

# Shahnameh

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The **Shah-nama** (Persian: شاهنامه *šāhnāme* "The King's book") is an enormous poetic opus written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi around 1000 AD and is the national epic of the cultural sphere of Greater Persia. Consisting of some 60,000 verses,<sup>[1]</sup> the *Shāhnāme* tells the mythical and historical past of (Greater) Iran from the creation of the world until the Islamic conquest of Persia in the 7th century.

The work is of central importance in Persian culture, regarded as a literary masterpiece, and definitive of ethno-national cultural identity of Iran.<sup>[2]</sup> It is also important to the contemporary adherents of Zoroastrianism.



Late-16th-century illustration of a scene of the Shah-nama, showing King Solomon.

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## Sources and composition

Ferdowsi started his composition of the Shahnameh in the Samanid era in 977 A.D and completed it on 8 March 1010 during the Ghaznavid era.<sup>[3]</sup> The Shāhnameh is a monument of poetry and historiography, being mainly the poetical recast of what Ferdowsi, his contemporaries, and his predecessors regarded as the account of Iran's ancient history. Many such accounts already existed in prose, an example being the Shāhnameh of Abu Mansur Abd-al-Razaq. A small portion of Ferdowsi's work, in passages scattered throughout the Shāhnameh, is entirely of his own conception.

The Shāhnameh is an epic poem of over 50,000 couplets, written in early Modern Persian. It is based mainly on a prose work of the same name compiled in Ferdowsi's earlier life in his native Tus. This prose Shāhnameh was in turn and for the most part the translation of a Pahlavi (Middle Persian) work, known as the *xvatāynamāk* ("Book of Kings"), a late Sassanid compilation of the history of the kings and heroes of Persia from mythical times down to the reign of Khosrau II (590–628). The *xvatāynamāk* contained historical information on the later Sassanid period, but it does not appear to have drawn on any historical sources for the earlier Sassanid period (3rd to 4th centuries).<sup>[4]</sup> Ferdowsi added material continuing the story to the overthrow of the Sassanids by the Arabs in the middle of the 7th century.

The first to undertake the versification of the Pahlavi chronicle was Daqīqī-e Balkhī, a contemporary of Ferdowsi, poet at the court of the Samanids, who came to a violent end after completing only 1000 verses. These verses, which deal with the rise of the prophet Zoroaster, were afterward incorporated by Ferdowsi, with acknowledgment, in his own poem. The style of the Shahnameh shows characteristics of both written and oral literature. Some claim that Ferdowsi also used Zoroastrian *nasks*, such as the now-lost *Chihrdad* as sources as well.

## Content synopsis

The Shāhnameh recounts the history of Persia, beginning with the creation of the world and the introduction of the arts of civilization (fire, cooking, metallurgy, law) to the *Aryans* and ends with the Arab conquest of Persia. The work is not precisely chronological, but there is a general movement through time. Some of the characters live for hundreds of years but most have normal life spans. There are many *shāhs* who come and go, as well as heroes and villains, who also come and go. The only lasting images are that of *Greater Persia* itself, and a succession of sunrises and sunsets, no two ever exactly alike, yet illustrative of the passage of time.

The work is divided into three successive parts: the *mythical*, *heroic*, and *historical* ages.

*Father Time*, a Saturn-like image, is a reminder of the tragedy of death and loss, yet the next sunrise comes, bringing with it hope of a new day. In the first cycle of creation, evil is external (the devil). In the second cycle, we see the beginnings of family hatred, bad behavior, and evil permeating human nature. Shāh Fereydūn's two eldest sons feel greed and envy toward their innocent younger brother and, thinking their father favors him, they murder him. The murdered prince's son avenges the murder, and all are immersed in the cycle of murder and revenge, blood and more blood.

In the third cycle, we encounter a series of flawed shahs. There is a Phaedra-like story of Shāh Kay Kāūs, his wife Sūdābeh, and her passion and rejection by her stepson, Sīyāvash.

In the next cycle, all the players are unsympathetic and selfish and evil. This epic on the whole is darker over all than most other epics, most of which have some sort of resolution and catharsis. This tone seems reflective of two things, perhaps: the conquest of the Persians by the Arabs, and a reflection of the last days of Persian Zoroastrianism. The old religion had been fraught with heresies, and somehow Zoroaster's optimistic view of man's ability to choose had become life denying and negative of this world.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> There is an enormous

amount of bad luck and bad fate in the stories.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

It is only in the characterizations of the work's many figures, both male and female, that Zoroaster's original view of the human condition comes through. Zoroaster emphasized human free will. All of Ferdowsi's characters are complex. No of them is an archetype or a puppet. The best characters have bad flaws, and the worst have moments of humanity.

