

The Image of Rūm in Persian Epics: From Firdawsī to Niẓāmī

Rūm and Rūmīs are extensively referred to throughout New Persian epical tradition, which was formed approximately from the 10th through to the 12th century. On the one hand, the image of Rūm embedded elements of cultural memory about the glorious past as it was remoulded and reinterpreted in Neo-Persian mentality. On the other, it established an elementary axiological pattern of imaginary world of medieval Persians, thus preconfiguring the future. Although, modern scholarship has touched upon a number of motifs referring to Rūm, up to now we have no generalizing study on the subject. Specifically, the images of Alexander the Great (Iskandar) and Kusraw's lover Shirīn have been studied in greater detail, however, in a somewhat decontextualized way being removed from the conceptual network of the whole of epical tradition¹.

I see my task here in preliminary outlining a set of possible research topics dealing with the Image of Rūm in Persian epics. Having in mind the vastness of the subject and its complexity, it is necessary to make the following reservations. First, in this paper, I will give a synchronic image of Byzantium in Persian epics, in most cases avoiding diachronic analyses of the time and circumstances of the origins of specific motifs. The latter diachronic study has already been implemented for most epical stories and motifs by generations of scholars². Consequently, I will give a sort of phenomenological description of the Neo-Persian image of Rūm as it was perceived by an average Persian-speaking Medieval reader.

Second, when one reflects on Persian epics, two pillars of Persian literature come across one's mind: Abū-l-Qāsim Firdawsī Tūsī's Shāhnāma³ and Niẓāmī Ganjawi's Khamsa⁴. However, between these two masterpieces, there were more than a dozen epical texts by different authors representing *dāstāns* (or stories) such as the Dārābnāma by Abū Ṭāhir Tarsūsī, the Barzūnāma, the Garshaspnāma, the Kūshnāma and the like. In this paper, I focus mainly on the poems of Firdawsī and Niẓāmī with occasional references to smaller epical texts.

Rūm as a part of the Iranian world

Throughout the New Persian epics, the terms Rūm and Rūmī, that is Rome and Romans, were the general and the only terms for the description of the western part of the *oikoumene* irrespective of the historical period concerned. Pre-Hellenistic Greece, Alexander the Great's homeland, Roman Latin and Byzantine Greek worlds, all of them are called Rūm and the persons native to these spaces are called Rūmī. This is a specific feature of New Persian epics to which we come back later.

The New Persian and Arabic term Rūm (روم) ultimately derives from the Greek Ῥώμη (← Latin *Rōma*) and goes back to Parthian *frwm* and Aramaic (ܪܘܡܐ / ܪܘܡܐ). Probably, it was the Parthian term which subsequently was borrowed by the Pahlawi (*hrōm*, cf. Sogdian *βr'wm*), Armenian (Հռոմ, *hrōm*) and Georgian (ჰრომი, *hrom*).

The population of epical Rūm spoke the same Rūmī language, again irrespective of the historical period concerned. For the authors and readers of New Persian epics, the epical Rūmī language definitely meant the Greek language: Alexander the Great and Rūmīs of Byzantine times spoke the Rūmī language.

The most archaic parts of the Shāhnāma concerning the mythical and heroic past postulates the unity of Iran and Rūm; Rūm often is described as a part of the Iranian world. The mythical king Farīdūn divided his kingdom into three parts and assigned each part to one of his three sons Salm, Tūr, Īraj. His elder son Salm became the king of the West, his second son Tūr the king of the East, and his youngest son Īraj became the king of Iran proper. The Shāhnāma designates Salm's share as »Rūm and the West« (*Rūm wa Khāwar*)⁵. The origin of Rūmī kings from Salm and consequently from Farīdūn is recalled many times throughout the Shāhnāma as for instance is the case of Isfandiyār who speaks with pride of his blood link to Farīdūn through Salm⁶. Niẓāmī also, as it seems,

1 Most recent studies with updated bibliography: Baum, Shirin. Especially well-studied is the image of Alexander the Great, see, for instance: Stoneman/Erickson/Netton, *The Alexander Romance*. – Wiesehöfer, *The »Accursed«* 113-132. – Rubanovich, *A Hero Without Borders* 210-233.

2 See, for instance: Yarshater, *Iranian National History 359-477* with an extensive bibliography. – Safā, *Hamāsa-sarāyī*.

3 The Shāhnāma's text will be used here primarily in the edition by Khaleghi-Motlagh; however, occasional references will be made to Bertels' edition, even if the latter's reading essentially differs from that of Khaleghi-Motlagh, Abu'l-

Qasem Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh* – hereafter »Khaleghi-Motlagh«. – Abū-l-Qāsim Firdawsī, *Šach-name* – hereafter »Bertels«.

4 I have used here the following editions of Niẓāmī's poems: Niẓāmī Ganjawi, *Haft paykar*. – Niẓāmī Ganjawi, *Iqbāl-nāma*. – Niẓāmī Ganjawi, *Sharaf-nāma*. – Niẓāmī Ganjawi, *Khusraw-u Shirīn*. – Niẓāmī Ganjawi, *Laylī-yu Majnūn*. – For Niẓāmī's romances, see, for instance: Rubanovich, *In the Mood of Love* 76-88.

5 For the usage of »Khāwar« in epics, see: Monchi-Zadeh, *Topographisch-historische Studien* 164-180.

6 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 5, 350.696-698; see also *ibidem* vol. 8, 257.3361 etc.).

regarded Farīdūn as a common progenitor for both Iran and Rūm making Alexander attacking Dārā put on his banner the representation of Farīdūn in the guise of a dragon (*azhdahā*)⁷.

However, in the Shāhnāma, the Rūmī language appears even earlier than the formation of Salm's kingdom of Rūm. When Ṭahmūrath defeated and imprisoned demons, the demons taught him writing in about thirty languages, found in the mythical world of the Iranians, and the Rūmī language was listed first among them⁸. This passage, as it seems, presupposes Ṭahmūrath's knowledge of Greek and all other languages in which he could write. Later Iranian kings may have been fluent in Greek as, for instance, was Firdawsī's and Niẓāmī's Alexander the Great. Alexander in the Sharafnāma of Niẓāmī ordered to transfer Persian (*darī*) books to Rūm/Yūnān and translate them into his native language, namely Greek (*yūnān-zabān*, *yūnānī*)⁹. Niẓāmī, who preferred to designate Greek as *yūnānī*, makes Bahrām Gūr learn the Greek language along with Arabic in his youth¹⁰.

The idea of the virtual unity of Iran and Rūm is expressed in epics occasionally and in various forms. For instance, Rūmī troops were often referred to as a part of the Iranian army. Such instances are quite numerous: for instance, during Kaykāwus' campaign against Afrāsiyāb numerous Rūmī fighters joined Kaykāwus¹¹, Rūmī troops are found in the armies of Siyāwush, Kaykhusraw, Gushtāsp, Bahrām Gūr, Khusraw Parwīz, Gurāz and other Persian characters of the Shāhnāma.

