Ḥamza versus Rustam: Comparing the *Ḥamzanāma* with the *Shāhnāma*

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Abstract

This paper compares the *Ḥamzanāma* (Book of Ḥamza) with the *Shāhnāma* (Book of Kings), the two most popular works performed by the storytellers of Safavid Iran (1501–1736), focusing on their heroes, Ḥamza and Rustam, respectively. Following an overview of the *Ḥamzanāma* that helps to identify its main intertexts, themes, and narrative elements: the *Shāhnāma*; the Islamic Alexander tradition; and *ʿayyārī* (trickery); the paper re-examines how Ḥamza is modelled after Rustam by looking at his epithets and narrative functions. It then turns to their differences, which are most discernible in Rustam's epithet used as the name of Ḥamza's enemy, the split between the ideals of *jawānmardī* (generosity) and *ʿayyārī*, and Ḥamza's unheroic weaknesses. This latter serves to emphasize God's compassion at his martyrdom while giving storytellers an impetus to continue their performances.

Keywords: *Naqqāli*, *Ḥamzanāma*, *Shāhnāma*, Persian popular romances, Epic tradition, Ḥamza b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Rustam, Oral storytelling

Introduction

Neither the origins nor the author of the *Ḥamzanāma* or *Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥamza* (Book/ Story of Ḥamza) are known.[1] On the strength of Bahār's suggestion (1942, vol. 1: 285–6), G.M. Meredith-Owens argued that the *Ḥamzanāma* was based on the *Maghāzī-yi Ḥamza* (Holy Wars of Ḥamza) which, according to the anonymous author of the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (History of Sistan; ed. Bahār 1935: 169–70, and translated by Milton Gold in 1976, p. 135), related Ḥamza

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b. ʿAbd-Allāh (Atrak or Ādharak) the Kharijite's expeditions to Sarandīb, Chīn, Māchīn, Turkistān, and Rūm, and which was later transferred to Ḥamza b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet Muḥammad's paternal uncle who was acceptable to all Muslims (Meredith-Owens 2012; Lang and Meredith-Owens 1959: 475–7). This view, however, has been called into question as it is not corroborated by textual evidence (Pritchett 1991: 3; Marzolph 2011: 75; Kondo 2019: 7; cf. Sabri 2011: 30). The *Ḥamzanāma* is no less fanciful than the *Maghāzī-yi Ḥamza*, for apart from his death at Uḥud in 625, it gives no historical account of its eponymous hero.

A seventeenth-century professional storyteller, ʿAbd al-Nabī Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazwīnī, compiled a manual for storytellers, the *Ṭirāz al-akhbār* (completed in 1631/32) in Mughal India.[2] In the introduction to this important work, he relates the origin myths of the *Ḥamzanāma*. He reports that one day, an ʿAbbāsid caliph became sick. To cure his illness, an Arab sage invented the story of Ḥamza, which ended every day on a cliffhanger (Fakhr al-Zamānī 2013: 19–20). According to Fakhr al-Zamānī (2013: 20–21) and Sabri (2011: 32), the story of Ḥamza had similar therapeutic effects on Masʿūd of Ghazna (r. 1030–1041), who recovered from illness by listening to the recitation of the *Ḥamzanāma* for four months; but the story continued for another two months. Thus, the *Ḥamzanāma* was seen from its mythological inception as an oral "performative" (Khan 2015: 198; 2019a: 114) story that was given in successive instalments with cliffhanger endings or as oral serial narrative, probably reflecting Fakhr al-Zamānī's own performance style.[3]

Fakhr al-Zamānī also provides information about legendary storytellers of the *Ḥamzanāma*, among whom Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Takaltū Khān merits our attention for the following reason (Fakhr al-Zamānī 2013: 21–2): Takaltū Khān, who served Shah Ismāʿīl I (r. 1501–24) or his son Shah Ṭahmāsp (r. 1524–76; Khan 2017: 26) wrote two books about Amīr Ḥamza: the *Īrajnāma* (Book of Īraj) and the *Nūr al-Dahrnāma* (Book of Nūr al-Dahr).[4] Shah Ismāʿīl's fascination with the story of Ḥamza was so great that he named his two sons after its characters: Ṭahmāsp and Alqāṣ (Sabri 2011: 33; Khan 2017: 27).

While Takaltū Khān was a courtly storyteller, many were popular performers who told stories at coffeehouses in the Safavid period, especially in the reign of Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 1588–1629) onwards.[5] The poet Mīrzā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Naṣrābādī documented poems recited in coffeehouses during the reign of Shah ʿAbbās II (r. 1642–66) in his famous *Tadhkira* (biographical notices of poets), from which we can infer that both the *Ḥamzanāma* and the *Shāhnāma* (Book of Kings) were in the popular repertories of storytellers.[6] To give

2   See Fakhr al-Zamānī 2013. On Fakhr al-Zamānī's biography, see Khan 2015: 191–4; and 2017: 40–49.
3   Fakhr al-Zamānī instructs his fellow storytellers to snap off the jewelled necklace of speech at a place that would make their audiences impatient to know what happens next (Fakhr al-Zamānī 2013: 25–6; Khan 2017: 61). See also Yamamoto 2003: 31.
4   According to Sabri (2011: 33), the *Īrajnāma* was a pseudo-historical work that described the war between the Timurids and the Uzbeks around the city of Herat. On other storytellers in Mughal India, see Khan 2017.
5   On coffeehouses, see Falsafī 1954; Āl-e Dawūd 1993; Bulūkbāshī 1996.
6   See Naṣrābādī 1939: 145; 307; 324–5; 357; 379; 401; 414. All references to the *Shāhnāma* are to the edition of Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh et al. (1988–2008) and are

examples of others who recite the *Ḥamzanāma*, Mīrzā Muḥammad, a story-teller (*qiṣṣa-khʷān*), performed the *Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥamza* in coffeehouses and later went to India where he spent most of his life and eventually died (Naṣrābādī 1939: 401). Storytellers like him were instrumental in transmitting the *Ḥamzanāma* to India.[7] Ḥusaynā Ṣabūḥī was originally a vagabond dervish and came to perform both the *Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥamza* and the *Shāhnāma* after entering a khān's service (Naṣrābādī 1939: 357). In his *Tadhkira-yi Maykhāna* (Wine Tavern), Fakhr al-Zamānī mentions Mawlānā Muḥammad Ṭanbūra who knew the *Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥamza* well (*qiṣṣa-dān-i khūb*) and was a talented *shāhnāma-khʷān* (*Shāhnāma* reciter; Fakhr al-Zamānī 1961: 914; Khan 2019b: 11–12). As storytellers such as Ḥusaynā Ṣabūḥī and Ṭanbūra illustrate, the two works were performed in a predominantly oral environment. The *Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥamza* was seen from the very beginning as oral serial narrative whereas the *Shāhnāma* became acclimatized to an oral milieu by the Safavid period (1501–1736).

