-nāma*, his name is given as Manšūr, Ḥasan, or Aḥmad, his father's as Ḥasan, Aḥmad, or 'Alī, and his grandfather's as Šarafšāh (Šafā, *Adabīyāt*, pp. 458-59). Of these various statements, that of Faṭḥ b. 'Alī Bondārī, who translated the *Šāh-nāma* into Arabic in 620/1223, should be considered the most creditable. He referred to Ferdowsī as “al-Amīr al-Ḥakīm Abu'l-Qāsem Manšūr b. al-Ḥasan al-Ferdowsī al-Ṭūsī” (Bondārī, p. 3). It is not known why the poet chose the pen name Ferdowsī, which is mentioned only once in text and twice in the satire (ed. Khaleghi, V, p. 275, v. 3, ed. Mohl, I, p. lxxxix, vv. 4, 6). According to a legend recorded in the introduction to the Florence manuscript, during the poet's visit to the court of the Ghaznavid Sultan Maḥmūd, the latter, pleased with his poetry, called him Ferdowsī “[man] from paradise” (Khaleghi, 1988, p. 92), which became his sobriquet. According to Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (text, p. 75, comm., p. 234) his birthplace was a large village named Bāž (or Pāz, Arabicized as Fāz), in the district of Ṭābarān (or Ṭabarān) near the city of Ṭūs in Khorasan. All sources agree on his being from Ṭūs, the



present-day Mašhad. The precise date of his birth was not recorded, but three important points emerge from the information the poet gives on his own age. First, in the introduction to the story of Kay Qosrow's great war Ferdowsi says about himself that he became a poor man at the age of 65, and he twice repeats this date; he then states that when he was 58 and his youth was over Maḥmūd became king (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleqi, IV, p. 172, vv. 40-46). This statement is a more reliable guide than the three occasions on which the poet refers to himself as 65 or 68 years old; and since Maḥmūd succeeded to the throne in 387/997, the poet's birth date was 329/940. Second, a point occurs in the story of the reign of Bahrām III (q.v.), when the poet refers to himself as being 63, and approximately 730 lines later repeats this reference to his age as 63, adding that Hormazd-e Bahman (the first of the month of Bahman) fell on a Friday (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VII, p. 213, v. 9, p. 256, vv. 657-59). According to the research of Shapur Shahbazi (1991, pp. 27-29), during the years which concern us, only in the Yazdegerdi year 371, that is 1003 C.E., did the first of Bahman fall on a Friday. If we subtract 63 from this date, we arrive at 329/940 as the poet's birth date. The third point occurs at the end of the book when the poet refers to his own age as being 71, and to the date of the *Šāh-nāma*'s completion as the day of Ard (i.e., 25th) of Esfand in the year 378 Š. (400 Lunar)/8 March 1010 (see calendar), which again establishes his birth date as 329/940 (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, IX, pp. 381-82; see further Şafā, *Adabīyāt*, pp. 459-62; idem, *Ḥamāsa*, p. 172, n. 1; Shahbazi, pp. 23-30).

We have little information on the poet until he began writing the *Šāh-nāma* in approximately 367/977, apart from the fact that he had a son who was born in 359/970 (see below). Therefore the poet must have married in the year 358/969 or earlier. No information concerning his wife has come down to us. Some commentators, e.g., Ḥabīb Yağmā'ī (p. 30), Moḥammad-Taqī Bahār (p. 39), and Ḍabīḥ-Allāh Şafā (*Ḥamāsa*, p. 178), have considered the woman referred to in the introduction to the story of Bēžan/Bīžan and Manēža /Manīža (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 303-6) to be the poet's wife. If this conjecture is correct, it is probable that his wife was both literate and able to play the harp, that is, she, like the poet himself, was from a landed noble family (*dehqān*; q.v.) and had benefited from the education given to girls by such families, including learning to read and write and the acquisition of certain of the fine arts (cf. the story of the daughters of the *dehqān* Borzēn, *Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VII, pp. 343-44; Khaleghi, 1971, pp. 102-3, 129, 200-2; Bayat-Sarmadi, pp. 188-89). Another point which emerges from the introduction to the story of Bēžan and Manēža is that in his youth the poet was relatively wealthy. Nežāmī 'Arūzī



(text, p. 75) also confirms this detail. Not only the content of this introduction, but also the diction and the less skillful poetry of the story itself, as compared to the rest of the *Šāh-nāma*, clearly indicate that it was a product of the poet's youth, which he later included in the *Šāh-nāma* (Mīnovī, 1967, pp. 68-70; Šafā, *Adabīyāt*, pp. 462-64; idem, *Ḥamāsa*, pp. 177-79). This story, however, cannot have been the only literary work produced by the poet before 367/977, when he was thirty-eight years old. Up to this time the poet must have produced poetry which has since been lost. The poems (in the *qaṣīda*, *qeṭ'a*, and *robā'i* forms) attributed to him in biographical dictionaries (*taḍkeras*), some of which may well not be by him, are probably from this period. Hermann Ethé (q.v.) collected these poems in the last century and printed them with a German translation (see also *Taqīzāda*, pp. 133-34; *Šērānī*, pp. 130-35). The narrative poem *Yūsof o Zolaykā* is certainly not by Ferdowsī (Qarīb; *Šērānī*, pp. 184-276; Mīnovī, 1946; idem, 1967, pp. 95-125; *Nafīsī*, 1978, pp. 4-5; Šafā, *Adabīyāt*, pp. 488-92; idem, *Ḥamāsa*, pp. 175-76; Storey/de Blois, V, 576-84). According to legends found in the introductions to a number of *Šāh-nāma* manuscripts, the poet had a younger brother, whose name was Mas'ūd or Ḥosayn (see *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, editor's Intro., p. xxxiii).