Sometimes, the land of Rūm is referred to as either being in the possession of or in close association with the Iranian kings. The Shāhnāma, for instance, makes one think that Kaykhusraw's realm included Rūm¹². Alexander the Great united Irān and Rūm, reintroducing the intrinsic unity between the two realms which existed before Farīdūn's division of his kingdom. King Kisrā Nūshīrwān emphasizes the unity between Iran and Rūm ascribing the factual enmity between the two kingdoms to the evil activity of Ahrīman: »That enmity [of the Iranians to Rūm] is innate and [the result of] Ahrīman's anger«¹³. King Gushtāsp promises that he will not take tribute from Rūm ever again because he »is delighted with the land and country [of Rūm]«¹⁴.

According to the Shāhnāma, the wish of re-establishing the unity between Iran and Rūm, despite all enmity and rivalry of old, became especially pressing when Khusraw Parwīz was seeking for asylum in Rūm after his defeat from Bahrām

Chūbīn. The idea of establishing the eternal unity between the two realms appeared in the course of letter exchange between Qayṣar and Khusraw Parwīz. First, it was suggested by the Qayṣar: »From now on, let Iran and Rūm be the one, let us not seek separation of these lands«. Khusraw Parwīz, supporting the idea of overcoming traditional hostility, confirmed that »the Rūmīs and Iranians have become the one (*yakē gasht*)«. Having received the confirmation from the shāh, the Qayṣar and his counsellors came to the conclusion that now »we, Rūm and Iran, have become the one (*yagāna shudīm*)«¹⁵. The two sovereigns decided to reinforce the unity between the two nations by the marriage of Khusraw Parwīz and Qayṣar's daughter in order that their son and the future king of Iran would not follow the way of Irāj's vengeance¹⁶.

Finally, the motif of the unity of Iran and Rūm is expressed in a somewhat paradoxical way in Firdawsī's story of the death of Yazdgird III, the last Sasanian king. Yazdgird was murdered on the orders of his officer Māhūy-i Sūrī and his body was thrown into the river. The king's body was found by some Rūmī monks who buried him with honours, thus factually, as Māhūy sarcastically put it, performing the duty of the king's relatives¹⁷. The Rūmī monks turned out to have been more respectful, compassionate and humane than the king's noble servants of Iranian blood.

In the Shāhnāma, both Iran and Rūm are accredited with being *ābādbūm*, that is an »affluent and civilized land« and, seemingly, the exact counterpart of the Greek οἰκουμένη. Only in application to Iran and Rūm, the definition *ābādbūm* is employed as a synonymous toponymic term¹⁸. It is one of the most important points in which, throughout the Shāhnāma, Iran and Rūm as close associates are opposed to essentially hostile Tūrān and also Chīn and India.

The plot of the 12th-century prosaic Dārābnāma by Abū Ṭāhir Ṭarsūsī partly develops in the Yūnānī islands, where the Iranian prince Dārāb and other characters of the epic travelled and stayed for long time¹⁹. As it seems, the epical imagination of Ṭarsūsī differentiated »Yūnānī islands« from the kingdom of Rūm which was founded by Salm, Farīdūn's son, and was the cradle of the *qayṣars*, Rūmī kings²⁰. However, this difference was hardly typical for Persian epics in general. For instance, in some manuscripts of the Shāhnāma, Rūm and Yūnān could have been used as synonyms²¹. In the same vein, Rūm and Yūnān were employed as synonyms by

7 Niẓāmī Ganjawī, Sharafnāma 84.1915-1919.

8 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 1, 37.42-44). – Firdawsī (Bertels vol. 1, 38.42-44). – Other languages specified by Firdawsī are Tāzī, Fārsī, Sughdī, Chīnī, and Pahlawī. The readings of the passage by Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh) and (Bertels) differ in meaning.

9 Niẓāmī, Sharafnāma 46.723; 127.3269-3270. – Niẓāmī Ganjawī, Iqbāl-nāma 21.366 ff.

10 Niẓāmī, Haft paykar 50.808 (tāzī, pārsī, yūnānī).

11 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 1, 89.286-288).

12 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 4, 327.2439).

13 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 7, 397.3784: »chunīn dād pāsukh ki ān dushmanī || ṭabī'i-st-u parkhāsh-i Āharmanī«.

14 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 5, 69.896).

15 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 99.1293 [Qayṣar]; 101.1330 [Parwīz]; 103.1357 [Parwīz]; 105.1374 [Qayṣar]).

16 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 99.1296).

17 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 474.747).

18 See, for instance: Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 5, 14.165; 22.273; 497.129; 503.205 etc.; vol. 8, 68.876; 122.1603; 133.1748 etc). For the toponymic value of *ābādbūm* in the Shāhnāma, see also: Dehkhodā, Loghatnāme, s. v.

19 Abū Ṭāhir Ṭarsūsī, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, Dārābnāma-yi Ṭarsūsī, see, for instance: vol. 1, 106-144 (Chapter 5: Az 'Umān tā jazīrahā-yi Yūnān) etc. – A French translation of the novel: Abū Ṭāhir Ṭarsūsī, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, Alexandre le Grand en Iran. – A Russian translation: Abū Ṭāhir Ṭarsūsī, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, Darab-name.

20 See, for instance: Ṭarsūsī, Dārābnāma 307 ff: »qayṣar-i Rūm az tukhma-yi Salm ibn-i Farīdūn...«, and also 350; 358 etc.

21 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 125.1846 note 14). – See also below p. 66 for »Yūnānī religion«.

Nizāmī²². According to the Dārābnāma, the Iranian nobles had invited the Qayṣar of Rūm to make him dethrone the queen Humāy and rule Iran²³. Moreover, the Dārābnāma maintains that the Kingdom of Rūm is more ancient than that of Iran²⁴.

To sum up, Iran and Rūm are extremely close political and cultural regions, the primordial and essential unity of which was restored in the course of history many times and in various ways.

Rulers, personages and territories

The general term designating the king of Rūm was Qayṣar (قصر). The Arabicized term Qayṣar goes back to the Greek Καῖσαρ (← Latin *Caesar*) and first appeared in Aramaic as *qēsār* and *qaysar* (קיסר / قيسر) and Parthian as *kēsār*, and further on was inherited by Pahlavi (*kēsār*, cf. Sogdian *kēsār* and *qysr*), Armenian (կայսր, *kaysr* and կեսար, *kesar*), and Georgian (კეისარი, *keisari*).

The title Qayṣar was applied to all the successors of Salm irrespective of the historical period concerned. In the Shāhnāma, the first mention of Qayṣar is found in the *dāstān* of Manūchīhr, the grandson of Īraj. In the Shāhnāma, only four Qayṣars including Salm are referred to by their personal names. The two others are Faylaqūs, that is the Macedonian king Philip II, and his son Iskandar/Sikandar, i.e. Alexander the Great²⁵. In Shāpūr II's section of the Shāhnāma one finds the name of the *qayṣar* Barānūsh which is identical to the historical Roman emperor Valerian²⁶. All other Qayṣars are mentioned just by their title alone. Firdawsī mentions a few Qayṣars' brothers such as Yānis during the rule of Shāpūr II and Niyāṭūs during the rule of Khusraw Parwīz. The only Qayṣar's son is referred to by name in the Shāhnāma: this is Saqīl in the chapter of Lūhrāsp. Nizāmī relates that the name of Alexander's son was Iskandarūs²⁷. There are a number of references to unnamed relatives like Qayṣar's wife in the story of Shāpūr II.