As Julia Rubanovich (2012a: 22) has shown, the *Shāhnāma* infiltrated folk literature such as *dāstān*s or popular romances by the fifteenth century. Modern *naqqāl*s (storytellers) claim that their craft, *naqqālī* (storytelling) origi-nated in the Safavid period.[8] According to a prominent *naqqāl*, Murshid ʿAbbās Zarīrī (1909–71), Shah Ismāʿīl appointed dervishes to propagate Twelver Shiism. The dervishes were divided into 17 lineages (*silsila*), and each devel-oped a particular manner of performance, specializing in certain types of narra-tive or addressed to a specific audience. To attract the audience's attention, they were obliged to tell heroic tales, which gradually became a separate genre (Dūstkhʷāh 1966: 73–4; Afshari 2021: 425). Zarīrī's testimony is now partly confirmed by the discovery of a late Safavid *ṭūmār* (a prose narrative text that was written and transmitted by *naqqāl*s) of the *Shāhnāma* (completed in 1722/23; *Ṭūmār-i naqqālī-yi shāhnāma*; Āydinlū 2010: 39; 2011; 2012).[9] The

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7   For storytellers who emigrated from Iran to India in the period under discussion, see Calmard 2003: 315–6; Khan 2017; 2019b.

8   On *naqqālī*, see Yamamoto 2021.

9   For ease of discussion, a simplified picture of oral traditions in the Safavid period is given. The realities were far more complex and confusing. Naṣrābādī uses the words *qiṣṣa-khʷān* and *shāhnāma-khʷān*. The *Tārīkh-i ʿālamārā-yi ʿabbāsī* (Word-adorning History of ʿAbbās) by Iskandar Bīg Munshī, a courtly scribe and chronicler (d. 1633/ 34; Munshī 1956: 190–91), registers these two terms under the heading of musicians and singers. *Shāhnāma-khʷān*s obviously recited the *Shāhnāma*, whose contents can be said to have some similarities to modern *ṭūmār*s of the *Shāhnāma*, such as the *Haft Lashkar* (ed. Afshārī and Madāyinī 1998), whereas *qiṣṣa-khʷān*s performed non-*Shāhnāma* tales, including the *Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥamza*. In Fakhr al-Zamānī's terminology, the word *qiṣṣa* refers to the story of Ḥamza (Maḥjūb 1991: 190–91; cf. Khan 2017: 35–6). The term *naqqālī*, on the other hand, probably goes back no earlier than very late Safavid times or the Qajar period (1779–1925) by which time it almost supplanted the term *qiṣṣa-khʷānī* (storytelling). Up until the late 1920s when the Pahlavi regime banned non-*Shāhnāma* tales from *naqqālī*, *naqqāl*s also performed popular romances (Zarīrī 1990, Intro: 28; 32; Omidsalar and Omidsalar 1999: 332; Yamamoto 2010: 246). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *shāhnāma-khʷānī* (*Shāhnāma*

Shāhnāma as transmitted by *naqqāl*s is both truncated and expanded;[10] truncated because it ends with the reign of Bahman or before that of Alexander; and expanded because it comprises both Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* and later epics, such as the *Garshāspnāma* (Book of Garshāsp; Asadī 1938 [1975] (abbreviated as GN)), the *Barzūnāma* (Book of Barzū), the *Sāmnāma* (Book of Sām), the *Bahmannāma* (Book of Bahman), the *Farāmarznāma* (Book of Farāmarz) and the like, most of which focus on members of Rustam's family whom Firdawsī has left out of his *Shāhnāma*.[11] *Naqqāl*s' renderings are a popularized or "romanticized" version of the *Shāhnāma* in prose, occasionally interspersed with verse quotations. In terms of their form, they are similar to popular romances (*dāstān*s) that are defined as "fictional prose narratives with common structural and thematic characteristics rooted in the tradition of oral storytelling" (Rubanovich 2015a), and which relate "the heroic-romantic adventures of their eponymous heroes, often with a religious Islamic emphasis" (Rubanovich 2012b: 653). These descriptions can equally apply to the *naqqālī* version of the *Shāhnāma* to the point of its being identified as a *qiṣṣa* or *dāstān* in the Indian subcontinent (Khan 2019a: 136).[12] Both the *Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥamza* and the *naqqālī* (*ṭūmār*) version of the *Shāhnāma* have oral storytelling as the common denominator that will warrant the comparative study of the two works.

Following an overview of the *Ḥamzanāma* that has been little-studied in the field of Persian literature, with the admirable exceptions of Marzolph (2011) and Sabri (2011), we will compare Ḥamza with Rustam to consider how the two heroes resemble and differ from each other. Their differences in particular will lead us to study Ḥamza's singularity as a hero.

1. Overview of the *Ḥamzanāma*

In order to offer an overview of the *Ḥamzanāma*, we have provisionally divided the text into the following fourteen chapters:

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recitation) was characterized and distinguished from *naqqālī* by its static performative style in which *shāhnāma-kh^wān*s sat on a chair with a *ṭūmār* in front of themselves (*Haft Lashkar*, Intro, 26–7). Some scholars retroactively use the term *naqqālī* to refer to Safavid performers (see Maḥjūb 1970: 43 and Afsharī 2021: 384–5).

10   See for example the *Haft Lashkar*.

11   On the *Sāmnāma*, see van Zutphen (2014: 93–6). For the later epics, also known as the Persian Epic Cycle, see Ṣafā (1946); de Blois (1998; 2004: 465–82); Yamamoto (2003: 110–14); van Zutphen (2014: 62–144); and Hämeen-Anttila (2018: 167–73). Hämeen-Anttila (2018: 173) raises "the question whether at least some of the *ṭūmār*s could actually go back to a rather early period and might even retain vestiges of early versions of the stories". Although the *ṭūmār*s can be traced back no earlier than the Safavid period, this is an interesting question as it reminds us that *naqqāl*s virtually revived the Sistani Cycle in prose, reversing the process in which early poets such as Firdawsī and Asadī versified pre-existing, now lost, prose sources.

12   Rubanovich (2015a) defines a *ṭūmār* as "the written basic storyline of an orally performed prose narrative, occasionally interspersed with verse". *Ṭūmār*s that concern us are not "prompt books" (Page 1979: 198; Seyed-Gohrab 2015: 444; 447; 457, n. 16) but are complete narrative documents written or compiled by exceptional storytellers (see Maḥjūb 1970: 49–50). See for example Zarīrī's magnificent five-volume *ṭūmār* (Zarīrī 2020).

