

He addressed the Kayānian king: “I am a prophet!” – The Image of Zoroaster in the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* (Tale of Goshtāsp)

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the image of the ancient Iranian prophet Zoroaster in the *Shāhnāma* based on a closed reading of the story about the Kayānian king Goshtāsp written by Daqīqi (and continued by Ferdousi). There has so far been no comprehensive treatment of Daqīqi’s rendering of Zoroaster and the founding of the first Zoroastrian community. This lack of scholarly research is surprising given the importance of Daqīqi in the transmission of the ancient Iranian cultural and religious heritage (illustrated in his pioneering role in the creation of the *Shāhnāma* of Ferdousi) and the uniqueness of his work, which constitutes the only long poem that has been preserved from the Sāmānid and pre-Sāmānid period (even though extant verses of some early poets suggest the existence of several other epic works). As Daqīqi relates, it was in Goshtāsp’s reign that Zoroaster introduced his religion in the Iranian cultural sphere, with the support of the king’s son Esfandiār. Goshtāsp was forced to go to war to defend the faith against king Arjāsp of Turān and suffered the loss of his brother Zarēr in battle. These are celebrated events in the early history of Zoroastrianism that have been expounded upon throughout the centuries in different versions.

Keywords: Abu Maṣṣur Daqīqi, *Shāhnāma*, Abo’l-Qāsem Ferdousi, Zoroaster, Ahura Mazdā, Sāmānid, Avestā, Goshtāsp

Introduction

The *Shāhnāma* (Book of Kings) of Abo’l-Qāsem Ferdousi (940–1020) is generally considered the Persian national epic *par excellence* and enjoys an iconic status in Iranian literary culture. In medieval times it played a decisive role in the renaissance of the Persian language across the Iranian cultural sphere and had an enduring influence on the flourishing of Persian literature and art. Although other poets and scholars, such as Ḥanzāla Bādghisi, Rudaki, and Shahid Balkhī, not to mention Abu Maṣṣur Daqīqi, contributed to the genesis and growth of the Persian cultural renaissance, Ferdousi alone must be credited with its success and triumph. The major reason for his iconic status and uniqueness in relation to his contemporaries is the magnitude of his work as well as the nature of its subject matter. His greatness is even more impressive given that he lacked royal patronage and encouragement. The *Shāhnāma* was not a unique phenomenon, and its authors – Daqīqi succeeded by Ferdousi – drew on an extant oral and written tradition, albeit for the most part in prose, which had utilized more ancient Sāsānian materials.¹ Thanks to their dedication and genius not only did the Persian language and Iran-

¹ The indirect influence of oral transmission on the genesis and evolution of the Persian written epic tradition has been discussed by Kumiko Yamamoto (2003) and Mahmoud Hassanabadi (2010).

ian traditional history survive the persistent assaults of Arab cultural domination, but the mythology, customs, beliefs, and mores of ancient Iran were revived and preserved for posterity.²

The aim of this article is to examine the image of the ancient Iranian prophet Zoroaster³ in the *Shāhnāma* based on a closed reading of the story about the Kayānian king Goshtāsp written by Daqiqi (and continued by Ferdousi). In his pioneering study of Zoroastrian influences on Persian literature the Iranian scholar Moḥammad Mo'in (1948:315–365) devoted a chapter to Daqiqi's epic with specific emphasis on its Zoroastrian themes. He presented a wide range of primary data collected from a variety of Persian sources but made no attempt at a historical-critical analysis beyond the descriptive level. Apart from Mo'in's monograph, previous research on Daqiqi's epic has been restricted to comparative examinations of Middle Persian works in the same genre (Geiger 1890, Utas 2008:1–20); historical and literary analyses of heroic themes (Davidson 1994:146–155, Davis 1992:128–160); and assessments of its role in Iranian national history (Christensen 1931:117–126, Yarshater 1983:465–470). There has so far been no comprehensive treatment of Daqiqi's rendering of Zoroaster and the founding of the first Zoroastrian community. This lack of scholarly research is unexpected given the importance of Daqiqi in the transmission of the ancient Iranian cultural and religious heritage (illustrated in his pioneering role in the creation of the *Shāhnāma*) and the uniqueness of his work, which constitutes the only long poem that has been preserved from the Sāmānid and pre-Sāmānid period (even though extant verses of some early poets suggest the existence of several other epic works).

As Daqiqi relates, it was in Goshtāsp's reign that Zoroaster introduced his religion in the Iranian cultural sphere, with the support of the king's son Esfandiār the Brazen-bodied (*Ruintan*). Goshtāsp was forced to go to war to defend the faith against king Arjāsp of Turān and suffered the loss of his brother Zarēr in battle. These are celebrated events in the early history of Zoroastrianism that have been expounded upon throughout the centuries in different versions. The narrative framework of Daqiqi's account coincides with that of the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* (Memorial of Zarēr Family), a Middle Persian fragment of epic verse originally composed in Parthian in north-eastern Iran and slightly transformed in the middle Sāsānian period.⁴ Although the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* is the only surviving specimen of ancient Iranian epic in Middle Persian, its thematic origin, according to Benveniste (1932) dates back to the Achaemenid period as testified by a romantic legend preserved in the *Deipnosophistae* of Athenaeus on the authority of Charas of Mitylene.⁵ The fact that Daqiqi's account is more archaic and more elaborate than the Pahlavi text, as far as

² The phenomenon of the Persian cultural renaissance was explored at the conference "The Rise of the Persian Renaissance" held at the University of Oxford in July 2008.

³ In the *Shāhnāma* Zoroaster's name is varyingly spelt Zardosht or Zardhosht, but I use the Greek form here since it is more familiar to Western readers. The Gāthic form of the name is Zaruštra.

⁴ It is generally supposed that its Parthian origin is confirmed by the many Parthian words, phrases, and grammatical patterns throughout the text, but Utas (2008:19) has convincingly argued that the text lacks clearly Parthian elements alien to ordinary Pahlavi.

⁵ For a discussion on the continuity of the narrative traditions as attested in the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* and in the *Shāhnāma*, see Boyce 1955.

its themes are concerned, indicates that there existed multiple versions of the story and that Daqiqi most likely had access to other oral or written sources, perhaps going back to an Avestān original that is no longer extant.⁶ The present study is not however concerned with a comparative analysis of Daqiqi's account and the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, as it is likely that Daqiqi mainly consulted the *Shāhnāma-ye Abu Manšuri*, a Persian rendition of the *Khʿadāy-nāmag* (Book of Kings), a compendium of legendary and historical traditions compiled at the end of the Sāsānian period (c. 620).

Daqiqi's life and work

Abu Manšur Daqiqi is celebrated as one of the most important figures in early Persian literature but datable events of his life are very scanty. According to Moḥammad 'Aufi's (d. 1242) *Lubāb al-albāb* (Quintessence of Hearts) his personal name was Moḥammad ibn Aḥmad and his patronymic Abu Manšur.⁷ Daqiqi was a native of Khorāsān, probably born in Ṭus or Balkh, although Samarkand is also mentioned as his birthplace in later biographical works such as the *Ātashkade-ye Āzar* (Fire-temple of Āzar) of Loṭf'ali Bigdeli Āzar (d. 1780) and the *Majma' ol-Foṣaḥā'* (Meeting Place of the Eloquent) of the Qājār writer Rezā Qoli Khān Hedāyat (d. 1871).⁸ Daqiqi's social background is not known but one of his lyrical poems refers to its author as a noble (*āzāda-zād*), which attests to an aristocratic ancestry (D 142). Similar to a large number of Iranian dignitaries and learned individuals of the early medieval period he probably belonged to the provincial landed gentry (*dehqānān*) or was descended from this class. The *dehqāns* clung to national customs and traditions more than any other class and were favoured by the ruling Sāmānid dynasty, which attempted to revive Sāsānian culture. His social milieu and class consciousness did in this case have a decisive impact on the national spirit of his work since the *dehqāns* played a significant role in the transmission of the heroic as well as romantic epics of ancient Iran.⁹

To judge from his preserved literary production, Daqiqi entered service as a court poet in his youth at the Sāmānid court of Manšur I, son of Nuḥ (r. 961–976), in Bukhara. A career as a court poet being the obvious choice in his period for someone with literary talent, he wrote panegyrics praising this king and other Sāmānid princes. The fragments of a *qaṣida* in praise of Manšur I include a declaration of the king's divine legitimacy and a comparison of his glory to that of the Achaemenids (*āl-e dārā*) (D 159). Daqiqi soon earned success at the court and

⁶ Evidence from the *Shāhnāma* indicates that Daqiqi consulted the *Dēnkard*, the largest extant Middle Persian work, which consists of a compilation of the millennial Zoroastrian tradition. Chapter seven of the *Dēnkard* describes Zoroaster's revelation and the conversion of the Kayānian king Goshtāsp, which is followed by a description of the war between Goshtāsp and the Turānian king Arjāsp. According to Nyberg (1975:517) this account forms the "pre-history" of certain episodes in the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*.