At all events, according to his own statement, the poet began work on the composition of the *Šāh-nāma* after 365/975 (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, IX, p. 381, v. 843), and since Ferdowsī specified in the exordium to the poem that he began this task after the death of Abū Maṣṣūr Daqīqī (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 13) the composition of the poem must have begun in 366-67/976-77. At first the poet intended to travel to the Samanid capital Bokhara (q.v.; *ibid.*, I, p. 13, vv. 135-36) in order to continue Daqīqī's work, using the copy of the prose *Šāh-nāma* of Abū Maṣṣūr b. 'Abd-al-Razzāq (q.v.), which had been used by Daqīqī (qq.v.), and which probably belonged to the court library; but since a friend (identified as Moḥammad Laškari in the introduction to *Bāysonḡorī Šāh-nāma*, q.v.) from his own city placed a manuscript of this work at his disposal (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 14, vv. 140-45), he gave up this idea and started work in his own town, where he also benefited from the support of Maṣṣūr the son of Abū Maṣṣūr Moḥammad. According to the poet himself, this man was extremely generous, magnanimous, and loyal; he had a high opinion of the poet and gave him considerable financial help (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, pp. 14-15; khaleghi-Motlagh, 1967, pp. 332-58; idem, 1977, pp. 197-215; also, after the death of Īraj [ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 121, vv. 513-14], where Ferdowsī moralizes and reproaches the killer of an innocent king, it is probably that by such a king he means Maṣṣūr). In the whole of the *Šāh-nāma* this is the only moment at



which the poet speaks explicitly of having received financial help from anyone, and since he wrote this after the death of Maṣṣūr, there is no reason to believe that it was written in order to please the object of his praise. Further, that he did not remove his praise of Maṣṣūr from the *Šāh-nāma* even after he added that of Sultan Maḥmūd to the poem's introduction indicates the extent of his attachment to Maṣṣūr (and before him to his father Abū Maṣṣūr), as well as his sympathy for the political and cultural tendencies of Abū Maṣṣūr (Khaleghi, 1977, pp. 207-11). The year 377/987, in which Maṣṣūr was arrested in Nīšāpūr and taken to Bokhara, where he was then executed, was a turning point in Ferdowsī's life; in the *Šāh-nāma* from this moment onward there is no mention of anything to indicate either physical comfort or peace of mind, rather we find frequent complaints concerning his old age, poverty, and anxiety. Nevertheless, Ferdowsī was able to complete the first version of the *Šāh-nāma* by the year 384/994, three years before the accession of Maḥmūd (tr. Bondārī, II, p. 276; khaleghi-Motlagh, 1985, pp. 378-406; idem, 1986, pp. 12-31). The poet, however, continued to work. In 387/997, when he was 58 or a little older, composed the story of Sīāvākš (ed. Khaleghi, II, p. 202, v. 12) and a year later wrote a continuation of the former narrative, the "Revenge for Sīāvākš" ("Kīn-e Sīāvākš"; ibid., ed. Khaleghi, II, p. 379, v. 7).

He was then a quite different poet from the pleasure-loving and wealthy young man depicted in the introduction to the story of Bēžan and Manēža. He complained of poverty, old-age, failing sight, and pains in his legs and looked back on his youth with regret. Even so, he hoped to live long enough to bring the *Šāh-nāma* to its conclusion. In 389/999, he started work on the reign of Anōšīravān (q.v.) and once again complained of old age, pains in his legs, failing sight, and the loss of his teeth and looked back to his youth with regret (Moscow, VIII, p. 52). The poet was, nevertheless, very active during this year. By the time he was 61, in 390/1000, he had composed almost 4,300 of the almost 4,500 verses of the story of Anōšīravān. The poet complained that at his age drinking wine gave no pleasure and he prayed that God would grant him sufficient life to finish the *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow, VIII, pp. 303-4, vv. 4277-86). Two years later, in 392/1002, the poet was busy writing the narrative of the reigns from Bahrām III to Šāpūr II (four reigns in all, covering 76 years in little more than 700 verses). It is not clear what occurred during this year to make the poet more content, as both at the opening of the first reign and also at the end of the fourth reign he expresses the desire to drink wine (Moscow, VII, p. 213, v. 9, p. 256, vv. 657-59; in the first of these verses the word *rūzbeh* is used, which can be interpreted as either "fortunate" or as a person's name, and



which appears in the *Šāh-nāma* with both meanings. In the second case Rūzbeh is probably the name of Ferdowsī's servant). This period of happiness passed quickly. Two years later, in 394/1004, at the beginning of the story of Kay Ḳosrow's great war, during the course of a panegyric on Maḥmūd, he complains in accents of despair of his poverty and weakness; he points out the value of his work to Maḥmūd and asks Maḥmūd's vizier, Faḏl b. Aḥmad Esfarāyenī (q.v.), to intercede on his behalf so that some help may be forthcoming from Maḥmūd (ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 169-74).

The year 396/1006, when the poet was 67, was the worst period of his life. In this year his 37-year-old son died. The poet describes his grief in extremely simple and personal language, complaining to his son that he has gone on ahead and left his father alone, and asks God's forgiveness for him (Moscow, IX, pp. 138-39, vv. 2,167-84). What is most striking in this elegy is the hemistich: *hamī būd hamvāra bā man dorošt* ("He was always rude to me"; *ibid.*, v. 2,175). Was there a disagreement between father and son? And if so over what? No answer to this question can now be given. The poet inserts this elegy into the narrative of the reign of Ḳosrow Parvēz. Approximately 1,500 lines further on, at the end of this reign, he writes that he has now completed his sixty-sixth year (Moscow, p. 230, v. 3681). This does not seem to accord with his previous statement, but if one takes into account the exigencies of rhyme and the fact that the poet was not always 100 percent accurate over figures, even in such a case, one can draw the conclusion that the reign of Ḳosrow Parvēz (a little more than four thousand verses) was written during the years 395-96/1005-6, when the poet was 66 or 67 years old. This obvious contradiction over the exact age of the poet, however, is not found in the variant "I was sixty five and he was thirty-seven" (*marā šast o banj o verā sī o haft*) found in certain manuscripts.