More ample are references to other Rūmī characters. In the Shāhnāma these are Rūmī generals and nobility such as Mīrīn, Ahran, Kishwarsitān, Farfūriyūs, Bāṭrūn, Sarkish, Kūt; Rūmī envoys such as Qālūs, Tīnūsh, Mihrās, Khānagī; Rūmī commoners like the sailor Hīshūy, the herdsman Nastāw, the blacksmith Būrāb²⁸. More Rūmī names are found in later epics (the Dārābnāma, Nizāmī etc.)

Most of these personal names are fictitious and cannot be derived from Greek or Latin anthroponyms. The excep-

tions are the following: Faylaqūs is Philip, Iskandar/Sikandar is Alexander, Niyāṭūs goes back to Theodosios. The name Qālūs probably derives from Greek καλός («good») and Yānis comes from Greek Ἰωάννης (although, in fact, the Emperor Jovian is meant).

Persian epics refer to a great number of Rūmī geographical names, most of which reflects the actual topography of Rūm but a smaller fraction is fictitious. In the Shāhnāma, the capital city of Rūm is referred to for the first time in Lūhrāsp's section and is described as an enormous city founded by Salm and being three *farsangs* long. Rūm's capital is directly called Constantinople in the form Quṣṭantīniyya in the Shāhnāma's story of Khusraw Parwīz²⁹ and throughout later epics, for instance, in the Dārābnāma and Nizāmī's poems. There are mentioned castles and cities of 'Ammūriya (Amorion), Shūrāb (Sura), Qālīniyūs (Kallinikos, now Raqqā), Antākiya (Antioch), Kāristān (Circesium), Warīgh (Edessa), Ḥalab (Aleppo). Most of these place-names are found in historical sections of the Shāhnāma relating to the Roman wars of the Sasanians. In the Shāhnāma's heroic part, one finds a few fictitious place-names like the woods Fāsquṅ and the mountain Saqīlā³⁰. Nizāmī, in his story of Alexander, competently speaks of Macedonia (*Maqdūniya*) as the core of the kingdom of Faylaqūs³¹.

Epical narrations often emphasize the maritime aspect of the geography of Rūm. Gushtāsp in the Shāhnāma reaches Rūm sailing on a ship by sea and most of his activity in Rūm evolves on the coast. Firdawsī compares an exceedingly huge army with the Sea of Rūm (*daryā-i rūm*). Nizāmī's Khusraw Parwīz, heading to Rūm, rushes towards the sea and finally arrives in Constantinople³².

In the Shāhnāma, most personal and geographical names, either deriving from the Greek language or imitating Greek-sounding words, were given in Arabicized form using the «non-Persian» letters *ṣād* and *ṭā itqī* mostly reserved for Arabic vocabulary.

Iranians in Rūm

A remarkable feature of Persian epics consisted of the presence of a number of stories dealing with the noble Iranian refugees in Rūm. According to the Shāhnāma, the prince Gushtāsp, quarrelling with his father, King Luhrāsp, fled to Rūm, where he married the Qayṣar's daughter and afterwards returned to Iran (see below).

The case of Shāpūr II is more complicated. King Shāpūr, under the guise of a merchant, arrived at the Qayṣar's court

22 Nizāmī, *Sharafnāma* 50.833-835 ff.; 72.1532-1533 etc., see also above in this section.

23 Ṭarsūsī, *Dārābnāma* 323 ff. 350.

24 Ṭarsūsī, *Dārābnāma* 351.

25 In the *Dārābnāma*, Faylaqūs is Qayṣar's brother (Ṭarsūsī, *Dārābnāma* 350).

26 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, see »Fihrist-i nāmā-i kasān« – Firdawsī (Bertels vol. 7, see »Указатель«).

27 Nizāmī, *Sharafnāma* 127.3277.

28 For these characters, see: Wolff, *Glossar*. – Shahīdī Māzandarānī, Ḥusayn. *Farhang-i Shāhnāma* (Nām-i kasān wa jāyḥā) (Tehran 1377).

29 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 97.1265).

30 For the Shāhnāma's toponymics, see: Wolff, *Glossar*. – Shahīdī Māzandarānī, *Farhang*.

31 Nizāmī, *Sharafnāma* 50.835.

32 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 3, 180.1242). – Nizāmī, *Khusraw-u Shirīn* 279.6.

in a sort of intelligence mission to learn how powerful and prosperous the kingdom of Rūm was. However, an Iranian at the royal court exposed Shāpūr's identity and the Iranian king was imprisoned. Finally, Shāpūr escaped from captivity and returned to Iran.

Khusraw Parwīz was defeated by Bahrām Chūbīn, a rebellious general, and fled to Rūm where he was well received by the Qayṣar. Khusraw married Qayṣar's daughter and with the help of Rūmī army regained the Iranian throne.

Another noble Iranian visitor to Rūm is the famous Iranian general Shahrbarāz of the 7th century AD, who is referred to by Firdawsī under the name Gurāz Farāyīn. Firdawsī represents Gurāz as a shāh's vicegerent of Rūm, who lived in Rūm and incited and instigated the Qayṣar against Khusraw Parwīz. With the Qayṣar's aid, Gurāz waged war against Khusraw Parwīz and finally became the king of Iran.

Apart from the Iranian kings, there are found also a number of other Iranian residents in Rūm, both noble and commoners. For instance, the person who exposed Shāpūr II at the Qayṣar's court was most probably an Iranian political émigré who is described by Firdawsī as »an Iranian who suffered from oppression«³³. Another character from Shāpūr II's story, a slave girl who helped him to escape from Rūm was Iranian by blood and Christian by faith³⁴.

In addition, according to epics, the Persian language was rather common at the Qayṣar's court. The references to the interpreters (*tarjumān*) from Persian (*pahlawāni*) at the Rūmī court are found, for instance, in the Shāhnāma's stories of Alexander the Great and Khusraw Parwīz³⁵.

Rūmī women

The unity between Iran and Rūm was understood not only as a primordial affinity of these two parts of Farīdūn's kingdom. Some women characters also played an important role in constructing and emphasizing the sense of unity.

A number of Iranian queens were of Rūmī origin and gave birth to Iranian kings. The first Rūmī woman who married an Iranian *shāh* was Katāyūn, wife of Gushtāsp. She was the elder daughter of the Qayṣar and, according to royal Rūmī tradition, chose a husband for herself from a number of candidates who presented themselves at the palace. In Iran, she was renamed Nāhīd (Anāhitā, Venus) and gave birth to Gushtāsp's son Isfandiyār, a famous Iranian knight. She unsuccessfully tried to dissuade Isfandiyār from fighting the invin-

cible warrior Rustam who finally killed Isfandiyār³⁶. Isfandiyār himself was proud of his royal Rūmī mother, his grandfather the Qayṣar and his progenitor Farīdūn³⁷.

In the Shāhnāma Nāhīd, daughter of the Qayṣar Faylaqūs, was the wife of King Dārāb. Dārāb was displeased with her because of her bad breath. Although Dārāb finally sent her back to her father, she healed her bad breath with a herbal medication called by the Rūmīs *sikandar*. On her coming back to Rūm, she gave birth to the son of Dārāb and called him after the herb's name Iskandar, that is Alexander. Firdawsī refers to her several times after Alexander became king of Iran. However, Niẓāmī explicitly refuted the idea of Alexander's origin from the Iranian king giving two independent versions of his birth from Rūmī parents; Niẓāmī had derived this information from the writings of Rūmī sages (*hūshyārān-i Rūm*)³⁸.