A quick glance at these chapters shows that the *Ḥamzanāma* has intertextual relations with the *Shāhnāma*, the Persian Epic Cycle, and the Islamic Alexander tradition, while containing elements of ʿayyārī (trickery). Let us begin with the *Shāhnāma* that provides a narrative framework for the text. The *Ḥamzanāma* is set in the reign of Nūshīrawān with the good and evil viziers, Buzurjmihr and Bakhtak, respectively. ʿAmr, Ḥamza's companion, is cursorily mentioned in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, albeit in the reign of Hurmuzd. According to Firdawsī's account, a new cavalry force appears from Arabia under the command of generals such as ʿAbbās and ʿAmrū (*chu ʿAbbās-u chun ʿAmrū-shān pīshraw/suwārān-u gardan-farāzān-i naw*; vol. VII, p. 489, v. 293).[13] The episode of Buzurjmihr's interpretation of a king's dream by way of which he finds his way into court is common to both the *Shāhnāma* and the *Ḥamzanāma*, with the only difference being the king's identity: Nūshīrawān in the former (vol. VII, pp. 167–77, vs. 981–1076), as opposed to Nūshīrawān's father Qubād in the latter (pp. 22–3, chapter 1).

The *Ḥamzanāma* also exhibits some similarities with the *Shāhnāma* and the Persian Epic Cycle on a deeper, thematic level. As Dick Davis (1992: 35–96) has discussed at length, one of the underlying themes of the *Shāhnāma* is the conflict between king and hero. Chapter 2 brings this into relief through the agency of jealous courtiers who turn Nūshīrawān against Ḥamza (pp. 78–85). They urge Nūshīrawān to banish Ḥamza to a remote place such as India (chapter 3), Greece, Rūm, or Egypt (chapter 4), hoping that he will be killed by Landhūr, the monstrous king of Sarandīb, or by rebellious tributaries. Their attempts also echo that of King Żaḥḥāk, who commands Garshāsp to get rid of a rebel in India in the *Garshāspnāma* (GN, pp. 63–125, chapter 2). When the courtiers fail in these schemes, Bakhtak instigates Nūshīrawān to make Ḥamza fight against Zūbīn-i Kāwūs, King of Mughulistān (chapter 5). In chapter 7, Nūshīrawān's (or, more precisely, his retinue's) hostility towards Ḥamza decisively takes on a political aspect. Ḥamza marries Mihrnigār, daughter of Nūshīrawān, who gives birth to a son, Qubād-i Shahriyār (on this union, see below). As soon as Zūbīn hears this news, he writes to Nūshīrawān that

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13   Interestingly, the name of Ḥamza is given as a variant of ʿAmrū (vol. VII, p. 489, n. 14).

Ḥamza will revolt to seat his son on the throne. Being of Persian royal descent, Qubād indeed has the potential to usurp Nūshīrawān's sovereign power. Ḥamza in fact proclaims that Qubād is king of the seven climes (pp. 273–5). The birth of Qubād thus serves as a crucial plot device to justify the war between Nūshīrawān and Ḥamza, which continues well into chapters 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14.

The contents of chapter 11 remind one of the descriptions of Jamshīd in his later years in the *Garshāspnāma*. Pursued by Żaḥḥāk, Jamshīd takes flight to Zābulistān in a miserable manner and eventually marries the princess, giving rise to the house of Garshāsp (GN, pp. 21–63). Chapter 12 is very loosely constructed, with a series of episodes (or rather instalments) including an abandoned newborn baby (pp. 423–4) like Dārāb in the *Shāhnāma* (vol. V, pp. 488–90, vs. 10–39) and Dārāb and Iskandar in the *Dārābnāma* (Rubanovich 2015b: 215–17), Ḥamza's search for his kidnapped son (pp. 428–32), and Nūshīrawān's blinding of Buzurjmihr (p. 483). A story that is similar to the latter narrative is found in the *Shāhnāma* (vol. VII, p. 381, vs. 3599), though in a completely different context.

The influence of the Islamic Alexander tradition is also found in the *Ḥamzanāma*. According to Ulrich Marzolph (2011: 74), the *Ḥamzanāma* is adapted to the rich soil of Persian literature and "to some extent, can be read as an Islamicized Persian version of the *Alexander Romance*", for which he gives the following three reasons (Marzolph 2011: 76). First, like Alexander, Ḥamza "conquers more or less the whole world". Second, he destroys a magic mechanism (*ṭilism*) built by the sorcerer Zoroaster, whereas Alexander burns the Zoroastrian scriptures. Third, just as Alexander marries Princess Roxana, daughter of Dārā, Ḥamza is wed to Princess Mihrnigār, daughter of Nūshīrawān.

Ḥamza is not a self-acknowledged conqueror like Alexander; he is forced to fight wars by his enemies, including Nūshīrawān and Bakhtak. Only in chapter 13 does he voluntarily fight the cannibals and conquer the Land of Darkness. In destroying Zoroaster's magic mechanism, Ḥamza indeed emulates Alexander. He even burns a book found beside Zoroaster's body (pp. 527–30). As Marzolph has pointed out (2011: 78–9; cf. Amir-Moezzi 2005), Ḥamza's union with the Persian princess seems to reflect the third Imam Ḥusayn's marriage to Shahrbānū, daughter of Yazdegird III (r. 632–651), the last Sasanian king, at least in the popular beliefs of Twelver Shiites. This marriage establishes a link between "pre-Islamic Persia and Imamism" (Amir-Moezzi 2005). We may add to Marzolph's list that chapter 6 brings to mind the *Alexander Romance* (q.v. *Iskandarnāma*) as it recounts how Ḥamza routs the *dīw*s (demons) to liberate the Golden City for the *parī*s (fairies), marries a *parī* with whom he has a daughter called Qurayshī, and who keeps him in Mt. Qāf for eighteen years.[14] In his desperate attempts to return to the world of humans, Ḥamza is helped by the prophet Khiżr at critical moments (pp. 215–16, 226, 236–7, 251).[15]

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14 See the *Iskandarnāma*, pp. 356–770. I am grateful to Dr Julia Rubanovich for this reference.

15 According to Hanaway (1970: 237–8), chapter 6 "is a strangely incongruous section and has all the characteristics of a foreign body grafted on" and "could be deleted without any serious damage to the story". In an Urdu version, however, the chapter is central to the

Throughout the story, Ḥamza is accompanied by ʿAmr-i ʿUmayya-yi Dhamrī, the ʿayyār or trickster[16] – as Marzolph (2018: 70) puts it, ʿAmr is Ḥamza's alter ego. He does all kinds of things that Ḥamza cannot. He acts as Ḥamza's deputy, messenger, scout, spy, or rescuer. He is a thief who steals enemies' broken daggers in battle or their golden goblets in banquet. He disguises himself as a merchant, dervish, or rope-dancer, as appropriate. He has no scruples about lies or deception. He often drugs people, including Ḥamza. He is agile in war, fighting with a paper shield and arrows without feathers or arrowheads, jumping from place to place, and burning infidels. ʿAyyārī is one of the salient features of popular romances, the earliest of which is the *Samak-i ʿAyyār*.[17] The co-existence of motifs and themes from the *Shāhnāma* and other heroic epics, the Islamic Alexander tradition, and ʿayyārī in part explains the popularity of the *Ḥamzanāma* across the Islamicate world.[18] It has everything that the audience would expect from oral storytelling. It is, as it were, an all-in-one romance.[19]

2. Ḥamza as Rustam's double

In his pioneering study on the *Ḥamzanāma*, van Ronkel (1895: 238–40) compared Ḥamza with Rustam to refute Jules Mohl (Firdawsī 1838–78, ed. and tr., intro: lxxvii, n. 1) who excluded the *Ṣāḥibqirānnāma*, a versified story of Ḥamza b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (Ṣafā 1946: 379) from his consideration of the Persian national epic because its subject matter had nothing to do with the national. Van Ronkel's comparison resulted in many parallels between the two heroes (see Table 1).