In the course of the history of Ḳosrow Parvēz, the poet complains that, due to the calumny of rivals, Maḥmūd has not given his attention to the stories of the *Šāh-nāma*, and the poet asks the king's *sālār* (general), Maḥmūd's younger brother Naṣr, to intercede for him and turn Maḥmūd's attention toward the poet (Moscow, IX, p. 210, vv. 3,373-78). From this it is clear firstly that no payment from Maḥmūd had ever reached Ferdowsī, and secondly that Ferdowsī had sent some of the narratives of the *Šāh-nāma* separately, before he either took or sent the whole poem to Ġazna (q.v.). The poet mentions his poverty many times during the course of the *Šāh-nāma*, and frequently praises Maḥmūd, his brother Naṣr, and his governor of Ṭūs, who would seem to have



been Abu'l-Hāreṭ Arslān Jādeb (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, pp. 25-27; Eqbāl), but there is nowhere any suggestion that he had ever received any assistance from these individuals. On the contrary, as has been indicated, he everywhere complains of the king's indifference to his work. At the end of the *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow, IX, p. 381) he also writes that the powerful came and copied out his poetry for themselves, and the sole profit to the poet from them was their saying "well done" (*aḥsant*). He only mentions two individuals, 'Alī Deylam Bū Dolaf and Ḥoyayy b. Qotayba, who helped him. In certain manuscripts, 'Alī Deylam and Bū Dolaf are mentioned as the names of two people, which agrees with the statement of Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (text, pp. 77-78, comm. pp. 465-66) that the first was a copyist of the *Šāh-nāma* and the second its reciter (*rāwī*). If this statement of Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's is correct, then these two individuals did not give the poet any monetary assistance. Instead, as a copyist and reciter of sections of the *Šāh-nāma* for the nobility of the town of Ṭūs, they each profited from the poet's work. In this case line 849 (Moscow, IX, p. 381) of the Moscow edition is incorrect and should be mended according to the variant readings of the line and the reference in the *Čahār Maqāla*. Ḥoyayy b. Qotayba, in his capacity as financial controller of Ṭūs, sometimes remitted the poet's taxes.

Finally, in his seventy-first year, on 25 Esfand 400/8 March 1010, Ferdowsī finished the *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow, IX, pp. 381-82). According to Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (text, pp. 75) and Farīd-al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (*Elāhī-nāma*, p. 367; *Asrār-nāma*, p. 189, v. 3,204), the total time spent on the composition of the *Šāh-nāma* was twenty-five years. In the satire, however, there is thrice mention of thirty years and once of thirty-five years (ed. Mohl, Intro., p. lxxxix, v. 11, p. xc, vv. 11, 20, p. xci, v. 4). If we place the beginning of work on the *Šāh-nāma* in 367 and its completion in 400 the time spent on its composition is thirty-three years, and if we extend the poet's work to the period before 367—the composition of Bēžan and Manēža—and add to this time spent on revision after 400, the figure of thirty-five years is closer to the truth. There are lines in the *Šāh-nāma* which, according to some scholars, refer to events of the year 401/1011 (Moscow, VII, p. 114, vv. 18-20; Taqīzāda, 1983, p. 100, n. 3; Mīnovī, 1967, p. 40). Aḥmad Ateş has gone even further than this and claims that since Ferdowsī, during the course of his praise of Maḥmūd in the introduction to the *Šāh-nāma*, mentions Kašmīr and Qannūj among his territories, and since Maḥmūd first conquered these regions in 406/1015 and 409/1018, Ferdowsī must have made the final revision of the *Šāh-nāma* and sent it to Ġazna in 409/1018 or 410/1019. He also draws the conclusion that Maḥmūd sent the poet a financial reward but that this reached Ṭūs in 411/1020, after the poet's death (Ateş, 159-68). The names



Kašmīr and Qannūj, which appear in this panegyric beside other names such as Rūm (the West), Hend (India), Čīn (China), etc. and which occur many more times throughout the *Šāh-nāma*, is no indication of a conquest by Maḥmūd of these two areas. Their occurrence in the panegyric is simply due to poetic license and leads to no historical conclusions.

Our information on the poet's life after 400/1010 is limited to the matters reported by Neẓāmī 'Arūẓī (text, pp. 75-83). According to him, after the completion of the *Šāh-nāma*, 'Alī Deylam prepared a manuscript of it in seven volumes and Ferdowsī went to Ġazna with his professional reciter Abū Dolaf. There, with the help of Maḥmūd's vizier Aḥmad b. Ḥasan Meymandī he presented the book to Maḥmūd, but because of the calumny of those who envied him, and the poet's religious orientation, it was not favorably received by the king. Instead of 60,000 dinars (q.v.), payment was fixed at 50,000 dirhams (q.v.), and finally at 20,000 dirhams. Ferdowsī was extremely upset by this and went to a bathhouse; upon leaving the bathhouse he drank some beer and divided the king's present between the beer seller and the bath attendant. Then, fearing punishment by Maḥmūd, he fled from Ġazna by night. At first he hid for six months in Herāt in the shop of Esmā'īl Warrāq, father of the poet Azraqī (q.v.), and then he took refuge in Ṭabarestān with Espahbad Šahrīār, a member of the Bavandid dynasty (see ĀL-E BĀVAND; the report of the poet's journey to Baghdad, which appears in the introductions to the a number of manuscripts of the *Šāh-nāma*, is merely a legend; similarly, the story of the poet's journey to Isfahan is based on interpolated passages; see Šafā, *Adabīyāt*, pp. 474-76; Mīnovī, 1967, pp. 96-98; khaleghi-Motlagh, 1985, pp. 233-36). While in Ṭabarestān, the poet composed 100 lines satirizing Maḥmūd, but the amir of Ṭabarestān bought the satire for 100,000 dirhams and destroyed it, so that only six lines survived by word of mouth, and these Neẓāmī 'Arūẓī recorded. Later, due to events described by Neẓāmī 'Arūẓī, Maḥmūd regretted his behavior toward the poet and on the recommendation of the above mentioned vizier had camel loads of indigo to the value of 20,000 dinars sent to Ferdowsī, but as the camels were entering Ṭūs by the Rūdbār gate Ferdowsī's corpse was being borne out of the city by the Razān gate. In the cemetery the preacher of Ṭābarān prevented his being buried in the Muslim cemetery on the grounds that Ferdowsī was a Shi'ite, and so there was no choice but to bury the poet in his own orchard. Neẓāmī 'Arūẓī tells how he visited the poet's tomb in 510/1116 (on this site, see Taqīzāda, 1983, pp. 120-21). According to Neẓāmī 'Arūẓī (pp. 47-51), Ferdowsī left only one daughter, and the poet had wanted the king's payment as a dowry for her. But after the poet's death, his daughter



would not accept the payment and, on Maḥmūd's orders, the money was used to build the Čāha caravansary near Ṭūs, on the road which goes from Nišāpūr to Marv. The year of the poet's death is given by Dawlatšāh Samarqandī (ed. Browne, p. 54) as 411/1020, and by Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī (p. 743) and Faṣīḥ K̄vāfī (p. 129) as 416/1025. According to the first date, Ferdowsī was eighty-two years old when he died, and according to the second report he was eighty-seven.