The wife of Khusraw Parwīz was Mariyam, the daughter of the Qayṣar. She gave birth to Shīrūya, the future king of Iran. In the Shāhnāma she played a prominent role at the Iranian court. For instance, she resolved a conflict between the Iranian and Rūmī knights in her husband's army and reconciled them. According to Khusraw Parwīz's letter to the Qayṣar, she remained Christian at the Iranian court³⁹; her son Shīrūya, as Firdawsī relates, patronized Christianity as well.

Shīrīn, another lover and finally wife of Khusraw Parwīz, was Christian, too, and originated probably from Rūm or its borders. As it seems, the relations between Mariyam and Shīrīn were not good. Firdawsī claims that Shīrīn poisoned and killed Maryam, while Niẓāmī maintains that Shīrīn was not guilty of Maryam's death⁴⁰.

Not only Khusraw Parwīz was fond of Christian women. According to Firdawsī, Kisrā Nūshīrwān was married to an extremely beautiful Christian woman who gave birth to Nūshzād⁴¹. However, it is not clear whether she was of Rūmī origin or a different one.

According to Niẓāmī's Haft Paykar, one of Bahrām Gūr's seven wives was Humā, the daughter of the Qayṣar. Humā was settled by Bahrām Gūr in the sixth palace of sandalwood colour dedicated to Jupiter and corresponding to the sixth day of the Muslim week, which is Thursday. In philosophic and ethical concept of Niẓāmī's Haft Paykar, the Rūmī princess symbolized the sixth highest level in the path of human perfection, yielding in importance only to the Iranian Queen Dursatī⁴².

Apart from noble ladies and kings' wives, Rūmī female slaves (as well as male slaves) were a quite common character in Persian epics. In the Shāhnāma, for instance, King Bahrām

33 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 302.166: »jafādīda irāni-yē bud ba-rūm...«).

34 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 304.197 ff.).

35 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 5, 535.77; vol. 6, 8.80 [Iskandar]; vol. 8, 302.3885 [Parwīz]).

36 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 5, 293.19; 306.164 ff.). – An attempt to derive the name Katāyūn from the Greek Κομτώ, a prostitute and the elder sister of Justinian I's wife Theodora, is quite arbitrary and both linguistically and factually groundless; cf.: Moazami, Katāyūn 121-122.

37 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 5, 350.696-698: »hamān mādar dukhtar-i qayṣar-ast...« etc.

38 Niẓāmī, Sharafnāma 50-52 and 50.847 for »Rūmī sages«. In fact, Niẓāmī relied on pseudo-Callisthenes' narration.

39 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 257.3364).

40 Baum, Shirin 66-69. 71-76.

41 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 7, 146.748 ff.).

42 The proper ethnic identity of the seven wives and the sequence of their palaces are clearly seen in the section describing Bahrām Gūr's first encounter with the portraits of the seven beauties in Khawarnaq: Niẓāmī, Haft paykar 55.976-982.

Gūr was fond of two Rūmī female slaves, one of who was a harp-player Āzāda by name⁴³.

Technology and wisdom

For Iranian epical worldview, Rūm was a source of high technologies, all kinds of sciences and wisdom. The products of Rūmī industry and craftsmanship are amply represented in epics indicating their high quality and constant high demand for them in Iran. These are various Rūmī veils, headgear, garments, silk, brocade and gold-woven brocade, Rūmī helmets, chain mails, swords, maces and even *qalam* / κάλαμος⁴⁴. The famous knight Bīzhan in prison was wrapped in Rūmī chains, that is in very sturdy chains⁴⁵.

The fortress of Bihishtkang belonging to the Turanian king Afrāsiyāb was strengthened and equipped by Rūmīs with missile weapons. Interestingly, when Kaykāwus besieged Bihishtkang he also used the services of Rūmī soldiers with siege missile engines⁴⁶.

A remarkable instance demonstrating the highest point of Rūmī technological achievements is found in the Shāhnāma. Firdawsī's story of Khusraw Parwīz relates to a marvellous mechanical group of dolls representing a crying princess surrounded by a group of slaves and servants. The princess's doll was able to take a bow, to move her one hand and one leg and to drop tear drops on her chest. In addition, Firdawsī mentions an iron horseman who floated in the air due to a magnet⁴⁷.

Rūmī architects and constructors often play a leading role in epical stories on constructing individual buildings and new cities. Bihishtkang, which was founded by Afrāsiyāb, was constructed by builders from Rūm and India. Luhrāsp commissioned the construction of Balkh and the temple of Burzīn to Indian, Rūmī and Chinese artisans. Rūmī and Indian experts constructed irrigation channels and the city of Dārābgird. The captive Rūmī *qayṣar* Barānūsh built a bridge for Shāpūr II. Kusrā Nūshīrwān erected a fortification wall in Khwārazm and a number of cities and palaces with the help of Rūmī and Indian builders. Tāqdis, the throne hall of Khusraw Parwīz, was built by foreign constructors including Rūmī experts⁴⁸.

The Rūmī architect Far'ān constructed a palace in Madāyīn for Khusraw Parwīz. The newly built huge and heavy walls of the palace needed some time to settle, however, the king insisted on a speedy finish to the work. The architect Far'ān

refused to continue and fled from the *shāh*, and disappeared for a full three years. In the fourth year, when the time needed had passed, the architect came back and finished the structure⁴⁹.

However, the most explicit and prolific in this subject was Nizāmī who, in the Haft Paykar, vividly described the personalities and works of two Rūmī architects. The Rūmī architect Simnār was commissioned by the Arab king Nu'mān to construct the palace of Khawarnaq. Simnār is said to have constructed buildings in Syria and Egypt, being wise and knowledgeable like Bulīnās of Rūm (Apollonios of Tyana). After the completion of Khawarnaq, Nu'mān threw Simnār down from the dome he built, so that he would not construct for someone else a better palace than Khawarnaq. The apprentice of Simnār, whose name was Shīda, was an accomplished architect, geometer, astrologer and physician. He was commissioned by Bahrām Gūr to erect seven domed palaces for the king's seven wives. Unlike the fate of Simnār, Shīda was lavishly rewarded for his work by Bahrām Gūr⁵⁰.

Later Persian epics highly praise the Rūmī skill of painting as, for instance, does Nizāmī devoting dozens of verses to praise the masterpieces of Rūmī painters⁵¹.

Rūm is a land of extremely high developed wisdom and knowledge of all kinds. Rūmī philosophers are especially famous in Persian epics: Plato (Falātūn) and Aristotle (Arastātālis, Arastālis, Arastū, etc.) are referred to throughout the epical texts, while Archimedes (Arshamīdis), Socrates (Suqrāt), Porphyry of Tyre (Fūrfūrān), Thales of Miletus (Wālis), Hermes Trismegistos (Hirmis), Euclid (Iqlīdis), Nicomachus (Naqūmākhis, Aristotle's father) and Apollonios of Tyana (Balīnās) are to be found in Nizāmī's poems; Balīnās was mentioned more than once in the Khusraw-u Shīrīn, the Haft Paykar, the Sharafnāma and the Iqbāl-nāma⁵².