Based on these parallels, van Ronkel (1895: 240) concludes that Ḥamza is Rustam's copy and his story is not unrelated to the Iranian national epic.

More recently and probably independently of van Ronkel, William Hanaway Jr. (1970: 197–8, 199–201) also found similarities between the two heroes. In addition to the episodes of the Sīmurgh (Hanaway 1970: 197–8) and the

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story of Ḥamza, taking up about one third of the text. See Lakhnavi and Bilgrami (2007: 371–704).

16   ʿAmr also appears as an archetypal *ʿayyār* in the *Khāwarānnāma*, a fifteenth-century religious epic about ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib by Ibn Ḥusām (see Rubanovich 2017).

17   The *Samak-i ʿAyyār* was transmitted orally and then written down during the twelfth century. It is the oldest known popular romance in Persian literature (see Gaillard 1987; 2009; Stockland 1993–95; and Zenhari 2014). I am indebted to Dr Roxana Zenhari for making her book available to me as a PDF file.

18   The *Ḥamzanāma* has been translated, adapted, reworked, and performed in many different languages across the Islamicate world and beyond. It was translated into Arabic early, into Georgian in the twelfth century, into Turkish in the fifteenth century, and into Malay and Javanese in the sixteenth century (see van Ronkel 1895; Lang and Meredith-Owens 1959: 471–4; Pritchett 1991: 4; Marzolph 2011: 75–6; 2018: 71; Kondo 2019: 8–13). For its development in India, see Pritchett 1991: 4–8; for an Urdu version that began to emerge in the early nineteenth century, see Pritchett 1991: 11–13.

19   Marzolph (2011: 78) stresses the Islamic, religious component of the narrative as an important contribution to the success of the *Ḥamzanāma* all over the Islamicate world. On Islamic aspects of the narrative, see below.

Table 1. Van Ronkel's comparison between Ḥamza and Rustam

Episode	Rustam (the *Shāhnāma*)	Ḥamza (the *Ḥamzanāma*)	Note
Killing the White Dīw	Vol. II, pp. 41–5, vs. 550–615	pp. 494–97	Part of Rustam's *haft kh^wān* (seven trials)
Being protected by the Sīmurgh	Vol. I, pp. 164–8, vs. 41–90	pp. 230, 238	Van Ronkel (1895: 239) erroneously attributes this episode to Rustam instead of his father Zāl
Killing *babr-i bayān*		pp. 73–5 (killing a leopard)	Interpolated episode (see Rubanovich 2015a)
Slaughtering a dragon	Vol. II, pp. 26–9, vs. 338–88	pp. 371–2	Part of Rustam's *haft kh^wān*
The Akwān Dīw	Vol. III, pp. 283–300, vs. 1–186	pp. 234–5	
Killing a sorcerer	Vol. II, pp. 29–31, vs. 389–416	pp. 528–30	Part of Rustam's *haft kh^wān*

Akwān Dīw (Hanaway 1970: 199–201) already indicated by van Ronkel, Hanaway's findings include the following, all of which concern the story of Rustam and Suhrāb whose influence on the text is palpable (see below, esp. n. 24). First, just as Suhrāb asks Hujīr to show him Rustam among the Iranian champions (vol. II, pp. 157–66, vs. 489–602), Zūbīn, and then Bahman, both of whom are Ḥamza's potential enemies, command Bakhtak to point out Ḥamza among the arriving warriors (pp. 190, 392). Second, overpowered by his son Suhrāb, Rustam prays to God for help (vol. II, p. 184, vs. 836–46). Similarly, Ḥamza asks for God's help to defeat his own son ʿUmar (p. 271). Third, like Suhrāb (vol. II, p. 127, n. 4), Ḥamza has difficulty finding a suitable horse (pp. 37–40).

Contrary to van Ronkel, who wished to see Ḥamza as an integral part of the national epic, Hanaway tries to separate him from heroic epic, playing down the similarities between Rustam and Ḥamza:

> From these four [sic.] examples one could imagine that Ḥamza was deliberately modelled after Rostam. This is only superficially true, for in essence Ḥamza is an entirely different kind of man in an entirely different situation. Ḥamza is a hero, but the story of Ḥamza is not a heroic or epic story, but rather a romance. It is to Persianize Ḥamza that he is made to go through some of the same motions as Rostam, but the resemblance ends there (Hanaway 1970: 201).

Hanaway raises two issues here. On the one hand, he contradicts himself by rejecting Rustam as Ḥamza's model while affirming the resemblance between them that is used to Persianize Ḥamza; on the other, he asserts that the hero of a romance is "an entirely different man in an entirely different situation" from the one of a heroic epic. When combined with both van Ronkel's study and our contribution which will be shown below, Hanaway's discoveries strongly suggest that Ḥamza is, even if not deliberately, modelled after Rustam, which in turn serves to Persianize Ḥamza. As noted in the introduction, the generic distinction between heroic epics and popular romances tends to dissolve when it is seen in the context of oral tradition. Exceptional storytellers (e.g. Ḥusaynā Ṣabūḥī and Ṭanbūra) freely and easily crossed the border, prompting the cross-fertilization of the two genres that then coalesce into "epic romance[s] in prose" (Rubanovich 2012a: 11), a term applicable to both *dāstān*s and *ṭūmār*s. In what follows, we will supplement the earlier scholarship on the parallelism between Ḥamza and Rustam from a fresh perspective.[20]

Ḥamza is frequently referred to as *jahān pahlawān*, *pahlawān-i jahān* (world champion) or *jahāngīr* (world conqueror, which is also the name of one of Rustam's grandsons). Although such epithets as "world champion" and "world conqueror" can be applied to any hero, they are in fact a contracted form of the following full epithet: *jahān pahlawān-i khusraw-i kayhān-u*

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20 According to Khan (2019a: 151), the nineteenth-century poet Ghālib wrote about "Rustam as a *historical* model for Amīr Ḥamza" (emphasis original). In a nineteenth-century Urdu version of the *Ḥamzanāma*, Ḥamza emulates Rustam in his feats and adventures (see Pritchett 1991: 39).