Ferdowsi was grieved by the fall of the Persian empire and its subsequent rule by Arabs and Turks. The Shahnameh is largely his effort to preserve the memory of Persia's golden days and transmit it to a new generation so that they could learn and try to build a better world.<sup>[5]</sup>. Though formally Muslim, the Shahnameh nevertheless has a certain anti-Arab and anti-Turk bias<sup>[6]</sup>.

## The mythical age

After an opening in praise of God and Wisdom, the Shâhnameh gives an account of the creation of the world and of man as believed by the Sasanians. This introduction is followed by the story of the first man, Keyumars, who also became the first king after a period of mountain dwelling. His grandson Hushang, son of Sīyāmak, accidentally discovered fire and established the Sadeh Feast in its honor. Stories of Tahmuras, Jamshid, Zakhāk, Kava or Kaveh, Fereydūn and his three sons Salm, Tur, and Iraj, and his grandson Manuchehr are related in this section. This portion of the Shâhnameh is relatively short, amounting to some 2100 verses or four percent of the entire book, and it narrates events with the simplicity, predictability, and swiftness of a historical work.

## The heroic age

Almost two-thirds of the Shâhnameh is devoted to the age of heroes, extending from Manuchehr's reign until the conquest of Alexander the Great (Sekandar). The main feature of this period is the major role played by the Saka or Sistānī heroes who appear as the backbone of the Persian Empire. Garshāsp is briefly mentioned with his son Narimān, whose own son Sām acted as the leading paladin of Manuchehr while reigning in Sistān in his own right. His successors were his son Zāl and Zal's son Rostam, the bravest of the brave, and then Farāmarz.

The feudal<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> society in which they lived is admirably depicted in the Shâhnameh with accuracy<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> and lavishness. Indeed, Ferdowsi's descriptions are so vivid and impressive that the reader feels himself participating in the events or closely viewing them. The tone is significantly epic and moving, while the language is extremely rich and varied.

Among the stories described in this section are the romance of Zal and Rudāba, the Seven Stages (or Labors) of Rostam, Rostam & Sohrāb, Sīyāvash & Sudāba, Rostam & Akvān Dīv, the romance of Bižhan & Manižheh, the wars with Afrāsīyāb, Daqiqi's account of the story of Goshtāsp & Arjāsp, and Rostam & Esfandiyār.

It is noteworthy that the legend of Rostam and Sohrāb is attested only in the Shâhnameh and, as usual, begins with a lyrical and detailed prelude. Here Ferdowsi is at the zenith of his poetic power and has become a true master of storytelling. The thousand or so verses of this tragedy comprise one of the most moving tales of world literature.

## The historical age

A brief mention of the Ashkānīyān dynasty follows the history of Alexander and precedes that of Ardashir I, the founder of the Sassanid dynasty. After this, Sassanid history is related with a good deal of accuracy. The fall of the Sassanids and the Arab conquest of Persia are narrated romantically, and in very moving poetic language.

Here, the reader can see Ferdowsi himself lamenting over this catastrophe and over what he calls the arrival of "the army of darkness".<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## The Shâhnameh's message

Ferdowsi did not expect his readers to pass over historical events indifferently, but asked them to think carefully, to see the grounds for the rise and fall of individuals and nations; and to learn from the past in order to improve the present, and to better shape the future. Ferdowsi stresses his belief that since the world is transient, and since everyone is merely a passerby, one is wise to avoid cruelty, lying, avarice, and other evils; instead one should strive for justice, honor, truth, order, and other virtues.

The singular message that the Shâhnameh of Ferdowsi strives to convey is the idea that the history of Sassanid Empire was a complete and immutable whole: it started with Keyumars, the first man, and ended with his fiftieth scion and successor, Yazdegerd III, six thousand years of history of Iran. The task of Ferdowsi was to prevent this history from being lost to future Persian generations.

## Cultural Importance

Modern Persian has existed as a living language for around 1100 years, and the Shahnameh, despite being more than 1000 years old, is read by Persian speakers throughout the world in its original form. This makes the Shahnameh different from other epics which are written in languages that are now dead. As an example, Beowulf, an important epic in its own right, can not be understood by the modern English speaker. Because it is a living language, and because it has sustained Persian poetry throughout the centuries, the Shahnameh has had a tremendous influence in shaping the modern identity of its Iranian, Afghan and Tajik readers. Beside being an epic book, Ferdowsi has decorated his book with many universal virtuous and moral concepts. According to the expert Dr. Jalal Khaleghi Mutlaq, the Shahnameh teaches: Yekta-Parasti (Worship of one God), Khoda Tarsi (Fear of breaking the commandments of God-respecting God), Din Dari (Religious Uprightness), Mihaan Doosti (patriotism), Mehr beh Zan o Farzand (love of wife, family and children), Dastgiryeh Darmandegaan (Helping the poor), Kheradmandi (Pursuit of Wisdom), Dad-Khahi (Pursuit of Justice), Door-Andishi (Long term thinking), Miyaneh Ravi (Seeking and Acting in Equilibrium-moderation), Adaab Daani (Acting and Knowing correct manner-courtesy), Mehman Nawazi (Seeking the happiness of Guests-hospitality), Javanmardi (Chivalry), Bakhshesh (Forgiveness), Sepasgozari (Thankfulness), Khoshnoodi o Khorsandi (Being content and Happy with existence), Kooshaayi (Hard Work), Narmesh Yaa Modaaraa (Being Peaceful and Kind), Vafadaari (Being faithful), Raasti o Dorostkari (Truth and opposing anything that is against the Truth), Peymaan Daari (Keeping covenants), Sharm o Ahestegi (Shame at committing immoral acts and also control over one's self), Khamooshi (Not acting loud-modesty), Danesh Amoozi (Pursuing Knowledge-education), Sokhan Dani (Knowledge of Wise Words) and many other moral qualities<sup>[7]</sup>.