Unnamed philosophers are referred to in most stories concerning Rūm, Rūmī characters and relations between the two empires. The Qayṣar's embassy to Kusrā Nūshīrwān was headed by the wise Mihrās and included sixty knowledgeable and eloquent philosophers⁵³. The Qayṣar's embassy to Khusraw Parwīz consisted of four Rūmī philosophers bringing a letter and gifts⁵⁴.

The Rūmī envoy to Bahrām Gūr was a »philosopher whose teacher was Plato«. He put forward seven difficult questions to Bahrām's *mūbads*, that is Zoroastrian priests and teachers: what is interior? what is exterior? what is height? what is bottom? what is infinity? who is the most insignificant? who

43 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 373.160-167).

44 See for instance: Wolff, Glossar, especially 451-452 (s.v. rūm and rūmī).

45 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 3, 334.396).

46 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 4, 239.1080-1081; 253.1289).

47 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 105ff. and 110-111. – For mechanical devices in royal palaces including anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations, see: lafrate, *The Wandering Throne*, especially Chapter 2.

48 For the palace of Tāqdis, the royal throne inside it and its description by Firdawsī, see: lafrate, *Wandering Throne* 188 ff.

49 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 288-292).

50 Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Haft paykar* 46-48. 86-87.

51 See, for instance: Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Haft paykar* 55-56. – Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Khusraw-u Shīrīn* 89.2: »ba rassāmī dar-i Iqlīdis gushāda...«. – Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Sharafnāma* 186-187 (competition of Rūmī and Chinese painters).

52 Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Haft paykar*, see Index. – Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Sharafnāma*, see Index. – Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Iqbāl-nāma*, see Index. – For *Shāhnāma*, see: Wolff, Glossar, s.v. – If Plato and Aristotle were quite well-known in Muslim intellectual tradition, Balīnās, Fūrfūrān, Wālis, Hirmis etc. were definitely less common; see, for instance: Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage*. – Walzer, *Aflātūn*. – Walzer, *Aristūtālis* or *Aristū*. – Gutas, *Greek Thought*.

53 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 7, 142.702).

54 See: Wolff, Glossar, s.v. rūm (8. faylasūfān) and faylasūf.

Christ was the Son of God and ascended to heaven to join His Father⁶⁷. Nūshzād, rejecting the admonition of the old knight Pīrūz, maintained that, although the faithful Christ had died, Lord's *farr* did not leave him; Christ, who left pure memories behind, went to the pure God being disappointed with this dark world⁶⁸. Nizāmī reproduces mostly Muslim concepts of Christ indicating His ability to heal and to work wonders, His exceptional compassion and goodness⁶⁹.

Mostly, Persian epics are neutral to Christianity, avoiding polemic appraisal of the religion of Rūm and preferring a neutral tonality in its description. However, in the Shāhnāma, one can also find some instances of critical appraisal of Christianity. Unambiguous Zoroastrian trends in polemics can be seen in the passages blaming the Rūmī Christians for their renouncement and betrayal of the faith of Yazdān which was the indigenous common religion shared by Kayūmarth, Tahmūrath, and also Salm, the progenitor of Rūm. Such accusations are found, probably, exclusively in the Shāhnāma, for instance in the stories of Shāpūr II and of the Christian prince Nūshzād⁷⁰. Khusraw Parwīz, counterposing Zoroastrianism and Christianity as an old religion and a new one, maintained that neither Kayūmarth, nor Jamshīd, nor Kayqubād ever heard about Christ⁷¹. The knight Pīrūz, admonishing Nūshzād, claims that the »deceiving« (*firibanda*) Christ was killed because he turned away from Yazdān's religion⁷². More theology-centred criticism is found, for instance, in the story of Shāpūr II who rebukes the Christians for ascribing a son to God⁷³. Further on, the Shāhnāma's Shāpūr II refuted Christianity saying that »the faith of a prophet who was killed by the Jews should not be accepted«, thus manifesting a sort of anti-Semitism that was probably more typical for Muslims⁷⁴. Khurrād-i Burzīn maintains that Jesus was a fatherless servant at the Temple (*kunisht*), a knowledgeable person called to prophecy (*payghāambarī*), but he was in no way God's son, because God needs neither child nor wife⁷⁵. Khusraw Parwīz reproves Christians for regarding the Cross as a sacred object and especially of their identifying the Cross with Jesus Himself, thus blaming the Christians for idolatry⁷⁶.

Firdawsī's anti-Christian passages represent a mixture of commonplace Zoroastrian and Islamic strategies of refutation of Christianity targeting the Christian concept of deity,

Christology, Mariology, crucifixion and veneration of material objects⁷⁷.

The Shāhnāma remarkably reflects the spread of Christianity beyond the borders of Rūm into Iran proper⁷⁸. Thus, the *shāh* Alexander, the prince Nūshzād son of Kīsrā Nūshīrwān, the *shāh* Shīrūya son of Khusraw Parwīz were Christians. There were also many commoners among Iranians who adopted Christianity. In the time of Shāpūr II, owing to the frequent attacks of the Qayṣar against Iran: »Very many Iranians became Christians, || all the land [of Iran] adopted [Christian] prelates«⁷⁹. Shāpūr II, during his escape from Rūm, passed through Khūzistān and stayed for some time in the house of a gardener who complained that, because of the Rūmī raids in the Iranian borderland, many Persians had adopted Christianity⁸⁰:

»Also many [Iranians] became Christian,
and girded themselves by *zunnār* [belt] and adopted
[Christian] prelates.
Many put on [monk's] hood like *jāthiliq̄s*
and live afar from the cultivated lands and houses«.

The prince Nūshzād, the son of the Christian queen, rebelled against his father Kīsrā Nūshīrwān and offered an alliance to the *qayṣar*; he gathered under his banners Christians of Iran including both clerics and laymen⁸¹.

As far as the Rūmī *qayṣars* were considered as the descendants of Farīdūn through his son Salm, respectively, *qayṣars'* subjects were regarded as the descendants of the people of Farīdūn, the common ancestors for both Rūmīs and Iranians. Despite the common ancestry, epical tradition endows Rūmīs with special traits which make them different from Iranians. The paradigmatic story that prefigured the epical image of Iran, Rūm and Tūrān is Farīdūn's putting to the test his three sons⁸². Farīdūn in the guise of a huge and frightful dragon blocked the way of his sons. Farīdūn's elder son Salm realized that there was no chance to overcome the dragon and stepped back. His second son Tūr did not want to give up and prepared to fight. His youngest son Īraj tried to negotiate with the dragon, but was ready to fight if negotiations would fail. These are three different types of characters and three modes of reaction which differentiate

67 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 256.3351: »*chu pūr-i padar raft sūy-i padar*«; cf.: Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, p. 114.1490: »*pūr-i yazdān*«).

68 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 7, 161.931-932). – For Christian topics in epics, see also: Dehqani-Tafti, *Christ and Christianity*.

69 See, for instance: Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Laylī-yu Majnūn* 578.7; 580.53; 582.21 and also "Dāstān-i 'Isā" in Nizāmī Ganjawī, *Makhzan al-Asrār* 129-130.

70 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 322.409 [Shāpūr II: »tarsāyī-wu dushman-i ēzadī«]; vol. 7, 159.907-908 [Nūshzād]).

71 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 160.2112).

72 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 7, 159.908: »Masīh-i firibanda khūd kushta shud || chūn az dīn-i Yazdān sarash gashta shud«).