tājbakhsh-i sulṭān (the world champion of the king of the world and the crown-bestower to sultans, pp. 46, 61, 79, 195, 295, 380, 521). The word *tājbaksh* or crown-bestower particularly is an unmistakable epithet of Rustam although it is Islamicized by the word *sulṭān*.[21] It was traditionally associated with Rustam's bringing Kay Qubād to the throne and his rescue of Kay Kāwūs from Hāmāwarān and Māzandarān, but this assumption has now been questioned.[22] In the *Shāhnāma* the epithet *tājbaksh* is almost exclusively used for Rustam: *chu āmad bi shahr andarūn tājbakhsh/khurūshī bar āward chun ra'd rakhsh* (when *tājbakhsh* [=Rustam] entered the city, Rakhsh neighed like thunder, vol. II, p. 39, v. 523); *ham angāh khurūshī bar āward rakhsh/ bikhandīd shādān dil-i tājbakhsh* (when Rakhsh neighed, the heart of *tājbakhsh* [=Rustam] smiled rejoicing, vol. V, p. 400, v. 1271).[23] In spite of its rare occurrences in the *Shāhnāma*, the word *tājbakhsh* is frequently used in the *naqqālī* tradition. In Murshid ʿAbbās Zarīrī's account of the story of Rustam and Suhrāb (Zarīrī 1990: 164), Tahmīna says to Suhrāb: *bāb-i tu rustam-i tājbakhsh, jahān pahlawān-i haft iqlīm ast!* (Your father is Rustam the crown-bestower and world champion of the seven climes!). In oral performances, Zarīrī introduces Rustam as *gav-i tājbakhsh, rustam-i jahān pahlawān* (crown-bestowing paladin, Rustam the world champion) or *yal-i pahlawān, rustam-i tājbakhsh* (brave warrior, Rustam the crown-bestower; Zarīrī 1990: 391, 394). Elsewhere, *tājbakhsh* is interchangeable with Rustam: *Tahmīna baʿd az raftan-i tājbakhsh mashghūl bi taʿlīm-u tarbiyyat-i kūdak-i khud shud* (After the crown-bestower had left, Tahmīna became busy educating her own child; Zarīrī 1990: 410). Thus, the word *tājbakhsh* alone would suffice to make the audience think of Rustam. Nevertheless, to ensure that Ḥamza is strongly associated with Rustam, the narrator introduces Rustam-i Pīltan (elephant-bodied Rustam) as one of Ḥamza's sons. The word *pīltan* is also Rustam's epithet as in *buzurgān-i lashkar shudand anjuman/chu dastān-u chun rustam-i pīltan* (dignitaries of the army such as Dastān and the elephant-bodied Rustam gathered together, vol. III, p. 139, v. 548). The epithet *pīltan* is far more frequently used on its own, with more than 50 examples: *yakī majlis ārāst bā pīltan/rad-u mawbad-u khusraw-i rāyzan* ([the king] held an assembly with Pīltan [=Rustam], champions, priests, and chief councilors; vol. III, p. 29,

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21 The word *tājbakhsh* has caught scholarly attention since Olga M. Davidson published a controversial article on it in 1985. Her article instantly gave rise to a series of polemical debates on oral vs. written sources of Firdawsī. For this discussion, see Yamamoto 2010: 242, n. 1. On *tājbakhsh*, see Davidson 1985; 1994 and Alishan 1989.

22 The word *tājbakhsh* is used for the first time in Rustam's *haft khᵂān* (vol. II, p. 28, v. 375), which takes place prior to his rescue of Kay Kāwūs. This suggests that the word must, if anything, be related to Kay Qubād's coronation. In Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, however, the episodes of Qubād's dream in which two white falcons bring the crown to him, and of his subsequent identification of the falcons with Rustam, are considered spurious (vol. I, pp. 339–41, n. 4–5, vs. 61–66). Firdawsī does not explain why and whence Rustam acquired the title *tājbakhsh*. He simply uses the word to rhyme with Rakhsh, Rustam's famous steed. See further Alishan 1989: 9–12.

23 In one instance *tājbakhsh* refers to Isfandiyār: *az ān sū khurūshī bar āward rakhsh/wa zīn rūy asp-i yal-i tājbakhsh* (on that side Rakhsh neighed, so did the horse of the crown-bestowing champion [=Isfandiyār] on this side; vol. V, p. 331, v. 474). See also Alishan 1989: 12.

v. 45). This is a case of overdetermination in which multiple factors operate to equate Ḥamza with Rustam. Indeed, Ḥamza is made to appear almost identical to Rustam in more than one way. In addition to the arms given him by prophets, Ḥamza inherits the weapons and furniture passed down in Rustam's family. Ḥamza sits on Rustam's grandfather Sām's throne, and uses both Garshāsp's shield and Sām's mace (pp. 120, 299, 355, 387, 449, 452, 517).

The association of Ḥamza with Rustam can also be seen on the level of individual episodes, most noticeably taken from the story of Rustam and Suhrāb and Rustam's *haft kh^wān*.[24] As Hanaway has noted (see above), just like Rustam, Ḥamza unknowingly fights his own son ʿUmar (p. 271). What has escaped Hanaway is the fact that Ḥamza's combat with his sons and grandsons is repeated six times (pp. 270–71, 378–9, 418–20, 420, 425–7, 436–7) and all end happily. This episode is firmly established as a rite of passage among Ḥamza's sons or grandsons in the story. Badiʿ al-Zamān, for example, is instructed to try his strength with Ḥamza by Qurayshī, the half-human and half-fairy daughter of Ḥamza when he leaves Mt Qāf for the world of humans (p. 425).

A powerful hero poses a narrative problem to the storyteller, for he inevitably brings the story to a close by defeating the enemy with ease. To solve the problem, the storyteller must devise a strategy for continuing his performance while making full use of the hero's potential. Firdawsī shows an exemplary model in his handling of Rustam. In earlier parts of the reign of Kay Khusraw in the *Shāhnāma*, the Iranian army suffers defeat twice in Rustam's absence. Kay Khusraw summons Rustam who immediately departs from Zābulistān. Firdawsī, however, delays his arrival to create suspense. Both the Iranians and the Turanians count the days until Rustam arrives, obviously for opposite reasons; while the Turanians are well aware that their victory is temporary and can be squashed once Rustam joins the enemy, the Iranians await Rustam as the saviour. Even after Rustam joins the Iranians at long last, he refuses to fight because Rakhsh is tired after the long journey (vol. III, pp. 105–82, vs. 1–1266). Seeing, however, an Iranian warrior killed by the Turanian champion Ashkabūs, Rustam appears in the battleground on foot and defeats him. This confuses the Turanians, who are unsure of the identity of the foot soldier, and their uncertainty is further deepened for dramatic effect (vol. III, pp. 182–90, vs. 1267–1407).[25]

This story has been reworked and expanded by *naqqāl*s, who also keep Rustam from fighting by separating him from his horse and augmenting it with the motif of *haft kh^wān*.[26] In the longer *Barzūnāma*, for example,

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24 As Marijan Molé (1953: 379–80) has shown, the story of Rustam and Suhrāb influenced the evolution of the later epics. In both the oral and written versions of the longer *Barzūnāma*, for instance, the combat between father and son (grandson) is repeated four times (*Haft Lashkar*, pp. 254–9; 432–4; 435; 453–4; Bibliothèque nationale, Supplément persan 499, ff. 29v–36r; 229r–233v; 235r; 237r–240r), though all with a happy ending (see Yamamoto 2018: 121–4). As Hanaway's findings have shown, this story also affected the *Ḥamzanāma*.