Ferdowsi wrote in the end of his Shahnameh:

*I've reached the end of this great history*



Monument of Ferdowsi on his memorial square in Tehran. At the feet of the poet the heroes of his epic Shahnameh: future hero Zal and bird Simorgh.

*And all the land will talk of me:*

*I shall not die, these seeds I've sown will save*

*My name and reputation from the grave,*

*And men of sense and wisdom will proclaim*

*When I have gone, my praises and my fame.*<sup>[8]</sup>

This prediction of Ferdowsi has come true and many Persian literary figures, historians and biographers have praised him and his Shahnameh. The Shahnameh is considered by many to be the most important piece of work in Persian literature. Western writers have also praised the Shahnameh and Persian literature in general. Persian literature has been considered by such thinkers as Goethe as one of the four main bodies of world literature<sup>[9]</sup>. Goethe was inspired by Persian literature, which moved him to write his famous "West-Eastern Divan". Goethe writes: *When we turn our attention to a peaceful, civilized people, the Persians, we must—since it was actually their poetry that inspired this work—go back to the earliest period to be able to understand more recent times. It will always seem strange to the historians that no matter how many times a country has been conquered, subjugated and even destroyed by enemies, there is always a certain national core preserved in its character, and before you know it, there re-emerges a long-familiar native phenomenon. In this sense, it would be pleasant to learn about the most ancient Persians and quickly follow them up to the present day at an all the more free and steady pace.*<sup>[10]</sup>

## Biographers

Sargozasht-Nameh or Biography of important poets and writers has long been a Persian tradition. Some of the biographies of Ferdowsi are now considered apocryphal, nevertheless this shows the important impact he had in the Persian World. Among the famous biographers are<sup>[11]</sup>:

- 1) Nezami 'Arudi-i Samarqandi in his Chahar Maqaleh (Four Articles).
- 2) Dolat Shah-i Samarghandi in his Tazkeye-Al-Shu'ara (The Biography of poets)
- 3) Jami in his Baharestan.
- 4) Muhammad 'Awfi in his Lobab al-Lobab.
- 5) Natayej al-Afkar by Mowlana Muhammad Qudrat Allah
- 6) 'Arafat Al-Ashighin written by Taqqi Al-Din 'Awhadi Balyani

A modern biography in English is written by the late Professor Abdullah Shapur Shahbazi of Eastern Oregon University titled: "Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography"<sup>[12]</sup>

## Poets

Famous poets of Persia and the Persian tradition have praised and eulogized Ferdowsi. Many of them were heavily influenced by his writing and used his genre and stories to develop their own Persian epics, stories and poems.<sup>[13]</sup>

- 1) Anvari a famous poet in his own right remarks about the eloquence of the Shahnameh: "He was not just a Teacher and we his students. He was like a God and we are his slaves".<sup>[14]</sup>
- 2) Asadi Tusi was born in the same city as Ferdowsi. His Garshaspnama was inspired by the Shahnameh as he attests in the introduction. He praises Ferdowsi in the introduction <sup>[15]</sup> and considers Ferdowsi the greatest poet of his time<sup>[16]</sup>
- 3) Masud Sa'ad Salman, originally from Persia, was a poet of the Ghaznavid courts of India. Showing the influence of the Shahnameh only 80 years after the composition of the Shahnameh, he recited its poems in the Ghaznavid court.
- 4) Othman Mukhtari another poet at the court of the Ghaznavids of India remarks: "Alive is Rustam through the epic of Ferdowsi, Else there would not be a trace of him in this World"<sup>[17]</sup>
- 5) Sanai believes that in reality the foundation of poetry was established by Ferdowsi.<sup>[18]</sup>
- 6) Nezami Ganjavi was influenced greatly by Ferdowsi and three of his five jewels had to do with pre-Islamic Persia. His Khosro-o-Shirin, Haft Peykar and Eskandar-nameh used the Shahnameh as a major source. Nezami remarks that Ferdowsi is "the wise sage of Tus" who beautified and decorated words like a new bride.<sup>[19]</sup>
- 7) Khaghani of Shirvan who was the court poet of the Shirvanshah has remarked about Ferdowsi:

The candle of the wise in this darkness of sorrow,

The pure words of Ferdowsi of the Tusi are such

His pure sense is an angelic birth

Angelic born is anyone who's like Ferdowsi

شمع جمع هوشمندان است در دیجور غم  
نکته ای کز خاطر فردوسی طوسی بود  
زادگاه طبع پاکش جملگی حور اوش اند  
زاده حور اوش بود چون مرد فردوسی بود

- 8) Attar remarks about the poetry of Ferdowsi:

Open eyes and through the sweet poetry see the heavenly eden of Ferdowsi

باز کن چشم و ز شعر چون شکر  
در بهشت عدن فردوسی نگر

- 9) Sa'adi in a famous poem remarks:

How sweetly has conveyed the pure natured Ferdowsi, May blessing be upon his pure resting place: Do not harass the ant that's dragging a seed, because it has life and sweet life is dear.

چه خوش گفت فردوسی پاکزاد  
که رحمت بر آن تربت پاک باد  
میازار موری که دانه کش است

که جان دارد و جان شیرین خوش است

10) Jami in his Baharestan remarks: *He came from Tus and his excellence, renown and perfection are well known. Yes, what need is there of the panegyrics of others to that man who has composed verses as those of the Shah-nameh?*

Many other poets can also be named. For example Hafez, Rumi and other mystical poets have used many imageries of Shahnameh heroes in their poetry. With this regard, the Saqinaameh of Hafez and the famous verse of Rumi: "Shir-e Khoda o Rostam-e Dastan-am Arezoost" (The lion of God (Ali) and Rostam of Dastan is what I seek) come to mind.

## Persian historiography

The Shahnameh's impact on Persian historiography was immediate and some historians decorated their books with the verses of Shahnameh. Below is sample of ten important historian who have praised the Shahnameh and Ferdowsi<sup>[11]</sup>:

- 1) The unknown writer of the Tarikh Sistan (History of Sistan) (circa 1053 A.D.)
- 2) The unknown writer of Majmal al-Tawarikh wa Al-Qasas (circa 1126).
- 3) Mohammad Ali Ravandi the writer of the Rahat al-Sodur wa Ayat al-Sorur (circa 1206)
- 4) Ibn Bibi the writer of the history book Al-Awamir al-'Alaiyah written during the era of 'Ala ad-din KayGhobad
- 5) Ibn Esfandiyar the composer of the Tarikh-e Tabarestan.
- 6) Muhammad Juwayni the early historian of the Mongol era in his *Tarikh-e Jahan Gushay* (Ilkhanid era)
- 7) Hamdullah Qazwini also paid much attention to the Shahnameh and wrote his Zafarnama based on the same style. (Ilkhanid era)
- 8) Hafez Abru (1430) in his Majma' al-Tawarikh
- 9) Khwand Mir in his Habab al-Siyar (circa 1523) has praised Ferdowsi and has given an extensive biography on Ferdowsi.
- 10) The Arab Historian Ibn Athir remarks in his book titled "Al-Kamil": "If we name it the Quran of 'Ajam, we have not said something in vain. If a poet writes poetry and the poems have many verses, or if someone writes many compositions, it will always be the case that some of their writings might not be excellent. But in the case of Shahnameh, despite having more than 40 thousand couplets, all its verses are excellent".<sup>[20]</sup>

## Patronage of Shahnameh by different dynasties

The Shirvanshah dynasty adopted many of their names from the Shahnameh. The relationship between Shirvanshah and his son, Manuchihr, is mentioned in chapter eight of Nizami's Leili o Majnoon. Nizami advises the king's son to read the Shah-nama and to remember the meaningful sayings of the wise.<sup>[21]</sup>

According to the Turkish historian Mehmat Fuad Koprulu<sup>[22]</sup> :

“ Indeed, despite all claims to the contrary, there is no question that Persian influence was paramount among the Seljuks of Anatolia. This is clearly revealed by the fact that the sultans who ascended the throne after Ghiyath al-Din Kai-Khusraw I assumed titles taken from ancient Persian mythology, like Kai-Khusraw, Kai-Kaus, and Kai-Qubad; and that Ala' al-Din Kai-Qubad I had some passages from the Shahname inscribed on the walls of Konya and Sivas. When we take into consideration domestic life in the Konya courts and the sincerity of the favor and attachment of the rulers to Persian poets and Persian literature, then this fact {i.e. the importance of Persian influence} is undeniable. ”

Shah Ismail Safavi was also deeply influenced by the Persian literary tradition of Iran, particularly by the "Shāhnāma" of Ferdowsi, which probably explains the fact that he named all of his sons after Shāhnāma-characters. Dickson and Welch suggest that Ismā'il's "Shāhnāmāye Shāhī" was intended as a present to the young Tahmāsp<sup>[23]</sup>. After defeating Muhammad Shaybāni's Uzbeks, Ismā'il asked Hātefī, a famous poet from Jam (Khorasan), to write a Shāhnāma-like epic about his victories and his newly established dynasty. Although the epic was left unfinished, it was an example of *mathnawis* in the heroic style of the Shāhnāma written later on for the Safavid kings<sup>[24]</sup>.