73 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 322.410: »pisar gūyī ānrā k-ash anbāz nīst || zi gītīsh farjāmu āghāz nīst«).

74 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 332.541: »hamēguft payghambarē k-ash juhūd || kushad dīn-i ūrā nashāyad sutūd«).

75 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 113.1487-114.1492).

76 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 255.3348-256.3351).

77 Some Zoroastrian tint in Firdawsī's criticism of Christianity was first noted by Nöldeke, *Das Iranische Nationalepos* 162. – For Zoroastrian anti-Christian tradition, see: de Menasce, *Une apologétique mazdéenne* Chapter XV, 205-225. – Šak-ud-gumānīh-vizār, Chapters 10-12, 166-182. – Asmussen, *Das Christentum in Iran* 11-22. – For early Muslim polemics against Christians, see, for instance: Thomas, *Routledge Handbook* and especially Hoover, *Attitudes 168-175 and PART II* »Theological attitudes in Christian-Muslim encounters« 269-338.

78 For Christian converts in the Sasanian Empire, see: Russell, *Christianity I*, 327-328. – Asmussen, *Christians in Iran* 924-948.

79 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 304.194: »...pīsh-i sukūbā shudand«).

80 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 275-276).

81 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 7, 149.786-787: »ba shahr andarūn har-k tarsā budand || agar jāthiliq ar sukūbā budand || basē anjuman kard bar kh'ishtan || sawārān-i gardankash-i tighzan«).

82 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 1, 103ff.).

the future nations of Rūm, Tūrān and Iran. Farīdūn later gave completely positive interpretations of his sons' characters, in particular describing Salm as a wise man who correctly assessed his own strength and chose a retreat, because the one who rushed into battle against a stronger enemy was not brave but insane⁸³.

On the one hand, Salm's wisdom manifested itself in the subsequent generations of Rūmīs in intelligence, sophistication, highly developed philosophy and science. Throughout epical tradition generally, Rūmī people are described as wise and knowledgeable, wealthy and powerful, liking beauty and the beautiful (*rūmī-naward*, *rūmī-ṭarāz*), highly civilized and well-mannered. In Persian poetical language, »Rūmī« had become associated with the colour white and everything white having exclusively positive connotations of beauty, radiance, elegance and purity⁸⁴. The metonymic pairs *rūmī-wu ḥabash* (Ethiopian) and *rūmī-wu zangī* (Negro) contrapose white and black, good and bad luck, day and night, light and darkness and so forth⁸⁵.

On the other hand, the reverse side of Salm's extreme wisdom was Rūmī treachery, cowardice and arrogance. Such traits appear especially often in the descriptions of wars and conflicts between Iran and Rūm. A paradigmatic example of Rūmī's treachery is given by Firdawsī in the continuation of the story of the three brothers. Salm and Tūr envied Īraj who was proclaimed by Farīdūn the ruler of Iran. Salm conceived to kill Īraj and instigated Tūr and made him murder Īraj, thus himself trying to avoid responsibility for the bloodshed⁸⁶. Likewise, the half-Rūmī Nūshzād displayed obvious treachery to God and his kingly father becoming happy about the false news of the latter's death⁸⁷. Another Iranian of Rūmī blood, Alexander the Great, is sometimes described by the Shāhnāma very negatively as an evil ruler in accordance with Zoroastrian tradition⁸⁸.

An exemplary description of Rūmī's cowardice is found in Firdawsī's story of Khusraw Parwīz who blamed the allied Rūmī warriors of cowardice and being like »a sheep herd during a storm«⁸⁹. However, Niẓāmī in his Khusraw-u Shīrīn enters into a hidden polemic with Firdawsī ascribing Khusraw Parwīz's victory over Bahrām Chūbīn to the Rūmī warriors⁹⁰. In any case, cowardice may be ascribed also to the Iranians having Rūmī blood, as in the case of the prince Shīrūya, the son of a Rūmī mother, who was qualified in the Shāhnāma by the term *tarsanda* »coward« being cognate with *tarsā* »Christian«⁹¹.

However, in general Persian epics described Rūmīs positively and quite respectfully. The manifest apologist of Rūmīs and Rūmī national character was Niẓāmī Ganjawī. He blames injustice, arrogance and greed on the Iranian king Dārā, who was hated by his own servants and became the cause of the war between Rūm and Iran⁹². In Alexander's time, »humanity [left Iran] for Yūnān and magnanimity [went] to Rūm«⁹³. Niẓāmī describes Alexander as a Rūmī/Yūnānī king who after the conquest of the world finally came back to his homeland. Alexander was a prophet, ideal king, philosopher, geometer and astrologer owning perfect knowledge. Niẓāmī's Alexander was a culture hero who beautified the Earth founding or decorating many cities (such as Alexandria, Herat, Samarqand, Bulghār, Tiflīs) and measuring all distances in this world; he introduced gold coins to Rūm, invented gold and silver jewellery, the divisions of the day and night, mirrors etc.⁹⁴ Alexander unified the wisdom of all nations and languages and elevated the status of men of wisdom as never before⁹⁵. Niẓāmī's *Iqbāl-nāma* was a poetical and intellectual eulogy to the wisdom of Rūm/Yūnān that endowed the characters of Hellenic philosophy, in the dimension of epical imagination, with memorable human traits. Niẓāmī succeeded in introducing into Persian cultural memory the Greek men of wisdom – and especially Alexander's seven sages Aristotle, Socrates, Apollonios of Tyana, Plato, Thales of Miletus, Porphyry of Tyre and Hermes Trismegistos – much more effectively than generations of Islamic scholars.

Epical Rūm and Byzantium

One may recognize in the image of Rūm in New Persian epics two distinct layers: the older, Parthian and Sasanian one (up to the beginning of the 7th century) and the newer, post-Sasanian one (up to approximately the 10th century). The use of the term »Rūm« for the designation of the Classical Greek, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine West follows Parthian and Sasanian tradition. The same Parthian and Sasanian tradition underlies also the Shāhnāma's story of Salm as the progenitor of Rūm⁹⁶, the story of Gushtāsp and the negative appraisals of Alexander. Sasanian sources contributed to most of the Shāhnāma's descriptions of Irano-Roman and Irano-Byzantine wars and to some elements of anti-Christian polemics. However, the colourful description of Rūmī *automata* and

83 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 1, 105.252: »dilāwar ki nandīshad az pīlu shīr || tu dīwāna kh^ānash mak^hānash dalīr«).

84 See, for instance: Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 144.169: »jahān gasht chūn rūy-i rūmī sapīd« and the like).

85 For more details, see: Dehkhodā, *Lughatnāma*, s. v. rūmī.

86 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 1, 107 ff.).

87 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 7, 147.765).

88 See, for instance: Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 6, 157.351: »ki nashnīd k-iskandar-i badgumān || chī kard az furūmayagī dar jahān«). – For »Persian episodes« in the story of Alexander, see also: Manteghī, *Alexander the Great* 164-168.

89 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 139.1838: »bidīdam hunarhā-yi rūmī hama || ba sān-i rama rūzgār-i dama«).

90 Niẓāmī Ganjawī, *Khusraw-u Shīrīn* 281 ff.

91 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 8, 358.437: »chu Shīrūy tarsandawu khām būd«).