25 For a fuller analysis of this story, see Yamamoto 2003: 97–107.

26 According to the late Murshid Walī-Allāh Turābī (private communication to this author), the story of Ashkabūs was one of the most popular in the *naqqālī* tradition. The scene of

Rakhsh is stolen by the enemy and nowhere can the horse be found. Zāl calls down the Sīmurgh to enquire about Rakhsh. The Sīmurgh predicts that only Jahānbakhsh, Rustam's grandson, can discover Rakhsh if he goes through the *haft khʷān* or seven trials (*Haft Lashkar*, pp. 393–4). Jahānbakhsh then undergoes the *haft khʷān* and returns with Rakhsh (*Haft Lashkar*, pp. 411–28). As soon as Rustam gets Rakhsh back, he defeats the Turanians (*Haft Lashkar*, pp. 428–54). Once Rustam joins the battle, he is sure to defeat the enemy and inevitably brings the story to an end. The absence of Rustam is a prerequisite to the continuation of the story, while enabling many subplots or counterplots to be woven into the storyline. The same logic is at work in the *Ḥamzanāma*. When Ḥamza is absent from the war, his companions are overwhelmed by the powerful enemy (pp. 306–11, 337–40, 398–9, 466–9) and his hometown, Mecca, is besieged (pp. 54–5). The moment he returns, he subdues the enemy. His return is at times foreshadowed by a nightmare (pp. 54–5, 306–12).

To return to the *haft khʷān*, which Jahānbakhsh undergoes to retrieve Rakhsh and on which both Rustam and Isfandiyār embark in the *Shāhnāma* – Rustam to rescue King Kāwūs (vol. II, pp. 21–45, vs. 275–615) and Isfandiyār to release his sisters (vol. V, pp. 219–89, vs. 1–849) – Ḥamza also undertakes a kind of *haft khʷān* on his way to Madāʾin (p. 73) or Kūhistān (p. 275). On each occasion, there are two ways to the destination. One is shorter though it comes with a fierce leopard (pp. 73–5) or giant ants (pp. 275–6; cf. Marzolph 2011: 77). Like Rustam, Isfandiyār, and Jahānbakhsh, who reach a fork in the road, Ḥamza naturally takes the shorter way and confronts the evil creatures. However, instead of a series of seven trials, which lead to a magic mechanism that protects King Siyāmak's tomb in the longer *Barzūnāma* (*Haft Lashkar*, pp. 420–23),[27] the *Ḥamzanāma* recounts only what appears to be the equivalent of a single trial in the series without any rescue mission. This can be taken as a vestige of the *haft khʷān*. As is clear from van Ronkel's observation (see Table 1 above), Rustam's *haft khʷān* is deconstructed in the *Ḥamzanāma*. Some trials are recounted randomly as discrete episodes.

In oral tradition the survival of a given story depends entirely on the audience's preference, which was quite conservative in nature: they would not listen to anything even remotely unfamiliar.[28] To Persianize Ḥamza or make him acceptable to the audience, the storyteller needed to use the figure of Rustam, whom members of the audience would instantly recognize and whose stories they were so fond of. As a result, Rustam came to feature in the main repertories of storytellers.

Rustam killing Ashkabūs is frequently illustrated. A statistical survey shows that it is ranked fourth in the illustrated scenes in *Shāhnāma* manuscripts (see Abdullaeva 2006: 205).

27 The *Ḥamzanāma* also twice relates the episode of a magic mechanism that protects a tomb (pp. 494–6; 529–30), though separately from the *haft khʷān*. One is Jamshīd's tomb and the other Zoroaster's. While Ḥamza leaves the former alone, he, as we have seen, tears down the latter.

28 As Page (1979: 199) has noted, "The audience is familiar with the storyteller's repertoire, and a storyteller will not perform material which is unknown to his audience".

3. "De-Persianizing" Ḥamza

The similarities between the two heroes, however, are there to lay bare their differences, shedding light on the singularity of Ḥamza as a "de-Persianized" Islamic hero.

The Islamic Alexander tradition plays no part in Rustam's tales. As far as we are aware, Rustam does not go to India to defeat a rebel and explore its marvels and wonders. This is not so surprising, as Firdawsī did not recount Rustam's campaign against India, and storytellers, including epic poets who came after Firdawsī, generally respected his storylines. As Molé (1953: 379–80) pointed out more than half a century ago, it is in the later epics that the influence of the *Alexander Romance* becomes dominant, starting with the *Garshāspnāma*, followed by the *Farāmarznāma*, and many others. In an oral version of the *Shāhnāma*, Rustam travels to the Maghrib where he defeats monsters with elephantine ears[29] as well as Māzandarān in which he vanquishes Siyāhrang, son of the White Dīw whom he has killed in the *Shāhnāma* (see above, Table 1).[30]

While we have formed our theory of Ḥamza as being a near-equivalent of Rustam based on some of his epithets, another epithet of Rustam's is given to Ḥamza's enemy. *Tahamtan*, again Rustam's famous epithet in the *Shāhnāma*, is used as the name of the enemy who is taken prisoner by Rustam-i Pīltan, son of Ḥamza (p. 382). Similarly, Isfandiyār's epithet in the *Shāhnāma*, *rūīntan*, which literally means "bronze-bodied", has become the name of a tribe who actually use their bare heads as shields (pp. 353–4). In the Persian epic tradition, the personification of an epithet is attested quite early (Alishan 1989: 22). The name of Sām's father Narīmān was once one of Kərəsāspa's (Garshāsp's) epithets in the Avesta. Its Avestan form was *naire.manah* (of manly mind; Skjærvø 2011). Over the long course of transmission, it lost its original meaning and became the name of a separate hero. Probably because of this unusual origin, Narīmān has virtually no story of his own.[31] It is likely that the epithet *tahamtan* underwent a similar process in which it was dissociated from Rustam in the course of cross-cultural dissemination.[32] Although Rustam is closely related with Zābul in the *Shāhnāma*, Zābulī warriors such as Mardumafkan-i Zābulī and his seven brothers appear as the enemy in the *Ḥamzanāma* (pp. 195–6). Rustam's companions, including Bīzhan, Gustaham, and Farīburz, son of Kay Kāwūs, have become Ḥamza's enemies. The same

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29 Rustam confronts Gūsh, son of Gūsh who is a descendant of Żaḥḥāk with elephant-like ears in the Maghrib. After a brief fight, however, Gūsh realizes that he is no match for Rustam and runs away (*Haft Lashkar*, pp. 280–1).