## Linguistic impact

After Ferdowsi's Shāhnameh, a number of other works similar in nature surfaced over the centuries within the cultural sphere of the Persian language. Without exception, all such works were based in style and method on Ferdowsi's Shāhnameh, but none of them could quite achieve the same degree of fame and popularity.

Some experts believe the main reason the Modern Persian language today is more or less the same language as that of Ferdowsi's time over 1000 years ago is due to the very existence of works like Ferdowsi's Shāhnameh which have had lasting and profound cultural and linguistic influence. In other words, the Shāhnameh itself has become one of the main pillars of the modern Persian language. Studying Ferdowsi's masterpiece also became a requirement for achieving mastery of the Persian language by subsequent Persian poets, as evidenced by numerous references to the Shāhnameh in their works. This is also due to the fact that Ferdowsi went to great lengths to avoid any words drawn from the Arabic language – which had increasingly infiltrated the Persian language following the Arab conquest of Persia in the 7th century. Ferdowsi followed this path not only to preserve and purify the Persian language, but also as a stark political statement against the Arab conquest of Persia.<sup>[25]</sup>

The Shāhnameh has 62 stories, 990 chapters, and some 60,000 rhyming couplets, making it more than three times the length of Homer's *Iliad*, and more than twelve times the length of the German Nibelungenlied. According to Ferdowsi, the final edition of the Shāhnameh contained some sixty thousand distichs. But this is a round figure; most of the relatively reliable manuscripts have preserved a little over fifty thousand distiches. Nezami-e Aruzi reports that the final edition of the Shāhnameh sent to the court of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was prepared in seven volumes.

There have been a number of English translations, almost all abridged. James Atkinson of the Honourable East India Company's medical service was the first to undertake a translation in to English in his 1832 publication for the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, now part of the Royal Asiatic Society. Matthew Arnold produced another early English translation of the story of Rostam and Sohrab<sup>[26]</sup>.

In 1925, the brothers Arthur & Edmond Warner published the complete work in nine volumes, now out of print. A recent translation by Dick Davis<sup>[27]</sup> has made this epic poem accessible for English speakers. The translation is a combination of poetry and prose, although it is not a complete translation of the Shahnameh.



## Influence beyond the Persian sphere

Professor Victoria Arakelova of Yerevan University states<sup>[28]</sup>: *During the ten centuries passed after Firdausi composed his monumental work, heroic legends and stories of Shahnameh have remained the main source of the storytelling for the peoples of this region: Persians, Pashtuns, Afghans, Kurds, Gurans, Talishis, Armenians, Georgians, North Caucasian peoples, etc.*

Professor Jamshid Sh. Giunshvili remarks on the connection of Georgian culture with that of Shahnama<sup>[29]</sup>: *The names of many Shahnama heroes, such as Rostam, Tahmine, Sam-i, or Zaal-i, are found in 11th- and 12th-century Georgian literature. They are indirect evidence for an Old Georgian translation of the Shahnama that is no longer existant. Furthermore he remarks: The Shahnama was not only translated to satisfy the literary and aesthetic needs of readers and listeners, but also to inspire the young with the spirit of heroism and Georgian patriotism. Georgian ideology, customs, and worldview often informed these translations because they were oriented toward Georgian poetic culture. Conversely, Georgians consider these translations works of their native literature. Georgian versions of the Shahnama are quite popular, and the stories of Rostam and Sohrab, or Bijan and Manizha became part of Georgian folklore..*

## Illuminated copies

Illustrated copies of the work are among the most sumptuous examples of Persian miniature painting. Several copies remain intact, although two of the most famous, the *Houghton Shahnameh* and the *Great Mongol Shahnameh*, were broken up for sheets to be sold separately in the 20th century. A single sheet from the former (now Aga Khan Museum) was sold for £904,000 in 2006.<sup>[30]</sup> The *Bayasanghori Shâhnâmeh*, an illuminated manuscript copy of the work (Golestan Palace, Iran), is included in UNESCO's *Memory of the World Register* of cultural heritage items.<sup>[31][32]</sup>

## Editions

A handful of scholarly editions has been prepared of the Shahnameh. A early edition was prepared in 1829 in India by T. Macan. It was based on a comparison of 17 manuscript copies. Between 1838–78, an edition appeared in Paris by French scholar J. Mohl, who based it on a comparison of 30 manuscripts. Both editions lacked the critical apparatus and were based on secondary manuscripts that had appeared after the 15th century; much later than the original work. Between 1877 and 1884 the German scholar J. A. Vullers prepared a synthesized text of the Macan and Mohl editions, but only three of the excepted nine volumes of his edition were published during 1877–1884. The Vullers edition was later completed in Tehran by the Iranian scholars S. Nafisi, Iqbal and M. Minowi for the millennial jubilee of Ferdowsi, held between 1934 and 1936.