⁷ Cf. Aufi 1903 II:11.

⁸ Cf. Hedāyat I:214. Although Daqiqi is generally referred to as Daqiqi-ye Balkhi in the later literature he was from Ṭus according to Moḥammad 'Aufi's (1903 II:11) *Lubāb al-albāb*, which is the earliest biographical source. Cf. Khāleqi-Motlaq 1976:221–248.

⁹ Cf. Tafazzoli 2000.

won distinction for his panegyrics and mastery of various lyrical forms. As ‘Aufi (1903 II: 11) explains, he took the pen-name Daqiqi after having been recognized for his “perfectionism in meaning” (*deqqat-e ma’āni*) and “stylistic tenderness” (*reqqat-e alfāz*). In Bukhara he probably made the acquaintance of many princes and men of letters and learning, one of the most notable being the Sāmānid historian and vizier Abu ‘Ali Moḥammad Bal‘ami. Later he also served as a court poet under Maṣṣūr I’s son and successor Nuḥ II (r. 976–997), who is praised in a *qaṣida* that contains traditional panegyric images in a rudimentary form. In between the above mentioned Sāmānid patrons, he also tried his fortune at the court of the Chaghānid (Āl-e Moḥtāj) dynasty north of Termez. Daqiqi is highly celebrated by later authors for his affluent panegyrics in praise of the Chaghānid king Fakhrod-Doula Abu Moḥzaffar, patron of the poets Monjik and Farrokhi Sistāni. He also wrote panegyrics and elegiac poems to other Chaghānid princes, such as Abu Sa’d Muḥzaffar and Abu Naṣr Aḥmad.

As Neẓāmi ‘Arūzi (1985:59) relates, Fakhrod-Doula Abu Moḥzaffar’s court minister Kh^vāja ‘Amid As‘ad was himself a poet of distinction and scholar of poetry (*shā‘er-shenās*), which certainly motivated Daqiqi (like his successor Farrokhi Sistāni) to visit the Chaghānid court. In the *Chahār maqāla* (Four Discourses) it is narrated that when the minister introduced Farrokhi Sistāni to the king he declared that no poet since Daqiqi had composed such excellent panegyric verses: “Your Excellency! I bring you a poet the like of whom the Eye of Time has not seen since Daqiqi’s face was veiled in death!”¹⁰ Farrokhi Sistāni’s cicerone, the celebrated Amir Mo‘ezzi (1941:523), has mentioned the great favours and rewards bestowed upon Daqiqi by his Chaghānid patrons in a famous couplet:

Magnificent were the rewards that
Motanabbi received from Saif al-Doula!
As magnificent as those that the learned
Daqiqi received from the Chaghānids!

فرخنده بود بر منتبّی بساط سیف

چونانکه بر حکیم دقیقّی چغانیان

To judge from his biographers, Daqiqi must have written much lyrical poetry that no longer survives. Only about 350 scattered distiches in the conventional forms *qaṣida* (ode), *ghazal* (lyrics), *qet‘e* (fragments), and *maṣnavi* (rhyming couplets) have survived. Gilbert Lazard collected the existing poetry and published it in 1964 along with a French translation and a short biographical introduction. Daqiqi’s poems had previously only existed in the form of scattered examples in anthologies, dictionaries, and treatises on rhetoric. The most important anthology is Moḥammad ‘Aufi’s *Lubāb al-albāb*, composed in the first quarter of the thirteenth century (c. 1221), which also includes some meagre biographical details. The earliest extant dictionary is Abu Maṣṣūr Asadi Ṭusi’s *Loghat-e Fors* (Persian Lexicon) in which verses of some seventy-eight poets are cited. Following his predecessors Rudaki (d. 941) and Shahid Balkhi (d. 935),¹¹ who were masters of all the poetic genres, Daqiqi’s lyrical poetry includes panegyrics, profane poems on nature, love, and wine, and moral admonition and advice (*andarz*), but also rare ex-

¹⁰ Neẓāmi ‘Arūzi 1985:63.

amples of satire, depictions of the physical milieu, and descriptions of psychological thoughts and feelings. According to Rypka (1968:99) he was conceivably the first poet to use a pen-name (*takhallos*) at the end of his *ghazal*, a custom which only later came into general use.

Like most early Persian poets, Daqiqi makes moderate use of comparisons and metaphors. He is celebrated for his stylistic innovations in the panegyric genre, particularly his integration of charming erotic passages (*taghazzol*) into the opening of the *qaṣida*. This technique is for instance manifest in his famous poem praising Abu Sa'd Muẓaffar that begins with the line *parichehre-bot-i ayyār-o delbar* ("A fairy-faced idol, unfaithful and tender"). Other stylistic skills are his nature-related descriptions of colours, adoption of concrete metaphors (for instance a scorpion-like lock of hair)¹² and use of repetition (*tekrār*) of the same word in the same distich or two adjoining ones as a means of assonance. His originality is also evident in his use of antithetical similes (*tashbih-e motazādd*), such as when he compares the bright day to the pure cheeks of the beloved, or the red ruby to her sweet lips (D 147). In these verses he realizes a more dynamic effect by changing the position of the images in the similes: it is not for instance the cheeks that resembles the bright day, but rather the day that looks like her cheeks in its intense lustre. Daqiqi's artistic mastery of the panegyric genre has been confirmed by self-flattering statements such as *madiḥ tā be bar-e man rasid 'oriān bud / az farr-o zinat-e man yāft tilsān-o azār* ("Panegyric was bare when he came to me; I gave him all his finery and splendour"),¹³ but also in these verses by Ferdousi:

He alone was my guide in poetry.
He set the kings upon the throne.
He received honour and rewards from the nobles.
His only trouble was his bad temper.
He sang the praises of the kings!
He crowned princes with his eulogies! (S 5:176)

همو بود گوینده را راه بر
که شاهی نشانند ابر گاه بر
همی یافت از مهنران ارج و گنج
ز خوی بد خویش بودی به رنج
سناینده ی شهر یاران بدی
به مدح افسر نامداران بدی

The Sāmānid dynasty took great interest in Iranian national history and entrusted a rendition of the *Shāhnāma* to Daqiqi who undoubtedly must have been considered the most distinguished of its court poets. The poet laureate set out in 976 on the commission of Nuḥ son of Maṣūr to compose a version of the entire epic and deliberately commenced with the coronation of Goshtāsp and the advent of Zoroaster. Daqiqi was the second Persian poet to put the *Shāhnāma* into verse, but the work of his precursor Mas'udi Marvazi has been lost except for some fragments. His principal source was a copy of the prose *Shāhnāma-ye Abu Maṣūri* that was kept in the Sāmānid court library in Bukhara, but since this work has disappeared it is difficult to judge how closely Daqiqi follows his archetype. Daqiqi's labour

¹¹ D 156, 161. There is no doubt that Daqiqi considered these two poets as his guides and inspirers, referring to Balkhi as "master" (*ostād*) and Rudaki as "the architect of all literary disciplines" (*emām-e fonun-e sokhan dar-be-dar*). In one line Daqiqi imitates Rudaki's famous image of the blossoming ("flower-like") face of the wine-drinker (D 150).

¹² D 163.