Many details of Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's account are inaccurate or even merely legendary (see, e.g., Qazvīnī's introduction to *Čahār maqāla*, pp. xiv ff.). For example, he claims that only six lines survived of the satire, but in some manuscripts of the *Šāh-nāma* the number of lines is as many as 160. Some scholars considered the satire to be genuine (Nöldeke, pp. 29-31; Taqīzāda, pp. 114-16). But Maḥmūd Šērānī established that many of the lines are spurious or are taken from the *Šāh-nāma* itself, and he therefore rejected the authenticity of the satire. The spuriousness of many lines in the satire, however, does not establish that the satire never existed at all. Besides, there are excellent lines in the satire which are not taken from the *Šāh-nāma*. Generally, it appears that in his article Šērānī was mainly seeking to vindicate Maḥmūd (Khaleghi, 1984, p. 121; Shahbazi, 1991, pp. 97-103).

There is a line in the satire (Mohl's edition, Intro., p. lxxxix, v. 10) in which the poet refers to his age as being almost eighty. According to this line, the poet composed the satire before 409/1018. But it is very probable that the vizier who was Ferdowsī's benefactor was Abu'l-'Abbās Faẓl b. Aḥmad Esfarāyenī, whom Ferdowsī praised in the *Šāh-nāma*, and not, as Neẓāmī 'Arūzī writes (p. 78), Aḥmad b. Ḥasan Meymandī. The latter, although holding an important position at Maḥmūd's court, is never mentioned in the *Šāh-nāma*. In the legends written in some of the introductions to *Šāh-nāma*'s manuscripts, Meymandī has been mentioned among Ferdowsī's adversaries at Maḥmūd's court. This vizier was a fanatical Sunni, strongly opposed to heretics and the Qarmaṭīs, and it is possible that he was influential in the removal of Esfarāyenī from office in 401/1011 and his murder in 404/1014, and also in the execution of Ḥasanak Mikāl in 422/1031, who was accused of harboring *qarmaṭī* tendencies. In like fashion, after he became vizier in Esfarāyenī's place in 401/1011, he directed that the language of the court records, which Esfarāyenī had caused to be kept in Persian, be changed back to Arabic. Meymandī was vizier until 412/1025. He was then removed from office and imprisoned, and the vizierate was transferred to Ḥasanak Mikāl. Thus the



vizier who is said to have caused Maḥmūd to regret his treatment of Ferdowsī, if the story is to be believed, was probably Ḥasanak and not Meymandī. If Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's story is true, 416/1025 is therefore the more probable date of Ferdowsī's death (see Taqīzāda, 1983, pp. 111-13).

Certain other details of Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's version of events are confirmed by various sources. For example, the author of the *Tārīḳ-e Sīstān* (ed. Bahār, pp. 7-8) also gives a report of Ferdowsī's journey to Ġazna and his encounter with Maḥmūd. Similarly, Neẓāmī Ganjavī (*Haft Peykar*, p. 15, v. 47; idem, *Eqbāl-nāma*, p. 22, v. 14; idem, *Ḳosrow o Šīrīn*, pp. 24-25, vv. 21-22) and 'Aṭṭār (*Elāhī-nāma*, p. 367, vv. 11-13; *Asrār-nāma*, pp. 188-190, vv. 3,203-26; *Mošibat-nāma*, p. 367, v. 8) frequently refer to the differences between the poet and the king, to Maḥmūd's ingratitude toward Ferdowsī, and even to the incident of the poet's drinking beer and giving the king's gift away. 'Aṭṭār also refers to the preacher's refusing to say prayers over the body of Ferdowsī. Further, in the introduction to the *BāysonḡoriŠāh-nāma*, a statement in Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow's *Safar-nāma* is quoted to the effect that in 437/1045 on the road from Saraḳs to Ṭūs, in the village of Čāha, Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow saw a large caravansary and was told that this had been built with the money from the gift that Maḥmūd had sent to the poet, which, since he had already died, his heir refused to accept. This report is absent from extant manuscripts of the *Safar-nāma*, but Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda (1983, pp., 120-21) is of the opinion that it is probably genuine. Theodore Nöldeke (1920, p. 33) at first considered it spurious but later changed his mind (1983, p. 63, n. 1). Although it is possible to doubt some of the details in Neẓāmī 'Arūzī's account, we do not at the moment have any absolute reasons to reject all the particulars in his narrative.

Social background. In the introductions to various manuscripts of the *Šāh-nāma*, Ferdowsī's father is referred to as a *dehqān* (q.v.) who was a victim of oppression by the financial controller of Ṭūs. Even though this account may be no more than a legend, there is no doubt that Ferdowsī belonged to the landed nobility, or *dehqāns*. According to Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (p. 75), Ferdowsī was one of the *dehqāns* of Ṭūs and in his own village "had considerable possessions, such that with the income from his properties he was able to live independently of others help." According to the same account (p. 83), "within the city gate there was an orchard belonging to Ferdowsī," where he was buried (see further, Bahār, pp. 148-49). The *dehqāns* were preservers of traditional civilization, customs, and culture, including the national legends (see Mohl's introduction to the *Šāh-nāma*, p. vii; Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 440; Şafā, *Hamāsa*,