The first modern critical edition of the Shah-nameh was prepared by a Russian team led by E. E. Bertel, using the oldest known manuscript copies, dating from the 13th and 14th centuries, with heavy reliance on the 1276 manuscript from the British Museum and the Leningrad manuscript, dated 1333, of which the latter has now been considered a secondary manuscript. In addition to this, two other manuscripts used in this edition have been so demoted. It was published in Moscow by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in nine volumes between 1960–71. Since 1971 a new edition of the Shahnameh has been undergoing republication in Tehran, however only excerpts were published and it reached an preliminary end at the same time of the Islamic Revolution.<sup>[33]</sup>

For many years, the Moscow edition was the standard text. A new critical edition has been in preparation since 1990 by Dr. Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, using as its chief text the relatively recent discovery of the Florence

manuscript in 1977, dated 1217, which makes it one of the earliest surviving ones, predating the Moghul invasion and the following destruction of important libraries and manuscript collections. The number of manuscript that were consulted during the preparation of Khaleghi-Motlagh edition goes beyond anything attempted by the Moscow team, and the critical apparatus is extensive and there are a large number of recorded variants of many parts of the poem. The last volume was published in 2008, bringing the eight volume enterprise to a completion. It is "by far the best edition of the Shahnameh available, and it is surely likely to remain such for a very long time" according to Dick Davis, professor of Persian at Ohio state University.<sup>[34]</sup>

## See also

- Rostam and Sohrab (opera)
- Persian Trilogy
- Shâhnameh Characters
- Flying Throne of Kai Kavus
- Vis o Ramin (A similar book to Shâhnameh but deals with Parthian legendary stories)
- Iranian festivals
- Shahrokh Meskoob
- Mir Jalaeddin Kazzazi

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- Warner, Arthur and Edmond Warner, (translators) *The Shâhnâma of Firdausi*, 9 vols. (London: Keegan Paul, 1905–1925; reprinted Routledge, 2000) (complete English verse translation)
- Zimmern, Helen (translator), *The Epic of Kings: stories retold from Firdusi* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1882) (prose selections)

### Persian text

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- Jalal Khāleghi Motlagh (editor), *The Shahnameh*, in 12 volumes consisting of eight volumes of text and four volumes of explanatory notes. (Bibliotheca Persica, 1988–2009) (scholarly Persian text). See: Center for Iranian Studies, Columbia University (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/center-for-iranian-studies/programs-and-pubs/main/projects/shahnameh.html>) .

## Adaptations

- *Rostam: Tales from the Shahnameh* (Publisher: Hyperwerks 2005), *The Story of Rostam & Sohrab* ISBN 0-9770213-1-9, modern English Graphic Novel.*Find book here* (<http://shop.theshahnameh.com/products/rostan-ales-of-the-shahnameh>)
- *Rostam: Return of the King* (Publisher: Hyperwerks 2007), *The Story of Kai-Kavous and Soodabeh* ISBN 0-9770213-2-7, modern English Graphic Novel.*Find book here* (<http://shop.theshahnameh.com/products/rostan-return-of-the-king>)
- *Rostam: Battle with The Deevs* (Publisher: Hyperwerks 2008), *The Story of The Evil White Deev* ISBN 978-0-9770213-3-8, modern English Graphic Novel.*Find book here* (<http://shop.theshahnameh.com/products/rostan-battle-with-the-deevs>)

## Further reading

- Hassan Anvari, *Ancient Iran's Geographical Position in Shah-Nameh* (Iran Chamber Society, 2004). <sup>[35]</sup>
- Shirzad Aghaee, *Imazh-ha-ye mehr va mah dar Shahnama-ye Ferdousi* (Sun and Moon in the Shahnama of Ferdousi, Spånga, Sweden, 1997. (ISBN 91-630-5369-1)
- Shirzad Aghaee, *Nam-e kasan va ja'i-ha dar Shahnama-ye Ferdousi*(Personalities and Places in the Shahnama of Ferdousi, Nyköping, Sweden, 1993. (ISBN 91-630-1959-0)