¹³ D 150.

remained in progress, with only a thousand distiches having been composed, when in 976 (or in early 977), he was cruelly assassinated by his Turkish servant, considered by some modern sources to be his favourite.¹⁴ The reason for the poet's untimely death is not known, but it seems plausible that the murder had religious or moralistic motives as the poet openly had dared to praise Zoroaster and pursued an epicurean lifestyle not untypical of the atmosphere of the medieval Persian courts with their stylish elegance, decadent pursuits, and dark intrigues. Ferdousi, who himself pursued a quiet pastoral life at great distance from the courts, alludes in his poetry to what he calls Daqiqi's vicious habits or unmalleable character (*khu-ye bad*), which can be interpreted in a psychological as well as a moral sense:

A youth, he came with brilliant speech!
 He sang eloquently and had a good talent!
 He said: "I will retell this book in verse."
 Everyone rejoiced at his purpose.
 Vicious habits were the friend of this youth.
 He was always struggling against his vices.
 He gave his gentle soul to his vicious habits.
 His heart was constantly discontent with the world.
 Death unexpectedly approached him.
 It imposed its gloomy helmet on his head.
 Fortune suddenly turned its face away.
 He perished by the hand of his own slave.
 He departed and this tale remained untold.
 Such awakened fate and he went away! (S I:13)

جوانی بیامد گشاده زبان
 سخن گفتنی خوب و طبعی روان
 به شعر آرم این نامه را گفت من
 از و شادمان شد دل انجمن
 جوانیش را خوی بد یار بود
 همه ساله با بد به پیگار بود
 بدان خوی بد جان شیرین بداد
 نبود از جهان دلش بیکروز بود
 برو تاختن کرد ناگاه مرگ
 به سر بر نهادش یکی تیره ترگ
 یکایک از و بخت برگشته شد
 به دست یکی بنده برگشته شد
 بر رفت او و این نامه ناگفته ماند
 چنان بخت بیدار او خفته ماند

Daqiqi's rhetoric paved the way for Ferdousi, who copied his predecessor's narrative method, using the same metre, and who paradoxically must be considered the cause of the former's reputation as an epic writer. While the invention of the hendecasyllabic metre (*motaqāreb*) cannot be attributed to Daqiqi, he made a major contribution to its formation and inspired the composition of many later heroic works (for instance the *Karshāspnāma*) that continued using the same metre.¹⁵ Although Ferdousi admired Daqiqi's talent as panegyrist and considered him a fore-runner (*rāhbar*) he frankly criticized his style and diction as dry and considered it inappropriate for the literary genre and purpose of the *Shāhnāma*, the national epic of Iran:

¹⁴ Arberry 1958:41. Daqiqi's death must roughly speaking have taken place in 976 since Ferdousi commenced his work on the *Shāhnāma* around 977.

¹⁵ The continuity of the Iranian literary heritage, as far as the *Shāhnāmā* is concerned, is also illustrated by the fact that the hendecasyllabic metre (with four *ictus*) can be traced back to Parthian times. The first Persian works to adopt the metre were Rudaki's *Sindbādnāma* and Abu Shokur Balkhi's *Āfarin-nāma*, which only have been preserved in fragments. The *Shāhnāmā* of Mas'udi Marvazi was composed in the *hazaj* metre and only survives in a few fragments in Ṭāher Maqdesi's *Ketāb al-bad' wa 'l-ta'rikh (Book of Beginnings and History, c. 996)*.

When this book fell into my hands
 my hook was angling for the fish!
 I glanced at the verses and they appeared weak.
 Many distiches seemed defective to me.
 I have recited from them here so that the king
 may know how defective verses sound. [...]
 Unless you have talent as fluent as a stream
 lay not your hand on the book of kings! (S V:175)

چو این نامه افتاد در دست من
 به ماهی گراينده شد شست من
 نگه کردم این نظم سست آدم
 بسی بیت ناتندرست آدم
 من این زان بگفتم که تا شهریار
 بداند سخن گفتن نابکار [...]]
 چو طبعی نباشد چو آب روان
 مبر پیش این نامه ی خسروان

Although Daqiqi's style is monotonous and inferior in poetic imagination compared to that of Ferdousi, who brought the national epic to perfection, Theodor Nöldeke (1896:20) found the above criticism ungenerous and unfounded. Arguing that Ferdousi's narration is not uniform throughout the work, he concluded that the poet included Daqiqi's verses to handle a sensitive issue (the rise of Zoroastrianism) which could provoke accusations of heresy.¹⁶ Olga Davidson (1994:20) claims however that Ferdousi's criticism of his preceding rival should not be taken literally but as a competitive gesture typical of oral poetics. There are different explanations for the stylistic discrepancies in the work of the two poets, such as the fact that Daqiqi died at a young age without the opportunity for revision and also his presumed effort as a historian to remain faithful to his sources. Daqiqi's narrative is rapid, sometimes even abrupt, with imagery not nearly as varied and profuse as that of his successor. He never indulges in any moral or philosophical reflections of personal nature and the portrayals of the physical settings and battle scenes are minimalistic. It is also important to observe that Ferdousi did not criticize the formal qualities, namely prosody and rhyme, of Daqiqi's epic but only its rhetorical and aesthetic merits. Unfortunately he has not left a judgment on any other poet's work that would allow us to compare his criteria of aesthetics, but as Davidson demonstrates (1994:24), he incorporated his forerunner's account to appropriate "in one stroke, the cumulative poetic traditions of his Zoroastrian predecessors".

Daqiqi promoted the patriotic tendencies in Persian poetry, praising Iranian customs and mores, such as those related to banqueting and wine-drinking. In contrast to contemporary poets, such as Manuchehri Dāmghāni, who were heavily influenced by Arabic poetry, Daqiqi kept to Iranian subject and topics. He composed numerous verses on the occasion of national festivals, such as *nouruz* and *mehrgān* (corresponding respectively to the Spring and Autumn equinoxes), which he, in accordance with Iranian national history, asserts were established by the mythical kings Jamshēd and Ferēdun.¹⁷ As he addresses his patrons he adopts symbols and images from the Sāsānian period, such as the royal standard *Derafsh-e Kāvīāni* (The Banner of Kāva), which was intimately linked to the idea of Ērānshahr and became a symbol of Iran for nationalist-minded Persian intellectuals from the ninth century onwards. Daqiqi's descriptions of wine are natural and realistic in contrast to later

¹⁶ Cf. Nöldeke 1896:149.

¹⁷ D 143, 145, 151. As Shahbazi (1996:51) has shown, many of these traditions, in particular wine-drinking and the national festivals, were condemned as anti-Islamic by contemporary Muslim scholars, such as Moḥammad Ghazāli.

Persian poetry where wine often is used as a symbolic metaphor. In accordance with ancient Iranian customs, he claims that wine reveals the essence of man as he really is. Wine is intimately linked to happiness and therefore one must drink at times of happiness:

Come let us drink wine and be happy!
This is the time for wine and happiness! (D 145)

بیا تا می خوریم و شاد باشیم
که هنگام می و ایام شادایست

Daqiqi is considered one of the most important poets of the tenth century and he quickly achieved preeminent status in Iranian literary circles. His reputation among his contemporaries and influence on later Persian poets of the following centuries are testified to by the large number of his verses that are cited in medieval anthologies, dictionaries, and treatises on rhetoric. He is acclaimed for his stylistic and thematic innovations, his intellectual penetration, and his talent for expressing subtle meanings.¹⁸ Nāṣer Khosrou (1975:7) mentions in his *Safarnāma* (Travelogue) that the poet Qaṭrān Tabrizi approached him in 1046 on his journey to Arabia and asked him to explain and elucidate some difficult passages in Daqiqi's *Divān*. This account demonstrates that copies of Daqiqi's poems had spread rapidly across the Iranian cultural sphere and that dialectical discrepancies existed between its eastern (Khorāsān) and western (Āzarbāijān) parts because of the idiosyncrasies contained in the early literary language. Daqiqi is mentioned by Farrokhi Sistāni (1993:179) in a panegyric in praise of Abu Moẓaffar, which is not very surprising given his activities at the Chaghānid court. But many other later poets, such as 'Aẓā'eri Rāzi, Shamsod-din Suzani, Adib Šāber Termezi, and Tājod-din Purbahā Termezi, also pay tribute to him. Daqiqi is also occasionally referred to and cited in historical works, such as Abo'l-Faẓl Bayhaqi's *Tārikh-e Mas'udi* (History of Mas'ud I). Lazard (1964 I:36) ranks him as the most excellent early Persian poet between Rudaki and Ferdousi, emphasizing his mastery of the major poetic forms and the variety of his lyrical themes: "Tout ceci atteste un talent non seulement brillant, mais encore doué dans tous les genres, et, si l'on songe à la mort prématurée du poète, exceptionnellement fécond."