pp. 62-64). On the one hand, in the *Šāh-nāma dehqān* appears along with the *āzāda* (freeborn; see ĀZĀD) with the meaning of “Iranian,” and, on the other, beside *mōbad* (Zoroastrian priest), with the meaning of “preserver and narrator of the ancient lore.” In the *Šāh-nāma*, a legend concerning a *dehqān* by the name of Borzēn (Moscow, VII, pp. 341-46) gives us an opportunity to glimpse, to some extent, the nature of the life of this class. By comparing this with the story of a farmer’s wife in the same reign (ibid., pp. 380-84), the difference between the life of a *dehqān* and that of a simple farmer is apparent. At all events, Ferdowsī belonged to one of these reasonably wealthy *dehqān* families, which in the second and third centuries of the Islamic era accepted Islam mainly as a way of preserving their own social position, and for this reason, contrary to what is usually the case with new converts, not only did they not turn their backs on the culture of their forefathers but made its preservation and transmission the chief goal of their lives. The basis of Ferdowsī’s character, and the national spirit of his work, were founded in the first place on this class consciousness of the poet and the milieu in which his genius was nurtured. Khorasan had been a center of political, religious, national, and cultural movements at least since the rise of Abū Moslem (q.v.; killed in.137/755). With the compilation and translation of the prose *Šāh-nāma* known as the *Šāh-nāma-ye abū manšūrī*, which later became Ferdowsī’s major source, on the orders of Abū Manšūr Moḥammad b. ‘Abd-al-Razzāq in 346/957, the national language and culture, which had been lacking in previous movements in Khorasan, found a special place in Abū Manšūr’s political ambition (Mīnovī, 1967, pp. 52-55). The young Ferdowsī, who was no more than seventeen years old when the *Šāh-nāma* of Abū Manšūr was completed, must have been profoundly affected by this national and cultural movement. It was in these years that the education of a *dehqān* together with the poet’s national sentiment were able to mature in a congenial environment and to take shape, and thus become the foundation of the whole of his poem, so that, as Nöldeke put it (1920, pp. 36, 40-41), the poet’s attachment to Iran is clear in every line of the *Šāh-nāma*. The effects of Ferdowsī’s love for Iran must be considered not only in the transmission of the culture, mores, customs, and literature of ancient Iran to Islamic Persia but also in the spread of Persian as the national language. In this way the struggle for the preservation of Iranian identity while Persia was in danger of being Arabized in the name of the Islamic community—although the movement had begun before Ferdowsī’s time with the Šo‘ūbīya movement—finally bore fruit through Ferdowsī’s efforts. In this way Persia is deeply indebted to Ferdowsī, both as regards its historical continuity and its national and cultural identity.



Education. Since Ferdowsī, unlike many other poets, did not make his work a showcase for his own erudition, discussion of his education is a difficult matter. On the other hand, the intellectual quality of the *Šāh-nāma* shows that we do not deal simply with a great poet but with someone who judges many of the vicissitudes of life with wisdom and understanding, and this would not have been possible if he had not been in possession of a knowledge of the sciences of his time. However, Nöldeke (1920, p. 40) thought that Ferdowsī had not received formal education in the sciences of his time FERDA[O]WS AL-MORŠEDĪYA, especially in scholastic theology, but considered him simply to be a reasonably educated person in such matters (for Ferdowsī's world view, see Kāleġi Moṭlaq, 1991, pp. 55-70). Nöldeke also believed that Ferdowsī did not know Pahlavi (1920, p. 19, n. 1). Taqīzāda (p. 126) and Šērānī (pp. 170-71), on the other hand, believe that Ferdowsī was completely conversant with the sciences of his own time. Badī'-al-Zamān Forūzānfar (q.v.; pp. 47-49) and Aḥmad Maḥdawī Dām'ġānī (p. 42) believe that Ferdowsī even had a thorough knowledge of Arabic prose and verse. Similarly, Sa'īd Nafīsī (1978, pp. 9-10), Ḥabīb Yāġmā'ī (p. 6), and Lazard (pp. 25-41) believe that Ferdowsī knew Pahlavi. However, Moḥammad-Taqī Bahār (pp. 96-135) and Shapur Shahbazi (pp. 39-41) agree with Nöldeke on the matter of Ferdowsī's knowledge of Pahlavi. In a later article on Ferdowsī, Nöldeke, following Taqīzāda, wrote that he had previously underestimated the poet's knowledge of Arabic (1983, p. 63), but it appears that he did this mainly to satisfy the amour-propre of Persians. Certainly, it is probable that Ferdowsī learnt Arabic in school. The problem of Pahlavi in his time and for a person like him lay mainly in the difficulty of its script; thus if a person read a text in this language to the poet, he could probably understand it in the main. But in the *Šāh-nāma* there is nowhere any direct indication that Ferdowsī knew either Arabic or Pahlavi. In the exordium to the story of Bēžan and Manēža, he says that his "loving consort" (*mehrbān yār*) read a "Pahlavī book" (*daftar-e pahlavī*; ed. Khaleghi, III, p. 305, v. 19, p. 306, v. 22). But Ferdowsī refers to *Šāh-nāma-yeabū manšūrī* as being in Pahlavi (ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 14, v. 143), and thus it could be interpreted as meaning "Pahlavānī" or "eloquent/heroic Persian." There is, however, no evidence in the *Šāh-nāma* to indicate that Ferdowsī could read Pahlavi.

Religion. Ferdowsī was a Shi'ite Muslim, which is apparent from the *Šāh-nāma* itself (ed. Khaleghi, I, pp. 10-11) and confirmed by early accounts (Nežāmī 'Arūzī, text, pp. 80, 83; Naṣīr-al-Dīn Qazvīnī, pp. 251-52). In recent times, however, some have cast doubt on his religion and his Shi'ism. Some have simply called him a "Shi'ite" (Yāġmā'ī, pp. 23, 28); others, such as Bahār (p.