## Notes

1. ^ Farah Lalani (13 May 2010). "A thousand years of Firdawsi's Shahnama is celebrated" (<http://www.theismaili.org/cms/998/A-thousand-years-of-Firdawsis-Shahnama-is-celebrated>) . TheIsmaili.org. <http://www.theismaili.org/cms/998/A-thousand-years-of-Firdawsis-Shahnama-is-celebrated>. Retrieved 24 May 2010.
2. ^ Encyclopedia Iranica, "IRANIAN IDENTITY iii. MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC PERIOD iii. MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC PERIOD" by A. Ashraf [1] (<http://www.iranica.com/articles/iranian-identity-iii-medieval-islamic-period>) accessed online in April, 2010
3. ^ Encyclopedia Iranica, [2] (<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f5/v9f541a.html>) , Ferdowsi, Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh "the poet refers to... date of the Šāh-nāma's completion as the day of Ard (i.e., 25th) of Esfand in the year 378 Š. (400 Lunar)/8 March 1010..."
4. ^ Robert Charles Zaehner, *Zurvan: a Zoroastrian dilemma* (1955), p. 10.
5. ^ A. Shapur Shahbazi, "Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography", Harvard University Center For Middle Eastern Studies, Distributed by Mazda Publishers, 1991. pg 49
6. ^ Igor M. Diankonoff. *The Paths of History*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 100, ISBN 0521643988
7. ^ Jalal Khaleqi Mutlaq, "Iran Garai dar Shahnameh" (Iran-centrism in the Shahnameh), Hasti Magazine, Vol 4. 1993. Tehran, Bahman Publishers.
8. ^ (Shahnameh:a new translation by Dick Davis, Viking Adult, 2006.
9. ^ Von David Levinson, Karen Christensen, Encyclopedia of Modern Asia, Charles Scribner's Sons. 2002 pg 48
10. ^ Josef Wiesehofer, "Ancient Persia". I. B. Tauris; New Ed edition (August 18, 2001). Introduction page
11. ^ <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Doctor Mahdi Nurian, "Afarin Ferdowsi az Zaban Pishinian"(The praises of Ferdowsi from the tongue of the ancients), Hasti Magazine, Vol 4. 1993. Tehran, Bahman Publishers.
12. ^ A. Shapur Shahbazi, "Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography", Harvard University Center For Middle Eastern Studies, Distributed by Mazda Publishers, 1991.

13. ^ Doctor Mahdi Nurian, "Afarin Ferdowsi az Zaban Pishinian"(The praises of Ferdowsi from the tongue of the ancients), Hasti Magazine, Vol 4. 1993. Tehran, Bahman Publishers. All the verses are taken from this article.
14. ^ actual Persian: آفرین بر روان فردوسی آن همایون نهاد و فرخنده او نه استاد بود و ما شاگرد او خداوند بود و ما بنده
15. ^ که فردوسی طوسی پاک مغز بدادست داد سخنهاى نغز به شهنامه گیتی بیاراستست بدان نامه نام نکو خواستست
16. ^ که از پیش گویندگان برد گوی
17. ^ زنده رستم به شعر فردوسی است و نه زو در جهان نشانه کجاست؟
18. ^ چه نکو گفت آن بزرگ استاد که وی افکند نظم را بنیاد
19. ^ سخن گوی دانای پیشین طوس که آراست روی سخن چون عروس
20. ^ see also (<http://www.qudsdaily.com/archive/1384/html/2/1384-02-25/page2.html>)
21. ^ Dr. Ali Asghar Seyed Gohrab. "Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing", Brill Studies in Middle Eastern literature, Jun 2003. pg 276.
22. ^ (Mehmed Fuad Koprulu's , Early Mystics in Turkish Literature, Translated by Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff , Routledge, 2006, pg 149)
23. ^ M.B. Dickson and S.C. Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh* 2 vols (Cambridge Massachusetts and London. 1981. See: pg 34 of Volume I)
24. ^ R.M. Savory, *Safavids*, Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd edition
25. ^ Ferdowsi's "Shahnameh": The book of kings: A new exhibition shows Persian miniatures at their finest, The Economist, dated Sep 16th 2010.
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28. ^ See: [3] (<http://www.farhangiran.com/pdf/shahkurdarmen.pdf>) [4] (<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/famous/ferdowsi/shahkurdarmen.pdf>)
29. ^ Encyclopedia Iranica, "Shahnama Translations in Georgian", Jamshid Sh. Giunshvili
30. ^ Fine Books Magazine, Item 7 (<http://www.finebooksmagazine.com/issue/0502/expensive-1.phtml>)
31. ^ Six pages from the Bayasanghori Shâhnâmeh (<http://portal.unesco.org/ci/photos/showgallery.php/cat/793>) , Unesco website
32. ^ News story ([http://www.mg.co.za/articlepage.aspx?area=/breaking\\_news/breaking\\_news\\_\\_international\\_news/&articleid=311824](http://www.mg.co.za/articlepage.aspx?area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__international_news/&articleid=311824))
33. ^ M. N. O. OSMANOV (1970–1979). "Abul Qasim Ferdowsi, The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition" (<http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Abul+Qasim+Ferdowsi>) . The Gale Group. <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Abul+Qasim+Ferdowsi>. Retrieved 2010-09-11.
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35. ^ By: Dr. Hassan Anvari, 2004. "Iran Chamber Society: Ancient Iran's Geographical Position in Shah-Nameh" ([http://www.iranchamber.com/geography/articles/ancient\\_iran\\_geographical\\_position\\_shahnameh.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/geography/articles/ancient_iran_geographical_position_shahnameh.php)) . Iranchamber.com. [http://www.iranchamber.com/geography/articles/ancient\\_iran\\_geographical\\_position\\_shahnameh.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/geography/articles/ancient_iran_geographical_position_shahnameh.php). Retrieved 2010-09-08.