The coming of Zoroaster

Daqiqi's literary reputation is largely owing to his epic on the rise of Zoroastrianism which Ferdousi preserved for posterity in the *Shāhnāma*. Ferdousi reveals that he incorporated his predecessor's verses into his own work because of a vision, but this claim is probably a mere poetic figment (S V:75). Daqiqi gives a fairly full account of Goshtāsp, detailing his accession; his conversion to Zoroastrianism; his family and courtiers; and the beginning of his wars with the Turānians. It is important to emphasize that his narrative in many respects reflects a legendary, rather than historical representation of Zoroaster. His account traditionally forms part of the third book of the *Shāhnāma* that deals with the semi-legendary period stretching from the reign of Lohrāsp to the life of Qobād, the father of Ardashēr I, the founder of the

¹⁸ 'Aufi 1903 II:11 and Ṣafā 1987:415.

Sāsānian dynasty. The most dramatic and perhaps most influential event in this part is the tale of the seven labours (*haftkhvān*) of the armour-clad hero Esfandiār, who eventually is slain by Rostam. Daqiqi's account of Goshtāsp and Zoroaster is however of particular interest because of its religious contents. The references in the Avestā to the kings and heroes of the epic are sufficient to demonstrate that the legend already existed in its essential outlines when the former work was composed. The most ancient elements of the *Shāhnāma* comprise in fact the old Iranian myths as recalled in the Gāthās, the oldest part of the Avestā. It is reasonable to assume that the tale of Goshtāsp was performed by minstrels at his own court in the form of lays in the Avestān tongue, and continued to be celebrated at Zoroastrian courts, since it was linked with the establishment and survival of the faith. As such it was handed down orally from generation to generation, and similar to many Iranian legends and semi-historical stories it was not committed to writing until the Sāsānian period (Boyce 1955).

Zoroaster appeared in the eastern part of the Iranian cultural sphere during the reign of the semi-mythic king Goshtāsp (Av. Vishtāspa),¹⁹ son of Lohrāsp (Av. Aurvat.aspa) and the last ruler of the Kayānian dynasty. The history of Zoroaster's career involves some tenacious problems, notably the date and homeland of Goshtāsp. In Christensen's (1931:26) view, Goshtāsp, who is a most important personality in the Gāthās, must be considered a wholly historical figure and the religious tradition knows of no other early patron of the faith than him. Christensen (1931:27ff) has in fact argued for the historicity of the whole Kayānian era, which is reflected in the fact that the narrative mode of the *Shāhnāma* becomes less mythical and supernatural with less involvement of the deities. Nevertheless it is difficult to know whether the accomplishments attributed to Zoroaster are more or less historical facts, or legends that became identified with him. According to the Gāthās, Zoroaster had been persecuted in his homeland and found refuge with king Goshtāsp, who believed in him and supported him in the spreading of the new faith. He is mentioned four times by the prophet, who addresses him as Kavi. The exact status of Goshtāsp is undetermined, but his title according to Christensen (1931:9), was intimately connected with rulership among the eastern Iranians. Goshtāsp is celebrated as an ally of Zoroaster and as the establisher of the first Zoroastrian community. The Yashts also mention the struggle of Goshtāsp and Zarēr (Av. Zairivairi) of the House of Naotara against Arjāsp (Av. Arəjaṭ.aspa), the king of the Hyōns (Av. Hyaona), who are labelled as "followers of falsehood" (Av. *drəgvant*) (Yt 5:108–117; 9:30).

It is generally agreed, based on linguistic evidence, that Zoroaster and his associates belonged among the eastern Iranians, that is, to those tribes that settled in the regions on the eastern Iranian plateau.²⁰ Attempts at finding their exact location have

¹⁹ With the normal development of Middle Persian *wi-* into *gu-*, in Persian the name became Goshtāsp. The most probable explanation of the name is "whose horses are let loose (for the race)".

²⁰ There is no mention of Persia and Media in the Avestā. In the *Vendīdād* (Given against the Demons) (1.3–19) seventeen lands that all belonged to the east and north-east of the Iranian plateau are enumerated. Some of these lands, which accepted the Zoroastrian faith relatively early, have been identified: Airyana Vaēja (the centre of the world, Chorasmia according to Henning, a mythological construct according to Gnoli), Gava (Sogdiana), Mōuru (Margiana), Bākhōi (Bactria), Nisāya (Nisa), Harōiva (Herat) and Vaēkərəta (Gandhara).

proved inconclusive because of the scarcity of geographical references in the Avestā, the mythic element in traditional Iranian cosmography, and the incongruities of the later sources (Boyce 1975:3–4). The Bactrians claimed that Goshtāsp, like other Kayānian kings, had his court in Balkh and that the main scenes of his activities were in Bactria, whereas the Parthians asserted that he had erected their sacred fire Borzēn-Mehr on Mount Rēvand in Khorāsān. The Parthian version gained wide credence through pilgrims and became dominant in the late Middle Persian commentaries on the Avestā, whereas the Bactrian claim is attested in the early Islamic period but most fully set out in the *Shāhnāma*.²¹ As to the date of Zoroaster, scholars are divided between those who put him in the seventh or sixth century B.C. and those who maintain a much earlier dating, around 1200 B.C. The lack of accurate information in the Avestā means that the date cannot be decided with certainty, but merely established within approximate chronological limits. Mary Boyce (1975: 3) puts the date between 1500 and 1200 B.C. based on the fact that the language of the Gāthās is approximately as archaic as the related dialect in which the Rig-Veda hymns were composed and because Zoroaster must have lived before the time of the great Iranian migrations into the land that came to be named after them (i.e. Iran). Assigning his life to a period in distant prehistory explains why only the most important facts survive in the religious and national traditions and why many details have been lost.²²

The *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* is a literary work that cannot exclusively be treated as a historical source. It belongs to the heroic genre and is written with a specific purpose and for a specific audience. The present study is nonetheless interested in the extent to which its literal descriptions correlate with other versions of the coming of Zoroaster found in the old Avestā and the later Zoroastrian literature. The narrative background to Daqiqi's account is given by Ferdousi in the preceding chapter of the *Shāhnāma*. Goshtāsp's relationship to his father Lohrāsp, a rather uncharismatic but gentle ruler, was far from amicable, and while still a boy, the prince, dissatisfied with his position at the court, demands to be named as heir to the throne. When his demand is refused, he secretly leaves Iran and ends up in Rome (Rum), where he lives incognito until he becomes the lover and husband of the emperor's daughter Nāhid ("Venus") "whom he called Katāyūn" (S V:78).²³ He successfully undertakes great quests in Rome and it is here that a similarity can be seen with the romantic story of Zariadrēs in the history of Alexander. In the Zoroastrian tradition, Goshtāsp's wife is mentioned by the name of Ātōsā (Av. Hutaosā) of the Naotara

²¹ Boyce 1975:275–276. Bactria, as Boyce (1992:11–12) argues, was more early attested since Arabic sources (Ṭabari and Mas'udi) on the authority of the *Kh'adāy-nāmag*, insist that Goshtāsp's court was in Balkh.

²² Cf. Gnoli 2000 and Stausberg 2002 I:26–31. Yarshater (1983:437) puts forward that the Avestā ending *aspa* ("having horse") in the names of Lohrāsp, Goshtāsp, Arjāsp, and Jāmāsp must refer to a chief element in the tribal culture of the later Kayānians in relation to the previous generation of Kayānian rulers who bore the title Kay (Av. Kavi) in the sense of "king", namely Kay Kāvad, Kay Kāvus, and Kay Khosrou.

²³ In the *Shāhnāma*, the word Rum denotes the Western clime, corresponding to Greece and Rome, which according to Iranian mythology was assigned to Salm by his father Ferēdun. According to an ancient description of the world included in the prologue of the *Shāhnāma-ye Abu Manṣuri*, Iran stretches from Oxus to the Nile and Rum is one of its neighbours (Shahbazi 1990:214).

clan (Yt 15:35). Since neither Nāhid nor Katāyun can be a misreading of Hutaosā, they must be different personages and it is likely that he married twice, first to the Roman princess in his youth and then to Ātōsā on the demise of his first queen. As Lohrāsp had decided to spend the rest of his days in the Nōbahār temple in Balkh he invites his son back to Iran promising to resign the throne in his favour.²⁴ Goshtāsp returns triumphantly to his home-country with his Roman bride and is reconciled with his father. According to Ferdousi, Daqiqi's account begins as he is virtually acclaimed as the new ruler of Iran:

When Lohrāsp resigned the throne to Goshtāsp,
he descended and prepared himself for journey.
He was destined to go to Nōbahār in Balkh,
since the worshipers of God in that period
held that sanctuary in reverence
as the Arabs revere Mecca now. (S V:76–77)