149), have raised the question of whether Ferdowsī was an adherent of Zaydī Shi'ism, Isma'īli Shi'ism, or Twelver Shi'ism. Nöldeke (1920, p. 40) believed that he was a Shi'ite but did not consider him to be a member of any of the extremist Shi'ites (*golāt*; q.v.). Šērānī (pp. 111-26) called Ferdowsī a Sunni or Zaydī Shi'ite, but Šērānī was mainly concerned with defending Maḥmūd's Sunnism. Moḥiṭ Ṭabāṭabā'ī (pp. 233-40) also considered Ferdowsī to be a Zaydī Shi'ite. 'Abbās Zaryāb Ko'ī (pp. 14-23) argued that he was an Isma'īli Shi'ite, while Aḥmad Maḥdawī Dām'gānī (pp., 20-53) believed him to be a Twelver Shi'ite (see also, Shahbazi, pp. 49-53). The basic supporting evidence for the view that Ferdowsī was a Sunni or Zaydī Shi'ite has been the lines that appear in many manuscripts of the *Šāh-nāma*, in the exordium to the book, in praise of Abū Bakr, 'Omar, and 'Oṭmān, but these lines are later additions, as is apparent for lexicographic and stylistic reasons, and also because they interrupt the flow of the narrative (Nöldeke, 1920, p. 39; Yāḡmā'ī, p. 27; khaleghi-Motlagh, 1986, pp. 28-31); with the excision of these lines no doubt remains as to Ferdowsī's Shi'ism. One must also take into account the fact that Ṭūs had long been a center of Shi'ism (Nöldeke, 1920, p. 39) and that the family of Abū Maṣṣūr Moḥammad b. 'Abd-al-Razzāq were also apparently Shi'ites (Ebn Bābawayh, II, p. 285). On the one hand, Ferdowsī was lenient as regards religion. As Nöldeke remarks, Ferdowsī remembered the religion of his forbears with respect, and, at the same time, nowhere did he show any signs of a deep Islamic faith. Indeed, to the contrary, here and there are moments in the *Šāh-nāma* (e.g., Moscow, IX, p. 315, v. 56) which, even if they were present in his sources, should not strictly have been given currency by the pen of a committed Muslim (Nöldeke, 1920, pp. 38-39). On the other hand, however, Ferdowsī showed a prejudice in favor of his own sect and, as is apparent from the exordium to the *Šāh-nāma*, considered his own sect to be the only true Islamic one. The explanation for this contradiction, in the present writer's opinion, lies in the fact that during the first centuries of Islam, in Persia, Shi'ism went hand in hand with the national struggle in Khorasan, or very nearly so, such that the caliphate in Baghdad and its political supporters in Persia never made any serious distinction between the "Majūs" (i.e., Zoroastrians), "Zandīq" (i.e., Manicheans), "Qarmaṭīs" (i.e., adherents of Isma'īli Shi'ism), and Rāfezīs (i.e., Shi'ites in general; see Baḡdādī, tr. pp. 307 ff.). Ferdowsī was, as Nöldeke remarks, above all a deist and monotheist who at the same time kept faith with his forbears (Nöldeke, 1920, pp. 36-40; Taqīzāda, 1983, pp. 124-25). Ferdowsī attacks philosophy and those who attempt to prove the reality of the Creator, believing that God can be found neither by the eye of wisdom, nor of the heart, nor of reason, but that His



existence, unity, and might are confessed only by the existence of His creation; thus he worshipped Him, remaining silent as to the whys and wherefores of faith (Khaleghi-Motlagh, 1975, pp. 66-70; idem, 1991, pp. 55-57). According to his beliefs, everything, good or evil, happens to an individual only through the will of God, and every kind of belief in the benign or evil influence of the stars is a derogation of the reality, unicity, and might of God. This absolute faith in the unicity and might of God is disturbed in the *Šāh-nāma* by a fatalism that is possibly the result of Zurvanite influences from the Sasanian period, and this, here and there, has produced a self-contradictory effect (Khaleghi, 1983, 2/1, pp. 107-14; idem, 1991, pp. 55-68; 1983, 2/1, pp. 107-14; Banani, pp. 96-119; Shahbazi, pp. 49-59).

Due to his upbringing as a *dehqān*, Ferdowsī was acquainted with the ancient culture and customs of Iran, and he deepened this knowledge by his study of ancient lore so that they became part of his poetic world view. There are many instances of this in the *Šāh-nāma*, and here as an example one can mention the custom of drinking wine. According to the poet, in accordance with Iran's ancient beliefs, wine shows the essence of a man as he really is (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, V, pp. 3-4); one must drink at times of happiness (ibid., Moscow, VII, p. 192, vv. 658-59), but it is happiness that is to be sought in drinking wine, not drunkenness (ibid., Moscow, VIII, p. 109, vv. 964-65), and he reproaches the Arabs who are strangers to the custom of drinking wine (ibid., Moscow, IX, p. 320, v. 113). The most important of the poet's ethical attitudes include maintaining a chastity of diction (Nöldeke, 1920, p. 55, n. 2), honesty (ed. Khaleqi, III, p. 285, vv. 2,879-80; Moscow, VIII, p. 206, vv. 2,626-27; Šafā, *Ḥamāsa*, p. 203; Yāgmā'ī, pp. 14-15), gratitude toward his predecessor Daqīqī and, at the same time, frank criticism of his poetry (ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 13, V, pp. 75-76, 175-76). With the same kind of frankness the poet admonishes kings to act justly (Moscow, VII, p. 114, vv. 29-31; VIII, p. 62, vv. 161-66). His belief in the permanence of a good reputation (ed. Khaleghi, I, pp. 156-57, vv. 1,061-62), in fine speech (ibid., II, p. 164, vv. 574-76), and in fairness toward enemies (ed. Khaleghi, III, p. 163, vv. 937-38, IV, p. 64, v. 1,014) in so far as this is compatible with the heroic code of behavior, are all apparent. But when it comes to the domination of Iran by her enemies, especially at the end of the *Šāh-nāma*, he is violently opposed to both Arabs and Turks (Nöldeke, 1920, pp. 37, 41). Certainly, these attitudes were in the poet's sources, but he incorporated them into his work with complete conviction. Generally, it seems as though the ethical values of the poet's sources and of the poet himself reciprocally acted on one another. In this way, certain ethical values of the *Šāh-nāma*, such as



praise for effort, condemnation of laziness, recommendation of moderation, condemnation of greed, praise for knowledge, encouragement of justice and tolerance, kindness towards women and children, patriotism, racial loyalty, the condemnation of haste and the recommendation of deliberation in one's actions, praise for truthfulness and condemnation of falsehood, the condemnation of anger and jealousy, belief in the unstableness of the world, which is everywhere evident throughout the *Šāh-nāma* especially at the ends of the stories, and so forth, are considered also to be values held by the poet himself (see adab; Eslāmī, pp. 64-73).

Other opinions of the poet are his belief in the genuineness of the narratives in his sources (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 12, vv. 113-14) and his strong belief in the lasting values of his own work, a subject referred to frequently in the *Šāh-nāma* (e.g., ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 173-74, vv. 66-68; for other examples, see Yaġmā'ī, pp. 15-17; Nöldeke, 1920, pp. 34-35). Finally it seems as though he was a man who was fond of pleasantries and witticisms (e.g., concerning Rūdāba, see ed. Khaleghi, p. 243, v. 1,158; Manūčehr's joking with Zāl, *ibid.*, p. 253, vv. 1,283-88; Sām's and Sīndokt's joking with each other, *ibid.*, p. 262, vv. 1,407-9; the joking of the young shoemaker's mother before the king, Moscow, VII, p. 325, vv. 336-46). The sum of such heartfelt, mature, and eloquently expressed views and ethical precepts regarding the world and mankind have led to his being referred to, from an early period, as *ḥakīm* (philosopher), *dānā* (sage), and *farzāna* (learned); that is, he was considered a philosopher, though he was not attached to any specific philosophical school nor possessed a complete knowledge of the various philosophical and scientific views of his time.