92 Niẓāmī Ganjawī, *Sharafnāma* 50.837-844; 72.1542 f. 78 ff.

93 Niẓāmī Ganjawī, *Sharafnāma* 112.2794: »muruwwat ba Yūnān-u mardī ba Rūm«.

94 See, for instance: Niẓāmī Ganjawī, *Sharafnāma* 46-47; 72.1530; 77; 131.3380.

95 Niẓāmī Ganjawī, *Iqbāl-nāma* 21-22. – For Niẓāmī's Alexander, see: Asirvatham, *Alexander the Philosopher* 311-326.

96 Wiesehöfer, *The »Accursed«* 121-22; see also: Molé, *Le partage du monde* 455-463 (and Molé, *Le partage du monde. Note complémentaire*, 271-273). – Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée* vol. 1, 586-588.

probably the choosing of a groom by the Rūmī princes in Gushtāsp's story go back to the later tradition. The earliest records of the Byzantine mechanical wonders in the imperial palace are dated to the 9th century⁹⁷. The »groom show« described by Firdawsī in the story of Gushtāsp may have echoed the »bride shows« at the Byzantine court: such bride shows are known to have been organized in 788 (for Constantine VI), 807 (for Staurakios), in 830 (for Theophilos), 855 (for Michael III) and in 881 (for Basil I)⁹⁸. The reference to the Constantinopolitan hippodrome (*maydān*) with the Qaysar's balcony (*manzar*) in the Shāhnāma's story of Gushtāsp⁹⁹, – a central element of Constantinopolitan imperial topography, – may well have derived from both Sasanian and later traditions.

At the same time, the Persian image of Rūm heavily relies on the Late Roman and especially Byzantine (approximately since the time of Herakleios) self-identity conceptions¹⁰⁰. A number of ideas in Persian epics are of special importance in this sense, clearly manifesting their intersection and conformity with Byzantine conceptions. The Byzantine Self, as is seen from Byzantine tradition from the 5th or 6th century onwards, extended back to Homer and the *Conditio urbis Romae* including Greek-Persian wars of Classical time, the deeds of Alexander the Great, the achievements of republican and imperial Rome. All these periods of time were parts of the historical and epic memory of the Byzantines about their own Self. The Persian epical »Rūmī language« remaining the same throughout the time span may have reflected peculiarities of Late Roman and Byzantine usage in which Ῥωμαϊκὴ γλῶσσα (»the Roman language«) signified both Latin and Greek¹⁰¹. The Christian affiliation of Alexander, in Persian epical texts, directly refers to the Byzantine Christiancentric re-conceptualization of Alexander's image, which occurred by the first half of the 7th century. The significance of the Byzantine ideological interpretation of Alexander, of course, was emphasized in the eyes of Neo-Persian epical authors by the later Muslim historiosophic interpretation of Alexander as one of God's prophets¹⁰². Thus, the Persian epical image of Rūm in many ways follows the Byzantine self-image and in this sense mirrored contemporaneous Byzantine self-identity¹⁰³.

In the triangle of Iran, Rūm and Tūrān, the two former stand closer to each other: Rūmīs are described more positively than Tūrānians or any other neighbouring nation. In

the Shāhnāma, the terms Rūm and Tūrān are mentioned approximately the same number of times: about 330 for Rūm and 390 for Tūrān¹⁰⁴. However, even if in the Shāhnāma the representation of Tūrān is more detailed and abounds in characters, events and historical allusions, conceptually it is mostly plain and simple and depicts the land of Tūr as a hostile space presenting a constant threat and danger. Contrarily, the image of Rūm, albeit more sketchy and less precise, is conceptually more complex and versatile. Rūm could have been a rival and foe, but it was a kindred kingdom (in particular due to royal intermarriages) and the source of highly valued and prestigious intellectual and material culture. This observation seems to contradict the recent important studies revealing the outstanding role of East Iranian cultures in the fate of ancient and medieval Iran, the results of which I fully share¹⁰⁵. However, the contradiction is imaginary. Despite the importance of the eastern component in the formation and evolution of the Iranian civilization, the vector of Iranian cultural aspirations was directed to the Hellenic and Roman West, but not to the Indian, Chinese or Turkic East. The unambiguous justification for this remarkable point can be found in 6th-7th century Byzantine sources.

Peter the Patrician, a Byzantine diplomat of the 6th century, described Iran and the Roman empire as »two eyes« of the world¹⁰⁶: »It is obvious for all mankind that the Roman and the Persian Empires are just like two lamps; and it is necessary that, like eyes, the one is brightened by the light of the other and that they do not angrily strive for each other's destruction«. These words are ascribed by Peter to Apherban, the envoy of the Sasanian king Narseh (293-302), who addressed them to the emperor Galerius.

Theophylaktos Simokattes, in the 7th century, similarly referred to the Sasanian and Byzantine empires as »the two eyes of the world«¹⁰⁷: »God effected that the whole world should be illumined from the very beginning by two eyes, namely by the most powerful kingdom of the Romans and by the most prudent sceptre of the Persian state«. Again these words are ascribed to a Persian, namely, to Khusraw Parwīz II who started in this way his letter to the emperor Maurice.

In addition, Malalas, for the events of ca. AD 529, cited Kawad's letter to Justinian I containing the designation of the Persian king as the Sun and the Roman emperor as the

97 For Theophilos' *automata* in the 9th century, see: Brett, *Automata* 481-482. – For the 10th-century data on mechanisms at the Byzantine court, see: lafrate, *The Wandering Throne* 60-105.

98 Treadgold, *Bride-shows* 395-413.

99 Firdawsī (Khaleghi-Motlagh vol. 5, 47.612).

100 For elements of Byzantine identity, see, for instance: Dmitriev, John Lydus 27-42. – Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*.

101 For more details and further bibliography, see: Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks* 45-53.

102 van Bladel, *The Alexander Legend* 175-203. – For the Arabic versions of Alexander tale, see also: Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*.

103 Curiously, the Persian epical image of Byzantium intersects and coincides in many points with the image of Persia in Middle Byzantine mentality: Shukurov, *The Byzantine concepts of Iran*.

104 For more on the numerical ratio of personal names and some social terms in the Shāhnāma, see: Majnusov, »Šachname«.

105 See, for instance, some recent general studies: Rezakhani, *ReOrienting the Sasanians*. – Shukurov, *Chorasan*. – Shakūri, *Khurāsān*. – See the bibliography in these books for further references.

106 *Excerpta historica* 393.10-16: φανερόν ἐστι τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὅτι ὡσπερανεὶ δύο λαμπτήρες εἰσιν ἢ τε Ῥωμαϊκὴ καὶ Περσικὴ βασιλεία· καὶ χρὴ καθάπερ ὀφθαλμοὺς τὴν ἑτέραν τῆ τῆς ἑτέρας κοσμεῖσθαι λαμπρότητι, καὶ μὴ πρὸς ἀναίρεσιν ἑαυτῶν ἀμοιβαδὸν μέχρι παντὸς χαλεπαίνειν. An earlier edition of the same text: *Fragmenta Historiorum Graecorum* 4, 188 (frag. 13). For the English translation I have used here, see: Dignas/Winter, *Rome and Persia* 122-123.