چو گشتاسب را داد لهراسب تخت
فرود آمد از تخت و بر بست رخت
ببلخ گزین شد بدان نوبهار
که یزدان پرستان بدان روزگار
مران خانه را داشتندی چنان
که مر مگه را تازیان این زمان

Having succeeded to his father's throne, Goshtāsp is celebrated as possessing, like Zoroaster himself, the divine glory (*farr*), which here corresponds to the concept of royal fortune. In the *Shāhnāma* the concept of royal glory (*farr-e shāhanshāhi*) is a fundamental motif of Iranian kingship. It is presented as a divine investiture and a hereditary dynastic charisma belonging to the Iranian kings. As Daqiqi relates, Goshtāsp is acknowledged as the new monarch of Iran by the great emperors of the world except for king Arjāsp of Turān "who would not hear advice" (S V: 79). Not long after Goshtāsp's coronation Zoroaster appears at the Kayānian court in Balkh.²⁵ In Daqiqi's account the spirit of Zoroaster is metaphorically connected with a great tree, bearing the immortal fruit of wisdom, with many branches spread far and wide:

Its leafage precepts and its fruitage wisdom.
How shall the one die who has eaten such a fruit?
A tree right fortunate and named Zoroaster,
who cleansed the world from evil deeds. (S V:79–80)

همه برگ او پند و بارش خرد
کسی کز خرد بر خورد کی مرد
خجسته پیی نام او زرد هشت
کز آهر منی دست گیتی بشست

The motif of the cosmic tree is very ancient and is the common patrimony of many Indo-European peoples. In the Iranian tradition the tree can be a symbol of the prophet himself (i.e. the supreme man), of the world, and of the Bounteous Immortal (Av. *spəntəm aməshətm*) Vohu Manah (Good Mind) (Mo' in 1948:340). Zoroaster's connection with the tree is also present in the ancient legends according to which he plants a cypress that is at the same time himself (see below). The notion that the advent of Zoroaster "cleansed the world from evil deeds" reflects the idea expressed in

²⁴ The Nōbahār temple was according to Daqiqi dedicated to the sun deity Miθra (S V:77). Although it was known as a fire temple in the Zoroastrian tradition for a long period it was a Buddhist temple and the name is likely to be from the Buddhist Sanskrit *nava-vihāra* ("new monastery"). Ferdousi confuses the Nōbahār temple with the Borzēn-Mehr that was erected by Goshtāsp after the advent of Zoroaster (S V:6).

²⁵ The reference to Balkh as the capital of Goshtāsp is made in the later passage where the Turānian envoys arrive at his court. Cf. S V:93.

the Yashts that evil had to flee from the face of the earth when Zoroaster was born (Yt 17:19; 19:81).²⁶ In the variant reading of the Moscow edition (VI: 68) the final line of the above passage captures the very essence of Zoroaster's cosmic function in the struggle between good and evil:

the slayer of the malignant Ahriman.²⁷

که آهرمن بدکنش را بگشت

Although the meaning of this verse is similar to the expression “cleansed the world from evil deeds” in Khāleqi-Moṭlaq's version, the description of Zoroaster as the “slayer” of Ahriman (the evil spirit) more explicitly conveys the notion that the prophet embodies the triumph of good over evil. According to the Gāthās (30:3; 45: 2) good and evil are absolute, but not symmetrical, antitheses and have distinct sources, with evil trying to destroy Ahura Mazdā's creation, and good trying to sustain it. In contrast to the Abrahamic conception of God, Ahura Mazdā is all good, and no evil originates from the creator. The opposition between the spirits of good and evil is the great drama of choice dominating the life of man and the destiny of the world. Although there is no mention in Daqiqi's account of Zoroaster's early career or his denunciation of the ritual practices of the old religion, it is clear that he has received a revelation and the gift of preaching.²⁸ The prophet considers himself a visionary and publicly proclaims his new religion to Goshtāsp, inviting him to follow his teachings:

He addressed the Kayānian king: “I am a prophet!
I will bring you wisdom as a guide.” (S V:80)

به شاه کیان گفت پیغامبرم
سوی تو خرد رهنمون آورم

Zoroaster is presented by the poet in accordance with the Avestā as a prophet who advocates wisdom and goodness.²⁹ In Zoroastrianism the highest praise is given to wisdom (*kherad*) both as the predominant cosmic force in the universe and as innate human wisdom or good judgment. The centrality of wisdom is reflected in the fact that Mazdā – which is generally taken to be the proper name of the highest deity of worship – means “wisdom”. The above reference to wisdom can hence be interpreted according to both meanings. In Daqiqi's account Zoroaster invites the king to learn about God's ways and religion (*rāh o āyin-e uy*). The poet generally refers to Zoroastrianism by its traditional Zoroastrian name the “good religion” (*dēn-e behi*) and identifies it as opposed to the religion of “falsehood” (*drug*).³⁰ Zoroaster im-

²⁶ Cf. Dk 5:2; 7:4.63.

²⁷ In the *Shāhnāma* Ahriman is referred to as Āherman or Ahreman according to the exigencies of metre and rhyme.

²⁸ There is no mention in Daqiqi's verses of Zoroaster's age upon his arrival at Goshtāsp's court. According to the *Dēnkard* (Dk 4:1) *he began to preach at the age of thirty and was received by the patron ten years later*. This account is also confirmed by the Pahlavi text *Vizīdagihā ī Zādspram* (*Anthology of Zādspram*) written by the ninth-century Zoroastrian scholar and author Zādspram.

²⁹ Schaefer (1932:295) claims that the description of Zoroaster as a prophet (*payghāambar*) reflects the Islamic concept of divine messenger (*rasul*). This view is incorrect since Zoroaster appears in the Gāthās as well as the Zand literature as a prophet rather than a philosopher or a lawgiver.

³⁰ Daqiqi refers to Zoroastrianism as the “pure religion” (*dēn-e pāk*) and Ferdousi twice calls it the “religion of God” (*dēn-e yazdān*). Cf. S V:117 and VIII:160.

aged humanity as divided into two opposing parties, and the term "good religion" (*vañuhī daēnā*)³¹ is adopted in the Gāthās (Y 53.1–4) as the communal expression of the faith. The epithet "good" is in accordance with the Zoroastrian triad of good "thought, word, and deed", and with the Gāthic description of Ahura Mazdā as the father of "good thinking" (Y 47.2). The conflict between Zoroaster's associates (the Avestān people) and their enemies (the Turānians), who remained faithful to the old religion, is given cosmic dimensions in Daqiqi's account and is perceived as constituting a dynamic phase in the dualistic struggle between good and evil.

According to the *Shāhnāma*, Zoroaster claims before Goshtāsp to have received a revelation in the presence of the one supreme Creator in which he was taught the principles of the good religion. Daqiqi's description of the Zoroastrian God and His creation of heaven and earth (*āsmān o zamin*) are in accordance with the description in the Gāthās (Y. 44:4) of Ahura Mazdā as the creator of the skies, the earth, the plants, and the waters.³² As illustrated in the conversion of Goshtāsp he presents Zoroaster's religion as a faith based on wisdom and free will. It is a faith that demands adherence by conscious choice. The prophet is described as an ethical dualist who instructs people to make the right choice between good and evil:

"Reflect and act according to the religion.
Choose wisdom and [good] speech in this world.
Learn the teachings of the good religion
since governance is not well without faith!" (S V:80)

نگر تا چه گوید برآن کار کن
خرد برگزین از جهان و سخن
بیاموز آیین و دین بهی
که بی دین ناخوب باشد مهی

The basic opposition between good and evil is projected on all spiritual and mundane levels where the two poles are opposed. Sovereignty cannot be separated from conformity to the Zoroastrian faith. It is significant that in Daqiqi's version the prophet believes in the sacred foundation of governance, even stating that secular power has no worth without divine authority. The notion of the equally indispensable roles of the supreme religious authority (Zoroastrianism) and the temporal power (monarchy) is not a genuine Avestān idea but replicates later Sāsānian concepts of religion and kingship, which indicates that in this respect Daqiqi's original sources belonged to that period.

Goshtāsp immediately embraced Zoroaster's religion and assembled his family,

³¹ Insler (Y 53.1, footnote) translates this term as "good conception", that is "the good vision of a world ruled by truth and good thinking". Cf. Y 44.10.