## External links

### ■ Web resources

- Shahnameh Search Engine in Persian (<http://www.Gyges.info>)
- *Rostam and Sohrab opera* (<http://www.daryadadvar.com/Darya-Video/Rostam-Sohrab-Shahnameh-Ferdowsi.html>) , اپرای رستم و سهراب from Shahnameh Ferdowsi, conducted and composed by Loris Tjeknavorian.
- *Shahnameh*, by Hakim Abol-Qasem Ferdowsi Tusi, the complete work (64 Epics), in Persian (ParsTech (<http://www.parstech.org/detail.php?id=1261>) ). This work can be freely downloaded (File size, compiled in the form of an HTML Help File: 1.4 MB).
- Iraj Bashiri, *Characters of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh*, Iran Chamber Society ([http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/shahnameh/characters\\_ferdowsi\\_shahname.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/shahnameh/characters_ferdowsi_shahname.php)) , 2003.

- *Rostam: Tales from The Shahnameh* (<http://www.thesahnameh.com>) , English Graphic Novel adaptation of tales from the Shahnameh.
- *Shahnameh* (<http://classics.mit.edu/Ferdowsi/kings.html>) , English translation by Helen Zimmern.
- *Shahnameh* (<http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/shahnameh/shahnameh.php>) . Helen Zimmern translation.
- *Shahnameh*, Arthur and Edmond Warner translation at the Internet Archive: volumes 1 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama01firduoft>) , 2 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama02firduoft>) , 3 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama03firduoft>) , 4 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama04firduoft>) , 5 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama05firduoft>) , 6 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama06firduoft>) , 7 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama07firduoft>) , 8 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama08firduoft>) , 9 (<http://www.archive.org/details/shahnama09firduoft>) .
- Khosrow Nāghed, *In the Workshop of Thought and Imagination of the Master of Tūs* ([http://radiozamaaneh.com/literature/2008/08/print\\_post\\_495.html](http://radiozamaaneh.com/literature/2008/08/print_post_495.html)) (Dar Kargāh-e Andisheh va Khiāl-e Ostād-e Tūs), in Persian, Radio Zamāneh, August 5, 2008.
- Shahnameh A.E. Warner with Images (<http://shahnameferdowsi.blogfa.com/>)
- *Simorq*: A Music Project (<http://www.simorq.org/Home.20.0.html>) .  
A short section of the *Simorq Opera* (<http://www.simorq.org/Video.66.0.html>) , video-recorded during a rehearsal in Tehran, December 2009. (5 min 32 sec).
- Rostam & Sohrab by Arnold, Mathew (1822–88) (<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/famous/ferdowsi/matthewarnold.htm>)
- Baysonghori Shahnameh in Encyclopedia Iranica (<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v4f1/v4f1a008.html>)
- Ferdowsi, Encyclopedia Iranica, Jalal Khaleghi-Motlaq (<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f5/v9f541a.html>)
- Dick Davis author of "Epic and Sediton: The Case of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh" (<http://mage.com/EAS.html>) and translator of "Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings" (<http://mage.com/SSC.html>)
- Jalal Matini (*Editor of Iran Shenasi* (<http://www.iranshenasi.net/englishIndex.html>) )
- Jalil Doostkhah (*Center for Iranian Studies CFIS* (<http://www.iranshenakht.blogspot.com/>) )
- **Persian sources**
  - Complete Persian text (<http://shahnameh.recent.ir/default.aspx?browse>)
  - Shahnameh website (<http://www.shahnameh.com/>)
  - Shahnameh Persian and English text, A.E. Warner, MehrAbadi (<http://shahnameferdowsi.blogfa.com/>)
- **Resources**
  - Shahnama Image Collection (<http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/>)
  - Images from illustrated versions of Shahnameh (<http://tehran.stanford.edu/Images/Shahnameh/>)
  - Metropolitan museum on the shahnama ([http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/khan6/hd\\_khan6.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/khan6/hd_khan6.htm))
  - The Asia Society; Illustrated Shahnameh (<http://asiasociety.org/arts/huntparadise/rustam/ch1-1.html>)
  - Shahname Images And Animations Collection (<http://shahnameferdowsi.blogfa.com/>)

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