30 On Siyāhrang (or Shabrang), see van den Berg (2015).

31 Narīmān appears as Garshāsp's nephew and adopted son in the *Garshāspnāma*. He accompanies Garshāsp in his expedition to Chīn where he shows his prowess (GN, pp. 328–429). On the dubious status of the *Narīmānnāma* (Book of Narīmān), see van Zutphen 2014: 91–3.

32 Firdawsī often uses *tahamtan* in place of Rustam presumably for metrical reasons. Used on its own, *tahamtan* could be easily mistaken for a different person. In the *Dāstān-i Ḥusayn-i Kurd* (Story of Ḥusayn the Kurd), a nineteenth-century popular romance, the epithet *tahamtan* is used for its protagonist, Ḥusayn the Kurd (see Marzolph 1999: 297–8).

is true of some ancient Iranian kings and heroes: Kāwūs, Bahman, Bahrām, Qārin-i Dīwband, and Ardashīr-i Bābakān.[33]

The fate of these Iranian kings and heroes, all familiar to the audience, is one of the most important factors to differentiate Ḥamza from Rustam. Ḥamza converts them to Islam; only when they fail to embrace Islam are they killed. Whereas Rustam is engaged in warfare at the behest of whimsical kings such as Kay Kāwūs, Ḥamza ultimately fights for the cause of Islam; he is depicted as a great Jihadist.[34] No matter how evil or wicked his opponent may be, he forgives and welcomes him to his army once the infidel converts to Islam; consequently, his army comes to consist of cosmopolitan warriors, ranging from Arabs to Indians and from Greeks and Egyptians to Zābulīs (pp. 392–4). This would explain in part why the *Ḥamzanāma* was so successful in the Islamicate world, allowing storytellers to add their regional champions and heroes to Ḥamza's army to strike a chord with their audiences (cf. Marzolph 2011: 76).

Whether in combat or in banquet, Ḥamza differs from Rustam in that he is not invincible. Strictly speaking, Rustam is not as invincible as Garshāsp. He is defeated four times in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* according to Asadī of Ṭūs who composed the *Garshāspnāma* (GN, p. 19; cf. Yamamoto 2003: 118, n. 35). In the *naqqālī* tradition, however, he is almost unbeatable. Ḥamza, by contrast, is wounded or drugged as many as fifteen times in the story (pp. 144, 167, 169, 177–8, 201, 215, 220, 230, 256, 319, 344–6, 373–4, 397–8, 462, 472). Ḥamza is struck twice on the head by the enemy who has removed ʿAmr from behind him (pp. 201, 256). Having drunk the poisonous water of a river and lost consciousness, he falls into a swamp from which he is unable to escape (p. 220). Drugged and sewn in a cow hide, Ḥamza is strung from a gibbet. Qārin commands his men to shoot arrows at Ḥamza, and even invites Nūshīrawān to come and see Ḥamza tortured (pp. 346–47). Worst of all, Nūshīrawān's wife Ādharangīz, who is in love with Ḥamza, decides to take him prisoner by drugging him. Though she tells him how she feels, she is rejected by Ḥamza for whom she is mother-in-law. He remains bound in fetters until ʿAmr comes to rescue him (pp. 397–400). This is so unheroic and even disgraceful for an epic hero that it almost violates the principles of *jawānmardī*.

In Persian the term *jawānmardī* literally means "being a young man" and by extension connotes "manliness, bravery, generosity, and chivalry" (Hanaway 1970: 130; Gaillard 1987: 17, 22, 43–4; Zakeri 1995: 316–17; Zenhari 2014: 46–8, 51–2). It is the ideals that Persian popular romances portray through the actions of principal characters (Hanaway 1970: 129, 145; Gaillard 1987: 41).

33   Qārin-i Dīwband was originally an Iranian champion while his epithet *dīwband* is used for King Ṭahmūrath in the *Shāhnāma* (see van Ronkel 1895: 240). In the *Khāwarānnāma*, too, Iranian kings and heroes are depicted as infidels (Rubanovich 2017). According to Raya Shani (2015: 243), "the author of the *Khāvarān-nāma* may have wished to exemplify the early Islamization of the Iranians during the first Islamic conquests".

34   A similar phenomenon is also observable in the *Khāwarānnāma*, where ʿAlī's heroic deeds echo Rustam's though emphasis is shifted to Islamic traditions. Like Ḥamza, ʿAlī converts to Islam "all sorts of infidels he encounters" (Shani 2015: 263). On other similarities between the *Khāwarānnāma* and the *Ḥamzanāma*, see Rubanovich 2017.

It also dictates how heroes should conduct themselves in a *naqqālī* version of the story of Rustam and Suhrāb. Tahmīna throws a merchant to the ground and sits on his chest to hack his head off. The merchant asks for her pardon, to which Tahmīna replies: "As long as you are *jawānmard* (manly or chivalrous) and do not act cowardly (*nāmardī nakunī*), I will forgive you" (Zarīrī 1990: 62). *Jawānmardī* can be an inherent quality of a hero. A soldier is struck by Suhrāb so hard that he faints. After he comes to his senses, he says to Suhrāb: "A sign of *jawānmardī* (generosity) emanates from your countenance. If I acted ignorantly, please forgive me for your *jawānmardī*'s sake" (Zarīrī 1990: 117). After his uncle is murdered, Suhrāb raids the Iranian camp. Rustam tells him to call for the murderer in the battleground, saying "If your uncle's murderer is Iranian and *jawānmard* (manly or chivalrous), he will present himself to you in the battleground" (Zarīrī 1990: 238). It is Rustam who has killed Suhrāb's uncle. In this narrative, however, he pretends to be Rustam's spear-bearer and deceives Suhrāb by appealing to his *jawānmardī*.

In popular romances, notably in the *Samak-e ʿAyyār*, the terms *jawānmardī* and *ʿayyārī* are used interchangeably (Hanaway 1970: 152–4; Gaillard 1987: 48–9; Zakeri 1995: 318), but they differ from each other in some respects.[35] First, *jawānmardān* do not engage themselves in *ʿayyārī*, which can be considered a profession (Gaillard 1987: 27, 52; cf. Hanaway 1970: 154). Second, theoretical treaties on *jawānmardī* do not refer to *ʿayyārī* (Gaillard 1987: 52). Third, *jawānmardī* is the ideal state to which *ʿayyār*s should aspire and of which Samak is a perfect example (Gaillard 1987: 52–3). The *naqqālī* version of the story of Rustam and Suhrāb, as we have just seen, is inspired by such principles of *jawānmardī*, although it makes no mention of *ʿayyār*s, with only one exception (Zarīrī 1990: 324). In contrast to the oral *Shāhnāma* tradition, the *Ḥamzanāma* offers innumerable instances of 'ayyārī as embodied by ʿAmr-i Umayya-yi Dhamrī, but it does not allude to the code of *jawānmardī*, which is symptomatic of the de-Persianization of the story.[36]