³² Cf. S V:80. In the words of Turānian king Arjāsp, as he summons and informs the priests about Zoroaster's appearance, the prophet had been brought into the immediate presence of God by means of what appears to have been a heavenly journey:

He says: "I have come down from heaven.
I have come down from the master of the world.
I have beheld the Lord in paradise.
I have beheld the Zand-Avestā in His writing." (S V:86)

همی گوید از آسمان آمدم
ز نزد خدای جهان آمدم
خداوند را دیدم اندر بهشت
من این زند و استا همه زو نوشت

From this verse it is evident that Daqiqi had an incorrect understanding of the difference between the Avestā and its late Middle Persian commentaries, e.g. the Zand. The compound construction Zand-Avestā (which appears as *zand o ostā* in the *Shāhnāma*) became prevalent in the early Islamic period and it is not clear if Daqiqi made any distinction between them.

his ministers, physicians, governors, and generals, who all collectively converted to the new faith. Among the first converts were his father Lohrāsp and his brother Zarēr, but there is no mention of the conversion of his wife Ātōsā and his eldest son, the crown-prince Esfandiār, who became a zealous champion of the Zoroastrian faith. The Yashts narrate that Ātōsā was influential in Goshtāsp's conversion and according to tradition she herself was the first convert to Zoroastrianism (Yt 9:26). In the *Shāhnāma* the conversion ceremony is described as assuming the sacred "girdle" (*kosti*) but there is no mention of other Zoroastrian ritual practices in this passage apart from the veneration of fire.³³ The custom of the girdle goes back to the Indo-Iranian initiation ritual where men put on a woven cord as a sign of their membership in the religious community. The symbolism of the cord were made more elaborate during the centuries and still today Zoroastrian men and women wear the cord at the time of initiation and for their daily prayers. From the *Shāhnāma* it is not apparent on what grounds Goshtāsp accepted the faith, but it seems probable that it was the priority given by Zoroaster to wisdom (which is accentuated by Daqiqi). The advent of Zoroaster was in any case so transformative that as a result of his glory (*farr*) evil disappeared from the hearts of wicked, the seeds were cleansed from all defilement, and the graves (*dakhmahā*) were covered by spiritual radiance.³⁴ It is significant that in one ancient manuscript version (London dated 1276) Zoroaster is portrayed in this passage as a healer, who cured the new believers from different illnesses, since this view reflects the priestly tradition as embodied in the *Dēnkard* (Dk 7:5.9–10) and other Pahlavi works.³⁵

After his conversion Goshtāsp dispatched his troops throughout the provinces and sent Zoroastrian scholars (*moadān*) to propagate the faith and set up fire-temples throughout the kingdom. Although it is impossible to reconstruct the early spread of Zoroastrianism from a historical point of view, Zoroaster probably played an active role in organizing the new society and establishing religious practices and norms of conduct. The spread of the religion was most likely the work of numerous individual missionaries going from one community to another. Daqiqi's account is in accordance with the general notion in the Yashts that Goshtāsp, by adopting Zoroaster's religion, helped to pave the way for righteousness in the world (Yt 13:99; 19:93). However, in contrast to the later Pahlavi literature, his principal interest is not the spread of the faith throughout the seven regions (*haft keshvar*) but the heroic battles fought by Goshtāsp, his brother, and his sons against the Turānians. From a thematic point of view this feature shows that he draws heavily on the royal tradition with its interest in the protection of the homeland and the victorious battles of the Kayānian dynasty. As Daqiqi relates, Zoro-

³³ S V:81. Ferdousi, like Daqiqi, is well informed about the spiritual foundation of the Zoroastrian veneration of fire. He defends Zoroastrianism against the common Muslim accusations of "fire-worship" (*mapendār ke ātash-parastān budand*) and describes the purpose of pilgrimage to the fire temple as "to pray before God" (*dar pēsh-e yazdān budand*) (S IV:312).

³⁴ S V:81. As Mo'in (1948:339) explains, the notion that the graves were covered by spiritual light must be considered a Muslim influence since any place for the dead is considered impure and a potential pollutant according to Zoroastrian beliefs. It is however significant that Daqiqi adopts the Zoroastrian word *dakhma*.

³⁵ Cf. S V:81.

aster then built the fire-temple Borzēn-Mehr³⁶ in the city where Goshtāsp had his court. The tradition of the historical foundation of this fire-temple is lost in antiquity but it was established in north-eastern Iran as suggested by its Parthian name Borzēn ("Exalted"). The precise location of the fire is not known, but according to Zoroastrian tradition it was enthroned on Mount Rēvand (Av. Raēvant) in a dependency of Nishāpur (in former Parthian territory). Since Daqiqi had previously referred to Balkh as Goshtāsp's capital the story here takes an unexpected Parthian turn.

The Borzēn-Mehr seems to have been the most glorious fire among the Parthians and was considered by posterity as a sacred fire of the highest grade (MP *ātakhsh ī vahrām*) along with the fires of Farnbāg and Goshnasp. According to later Pahlavi sources such as *Bundahishn* (18.2–7) the Borzēn-Mehr was associated with Zoroaster and Goshtāsp, and was believed to have been brought into existence by and to have burned in front of Ahura Mazdā. This is reflected in Ferdousi's words in the continuation of the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* that the prophet "brought a container for burning incense out of heaven" (S V:352). In the Sāsānian period the Borzēn-Mehr was downgraded with respect to the two great western Iranian fires but it nevertheless retained its fame and glory in the three-fold political and ecclesiastical division of Iran between the Parthians, the Persians, and the Medes. The Persian fire of Farnbāg and the Median fire of Goshnasp were held to represent the priesthood and the warriors, while the guardianship of the lowly third estate of society, i.e. the classes of herdsmen and farmers, was relegated to the Borzēn-Mehr. This three-fold division is envisaged in the *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr ī Pābagān* (The Acts of Ardashēr son of Pābag) where Pābag sees in a dream that the great sacred fires are burning in the house of Sāsān, which is interpreted as a sign that the "sovereignty of the world" will come to Sāsān or a member of his family.³⁷ As Boyce (1983:473) explains, the real character of Borzēn-Mehr has been forgotten in history and it is not known how long it remained under Islamic rule: "It may be safely assumed that the fire was a great centre of pilgrimage, even after the fall of the Arsacids; but how long its priests were able to preserve it in the Islamic period is not recorded."

As Daqiqi relates Zoroaster, then planted a cypress sapling before the temple portal saying that this "noble cypress" (*sarv-e āzāda*) had been "divinely sent from heaven" (*ze mēnō ferestād ze man khodāy*) (S V:83). The word for heaven (*mēnō*, MP *mēnōg*) has the etymological meaning "spiritual" or "of the spirit" and refers more generally to the spiritual world or a spiritual state as contrasted to the physical world or a physical condition (*gētē*, MP *gētīg*) in the Zoroastrian tradition. Daqiqi's reference to a transcendent origin of the cypress has important cosmic implications since the *mēnōg* creation is immune to the assaults of Ahriman (Boyce 1975:230). There is however no mention of a sacred cypress in the Avestā and the legend seems to have developed under the influence of the myth about the Borzēn-Mehr. In the *Shāhnāma* the straight-stemmed tree is called Kashmar after its alleged location on

³⁶ Borzēn-Mehr appears as Mehr-Borzēn in the text according to the exigencies of metre and rhyme.

³⁷ Asha 1999:11–13.

Mount Rēvand in the Nishāpur Mountains.³⁸ Arabic sources provide historical evidence of the existence of a sacred cypress in Kashmar that flourished majestically until 861 when it was desecrated in accordance with an edict of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Motavakkel. The caliph, according to Ta‘ālabī Nishāburi, ordered his governor in Khorāsān to have the cypress cut into pieces and sent to Baghdad to the profound grief of the local Zoroastrians. He was not however able to see the tree himself since he was assassinated before the convoy reached the capital.³⁹ It is evident from the geographical shift in the narrative from Balkh to Kashmar that Daqīqi fitted together the rival Bactrian and Parthian claims about the centre of Zoroaster’s activities, probably already present in his sources, into a continuous narrative leaving incompatibilities unresolved.