107 Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae* 4.11.2: δύο τισὶν ὀφθαλμοῖς τὸν κόσμον καταλάμπεσθαι πάντα ἄνωθεν καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὸ θεῖον ἐπραγματεύσατο, τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τῆ δυνατωτάτη τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλεία καὶ τοῖς ἐμφρονεστάτοις σκῆπτροις τῆς Περσῶν πολιτείας· For commentaries to this passage, see: Dignas/Winter, *Rome and Persia* 238.

Moon¹⁰⁸: »Koades, Emperor of Emperors, of the rising Sun, to Flavius Justinian Caesar, of the setting Moon. We have found it written in our ancient records that we are brothers of one another, and that if one of us should stand in need of men or money, the other should provide them[...]«. Further on, Kawad's letter accuses the Roman emperors of forgetting the intrinsic brotherhood of the two nations and maintains that this oblivion is the real cause of the wars between Iranians and Romans.

The above-discussed statements¹⁰⁹, being ascribed to the Sasanian kings and their servants, testify that the Iranian mentality of the time in general and imperial ideology in particular explicitly developed the ideas of a sort of cosmic unity with Rūm. The Sasanids saw the whole *ābādbūm/oikoumene* (see above p. 61) as divided between the two powers, Rūm and Iran; disaccord between them inevitably led to the disruption of the cosmic order. Of course, the idea of the unity of Iran and Byzantium was not alien to the Byzantine mentality at all¹¹⁰, however, as we see, the notion of »the two eyes of the world« was more typical for the Iranian ideological usage and not the Byzantine one as one may assert. This conception, as I have tried to demonstrate above, has been quite explicitly reflected by Firdawsī, due to his reliance on Sasanian sources.

Nizāmī as a perceptive and sensitive expert in epical tradition and its ingenious renovator unmistakably noticed the focal position of Rūm in Persian mythopoetic and epical imagination as it had taken shape by the 11th century. In his own writings, Nizāmī further developed the motif of Rūm rendering it even more articulated, detailed and tangible. He constantly amends Firdawsī in »Rūmī« matters, widely employs the synonymic term Yūnān and introduces more accurately Hellenized and Christianized versions of Alexander's biography. Nizāmī outlines the initial limits of Alexander's realm merging the borders of the pre-Islamic Roman Empire with the extensions of the later Byzantine »Common Wealth«: Egypt, Rūm, Afranj (Western Europe) and Rūs (northern lands of Slavs)¹¹¹. He incorporates Armenia and Abkhāz in the imaginary Rūm as areas culturally associated with the latter. Moreover, Nizāmī's epical region outside Iran is explicitly Hellenocentric: in the Khusraw-u Shīrīn and the Haft Paykar the land of Rūm and the Rūmīs are second only to Iran and the Persians. His Sharafnāma and especially the Iqbāl-nāma focus more on Rūm/Yūnān and on the virtues of the Rūmīs rather than on Iran and the Persians. He is profoundly disinterested in India and China, and especially in Tūrān, to which he referred only once in the Khamsa¹¹². Firdawsī's dangerous Tūrān is replaced by Nizāmī with the amicable Khurāsān, Bukhārā and Samarqand as the eastern margins of epical Iran.

108 Ioannis Malalae chronographia 378.32-35: Κωάδης βασιλεὺς βασιλευόντων, ἡλίου ἀνατολῆς, Φλαβίῳ Ἰουστινιανῷ καίσαρι σελήνης δύσεως. ἠύραμεν ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἀρχείοις ἀναγεγραμμένα ἀδελφούς ἡμῶς ἀλλήλων εἶναι, καὶ ἐάν τις ἐπίδηθη σωμαίων ἢ χρημάτων, παρέχειν τὸν ἕτερον[...] For an English translation, see: The Chronicle of Malalas 263.

109 Cf. also with Shapūr II's addressing to the emperor Constantius as »brother« (Ammianus Marcellinus, Rerum gestarum XVII.5.3).

110 See also: Chrysos, Some aspects 1-60. – Canepa, The Two and especially »Epilogue«. – McDonough, Were the Sasanians Barbarians? 55-66.

111 Nizāmī Ganjawī, Sharafnāma 83.1873: »zi Mişr-u zi Afranja-wu Rūm-u Rūs«. – See also: Manteghi, Alejandro Magno 281-292.

112 This is the only Nizāmī's reference to Tūrān: »zi daryā ba daryā tu kardi nishast || bar Īrān-u Tūrān turā būd dast«; he puts these words into the mouth of Khāqān-i Chīn who addressed to Alexander (Nizāmī Ganjawī, Sharafnāma 178.4852).

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Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

Das Bild von Rūm in persischen Epen: von Firdawsī bis Nizāmī

Der Autor diskutiert die Darstellung von Rūm (Byzanz) in der persischen epischen Tradition des 10. bis 12. Jahrhunderts. Die Semantik des Begriffs Rūm und seine Beziehungen zum epischen Iran werden besonders analysiert. Der Autor rekonstruiert das Bild von Rūm in der neopersischen Mentalität und unterscheidet dabei die folgenden Hauptthemen: Rūmī Herrscher, Persönlichkeiten und Territorien, Iraner in Rūm, die Rūmī Frau, Rūmī Technologie und Weisheit, Rūmī Religion, Moral und Bräuche. Abschließend wird das entstandene imaginäre Bild von Rūm mit byzantinischen Mustern der Selbstidentität verglichen: Es spiegelt lebhaft die byzantinische Kultur und Gesellschaft des 6. bis 12. Jahrhunderts wider. Der Vektor des iranischen Kulturstrebens in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter war auf den hellenischen und römischen Westen gerichtet, nicht aber auf den indischen, chinesischen oder türkischen Osten.

The Image of Rūm in Persian Epics: From Firdawsī to Nizāmī

The author discusses the representation of Rūm in the Persian epical tradition of the 10th-12th century. The semantics of the term Rūm and its relation to epical Iran are specifically analyzed. The author reconstructs the image of Rūm in the Neo-Persian mentality distinguishing the following major themes: Rūmī rulers, personages and territories, Iranians in Rūm, Rūmī women, Rūmī technology and wisdom, Rūmī religion, morals and manners. In conclusion, the resulting imaginary picture of Rūm is compared with Byzantine patterns of self-identity: it vividly reflects Byzantine culture and society of the 6th to the 12th century. The vector of Iranian cultural aspirations in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages was directed to the Hellenic and Roman West, but not to the Indian, Chinese or Turkic East.

La représentation de Rum dans les épopées persanes: de Firdawsī à Nizāmī

L'auteur discute ici la représentation de Rum (Byzance) dans la tradition épique persane du 10^e au 12^e siècle. La sémantique du terme Rum et ses liens avec l'Iran épique font l'objet d'une analyse particulière. L'auteur reconstitue l'image de Rum dans la mentalité persane et distingue les thèmes principaux suivants: seigneurs rumi, personnalités et territoires, Iraniens à Rum, femme rumi, technologie et sagesse rumi, religion rumi, morale et coutumes. Enfin, on compare la représentation imaginaire de Rum aux modèles byzantins de l'auto-identité: Elle reflète avec beaucoup de vie la culture et la société byzantines du 6^e au 12^e siècle. Les aspirations culturelles de la Perse dans l'Antiquité tardive et au haut Moyen Age étaient orientées vers l'Occident hellénique et romain, et non pas l'Orient indien, chinois ou turc.

Traduction: Y. Gautier