Speaking of disgrace or dishonour (*nājawānmardī*), we must mention the ways Ḥamza's family members are killed. Following a wild ass that jumps into the river, Badīʿ al-Zamān is drowned (p. 537). Drunk, Umar b. Ḥamza is killed by Zūbīn's sister Gulfahr who cannot consummate her love for him (pp. 329–30). During a respite from the war, Nūshīrawān orders an *ʿayyār* to bring the head of whomever he encounters every evening. The *ʿayyār* goes to the Arabian camp, finds Qubād asleep, and simply cuts off his head (pp. 338–9). Qubād's mother Mihrnigār also dies a humiliating death. While Ḥamza and his companions are busy fighting with Shaddād, Mihrnigār is left alone. When Zūbīn sees her all by herself, he leads his army and gradually approaches her as he fights. Mihrnigār shoots arrows at Zūbīn. Furious, Zūbīn decides to kill her and indeed strikes her in the chest with a dagger. After her death, Ḥamza remains insane for 21 days (pp. 341–2). On the twenty-first

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35 For a historical account of *ʿayyār*s as *jawānmardī* believers, see Zenhari 2014: 55–9.
36 When Ḥamza converts an infidel, he tells him either to be a man or serve a man, and say that there is only one God and that Abraham's religion is righteous (*yā mard bāsh wa yā dar khidmat-i mardī bāsh, bigū khudāy yakī ast wa dīn-i mihtar ibrahīm bar haqq ast*, p. 66). Admittedly, there is a sense of *jawānmardī* in this formulaic command.

day, the prophet Abraham appears in a dream, saying *agar zinda mānī ān chunān zanān khudā-yi taʿālā tu-rā bīshtar kh^wāhad dād* (If you remain alive, God Most High will grant you more of such women, p. 342).

When it comes to shameful deaths, we cannot forget how Ḥamza himself is killed. After defeating the army of infidels single-handedly, Ḥamza victoriously heads back to Mecca. On his way home, however, he comes across Hind, princess of Rūm, who has gathered a huge army and joined hands with Hurmuz to seek revenge on Ḥamza for the death of her son, Būr-i Hind. She destroys Ashqar, Ḥamza's steed. Ḥamza falls to the ground. As he tries to jump up, Hind decapitates him, mutilates his dead body, and chews on his liver (p. 545). At this crucial moment the text has some lacunas, leaving us to wonder how Ḥamza has become so weak as to be killed by a woman in such a wretched manner. Rustam, Ḥamza's counterpart in the *Shāhnāma*, is killed by his half-brother Shaghād who plotted against him by digging deadly pits. Rustam falls with Rakhsh into one of the pits at the bottom of which spears, javelins, and sharp swords are struck (vol. V, p. 445, vs. 76–81, pp. 451–5, vs. 152–205). Whether his death is heroic is a matter for discussion, but a sense of impending tragedy has been built up through the narrative of his combats with Isfandiyār in the reign of Gushtāsp. After Rustam is severely wounded by Isfandiyār, Zāl summons the Sīmurgh, who heals his wounds and tells him how to kill Isfandiyār while warning him that whoever spills the prince's blood is doomed to die (vol. V, pp. 397–405, vs. 1237–1317). Firdawsī thus makes his death intelligible to the audience by relating it back to his killing of Isfandiyār. The narrator of the *Ḥamzanāma*, on the other hand, seems to be utterly unconcerned with making a tragedy out of Ḥamza's death.

Ḥamza's unheroic death reflects the actual history on which the *Ḥamzanāma* is based (Ibn Isḥāq 1955: 131–2, 283, 299, 375–6, 385–7, 553). At the end of the story, the narrator decisively shifts his frame of reference to Islamic traditions that celebrate Ḥamza's death, or more precisely his martyrdom, while at the same time transforming its *nājawānmard* (unmanly, coward, or mean) aspects into a positive sign of God's action. According to Ibn Isḥāq (1955: 375), Ḥamza was killed by Jubayr b. Muṭʿim's Abyssinian slave named Waḥshī who is partially replaced by Hind in the *Ḥamzanāma*, underscoring the misery of his death to glorify God. The more disgraceful Ḥamza's death is, the more compassionate God will become. Ḥamza's humiliation is in inverse proportion to God's mercy and benevolence. Thus, Ḥamza sits on a throne in Heaven, guided by the Angels Gabriel, Michael, and Isrāfīl who instruct the Prophet Muḥammad to forgive Hind (p. 546). Devoid of any tragic overtones, death is here simply presented as the condition of possible salvation.

Conclusion

According to Pritchett (1991: 3), Ḥamza's life is "seen through very Persian eyes" in the *Ḥamzanāma*. In a sense, this study is an attempt to specify what these "very Persian eyes" mean. The Persian epic tradition provides the narrative framework for the *Ḥamzanāma*, bestows some of Rustam's epithets on Ḥamza, and transfers the former's narrative functions to the latter. While it establishes the continuity with the *Ḥamzanāma*, its influence is simultaneously weakened

elsewhere: another epithet of Rustam's is used as the name of Ḥamza's enemy; the split between the ideals of *jawānmardī* and *ʿayyārī* represents a phase of the "de-Persianization" of the narrative; and Ḥamza's and his family's undignified deaths are incongruous to the spirit of the *Shāhnāma*, which stresses the narrative's Islamic origin.

Although Ḥamza's unheroic features have been emphasized, they can be positively taken as a vastly different narrative strategy deployed by the teller of the *Ḥamzanāma*. A superhero like Rustam cannot entertain the audience as his actions are predictable: by beating everyone, he brings the story to an end. Firdawsī contrived to postpone Rustam's appearance in the story, which is one way of dealing with a superhero. The teller of the *Ḥamzanāma*, by contrast, chose to make his hero more vulnerable and human. Every time Ḥamza is drugged or taken captive, he can keep the audience in suspense, giving the storyteller an impetus to continue his performance. Indeed, no other hero can rival Ḥamza in his capacity to excite storytellers' desire to recite.[37] Were it not for the intervention of death as an extrinsic factor, the story of Ḥamza would continue almost indefinitely. Ḥamza's death is the boundary imposed on the storyteller's narrative drive from outside.

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37 In the fifteenth century a certain Hamzavi compiled a 24-volume Turkish version of the *Ḥamzanāma* (Lang and Meredith-Owen 1959: 473; Pritchett 1991: 4; Marzolph 2011: 75; Kondo 2019: 8). In Mughal India, the emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) commissioned a splendid manuscript in 12 volumes with 1,400 images (Seyller 2002: 12; Lang and Meredith-Owen 1959: 473; Pritchett 1991: 4–5; Marzolph 2011: 75; Kondo 2019: 9). In Safavid Iran the *Ḥamzanāma* was reworked and expanded into the *Rumūz-i Ḥamza*, whose nineteenth-century lithographed edition has 1,200 pages (Pritchett 1991: 4; Sabri 2011). One of the numerous Urdu versions came with 46 volumes (Pritchett 1991: 24–25; Marzolph 2011: 76).

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