In Daqīqi’s account the cypress essentially has a symbolic importance for the foundation of the Zoroastrian religion but it also acquires a cosmic function as the spiritual tree of the good spirit that helps the believer “to ascend to heaven” (*z-injā be mēnō gerāy*) (S V:83). This cosmic significance is also reinforced by the poet’s assertion that Zoroaster “bound the demon in fetters” at the temple (*bebast andar u div rā*) (S V:84). The allusion to a demon should be interpreted as referring to the general personification of evil since there is no mention of a specific demon in this passage. The foundation of a new cosmic order by Zoroaster hence signifies the replacement of disorder and chaos by peace and stability. The planting of the cypress is more specifically a memorial of Goshtāsp’s conversion to Zoroastrianism, since Daqīqi mentions that the prophet placed an inscription upon the tree to proclaim that his first convert had embraced the new faith and as a testimony that “wisdom was disseminating justice”. Although the legend is most likely of Parthian origin, this expression by the poet reflects the Sāsānian notion of the “holy empire” if wisdom (*kherad*) and justice (*dād*) are understood as metaphors for religion and the worldly order respectively:

He wrote on the tall cypress tree:
 “Goshtāsp has accepted the good religion.”
 He made the noble cypress witness
 that wisdom was disseminating justice. (S V:82)

نیشتش بر این زاد سرو سهی
 که پذیرفت گشتاسپ دین بهی
 گوا کرد مر سرو آزاد را
 چنین گستراند خرد داد را

According to Daqīqi, the cypress grew so huge in a few years that “a lasso (*kamand*) could not surround its trunk” (S V:82). As the cypress matured, Goshtāsp erected over it a magnificent palace with large vaulted halls (*eyvān*) made of gold and precious stones. On its inner walls, the court artists painted the images of ancient Iranian kings, such as Jamshēd and his descendant Ferēdun. The king then declared it an official place of pilgrimage and invited peoples of all nations to embrace Zoroastrianism and to visit the holy shrine and marvel at the cypress:

³⁸ In *Bundahishn* it is similarly stressed that the abode of Borzēn-Mehr was on Mount Rēvand. Cf. *The Bundahishn or Knowledge from the Zand*, ed. E. W. West, Oxford, 1897, 17:8 and 12:18.

³⁹ Cf. Nafisi 1948:164–169.

Now everyone who hears my advice
 come to the Kashmar cypress on foot!
 Adopt you all the way of Zoroaster
 and do not give praise to the Chinese idol!⁴⁰
 In the glory and greatness of the monarch of Iran
 put on the girdle around your loins!
 Follow the custom of tying the girdle.
 Trust in the shadow of this cypress tree.⁴¹
 Fix your gaze upon the fire-temple
 as bidden by the truthful prophet. (S V:83–84)

کنون هر که این پند من بشنوید
 پیاده سوی سرو کشمر روید
 بگریید یک سر ره زرد هست
 به سوی بت چین مدارید پشت
 به برز و فر شاه ایرانیان
 ببندید کستی همه بر میان
 به آیین کستی بیستن روید
 بدین سایه‌ی سروین بغنوید
 سوی گنبد آذر آرید روی
 به فرمان پیغامبر راستگوی

The sanctity of the tree is suggested by its status as a miracle bearing witness to the truth and grandeur of Zoroaster's religion, but it is also accentuated by Daqiqi's words "come on foot". He alludes to the Turānians as worshippers of Chinese idols (*bot-e chin*), which must be a reference to the old Iranian veneration of nature deities (*Av. yazata-*), since Zoroaster had proclaimed Ahura Mazdā to be the one uncreated God and Creator of all other beneficent deities. The portrayal of Zoroaster as an iconoclast may also reflect religious conditions in the Sāsānian period when the Zoroastrian priesthood demolished images of deities and encouraged people to visit fire temples. The term "Chinese" is used as synonymous with Turānian in the *Shāhnāma*. The references alternatively to Turān, Turk, and Chinese also reflect notions and conditions of the late Sāsānian period when the Turkish nomads began to threaten Iran's north-eastern frontier. It is important to observe that Daqiqi distinguishes between various forms of pre-Zoroastrian religious practice. While he disapproves of the Turānian idol worship he commends the old Iranian veneration of the sun (closely linked to Av. Mīθra, MP Mēhr) as illustrated in his reference to Lohrāsp's sanctuary in the Nōbahār temple of Balkh:

He stood in God's presence for thirty years.
 Such is the way that men should serve the Lord.
 He offered supplication to the sun
 according to the custom of Jamshēd. (S V:77)

همی بود سی سال پیشش به پای
 بر آنسان پرستید باید خدای
 نیایش همی کرد خورشید را
 چنان بوده بد راه جمشید را

The religious was between Iran and Turān

In Daqiqi's account, the fire-temple Borzēn-Mehr soon became an object of devotion and pilgrimage as people were attracted to the new faith. Zoroaster played a key role in the social reconstruction and material rebuilding of the Iranian realm, advising Goshtāsp on spiritual as well as mundane matters. As Daqiqi relates, the king had good fortune in governance and the nation prospered because his star was "blessed" (*khøjasta*) (S V:84). At this stage Arjāsp of Turān, fearing the growing strength of Iran, enters the narrative and demands tribute (*bāzh*) from Goshtāsp. In the *Shāhnāma* the Turānian kings and their armies are often depicted as representa-

⁴⁰ It is significant that Daqiqi uses the Zoroastrian term *yasht* (worship by praise) above.

⁴¹ The protective shade of the cypress is a common metaphor in classical Persian poetry.

tives of the cosmic evil spirit (Ahriman) and there is a general tendency in Iranian national history to regard them as the natural foes of the Iranians. The Turānians (Av. Tūriya) are however an Iranian people from the standpoint of the Avestā.⁴² The conflicts between the Avestān people and some of the Tūriya are mentioned in the Fravardīn Yasht, which suggests that the oppositions resulted from Zoroaster's proselytizing in Turānian regions (Yt 13:37–38).⁴³ The matter of tribute must be considered an anachronism since there is no mention of Iran's vassal relationship to Turān in other sources. In Daqiqi's account Zoroaster advises Goshtāsp to reject Arjāsp's demand for tribute and defend Iran's independence:

The sage Zoroaster told the Kayānian king:
 "It is not in accordance with our faith
 that you should pay tribute to the ruler of China.
 This is unauthorized in our religion!" (S V:84–85)

به شاه کیان گفت زردشت پیر
 که در دین ما این نباشد حژیر
 که تو باژ بدھی به سالار چین
 نه اندر خور دین ما باشد این

Zoroaster claimed that no king in Iran in the past had paid tribute to the rulers of Turān and that its north-eastern neighbour always had been powerless (*tāv*) against Iran. In this respect Daqiqi's representation of Zoroaster reflects the royal tradition in Iranian national history with its emphasis on patriotism and the protection of the homeland. The prophet's instruction, as the poet relates, had a deep impact on Goshtāsp, since the loyal king consented to his advice. This is the last time Zoroaster speaks in the *Shāhnāma*.

Arjāsp, who already was annoyed at what he considered a betrayal of the old faith, was brought news by a "valiant demon" (*narre div-i*) about the intentions of the Iranian king (S V:85). This demon is absent in the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, but is referred to as "the demon of wrath" (*khēshm dīv*, Av. Aēshōma) in the *Dēnkard* (Dk 7:4.87), which gives an extensive legendary biography of Zoroaster. In the Zoroastrian tradition the demons (Av. *daēvas*) play an important role in the existential drama and are responsible for cosmic and corporeal destruction as well as moral and social corruption. According to the Yashts, Aēshōma has the position of helper and messenger of the evil spirit (Av. *angra mainyu*) but his role is secondary since evil is not considered a creative force in the cosmic order (Yt 10:93; 19:46). As is evident from Daqiqi's description, the term *narre div-i* can be interpreted metaphysically as meaning a distinct demon, but it can also be understood psychologically as the function and quality of that demon realized in man. In the same passage of the *Dēnkard* it is also mentioned that when Goshtāsp had embraced the new religion the demons of hell were troubled and "the demon of wrath" rushed to the "wicked Arjāsp" inciting him to war. This is reflected in Daqiqi's words that the Turānian ruler had "the demons for servants" and hence "was doomed to chains" (S V:79). Although the royal tradition operated with concepts

⁴² In the Fravardīn Yasht the Tūriya are recognized as an Iranian people along with the Airiya, Sairima, Sāinu, and Dāhi (Yt 13:143–144). Airiya appears to be the term the Avestān people use of themselves. In the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, Arjāsp is described as the lord of the Hyōn or Xyōn (Av. Hyaona), a hostile tribe who adhered to the pre-Zoroastrian religion and who have been identified with the Chionites of the classical texts.

⁴³ Cf. Nyberg 1937:280–294.

animating the priestly tradition, the fact that Daqiqi mentions a demon in this context unmistakably reflects his religious orientation and suggests that he had access to a more archaic, priestly version of the story.