Ferdowsī and Sultan Maḥmūd. In various places in his work the poet devoted in all some 250 lines—some of which are very hyperbolic—to the praise of Maḥmūd, and the name Maḥmūd and his patronymic Abu'l-Qāsem are mentioned almost thirty times; but that sincerity which is apparent in the ten lines Ferdowsī wrote in praise of Maṣū'ūr in his introduction to the *Šāh-nāma* is never visible in the lines on Maḥmūd, though in many places he either directly or by implication offers Maḥmūd moral advice (e.g., Moscow, VII, pp. 114-15, vv. 29-40; VIII, pp. 153-54, vv. 1,700-04, p. 292, vv. 4,080-81). The climactic point of these allusions addressed to Maḥmūd must be considered to occur at the end of the *Šāh-nāma* in the letter of Rostam, the Sasanian general, to his brother on the eve of the battle of Qādesīya. In particular, the line in which it is prophesied that a talentless slave will become king (Moscow, IX, p. 319, v. 103) is like a bridge that takes us from the hyperbolic praise of Maḥmūd



in the *Šāh-nāma* to the hyperbolic contempt for him of the satire. The poet's hopes of a monetary reward from Maḥmūd must be considered one reason for his praise of Maḥmūd (Nöldeke, 1920, p. 34), but, as indicated above, there is no sign anywhere in the *Šāh-nāma* that any assistance from Maḥmūd ever reached the poet (Nöldeke, pp. 27-29). The praise of Maḥmūd must be considered an entirely calculated gesture, forced on the poet by his poverty (Eslāmī, pp. 59-60). With Maḥmūd's assumption of power in Khorasan, the Shi'ite Ferdowsī had, at the least, until he had finished work on the *Šāh-nāma*, to include him in the poem. This being the case he could not, according to the usual custom in Persian narrative poems, wait until the end of the poem and then write a single panegyric to be used in the preface, but was forced to compose separate passages of praise, or to place them at the head of a story that was then sent to Ġazna. Other passages of praise may well have been placed at the beginning of sections of the seven-volume *Šāh-nāma*. But the closer he got to the end of the *Šāh-nāma*, with there still being no sign of Maḥmūd's paying him any attention, the more pointed his sarcastic allusions to Maḥmūd became, until finally in the satire he took back virtually all his praise. In the satire the poet frequently speaks "of this book" (*az in nāma*) and this led Nöldeke (1920, p. 29) to conclude that the satire was composed as a supplement to the *Šāh-nāma* and that the poet's intention was to take back his praise of Maḥmūd with this satire, that is, the *Šāh-nāma* was no longer dedicated to Maḥmūd, as the poet himself states in the satire (Mohl's Intro., p. lxxxix, vv. 3-4). Neẓāmī 'Arūzī (text, pp. 49-50), also makes the same statement (see also Shahbazi, 1991, pp. 83-105).

Ferdowsī the poet and storyteller. The *Šāh-nāma* has not received its rightful attention in works written in Persian on the art of poetry (e.g., *al-Mo'jam* of Šams-al-Dīn Rāzī), which works consider eloquence and poetic style largely as a matter of particular figures of speech. So far there has been little serious work on Ferdowsī's poetic artistry, and our discussion of this subject will not therefore go beyond general principles.

In discussing Ferdowsī's achievement one must consider, on the one hand, the totality of the *Šāh-nāma* as a whole and, on the other, his artistry as a storyteller. Throughout the entire *Šāh-nāma*, a balance is masterfully maintained between words and meaning, on the one hand, and passion and thought, on the other. Ferdowsī's poetic genius in creating a lofty, dynamic epic language that is brief but to the point and free from complexity greatly contributes to the strength of his style.



The most important figures of speech in the *Šāh-nāma* include: hyperbole, paronomasia, repetition, comparisons (similes and metaphors), representative images, proverbial expressions, parables, and moral advice. Hyperbole, which is the most important principle of epic language, is present in order to increase the reader's emotional response. Some kinds of paronomasia are used to create a verbal rhythm, that is to increase linguistic tension by acoustic means. The most commonly used kinds of paronomasia include those that involve a complete identity of two words (*be čang ār čang o may āgāz kon* "Bring in your hand [čang] a harp [čang] and set out the wine"; Moscow, V, p. 7, v. 19) and those that involve alliteration (*šod az rakš rakšān o az šāh šād* "He became radiant [rakšān] because of Rakš [the name of Rostam's horse] and happy [šād] because of the king [šāh]"; ed. Khaleghi, II, p. 125, v. 93; *kolāh o kamān o kamand o kamar* "Cap and bow and lariat and belt"; ed. Khaleghi, III, p. 147, v. 676). This effect is sometimes achieved by the repetition of one word (*bed-ū goft narm ay javānmard, narm!* "He said to him: Gently o young man, gently!"; ed. Khaleghi, II, p. 222, v. 683; *makon šahrīārā javānī, makon!* "Do not, o prince, do not act childishly!"; ed. Khaleghi, p. 363, v. 846). There are also comparisons used to render the language representational, that is, to construct an image visually. Among the kinds of comparison used in the *Šāh-nāma* one must mention short comparisons which do not use words that indicate a comparison is being made (brief metaphors) and explicit comparisons (i.e., similes; For other examples, see Nöldeke, 1920, pp. 69-71; Šafā, *Ḥamāsa*, pp. 267-77). Sometimes Ferdowsī uses personification as an image (*be bāzīgar-ī mānad īn čark-e mast* "This drunken wheel [i.e., of the firmament] is like a juggler; ed. Khaleghi, III, p. 56, v. 474), sometimes proverbial expressions (*hamān bar ke kārīd kod bedravīd* "As you sow so shall you reap!"; ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 114, v. 383), and sometimes parables, that is, the explanation of a situation by another exemplary situation (e.g., *ibid.*, p. 216, vv. 770-73). In each of these three figures of speech, the image is constructed by reason. Another example of this is the elaboration of language as moral maxims (*tavānā bovad har ke dānā bovad!* "knowledge is power"; *ibid.*, p. 4, v. 14). On the other hand, Ferdowsī avoids those figures of speech which involve complex language or which take language far from the intended meaning. For this reason complex metaphors, ambiguities of grammatical construction, riddles, and academic phraseology are rarely found in his work (Nöldeke, 1920, pp. 64-65). Metaphors such as "dragon" for a "sword"; "narcissus" and "magician" for "eyes"; "coral," "garnet," and "ruby" for "lips"; "tulip" for "a face"; "pearls" for "tears," "teeth," and "speech"; "cypress" for "stature"; and so on, that have since been parts of the conventional themes, motives, and images used in



Persian poetry.