It is significant that Arjāsp takes to the sword at the instigation of a "demon", since war is considered fundamentally evil in Zoroastrianism. It is associated with the evil spirit (Ahriman), who is ignorant and wholly malign, in contrast to peace, which is related to Ahura Mazdā. In his study on the concepts of war and peace in Iranian traditions Bo Utas (2008:42) demonstrates that the Zoroastrian view, as expressed in the Gāthās, insists that "'peace' (or at least 'concord') is something morally good and desirable in itself, while 'war' (or 'discord') is something morally bad and worthy of blame". This religious conception survives in Iranian national history writings as shown by many central passages relating to war and peace (*jang o āshti*) in the *Shāhnāma*.⁴⁴ In Daqiqi's account, the disapproving attitude to war is reflected in the fact that Goshtāsp's trusted advisor and vizier Jāmāsp (Av. Jāmāspa) is disheartened (*nayāmad kh^vosh*) when Goshtāsp asks him to teach him the strategies and tactics of war, even though he knows that the enemy is approaching.⁴⁵ It is also exhibited in the poet's words after having counted the losses on each side in the second war between Iran and Turān in which Iran was victorious: "Shun, if you can, such ill scenes evermore" (S V:149).

Arjāsp is filled with contempt for Zoroaster and reacts fiercely to Goshtāsp's refusal to pay the tribute. In a letter addressed to Goshtāsp he threatens to resume the ancient struggle between the two nations if the Iranian king does not abandon Zoroastrianism, return to the old faith, and pay tribute in compliance with his demands. He praises the kings of the Kayānian dynasty and offers bribes, but threatens to lay the whole country waste if Goshtāsp is misled by the "old charlatan" (*pir-e jādu*), referring to Zoroaster (S V:90). Arjāsp's line of reasoning suggests that the cause of his indignation is not the issue of the tribute but Goshtāsp's conversion and the rapid spread of Zoroaster's doctrines. This account of the conflict, which exists in the *Dēnkard* (Dk 7:4.77) but is absent in the *Ayādgar ī Zarērān*, is in accordance with the Gāthic view that the followers of the old religion did not gently acquiesce in the new religious authority claimed by Zoroaster. Resenting the establishment of the new faith, Arjāsp bitterly laments:

"All have freely embraced his religion
The world has become filled with his cult!
He has established himself as a prophet in Iran
by such obscene methods and reckless words!" (S V:87)

گرفتند از او سر به سر دین او
جهان پر شد از راه و آیین او
نشست اندر ایران به پیغامبری
به کاری چنان یافه و سرسری

When Arjāsp's letter is delivered to the Iranian court by his brother, the warrior champion Biderafsh, Goshtāsp assembles Zoroaster and his court ministers to take counsel with them on the issue. The Iranian king is firm in his belief in the new religion and claims his own superiority over Arjāsp by virtue of his noble descent from Iraj, the youngest son of Ferēdun. An interesting aspect of Daqiqi's version is that it

⁴⁴ For quotations and references to Ferdousi, see Utas 2008:31–46.

⁴⁵ Cf. S V:107.

is Goshtāsp's brother Zarēr and son Esfandiār (Av. Spəntōdāta), and not Zoroaster or Jāmāsp, who gives the definite response after the king has spoken, declaring their readiness to go to war if Arjāsp does not surrender to Goshtāsp and embrace Zoroaster's teachings.⁴⁶ Although Zoroaster is mentioned by name he is placed entirely in the periphery of the dramatic events that unfold. The remainder of Daqiqi's verses contain a detailed description of the religious war between Goshtāsp and Arjāsp. Goshtāsp consents to the will of Zarēr and Esfandiār and sends envoys to Arjāsp rejecting his demands. This tension is the beginning of a series of armed confrontations between the two countries. The *Dēnkard* (Dk 7:4.87) and the *Shāhnāma* concur that the war was fought in defence of the new faith, which is also indicated by the epithets given to the Turānians in these sources. According to the *Ayādgar ī Zarērān* however it is the pious Zarēr who initiates the battle and is instrumental in the Iranian victory.

Conclusions

A close reading of the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* demonstrates that Daqiqi is heavily influenced by Zoroastrian religious and ethical concepts. He presents Zoroastrianism in accordance with the Avestā as a monotheistic religion that emphasizes to the dualistic struggle between good and evil. Zoroaster is portrayed as a prophet who advocated wisdom and goodness. He is the founder of the "good religion" (*dēn-e behi*) and his revelation, as contained in the Avestā, is praised by Daqiqi. Using the metaphor of a tree he portrays the prophet's coming as that of a great tree, bearing the immortal fruit of wisdom, with many branches spread far and wide. This favourable description of Zoroaster is far from the conventional Muslim view and stands in sharp contrast to contemporary Arabic sources (Ṭabari, Ta'ālabi Nishāburi, etc.) that denounce him as a false prophet and describe his teachings as based on a collection of superstitions. In Daqiqi's account he is a charismatic leader and eloquent orator, who guides Goshtāsp and his associates to God. As far as Zoroaster's character is concerned, he is represented as a wise, benevolent, and truthful person. Influenced by the royal tradition of the Sāsānian period, the poet also emphasizes his strong sense of patriotism and social consciousness. His religious instructions are intended to promote the protection and welfare of Iran, not least in relation to its Turānian enemy. Daqiqi's reliance on Sāsānian sources is also evident in the fact that Zoroaster is presented as advocating religion and kingship as comparable counterparts.

Given the Zoroastrian theme of the coming of Zoroaster it is important to observe that there are no substantial "concessions" in Daqiqi's account to the Muslim audience beyond linguistic and stylistic elements. There are for instance none of the inserted Qur'anic or Biblical quotations or references that are so common in the Arabic renderings of Iranian national history (even in the work of Ebn Moqaffa'). On the contrary, the poet consciously brings up features of Zoroastrianism, such as the practice of next-of-kin marriage (in his case between

⁴⁶ Cf. S V:95.

Esfandiār and Homāy), which could directly offend his Muslim audience. This feature acquires a special significance if we take into consideration some of his lyrical poems that bear resemblance to Zoroastrian confessions. In comparison with the priestly tradition it is significant that Daqiqi concentrates on the life of the historical Zoroaster and does not attempt to idealize the prophet. Whereas the Zoroastrian biographies in the Middle Persian literature refer to an ideal and attempt to situate the prophet to the realm of legend, Daqiqi's description is much more sparse and largely corresponds to the scanty historical facts known from the old Avestā. Zoroaster lived for many years after Goshtāsp's conversion, but little is known of his life either before or after this crucial event. The poet's account is more related to the genre of history than the genre of romance, where miracles and fantastic events are abound, since the qualities and actions attributed to Zoroaster only sporadically correspond to what we find in myth. As regards the Zoroastrian character of the epic, it is also important to note that Daqiqi does not situate the coming of Zoroaster within the cosmological calendar or millennial scheme of later Zoroastrian apocalyptic speculation (which of course belongs to a different literary genre). In contrast to the *Bundahishn*, which assigns to the world a duration of twelve thousand years and situates the rise of Zoroastrianism in the fourth millennium, there are no chronological links in Daqiqi's account with the sequence of cosmological processes or events.

Many streams of tradition – religious, royal, and heroic – converge and cross-influence each other in various ways in the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp*. The traditions differ in emphasis and in their evaluation of individual events and characters. Apart from the three major traditions of the Iranian national epic, Daqiqi draws on historical material from his own period as illustrated in his description of the originally Parthian legend of the Borzēn-Mehr and the cypress of Kashmar, which flourished in a dependency of Nishāpur until 871. The poet largely keeps to the royal tradition even if he is heavily influenced by the priestly tradition as regards details concerning the coming of Zoroaster and the conflict between Iran and Turān. His reliance on the priestly tradition is illustrated by his description of the causes of the war as well as the function of the "valiant demon", which is identical to the "demon of wrath" (Av. Aēshama) of the Zoroastrian tradition. It is important to observe that the poet consciously adopts these features to render the story a religious dimension, and his allusions to material contained in the priestly tradition are not just perfunctory references to the religious subject matter. Daqiqi's reliance on the royal tradition must however be considered highly conventional since it includes very little innovative or imaginative thinking in comparison to Ferdousi. The royal tradition also comprises a strong heroic component since the Kayānian cycle embodies the literature of the most notable heroic age in the Iranian tradition. This feature is reflected in the tone and rhetoric of the epic, which are more heroic than religious. The poet holds on to some conventions of epic poetry such as rich hyperbole, fixed epithets, and an abundance of formal repetitions.

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