The most important descriptive passages of the *Šāh-nāma* are descriptions of war, the beauty of people, and the beauty of nature. Although Ferdowsī himself had probably never taken part in a battle and the descriptions of scenes of warfare are in the main imaginary, as Nöldeke says (1920, p. 59), they are described so variously, with such liveliness and to so stirring an effect that, despite their brevity, the reader seems to see them pass before his eyes. The story of Davāzdah Roḡ (q.v.; ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 3-166) is particularly a case in point (Nöldeke, *ibid*). Ferdowsī does not simply introduce his heroes, he lives with them and shares their sorrows and joys. He grieves at the death of Iranian heroes, but he does not rejoice at the demise of Iran's enemies; his sincerity conveys his own emotions to the reader. When he describes the beauty of people, he is at his best when the subject is a woman (see, e.g., ed. Khaleghi, I, pp. 183-84, vv. 287-93). As a *dehqān*, Ferdowsī lived in close contact with nature; for this reason the descriptions of nature in his poetry have the lively coloring of nature itself, not the coloring of decorative effects as in the poetry of Neẓāmī. Of his descriptions of nature particularly noticeable are those concerned with the rising and setting of the sun and moon, placed at the opening of many sections of individual stories, and of the seasons of the year, in particular of spring, situated in the introductions to stories (see, e.g., ed. Khaleghi, V, pp. 219-20, vv. 1-9).

Ferdowsī's poetic artistry go hand in hand with his skill as a storyteller. Major stories usually begin with a preamble (*koṭba*) which includes moral advice, a description of nature, or an account of the poet himself. In the examples that involve moral advice there is normally a connection between the contents of the preamble and the subject of the story that follows, as in the introductions to the stories of Rostam and Sohrāb, of Kāvūs' expedition to Māzandarān, and of Forūd (q.v.), the son of Sīāvakš. Such a connection is sometimes also found in introductions containing descriptions of nature (Kāleqī Moṭlaq, 1975, pp. 61-72; *idem*, 1990, pp. 123-41). Thereafter begins the story and proceeds quickly. In the important stories of the *Šāh-nāma*, events are neither given in so direct a manner as to join the opening of the story to its conclusion in the shortest possible manner, nor with such ramifications that the main story line is lost. But the attention of the poet to certain details of the incidents described, without the story ever straying from its main path, fills the narrative with action and variety (e.g., see the quarrel between the gatekeeper of Mehrāb's castle and Rūdāba's maids in *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 196, vv. 468-77;



Nöldeke, 1920, p. 17). Many of the narrative poets who followed Ferdowsī were more interested in the construction of individual lines than of their stories as a whole. In such narrative poems, the poet himself speaks much more than the characters of his poem, and even where there is dialogue, there is little difference between the attitudes of the various characters of the story, so that the speaker is still the author, who at one moment speaks in the role of one character and the next moment speaks in the role of another. The result is that in such poems, with the exception of Faḡr-al-Dīn Gorgānī's *Vīs o Rāmīn* and to some extent the poems of Neẓāmī, the characters in the story are less individuals than types. In contrast, the dialogues in the *Šāh-nāma* are realistic and frequently argumentative, and the poet uses them to good effect as a means of portraying the inner life of his characters. This is so to such an extent that it is as if many of the characters of the *Šāh-nāma* lived among us and we knew them well. Since these characters are developed as distinct, genuine individuals, it is inevitable that sometimes differences between them should lead to conflicts that make each episode extremely dynamic and dramatic. An instance is the conflict in the story of Rostam and Esfandīār (q.v.), which has been described as "the deepest psychological struggle in the whole of the *Šāh-nāma*, and one of the deepest examples of its kind in the whole of world epic" (Nöldeke, 1920, p. 59). Ferdowsī is also very skillful in creation of tragic and dramatic moments, such as the dialogue between Sohrāb and his father, Rostam, when Sohrāb is on the point of death (ed. Khaleghi, II, pp. 185-86, vv. 856-65), Sām's reaction upon receiving Zāl's letter (ibid., I, p. 208, vv. 656-66), the disobedience of Rostam's loyal horse, Raḡš, and his risking his life for Rostam (ibid., II, pp. 26-27, v. 345-46, the anger of the natural world when Sīāvaḡš's blood is spilled (ibid., II, pp. 357-58, vv. 2,284-87), the minstrel Bārbad's cutting off his fingers and burning his instruments while mourning for Ƙosrow II Parvēz (Moscow, IX, pp. p. 280, vv. 414-18), and so on. The final part of Ferdowsī's elegy for his son and the Bārbad's elegy on the death of Ƙosrow II Parvēz together with certain of the preambles to various stories and other descriptive passages show that Ferdowsī was also a master as a lyric poet (Nöldeke, 1920, p. 64). Such moments in the *Šāh-nāma* distinguish it from other epics of the world (ibid., p. 63); due to their simplicity and brevity, however, they do not harm the epic spirit of the poem, rather they give it a certain musicality and tenderness; in particular, due to the descriptions of love in the poem, these lyric moments take it beyond the world of primary epic (ibid., p. 54, n. 2).

Since the greater part of the epic poetry before Ferdowsī's time, and even his



own main source, the *Šāh-nāma-ye abū manšūrī*, have disappeared, it is difficult to judge how far Ferdowsī's artistry is indebted to his predecessors. From the thousand lines of Daqīqī in the *Šāh-nāma*, from certain other scattered lines by poets who had preceded him, and also from the Arabic translation of Ṭa'ālebī, it can be seen that Ferdowsī was not an innovator but rather someone who continued an extant tradition, both in his epic style and in his narrative method. At the same time, as Nöldeke has said (1920, pp. 22-23, 41-44), it can be shown by reference to these same works that Ferdowsī not only succeeded in preserving his poetic independence, but also that Persian epic poetry is indebted to him for its finest flowering.

See also *ŠĀH-NĀMA*; [EPICS](#).

For a music sample, see [Šāh-nāma](#).

For a music sample, see [Battle between Rostam and Sohrāb, The](#).

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